



st michael's
hospice

Newsletter

Spring 2026



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A note from Dr Karen Clarke Chief Executive



Welcome to the spring 2026 edition of our newsletter. As the seasons change, we're reminded of the importance of growth, connection, and community — values that align with everything we do at St Michael's Hospice.

This issue is filled with inspiring stories of resilience, compassion, and the incredible impact of your support. From Anna's journey to finding confidence through our Breathlessness Support Group to Jas's unforgettable Sahara adventure, these stories highlight the strength and spirit of the people we serve and the community that uplifts them.

We're also excited to share updates on our new 24/7 Hospice Line, the launch of our redesigned website, and the success of our first eye donation — a milestone that reflects the dedication of our clinical teams and the kindness of our community.

As we look ahead, we invite you to join us in making a difference. Whether it's dedicating a Remembrance Ribbon, participating in the Moonlight Walk, or exploring the Icelandic Lava Trek, your involvement helps us provide compassionate care to those who need it most.

Thank you for being part of this. Together, we can continue to make every day meaningful for the patients, families, and communities we serve.



HOSPICE LINE

Hospice Line is our new 24/7 advice line for patients, family members and health professionals, replacing our Telephone Support Line from Monday 1st June.

We'll run Hospice Line with St Wilfrid's Hospice Eastbourne, so both hospices can offer a better service while keeping costs down. Why this change will help:

- A dedicated team day and night giving consistency and faster response times.
- Help with medication reviews and urgent prescriptions over the phone.
- More time for clinical teams to spend with patients in person.

If you're a patient (or family member), keep using the Telephone Support Line number and our trained, compassionate professionals will support you. Visit stmichaelshospice.com/the-news-hub for more information.

Every ribbon tells a story, every donation makes a difference

When we introduced Remembrance Ribbons last summer, we hoped the display of dedications would help families, friends and supporters remember the special people in their lives in a meaningful and joyful way. What we didn't expect was how deeply it would touch our colleagues too.

“Being able to have ribbons with family members names on was just wonderful. To look out the windows and see them waving in the breeze on the tree and drive past them, was a great comfort and a fabulous way to remember them.” – Hospice employee.

“The colourful display reminded me of my brother's life – beautiful, colourful and fun.” – Hospice employee.

Dedicating a remembrance ribbon to someone you love is a wonderful way to celebrate their life through a symbolic display of uplifting colour and joy. Each ribbon tells the story of someone special, someone loved and missed, with every accompanying donation helping us provide compassionate care for others facing life's most challenging times.

From May – July, the Remembrance Ribbon Tree will be filled with multicoloured ribbons, welcoming and uplifting all who visit the Hospice.

Visit stmichaelshospice.com/ribbons to dedicate your ribbon today.



What we've been up to recently



We've been working on a brand-new St Michael's Hospice website, set to launch this summer.

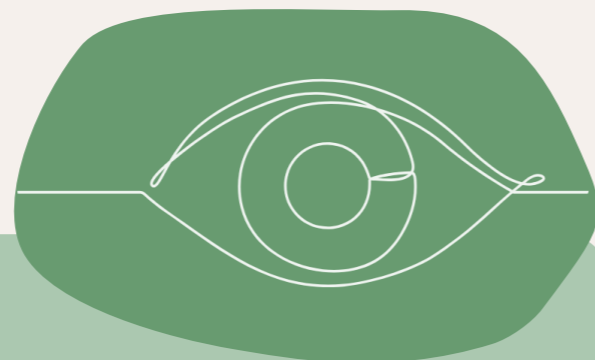
Whether you're a patient, carer, recently bereaved, a volunteer, fundraiser, or a healthcare professional, our new site will make it easier to understand our services and find the information you need.

"We've designed the new website with people firmly at the centre, ensuring that the structure, language, and layout create a smoother, more positive experience for everyone who uses it."

– Liz Jones, Associate Director of Capital Build, Communications and Marketing.

Grant-funded improvements across the Hospice.

Thanks to a one-off grant from the Department of Health and Social Care, we've completed a wide range of upgrades across the Hospice, including water and roofing works, enhanced technology for



Making eye donation possible.

Since September 2024 we've been preparing our clinical teams to offer the option of eye donation to suitable patients, learning from colleagues at St Wilfrid's Hospice, listening to patients and families in focus groups, and working closely with the Eye Bank at the Queen Victoria Hospital, East Grinstead.

