

# Ashgate Hospice News

Autumn 2024

## Discover Life's Final Chapter

An intimate online  
photography  
exhibition

See pages 4–7

"The death of my  
wife Diane has made  
me realise just how  
precious life is."

Graham Matthews

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of someone you love



[www.ashgatehospice.org.uk](http://www.ashgatehospice.org.uk)



# Welcome

A message from our Chief Executive

**As the leaves turn golden and Christmas approaches, I want to connect with you directly, thank you from the bottom of my heart for your incredible support, and share some updates.**

This year has flown by and one of the brightest moments has been our Sparkle Night Walk. Seeing a record-breaking 3,400 people come together and raise an astounding £341,854 was truly inspiring. Next year marks 10 years of Sparkle, and we'd love you to join us in making it our biggest event yet. Please visit our website to sign up and be part of this special celebration.

We're also excited about the improvements we're making to our services. Our Day Services are currently undergoing refurbishment and are set to reopen at the beginning of January. These upgrades will create a more welcoming and supportive space for our patients and the people important to them. This will help us care for more individuals and offer a wider range of support when we reopen.

Despite these positives, we face significant funding challenges, much like hospices across the country. Only 31% of our funding comes from the local NHS,

with the remaining £11 million needing to be raised through the generosity of people like you and our wider community.

We need more support from the government to provide the essential care people deserve. That's why we're backing Hospice UK's campaign to address underfunding. Please consider writing to your MP to support this important cause – read more on page 12.

As we approach Christmas, a time of joy but also reflection, especially for those grieving a loved one, please know your support means the world to us and the people we care for. If you're struggling, our Supportive Care Service is here to help. You can reach them on **01246 568 801** or email [supportivecareservice@ashgatehospice.org.uk](mailto:supportivecareservice@ashgatehospice.org.uk). If things are very challenging, please speak with your GP or the Samaritans on **116 123**.

Thank you for being such an important part of Ashgate. Together, we can make a huge difference.

**Barbara-Anne Walker,**  
Chief Executive

## Meet our new Chair of the Board of Trustees



**We're thrilled to introduce Chris Hallam as the new Chair of our Board of Trustees at Ashgate Hospice.**

Chris brings a wealth of experience as a Behavioural Psychologist and a leader in both the banking sector and consultancy. His connection to hospice care runs deep, inspired by the care his school friend received at a hospice.

"My role at Ashgate is a wonderful chance to give back to the community that has been a significant part of my life," he said.

"The superb leadership team is developing ambitious plans to ensure we continue to grow and spread the Ashgate magic far and wide.

"Our priorities will focus on expanding our reach, improving our services, and innovating how we deliver care to a broader community.

"One of the biggest challenges we face is the lack of funding for end of life care. We must raise our voice nationally to address this issue."

Despite these challenges, Chris is optimistic about the future: "I am confident in our ability to continue providing exceptional care."

Chief Executive of Ashgate Hospice, Barbara-Anne Walker, added: "I am delighted to welcome Chris as our new Chair at Ashgate.

"Hospices across the country are facing a challenging future but despite this, we are looking to Ashgate's next chapter with energy and hope.

"The range of professional experience Chris brings, his passion for our work, and his purposeful leadership is invaluable to the hospice."

For more information on our Trustees, please visit our website [www.ashgatehospice.org.uk](http://www.ashgatehospice.org.uk)



# Life's Final Chapter.

An intimate online photography exhibition

**Talking about death and dying can be tough and even a bit uncomfortable. It's a topic many of us prefer to avoid, but it's so important to face it openly and honestly.**

With Life's Final Chapter, we're inviting you into a special collection of photographs that tell real stories about death and dying. These images, captured by the talented Billy Bye, offer a look at the experiences of our patients, as well as the incredible staff and volunteers who support them.

The photos are accompanied by the personal stories of those featured, providing a deeper understanding of the joys and challenges that come with life's final chapter. Through their generous participation, our patients, families, and team members have allowed us to share a rare glimpse into what it means to live fully, even as life draws to a close.

We've included some of the portraits and stories on the following pages. As you view these images, we hope you'll be inspired to reflect on the significance of love, support, and open conversations about death and dying.



