



A year in the life of Heart of Kent Hospice

1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021

In their own words - how we made a difference

Carol Plumb explains how the Hospice's Social Worker helped her and her son Jake with pre and post bereavement counselling.

"When Eddie was ill, it was Lyndsey who got us through each day. She was my light in the dark. She's amazing. When we lost Eddie, she got my son Jake back to me. He now manages each day better than me."

"Because of the pandemic it wasn't always possible to speak to my doctor. But Lyndsey was always there and if I had a problem, I knew I could ring, and she would always make the time to listen and have an answer. The Hospice nurses, all of them were amazing too. Eddie would say: 'if you've got an issue, Lyndsey will have a tissue.' Lyndsey really helped all three of us."

Malcolm, who cares for his wife, shares how the Hospice's Compassionate Neighbours project helps him.

"Bob, my Compassionate Neighbour, doesn't see me as a carer, I'm a normal bloke who lives down the road. He doesn't know all the personal and medical things. We have normal conversations. Back in April, when talking on the phone, we realised that we knew each other from a long time ago. Last week we met for a very welcome, socially distanced chat in the local park."

You're the reason we can care

The pandemic may have changed the way we live, but it has not and will not change our compassionate care.

2020 - 2021 presented a tough and unexpected challenge for us all, but throughout we've seen remarkable support and generosity from our supporters and fundraisers. It's been the greatest challenge we've faced, but because of the continued support we've received we have been able to continue to be there for terminally ill people in our community and their families.

We were quick to remodel our services, moving to virtual support where possible and continuing to provide face-to-face support with the addition of PPE. Despite the uncertainty, all Hospice colleagues showed resilience and determination. Our Inpatient Unit, our Hospice Community and Dementia Teams, and Family Support Services Team continued to support over 900 patients.

We continued and continue to be committed to our vision that everyone living with a terminal illness in our community will achieve the best quality of life. Our core values underpin all our activity; ensuring that our patients and their loved ones receive the very best compassionate and expert care every day, whether in the Hospice, in their own homes or in other care settings such as nursing homes.



While demand increased, we faced additional funding challenges with the cancellation of all traditional fundraising events and the temporary closure of all 14 of our Hospice shops. Despite such unprecedented circumstances, we took the decision not to furlough our fundraising or communications team. Instead, we focussed on looking after our supporters and how we could make it easy for them to support us, when we publicly asked for their help.

As we look to the future, we know that we are an integral part of a community that pulls together, which means we can continue to make a difference at one of the most difficult times in people's lives. As a local charity we are here for our community and because of our community.

Thank you so much,

Rachel Street
Interim Chief Executive
November 2021



Rachel's story

We're grateful to Rachel Tidd for sharing her story of how the Hospice Dementia Team enabled her father, the respected ophthalmic surgeon, Greg Munton, and his family, to have the end of life he would have wanted.

Dad was already living with vascular dementia when he was diagnosed with cancer. Generally, he was well, and we had only been to the Hospice once – to the Dementia café – and received a couple of home visits, but we knew they were always at the end of the phone if we needed them.

We had been managing for a good 18 months, but around March 2020, Dad started to deteriorate mentally and physically and Mum needed additional support.

We got back in touch with the Hospice and started talking to Tracy, the Head of Hospice Dementia Team. Because of lockdown, we arranged to have video calls so that Tracy could 'see' my dad, and also talk to me, my mum and my brother. I wasn't sure how Dad would react to video calls but thankfully he reacted really well. One time I took the iPad over to Dad so Tracy could assess him and he opened his eyes and started talking directly to her. Dad would occasionally be a little abrupt with Tracy, referring to his medical experience, but she took it in her stride. She was always very good with him and treated him with the utmost respect.



Tracy Jackson, Head of Hospice Dementia Team

"Tracy was a godsend. She gave me the courage to ask for the things my parents needed, including a hospital bed when dad could no longer climb the stairs."