On 26th January 2026, thanks to excellent teamwork, the first successful eye donation was achieved.

"I'm so proud to have played my part in enabling our first successful eye donor - such an incredible gift and legacy."

– Carole Morton, Health Care Assistant.



clinical teams, and new equipment and furniture to support patient comfort. Reception also has a fresh look, thanks to new flooring, The Nook shop, and a brilliant mural by local artist Isobel Lynam.

Visit stmichaelshospice.com/the-news-hub to read more of our latest news.

Finding confidence in every breath – Anna's story

When Anna first joined the Hospice's Breathlessness Support Group, she wasn't quite sure what to expect.

Living with breathlessness had become part of her daily life and she had grown used to adjusting her routine around it. What she didn't expect was how the group would reshape the way she thought about herself.

One of the biggest changes came from something very simple, paying closer attention to her breathing. Anna was surprised to discover how focusing on something so ordinary could make such a difference.

Through guided techniques and gentle practice at the group, she began to understand her breath in a new way, learning how it could support her rather than overwhelm her.

The group has inspired Anna to think more positively and to concentrate on enjoying her life to the full. She now approaches each day with intention and increased energy, considering carefully how she wants to spend her time and striving to make every day meaningful.



"I never imagined something so simple could change so much for me. It's given me focus, confidence, and a new drive to help myself." – Anna



Matt's tips for managing breathlessness

- 1. Pace yourself:** slow down the task you're doing and stop for short pauses. This allows your breathing to do what it needs to when you are more active.
- 2. Breathing control:** focus on each breath. Breathe in gently through your nose, then breathe out a little longer through your mouth.
- 3. Handheld fan:** when you're breathless, a fan can create a gentle breeze on your face and neck, which can feel soothing.

Matt is the Rehabilitation Lead at the Hospice.

To find out more about our Wellbeing Programme, visit stmichaelshospice.com/services or call us on **01424 445177**.

Supporting children with grief

It's not only adults who are affected when someone close to them has a life limiting illness; children feel the impact too. Through our bereavement and social work teams, we regularly support people in finding ways to help children understand and cope with dying, death and loss.

People often tell us they worry about finding the 'right' words when talking to children about someone they love dying, or about when and how these conversations should happen.

Those concerns can feel overwhelming. It's natural to feel unsure about how much to share with children, or how to explain what's happening in a way that feels right for their age and understanding.

Children often feel grief before a death happens, and they can move in and out of their feelings quickly. This is sometimes called puddle jumping: they may feel sad for a moment, then 'jump out' to play or laugh, then dip back into their feelings again. This back and forth is normal and helps them cope.

At the Hospice, we offer books, activities and gentle guidance for any children affected by a patient's illness, providing support at a pace that feels right for them. We can also connect people with other services that offer support for children and adults living with grief.

For some, shared remembrance can also help. Children are welcome at our activities and events, like Remembrance Ribbons or Moonlight Walk.

Three simple tips that may help when supporting a child through grief:

Be honest and clear.

Use words like dying and death to help them understand. Phrases like 'pass away' or 'leaving' can make them think the person will come back.

Include them in age-appropriate ways.

Drawing a picture, sharing memories, or choosing flowers for the person who is unwell or who has died can help children express how they feel.

Encourage questions.

Choose a calm, unhurried moment. Be as open as you can. Include the person who is unwell in the conversation if possible.

Visit stmichaelshospice.com/carers to watch our resource videos for carers with guidance on caring for yourself and supporting children.



Join us under the stars for Moonlight Walk

Glowing light displays, live music, vibrant entertainment and a community walking together to celebrate and remember those they love — that's what makes Moonlight Walk such an unforgettable night.

Join us again on **Saturday 26th September** for a night to remember, heading off from the Moonlight Walk Event Village at The Stade at sunset, taking in our accessible 7km route, with entertainment and surprises along the way.

We can't wait to welcome everyone as we light up the night to celebrate loved ones and raise vital funds for the Hospice too. Last year you helped raise over £42,000, and this year we hope to beat that and raise £50,000. By taking part and asking family and friends to sponsor your remembrance walk, you can help us achieve this and make a genuine difference to those who need our care.

Will you be there to remember someone you love by doing something special? Visit stmichaelshospice.com/event-diary to grab your early bird ticket now.