**Amy Marsh, 25, is a hospice nurse who cares for people in their final days.**



"My experiences of death as a hospice nurse have helped me to appreciate life more than ever. I now feel incredibly lucky to have the things that I have. Life is precious and should be celebrated as much as possible."

**Monika Zywicka, 51, is a volunteer counsellor at Ashgate.**



“Death has taught me not to take life for granted. Every day is a gift, spend that time with the people in your life who matter most to you.”

**Alan Cohen died in March aged 81 after receiving end of life care at Ashgate Hospice.**



“They say you’re born, you live and you die – that’s about all there is to it. You can drive yourself crackers if you think too much about the meaning of life.”

For a limited time, you can see the exhibition in person at Ashgate Hospice, Ashgate Rd, Ashgate, Old Brampton, Chesterfield S42 7JD, from 7 October to 30 November. Don't miss this chance to explore the powerful stories behind the portraits.

The pop-up gallery will be in the corridor next to the café, so we encourage you to stop by, explore the artwork, and enjoy some delicious treats from our café.

**Café opening times are:**

Monday to Friday: 8.30am–3pm

Breakfast: 8.30am–10.30am

Lunch: 12pm–2pm

**View the online gallery:**

<https://ashgatehospice.org.uk/final-chapter>



# We're refreshing our Day Services!



**We're thrilled to share that we are refurbishing our Day Services. This is an exciting step towards enhancing the support we offer to our patients at earlier stages of their journey.**

Our Day Services team is dedicated to providing advice, organising activities, and offering a range of supportive services. By updating our space, we aim to support more people with the help and care they need right from the start.

Here's what the refurbishment will mean for patients and those important to them:

### More activities at once

The new layout will allow us to run group activities, drop-in sessions, and other services simultaneously, making it easier for everyone to join in and benefit.

### Exciting new sessions

With a refreshed space, we're looking forward to offering new sessions such as Tai Chi, yoga, and other therapies that promote overall wellbeing.

### Extended opening hours

We'll be open for two more days each week, which means we can support more people through Day Services, providing even more care and support.

### Improved environment and function

The current setup isn't quite up to modern standards, so we're making it more versatile and functional. This includes a new kitchen and serving counter for added comfort and convenience.

### A supportive space

We're adding a new quiet room for private conversations and moments of calm. This space will be perfect for sensitive discussions and personal reflection.

### Better accessibility

We want everyone to have access to our services, so we're adding wheelchair accessible toilets with a hoist and changing table to ensure everyone's needs are met.

Work on Day Services is set to be completed by January. In the meantime, you can learn more about the project on our website.

Scan me





## Soulmates together until the end

**Lynne and Chris Johnson, a devoted couple of 52 years, spent their final moments side by side in our Inpatient Unit.**

They received end of life care together in the same room on our Inpatient Unit, holding hands until Lynne died on 13 February aged 69. She had been diagnosed with a brain tumour less than two months before.

Chris died on 21 February aged 76 after being told he had bowel and secondary liver cancer.

Their daughter, Julie Whittaker, said Ashgate Hospice granted their final wish of being together.

"Dad was there for mum's last breath," she said. "He was holding her hand, and he took so much comfort in that."

"The ultimate goal was ensuring they were together until the end, and it wouldn't have been possible without Ashgate."

The couple met when Chris was a local milkman, and his round took him to Lynne's home in Clay Cross.

A romance blossomed and they married on 3 June 1972. They welcomed their son Garry in 1973, followed by Julie a year later, and spent 47 years in the same house.

Julie said: "They did everything together. Other than when they were at work, they were never apart; they were proper soulmates.

"Even to this day, it doesn't feel real. It's not been long since they passed away – how have they just gone?"

"It was such a whirlwind, everything happened so quickly. I'm so grateful Ashgate was able to keep them together."

Before being admitted to Ashgate, the couple received palliative care from our Virtual Ward team at home.

"The care was just phenomenal," Julie said. "Not just for mum and dad but for all of us.

"If they both couldn't have been cared for at the hospice it would have been heartbreaking for us choosing who to be with.

"Having them together gave our family so much more time with them both.