On a couple of occasions, Dad was taken into Tunbridge Wells Hospital and Maidstone Hospital where we were only able to visit once. He was so distressed – it was really terrifying for him. He didn't know where he was and at one point he even thought he was in a hotel. When he would become agitated, the hospital would ring us and ask us to talk to him to calm him down. You want to be there for the people you love, but we couldn't because of lockdown.



Again, Tracy helped. We agreed as a family that whenever possible we would keep Dad at home where it was familiar, he was surrounded by family and where he felt safe. So together we created an emergency healthcare plan and shared this with everyone involved in Dad's care.

One time Dad was struggling. He was very withdrawn and had fallen over. My mother called an ambulance and the crew wanted to take him to hospital but I arrived before they could leave and called Tracy. She spoke to the paramedics about my dad's healthcare plan. With this knowledge Dad was treated at home and was able to stay with us.

I feel we were so lucky that we had the support of the Hospice. Even when Dad died, Tracy had prepared us for when he was in the last stages of life and also what we needed to do when he died. Even though I had been a nurse, Tracy didn't assume knowledge and she didn't patronise.

Tracy was at the end of the phone for help, support and advice in Dad's final hours. I was concerned that as his condition deteriorated, we may need additional support. Tracy had said there was a bed at the Hospice if we needed it. Just knowing that was very reassuring.

In the end, I was so glad I was there for Dad and that he had died at home with his family.

Tracy was the first person I called. She repeated the practical things about what we needed to do. She was very calming and told me to go with the flow. I felt because of her support, we were more in control.

The Hospice was always very reassuring and their interventions were always timely and never intrusive. I feel we were so lucky that we had the support of Tracy and the rest of the Hospice Dementia Team. They are the most amazing people.

Thank you

How we continued to do what we do

At Heart of Kent Hospice, we help and support anyone in our community living with a terminal illness. Throughout the challenging period of a global pandemic our focus on delivering outstanding patient-centred care never changed.

As an independent charity, we are proud that throughout the pandemic, with resilience and determination, we continued to provide free care to patients and their families living in Maidstone, Aylesford, Tonbridge and Malling and the surrounding villages.

We ensured our patients and the people closest to them received the specialist compassionate care they needed, so they could live in comfort, with independence and dignity.

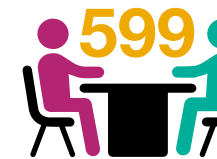
Hospice Community Team

In the community, our nurses changed from a geographical structure to a consolidated team, prioritising patients according to need, providing support through telephone and video conferencing, and visiting patients in their homes when necessary.



21,815

telephone and video consultations were made to support patients.



599 face to face VISITS

Inpatient Unit

Throughout the pandemic we continued to operate at full capacity, with all our ten beds being available. This was made possible by making the Hospice a safe environment through the implementation of new PPE procedures and training.

We introduced a dedicated Family Liaison role to help inpatients and their families to remain in touch during the coronavirus pandemic. The team of five Family Liaisons helped patients to make video calls so they could see their loved ones 'in person'. With very limited visiting, it gave families and friends reassurance and peace of mind that their loved ones were in the best possible place and that they could be 'there' with them at the end of their lives.

We helped **43%** of patients who received care on our Inpatient Unit to return home.



192 Inpatient Unit
ADMISSIONS

Hospice Dementia Team

The way our Hospice Dementia Team operated changed overnight. Unable to meet face-to-face, our support was maintained through telephone and video conferencing. The frequency of contact was increased to provide advice on how to adapt during the pandemic and to give reassurance to patients and their carers that they were not alone.



4,804

telephone and video consultations were made to support dementia patients and their carers.

Hospice Family Services Team

Social distancing measures meant our services moved online, allowing us to stay connected with those that needed our help. We used telephone and video conferencing to continue offering bereavement counselling, as many families were experiencing a heightened sense of grief as a result of isolation and loneliness. We helped our patients to keep active at home by offering Living Well sessions online.