"It was joyous and poignant...great entertainment and beautiful lighting. We also loved the memory wall."

"The route along the seafront was perfect with the sunset across the sea."



"It felt wholesome, it felt beautiful, it felt safe and it felt like a community coming together."



A day in the life of a Wellbeing Assistant

For Andrea no two days are the same. Each person she supports has their own needs, goals and story. As a Wellbeing Assistant, she helps people like Anna (page 5) with their physical, emotional, social and spiritual wellbeing through activities and one to one support as part of the Hospice Wellbeing Programme.



What does a typical day look like for you?

“Every day is different because every person we support is different. We tend to start the day by joining the In-Patient Unit handover to find out if anyone needs our support on the ward. Then the Wellbeing Assistants have a quick meeting to plan out the groups – who is attending, what their needs are, and who is facilitating.

“We offer a wide range of groups, from Tai Chi to breathlessness support, shaped around the needs of the people we work with.

“Tasks for the day might include supporting a carer, speaking to patients on the phone, or spending time with them at the Hospice. We work very closely with our occupational therapists, physiotherapists, social workers, and Spiritual Support Team, as well as

doctors and the inpatient and community nurse-led teams to make sure each person gets the support they need. We’re all part of one big multidisciplinary team.”

What are the best things about working at the Hospice?

“The ability to give people our time, which brings real benefits to their lives. We tend to see people at an earlier stage of their illness, those who can come into the Hospice and take part in activities as part of the Wellbeing Programme.

“We also help people find the support they need locally, it’s really important to help people stay within their community.

“Once we’ve supported them, they may not need us for a while, but they know we’re at the end of a phone.”

Visit stmichaelshospice.com/the-news-hub to read the full interview.

Hospice care isn’t just about the end of life – it’s about making the most of every day.

Visit stmichaelshospice.com/services to learn more about our services and how our multidisciplinary team, including people like Andrea, support the community of Hastings and Rother.

Is this your sign? Jas followed hers – all the way to the Sahara.

A gut feeling sparked an adventure Jas will never forget. In 2019, she trekked in the Sahara Desert for four days with other Hospice supporters to raise money and help fund care across Hastings and Rother. As we launch our 2027 Icelandic Lava Trek, Jas shares her memories of the desert – and why it might just inspire your next challenge.



Why did you sign up?

“I actually signed up because I really believe in signs...it wasn’t something on a bucket list, it was just this immediate feeling I got - like, yes, that’s for me. I loved the idea of pushing my limits and seeing what I was capable of, physically and mentally.

“Supporting the Hospice made the decision even easier. I know how much of a difference it makes to people locally and I’ve been leading the Moonlight Walk warm ups for about 10 years now, so I’ve always felt a close bond with the Hospice.”

What were the most memorable moments?

“The Sahara Desert wasn’t as sandy as I thought it would be! There were lots of stones and the terrain changed a lot, night times were surprisingly cold but the stargazing was awesome. Iceland will be a completely different landscape, with the summer midnight sun being the complete opposite to the Sahara with 24 hours of daylight.

“One of the other trekkers told us there would be a meteor shower at 3am one morning. I don’t know if I woke up on purpose or not, but when I got up in the night, I saw two shooting stars. It was amazing.”

What would you say to anyone thinking about signing up for the Icelandic Lava Trek?

“Just do it. I don’t think there’s going to be another opportunity quite like this. It’s a fantastic chance to challenge yourself and open your mind to the world we live in. Doing the Sahara trek has had a long term effect on me – it’s made me slow down and enjoy life more.”

Head to stmichaelshospice.com/the-news-hub to read Jas’s story in full.

Your adventure starts here - Iceland 2027

Taking place in July 2027, the trek will take you through 58km of dramatic scenery, from waterfalls, black-lava fields, geysers and sweeping fjords. It’s going to be an epic, once in a lifetime challenge.

Visit stmichaelshospice.com/icelandtrek for more details.

Jill's hidden treasures

Volunteers like Jill bring extraordinary knowledge, care and enthusiasm to our shops, Donation Centre and events - skills that help raise vital funds and give pre-loved items the chance to shine again.

Jill has a gift for spotting vintage gems and quirky collectibles among the donations you generously give to us. Her eye for detail and love of bringing items back to life has made her stalls an unmissable feature of Open Gardens for nearly a decade.