"The hospice is such an amazing place. They think of everything and will go above and beyond to help patients, families and visitors.

"Dad was able to enjoy a glass of wine, and his brother Alwyn came every day to visit with my mum and dad's dog, Tess. Alwyn and Tess were there when Dad died which was special for him."

Julie hopes more people will receive the compassionate care her parents did.

She said: "Everyone deserves the end of life care my parents had. Being in a hospice instead of a hospital eases the strain on the NHS. The staff's love and compassion were incredible, and I wish more families could experience the care we did."

# Join our fight for fairer funding

 **We are not an NHS hospice.**  
That means we must raise over **£11 million** each year to continue to provide our crucial palliative and end of life care.

## Can you spare just 30 seconds to make a big difference?

As costs rise and funding falls short, hospices like ours are under significant financial pressure.

Despite the incredible support from our North Derbyshire community, we need more help to meet the growing demand for our care.

## Here's where you come in:

### Join our campaign!

Join Hospice UK's **Write to Your MP** campaign to support Ashgate Hospice with just a few simple steps:

- 1 Provide your name and email.**
- 2 Enter your home address to find your local MP.**
- 3 Send them a letter in seconds with the template provided.**

With a new Government and MPs in place, now's the time to show them how much hospice care matters.

Help send the message that something must change to sustain hospice care for people at the most vulnerable time in their lives.

Speak up today by scanning the QR code and joining the campaign.



# Builder backs campaign after wife's incredible care



**Tom Moss, a builder from Chesterfield, is standing up for fairer hospice funding following the exceptional care his wife, Kat Moss, received at our hospice.**

Kat, a hairdresser who was diagnosed with bowel cancer 20 months before her death in April 2023, was known for her joy and infectious laughter. Tom describes her as a "truly amazing person" who "loved life and everyone around her."

Despite the tough news of her diagnosis, Kat remained brave and upbeat, finding joy in moments spent with loved ones and pursuing her passions, from seaside trips to concerts.

Tom recalls: "From the minute Kate arrived the staff were amazing, making sure she was at ease and as comfortable as possible. She needed a lot of care, but nothing was ever too much."

"One of the most important things for Kat was to spend lots of time with our family and friends," Tom said.

"To be able to spend so much time with Kat meant everything to me and our family. We'll always be grateful for everything they did for her, and for us."

In honour of Kat's memory, Tom's family has raised an impressive £37,000 for Ashgate Hospice.

Tom said: "It's so important to me, Kat's family and friends that hospices keep on running."

"We do what we can to raise funds for Ashgate because it's so important that the level of love and care my wife received is available for other families."

**"Please join and add your name to the campaign to help hospices across the country get the funding they need and deserve."**

## Why language matters when talking about death and dying



A blog by Shelagh Freeman, End of Life Care Facilitator.

**In our country, we often hear euphemisms like “pass away” or “go to a better place” instead of just saying “die.”**

While these phrases can soften tough conversations, they can also act as a shield, letting us dodge the awkwardness of discussing death and dying.

Talking about these topics can stir up all sorts of emotions. It’s not just us; even health professionals often use gentle phrases like “no further treatment” or “very poorly.” While well-meaning, these can lead to misunderstandings—like thinking, “Oh, I must be doing well!” or “Can I get better?”

At Ashgate, we know that using clear language about death is important. If you feel uneasy about these conversations, that’s totally normal. Here are a few tips to help you get started:

- **Acknowledge your feelings:** recognising your apprehension about discussing death is the first step to overcoming your discomfort.

- **Educate yourself:** understanding the process of death and the cultural and religious significance of it can put your mind at ease.
- **Practice compassion:** approach conversations with empathy and compassion by practicing active listening, validating others and being nonjudgmental.
- **Start small:** start conversations about death in safe and supportive environments and gradually discuss the topic more openly over time.
- **Use direct language:** avoid vague terms and use clear language to encourage open communication.
- **Reflect on your beliefs:** exploring your beliefs can help you gain confidence discussing death.
- **Celebrate life:** embracing a positive outlook can reduce feelings of fear.



We hope this blog has been helpful. Scan the QR code to read the full article.