1,138

pre and post bereavement counselling sessions delivered.

Compassionate Neighbours

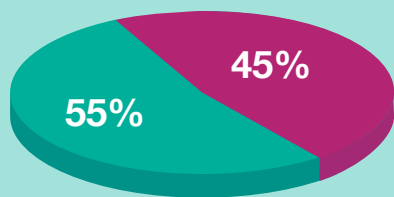
Despite the pandemic, our Compassionate Neighbours project, which tackles social isolation and loneliness for those living with a life-limiting illness or frailty in our community, trained 71 Compassionate Neighbour volunteers, who were matched with 75 community members. All made weekly calls to check in on some of the most isolated people in our community.

Together in 2020 – 2021:

We cared for
1,769
patients and their families.



139
Hospice
colleagues
worked together
to deliver
outstanding care.

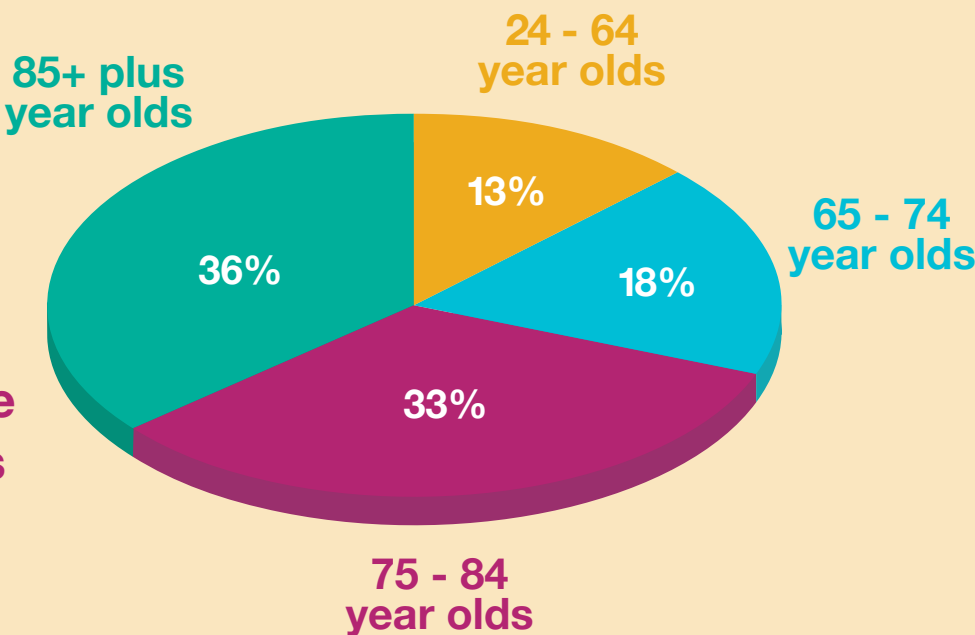


We supported 45% of our patients to live with non-cancer related illnesses and 55% to live with cancer.

We helped **195** patients and their families to access welfare benefits.



We CARED FOR people of all DIFFERENT ages



Our priorities for 2020 – 2021

Our plan focussed on five strategic priorities to extend the reach and impact of the Hospice in our local community:

1. Local care:
Establish a model of Hospice support throughout our communities.

2. Flexible, person-centred care:
Develop our services so they can meet a wide range of patient and family needs.

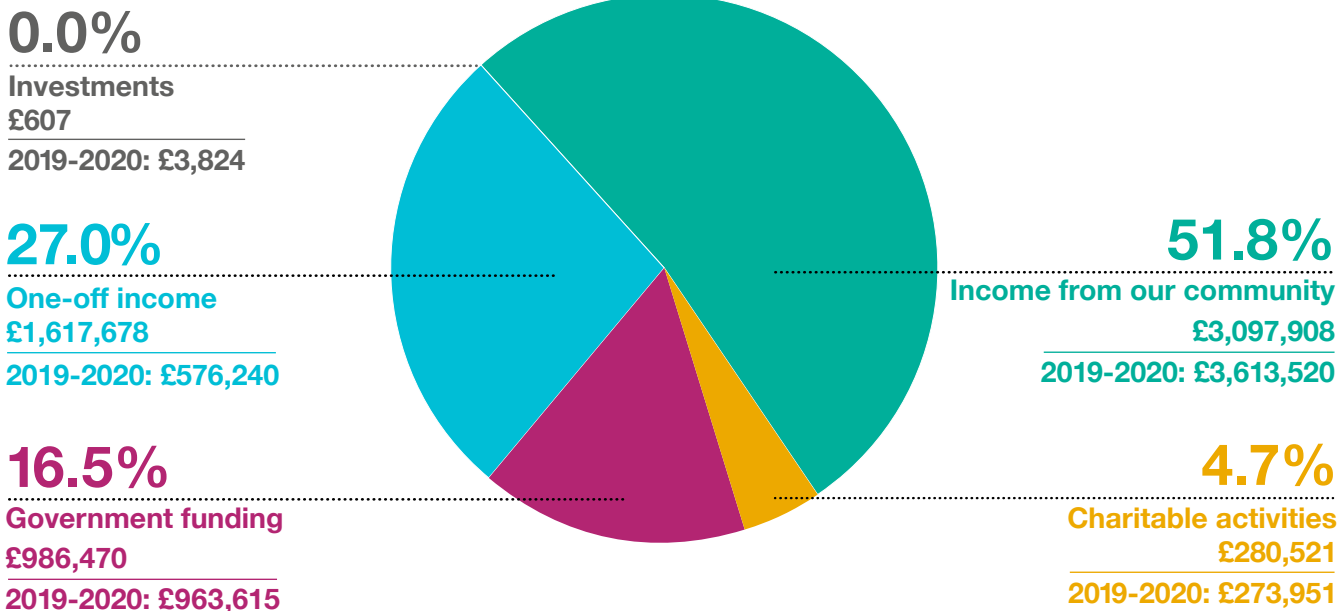
3. Specialist care:
Provide specialised care to every patient and maintain our reputation as a centre of excellence.