Since joining the Hospice in 2015 as part of the eCommerce Team, she's curated and restored hundreds of pieces, carefully choosing items she hopes will spark curiosity and delight.

"I love working with vintage and collectible stock. Bringing donated items back to their very best condition and sending them off to new homes, whilst making lots of money to support the work of the Hospice. I'd happily take most of them home myself!"



One of Jill's favourite finds came during her first Open Gardens season. While sorting donations, she noticed a dull metal tray in a box marked for recycling.

"After a quick polish with a soft cloth a beaten design of a sail boat appeared." She priced it at £3 but couldn't shake the feeling it was something special. "I knew if someone else bought it I'd regret it, so I paid £3 and popped it in my bag." After spotting the word Newlyn embossed in the corner, she donated it back to the eCommerce Team, where it was listed on the Hospice eBay shop.

"We all excitedly watched the last minutes of the auction online; the virtual hammer came down at £124.50!"

Jill is already curating quirky and unusual pieces for 11 Open Gardens events in 2026. Check out stmichaelshospice.com/opengardens for full list of dates and locations where Jill will be selling pre-loved treasures.

No One Dies Alone (NODA)

No one should have to face the end of life on their own. That's why we have NODA volunteers – specially trained volunteers who sit with patients in their final hours, offering comfort, company and calm.

Meet one of our volunteers - Victoria, originally from Poland, who moved from London to St Leonards on Sea in 2023. Life by the coast has brought her a slower pace and a deeper appreciation for meaningful connections. Here she shares why the role has become hugely important to her.

Why did you choose to become a NODA volunteer?

"I was a carer for my grandmother for 15 years and when she passed away in Poland, I couldn't be with her. She was alone in that moment, and it has always stayed with me. No one should be alone at the end of their life, so when I saw the NODA project on the Hospice website, I immediately felt it was something very close to my heart."

What does the role involve?

"After I completed the training, in my first month, I sat with a patient in his final moments, and he passed while I was there.



I didn't know what to expect, but I felt no fear only compassion. Being present at the end of someone's life is an incredible honour. People can feel frightened or alone, so if I can help someone feel even a little bit safer, simply by offering a sense of calm, it feels really valuable."

What would you say to someone considering volunteering?

"Volunteering is a way of sharing the blessings we receive in our own lives. It allows you to give your time and presence in a way that truly matters. You also meet wonderful people with the same compassion and heart, and you become part of St Michael's Hospice which is very special."

Visit stmichaelshospice.com/noda if you'd like to find out more about the NODA project and its volunteers.



Give a little time, make a big difference.

From vintage spotting volunteers like Jill to those helping on the ward or at events, every volunteer makes a difference. Whatever time you can give supports hospice care across Hastings and Rother.

Visit stmichaelshospice.com/volunteer to find your role.



**GOOD GRIEF
HASTINGS**
A FESTIVAL OF
LOVE + LOSS

You're invited to Good Grief Hastings

The festival takes place across Hastings from Friday 22nd - Monday 25th May. Take part in workshops, performances, art and conversations that open up space to explore grief together. Come along, connect with others, and be part of a free creative community event open to all.

Visit stmichaelshospice.com/good-grief-festival-hastings for key information.

Pop me on your fridge. Snip down the cut line to the right.

Dates for your diary

Come and join us at one of our upcoming events.

2026

Open Gardens
May - August

Remembrance Ribbons
1st June - 1st August

Rye and District Country Show
22nd August

Lego Walk
12th September

Moonlight Walk
26th September

Raise Your Voice
9th October

Big Sing
10th October

Lights of Love
29th November - 6th December

Christmas Markets
14th - 15th November

Biz Quiz
29th July and 12th December

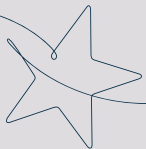
2027

Christmas tree recycling
January 2027

Hospice Run
31st January

Icelandic Lava Trek
7th - 11th July 2027

Visit stmichaelshospice.com/event-diary for more details, or call **01424 456396** to speak to the Fundraising Team.



Shop with us

Can't wait for Jill's Open Gardens pop-up shop? Pick up some pre-loved treasures from our seven shops across Hastings and Rother. Visit stmichaelshospice.com/retail to find your nearest store.

Prefer browsing online?
Scan the QR code to start shopping with us today.



Registered charity no. 288462