## Trustee, Steven, reflects on inclusivity at Ashgate Hospice



**Steven Brennan-Collis joined Ashgate Hospice as a Trustee in December last year.**

**He wanted to give back following the death of his father, who received our care in 1994.**

**As a member of the LGBTQ+ community and with a career spanning 20 years as a Registered Nurse, Steven understands some of the barriers LGBTQ+ people face when accessing healthcare across the UK.**

“Since joining Ashgate Hospice as a trustee, I have had the privilege of being part of an organisation that truly values inclusivity and diversity. I’ve been impressed by the organisation’s dedication to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI), and from the moment I started it was clear that inclusivity was a core part of the business, not just lip service.

“Research shows that members of the LGBTQ+ community have a poorer experience of healthcare than the general population. This is often due to insufficient knowledge among healthcare professionals, a lack of inclusive support groups, discrimination within services, and low confidence

in discussing sexual orientation and gender identity.

“Some of the solutions to improving this include enhanced training for healthcare staff around equality, inclusion and diversity, and appropriate recording and monitoring of sexual orientation and gender identity. I hope the work Ashgate Hospice is currently doing in this area will assure the local community that this is a welcoming and safe place that strives to be inclusive to all.”



If you have any feedback about how Ashgate Hospice can be more inclusive, email us at [info@ashgatehospice.org.uk](mailto:info@ashgatehospice.org.uk)

## Celebrating friendship at Ashgate Hospice



**At Ashgate, we recently celebrated International Day of Friendship, and we couldn't think of a better example of true friendship than our dedicated volunteers, June Spreckley and Lynne North.**

The pair met nearly two years ago volunteering as Meals Assistants on the Inpatient Unit, and a connection immediately sparked.

Lynne said: "We just clicked, and I wouldn't want to work without June by my side."

"She is one of the kindest people I have met, and she has the most meticulous attention to detail."

As Meals Assistants, June and Lynne take meals and refreshments to patients' bedrooms.

June said: "We will always enter a patient's room together. This means we can support each other and make sure we've heard and interpreted a patient's requests correctly."

"Volunteering with Lynne has taught me that you can be two people with very different personalities, but sharing a common goal can bring you great joy and amazing friendship."

Their friendship goes beyond the hospice too. When June had a live TV interview in Leeds, Lynne was right there with her.

"She helped me prepare my words and kept me calm. It was so kind of her to give up her day, and I will never forget it," said June.

The pair said that it's thanks to Ashgate Hospice's welcoming environment that their relationship has blossomed.

Lynne said: "I'm very grateful that Ashgate has given me the opportunity to make friends not only with June, but with other staff, who are so lovely and friendly. I would urge anyone to take on a volunteering role at Ashgate Hospice."

Scan me



Visit [www.ashgatehospice.org.uk/volunteering](http://www.ashgatehospice.org.uk/volunteering) if you're interested in getting involved.

## 'My family has never seen me so happy!'



**"Since I started volunteering at Ashgate Hospice my family say they've never seen me so happy!"**

Those are the words of 74-year-old Gloria Cantrell, a Volunteer Retail Assistant at our shop in Matlock.

Regular shopper, Gloria, enquired about volunteering at her local shop in 2023 and has never looked back! Her sister-in-law, Elaine Thirkle, was cared for on the Inpatient Unit in Old Brampton and she wanted to give something back.

Gloria said: "It all started about seven years ago. I lost my husband Neville firstly, then my sister-in-law was diagnosed with lung cancer."

"Elaine used to go to Ashgate's day centre and then for the last weeks of her life was admitted to the Inpatient Unit. The care was brilliant – you couldn't fault it, and Elaine would have said the same. It was after she died

that I decided I wanted to do something good in return. I'm so glad I did!"

From serving customers to sorting through clothes, toys and jigsaws, Gloria takes on a range of tasks and regularly enjoys dressing up when fancy dress costumes get donated.

She said: "My husband died quite suddenly and after that I said life is too short, you've just got to go and do things, and make the most of it!"

"Signing up as a volunteer is the best thing I've ever done. There is such a sense of satisfaction that you're doing something positive and helping people."