4. Skilled, compassionate care:
Be the organisation of choice for employees and volunteers.

5. Care for our cause:
Enable our local community to regard the Hospice as *the* local cause to support.

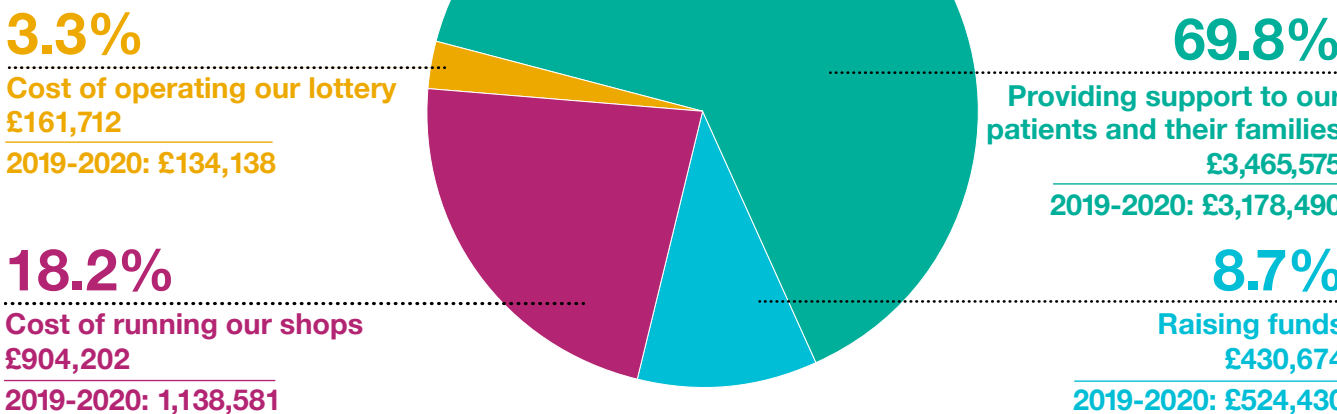
Our finances in 2020 – 2021

Our income and where it came from



One-off income accounted for in 2020-2021 is Covid-19 related and includes the continuation of local government grants to support our closed shops, business interruption insurance (also for our closed shops), money claimed via the Government's furlough scheme and the Covid Capacity grant from NHS England/ Hospice UK. The income represents a temporary boost to the Hospice's income for the year, and like last year, distorts the proportion of fundraising and government income received when comparing year on year figures.

How we spent our money



Ian's story

When Ian's mother, Mary, was referred to Heart of Kent Hospice, he was surprised by the range of support we offered. *"I couldn't believe that there were so many services and so much support available from the Hospice Community Team,"* comments Ian. *"Their support includes community nurses and different teams that help people to stay at home."*

Mary was diagnosed with skin cancer in the summer of 2015. After a series of different treatments, the cancer came back aggressively at the end of 2019. At this point, the consultant referred Mary to Heart of Kent Hospice. *"When you hear the word 'Hospice' it comes as a real shock. But I found out a Hospice was not what I thought it was at all! People think that a Hospice is just somewhere people go to die, but it is much more than that. It's an amazing organisation that none of us really understand until we have involvement with it,"* says Ian.

Ian did not live locally to his mother and found it a very stressful and worrying time. *"Being located a distance from my mum meant I was worrying about her 24/7. The Hospice Community Team were always there to help,"* recalls Ian.

In the early days, Ian relied on the Hospice team for advice and guidance, but as his mum's illness progressed the team became a lifeline.

"The team helped me with practical advice, such as a care plan and referrals to other agencies, but they also provided me with much more. They gave me emotional support; it was so reassuring to know that there was someone at the end of the phone who would listen and help."



As her illness progressed and Mary's condition became more serious, the team put Ian in contact with other agencies who could also help. *"The team were an advocate for mum, they helped us access the right support at the right time. Without them, the situation would have been much more distressing for mum and for me."*

Ian is incredibly grateful to the Hospice Community Team for their support. With their help, Mary remained in her own home until she died.



Ian's son Rob, Mary and Ian

Fundraising in the pandemic

Nothing to lose - everything to play for.

When Covid-19 restrictions were enforced in March 2020, the writing was on the wall for our Hospice. There was a projected £1.3 million shortfall in gross income (-26%) and reserves would only cover three months of running costs. The decision was made not to furlough any members of the fundraising or communications team. Instead, we focussed on what we would need to do to recover to pre-pandemic levels of fundraising.

New ambitious fundraising targets for an Urgent Fundraising Appeal were created by the fundraisers. This was a unique opportunity to be creative, try new things, and respond to the eagerness of our community who wanted to support us.

The results

Here's a snapshot of how we adapted.



150 virtual **Moonlit Walkers** walked it their way and raised **£8,720**.



Our festive celebrations continued with a virtual **Hospice Homemade Christmas**. We hosted our first online craft auction attracting **234 bidders**, who raised **£1,941**.



The hammer came down on the inaugural **Art of Kent Auction** – raising **£20,695**. Over the 51 hours, 738 individual bids were made – attracting international bids from Japan, St Lucia, Canada, Ireland and Germany.



Elmer's Big Heart of Kent Parade was due to launch in June 2020; a decision was taken for the Parade to go into hibernation, which was fully supported by Official Partners, Sponsors, schools and groups. All were committed to making it bigger and better in 2021.



Our **'Sponsor a nurse'** campaign raised a brilliant **£30,573**.