Scan me



Find out more about volunteering go to [www.ashgatehospice.org.uk/volunteering](http://www.ashgatehospice.org.uk/volunteering)

# Dedicate a star in memory of someone important to you

Join our special remembrance campaign, **Light Up a Life**, and dedicate a star in our virtual night sky to honour someone dear to you. Your star will shine brightly among hundreds of others, creating a beautiful tribute to the people most important to us.

By dedicating a star, you'll also be helping us provide comfort and support to those in need. Everyone is welcome, whether you've been supported by Ashgate Hospice or not.

After you've made your dedication, you'll receive an invitation to our lantern procession and ceremony on Sunday 1 December. We hope you join us as we come together for an evening of remembrance and music in our beautifully lit gardens, as we celebrate the lives of those we care for.

Dedicate your star at [www.ashgatehospice.org.uk/light-up-a-life](http://www.ashgatehospice.org.uk/light-up-a-life) or by scanning the QR code.



Photo: Nick Rhodes



Supported by



## Sparkle Night Walk shatters fundraising record



We're thrilled to share that our biggest fundraising event of the year, Sparkle Night Walk, raised **£341,854!**

Over 3,400 of you took to the streets of Chesterfield in June, lighting up the night in your flashing bunny ears and pink outfits.

Leanne Nightingale was one of the many who joined us, walking with 21 family members to raise £1,600 in memory of her grandma, Kate Holmes. Thanks to our community nurses, Kate was able to spend her final days at home after being diagnosed with pancreatic cancer.

"The night was just beautiful," Leanne said.

"It was almost a memorial on the night; we had our t-shirts with our team's name 'Kate's Legacy' on the back.

"Nana was head of the family, and we saw her every day. To do something like the Sparkle Night Walk knowing it was for her, she would have loved it and been very proud.

"The comradery, support and atmosphere were just incredible, we all absolutely loved it and were so proud to raise money for such a worthy cause.

"There were times certainly towards the end of Nana's life where everything got a bit overwhelming and you feel lost. Having the hospice there for support was like a guiding light."

We're already making plans for Sparkle Night Walk 2025, sponsored by Magpie Beauty, where we'll be celebrating the event's 10th anniversary.

Scan the QR code to book online now for a bargain price of **£12** or go to [www.ashgatehospice.org.uk/sparkle-night-walk](http://www.ashgatehospice.org.uk/sparkle-night-walk)

Pictured: Leanne and her family



Photo: Ellie Rhodes



Sponsored by



## A huge thank you to our generous community

To get involved and help raise money in your community, please email: [communityfr@ashgatehospice.org.uk](mailto:communityfr@ashgatehospice.org.uk) or call 01246 567 250

### New Whittington Bottom Club

In memory of Margaret Umney, who was cared for at home by Ashgate Hospice. Dan Umney, Margaret's husband, was part of the committee which has undertaken lots of different events and raised a fantastic total of £26,296.



### Mark Smith and Spire Rangers Tigers

Mark Smith and Spire Rangers Tigers held their Kinder Scout challenge and raised £1,476.19.



### Dore & Totley Golf Club

The Dore and Totley Golf Charity Day raised £7,619 in memory of Holly Sumner.



### Spar

Thank you to Spar in Wingerworth for their donation of Easter goodies for hampers which raised £3,500.



### Twinkle Toes Dance School

Twinkle Toes Dance School holds a show and raffle every year. In July 2024 they raised £865.50. Since 2010 they have raised an incredible £5,783.69.



### Dan Soar

Dan Soar, the Tattooed Knitter who knits with his arms, raised £1,423, by knitting 19 blankets in 24 hours.



### Blanc and Peak Edge Hotel

Thank you to Blanc and Peak Edge Hotel for their support with Ascot Day. A total of £2,738 was raised.



### Brampton Rovers U7s

Thank you to Brampton Rovers U7s who raised £1,372.



And thank you to Brian Woodall, who has been supplying our

Bakewell shop with popular Blue John items for the past three years.



## Widow organises birthday fundraiser in tribute to late husband

**When Liz Johnson turned 60, she decided to do something truly special and asked for donations to Ashgate instead of gifts.**

Thanks to Liz and the generosity of her friends and family, she raised an amazing £560.