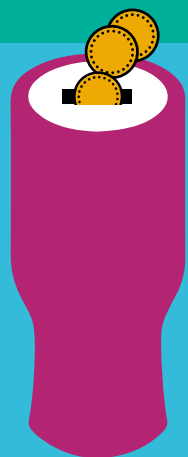
In December we launched a new Gift in Wills campaign **'Your present, our future'**, highlighting the huge difference a gift left in a will can make to local families.



Unable to hold our annual remembrances services in person, we live streamed our **Sunflower** and **Light up a Life Appeals** on our social media channels and website. Family and friends donated **£28,650** in memory of their loved ones.

Our series of **virtual themed quizzes** raised **£3,820**.

Achievements across the year



£682,010
was raised in
response to the
Urgent Fundraising
Appeal in
2020 - 2021.

Our brilliant
community
fundraisers continued
to raise money for
us in the most
creative ways, raising
£96,318



£488,600
was given in
grants from
Charitable
Trusts,
Foundations
and Parish
Councils.



When our shops reopened
their doors in July, the first
day's takings were
100% higher,
compared to a normal
pre-pandemic day.

giftaid it

Where donations were gift-aided,
we were able to increase the
value of donations by an extra
£41,939



In January 2021 we collected and
recycled **310** real Christmas trees.

In July 2020 the Hospice was one of
500 winners
in specialist insurer
Ecclesiastical's Movement for Good awards.
We were voted for by an amazing
253,879 members of the public.

Unity Mittens
stronger together



Our army of **180** Hospice knitters crafted over
2,000 'Unity Mittens' Christmas tree decorations.

We launched a partnership project with Lily
Smith House, who support people affected
by homelessness in Maidstone. The project
supports staff so that they can work with
customers with a terminal illness to enable
them to make informed choices, so they can
live as well as possible throughout their illness
and to the end of their lives.



At the start of the pandemic **Our Hospice
Community and Dementia Teams**
swiftly made seven online support videos
which covered topics such as pain control,
breathlessness advice and end-of-life support.

In December our **People Services
Team** were recognised by the **Kent
Branch of the Chartered Institute
of Personnel and Development**, for
their brilliant and compassionate work
to support the wellbeing of all Hospice
colleagues during the pandemic.



In May 2020, in
response to the
immense pressure on
care homes by the
pandemic, we launched
a free care support
programme via Zoom
for those working in the
sector.



The pandemic impacted on all our lives



It was an unprecedented and
challenging period for everyone. For
us to continue caring and supporting
our patients and their families while
keeping them safe remained our
priority. I have so much admiration
for how quickly we adapted and
responded to ensure we were there
for all our community.

Despite being in a global pandemic
the dedication of our Hospice
colleagues and the generous support
we received from the community
never wavered. The kindness that
pulled us altogether ensured we
could fully focus on our core role of
caring and supporting our patients,
their families and each other.

I would like to say thank you to
everyone who played their part, big
or small, you made a difference. I
am so proud of my Hospice and the
ongoing support of our volunteers
and supporters. I send my profound
gratitude to each and every one of you.

Building on the strength we have shown
throughout the pandemic, I feel we
have so much to look forward to as we
continue to make a difference together.

Marianna Monckton of Brenchley

Marianna, Viscountess Monckton of Brenchley, Patron



Messages of thanks

“You and your staff are so precious and amazing... We experienced that first-hand with mum. You are all being stretched to your absolute limit and although you truly are superhuman even superheroes have limitations. So be kind to yourself, take some time to reflect on all the good, positive things you have achieved which I know are in abundance. Please extend my thoughts and love to your amazing staff.”

“My Nan recently spent some time at Heart of Kent Hospice and whilst staying, with the help of some of your lovely and kind carers she was able to print her hands for my two sons. Both boys have them hanging in their bedrooms. This was a really lovely thing to do and means the world to us. Please do pass on our sincere thanks and kindest wishes to the care staff who helped create these wonderful keepsakes for our children.”



Heart of Kent Hospice, Preston Hall, Aylesford, Kent, ME20 7PU



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