Ashgate is close to Liz's heart after her beloved husband of 36 years, Mark Johnson, was cared for on our Inpatient Unit.

Liz said: "The care Mark received was unbelievable. The hospice did everything for him. We've done what we can to support Ashgate ever since because they were there for him and for us."

"My husband was lovely and very intelligent. He was quieter than me, but opposites obviously attract!"

Sadly, just months after her husband died aged 58 in 2020, Liz found out she had breast cancer for the second time.

Before Liz started her own cancer treatment in October last year, she also volunteered at our Bolsover charity shop.

"I managed to volunteer at Bolsover for about 18 months, but the cancer spread, and I just couldn't do it anymore," Liz said.

"It was lovely to see the team at my birthday party. They all came along and donated. "Everyone was so generous and we were delighted with how much we raised.

"I'd encourage other people thinking of having a birthday fundraiser for Ashgate to go for it! I much prefer giving than taking from people, so it made sense for me!"

Thanks to supporters like Liz, an incredible £27,328 has been raised for Ashgate in the 12 months leading up to April 2024.



If Liz's story has inspired you, find out how you can do the same here: [www.ashgatehospice.org.uk/donations-in-lieu-of-gifts](http://www.ashgatehospice.org.uk/donations-in-lieu-of-gifts)

## Ashgate Hospice Wordsearch

Dive into some brain-teasing fun with our autumn newsletter wordsearch. Can you find our values hidden among the letters below?

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R S V U C
N Q H I U D Z
C C T K L J N Z M G
F Q O L K E W X K V X X
M W V U Z Q A U E P K I O
R O T E A M W O R I K F A E E M F E Y G H E V S H X A U A C
E Z J B D J Z A P I N P F A D S B F I R P N X Y K V T M T U
S E M Q F P E B C F J C M Q N K K A M H N R P M T N A W L A
T Q G B M F N F I N G Q L E L Z E H P L V E S C M Q M P O D
C I U W B Z O N Y V D U Z U V P A M C R N T P Y C W P F H F
N S P V V U F U J D T C E P S E R G G J Z I H O J D J Y P J
D R J Z P V M F E B J H N N J I I B H R V N C N W M L E P O
Q X S N O Q D F D R C M A K O M V S Q F I H C O O D N F Z Q
L A K Z B Q N C J V G Y T V I L E X E E J Q W V A O Q R
F K B S Y E A P I Z L E Z E R Q S D L H B D G S Z F I Q
Z A R T L L C Q S B U R G C M O N N Y R C S K R G L
R Q L M A J X H Z Y H D U R V G O K S W B R V Y
N A D H O L F E Z Q K Y H W M K D D C A F G
N O F J L M M F B M M D M K A M K Y O U
R N O I S S A P M O C B Z Y H V Y U
O M G E U I F T V U W H U W Y T
H A F J T A T S D Y T S R W
H T E D E D T T Z Q E U
G C B Z Z C Y U S W
B A X A Z O U A
I K V I K Q
O G E U
E G
    
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**COMPASSION  
INCLUSIVE**

**TEAMWORK  
RESPECT**

**OPEN**

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[www.ashgatehospice.org.uk/ashgate-hospice-news](http://www.ashgatehospice.org.uk/ashgate-hospice-news)



## Essential contacts

- Main reception: 01246 568801
- Fundraising team: 01246 567250
- Patient enquiries: [clinicalenquiries@ashgatehospice.org.uk](mailto:clinicalenquiries@ashgatehospice.org.uk)
- Other enquiries: [info@ashgatehospice.org.uk](mailto:info@ashgatehospice.org.uk)
- Magazine editorial: [marcomms@ashgatehospice.org.uk](mailto:marcomms@ashgatehospice.org.uk)

Ashgate Hospice  
Ashgate Road  
Old Brampton  
Chesterfield  
Derbyshire S42 7JD

[www.ashgatehospice.org.uk](http://www.ashgatehospice.org.uk)

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One in six of our patients is cared for thanks to gifts in wills. When the time is right for you, please consider leaving a gift to Ashgate Hospice in your will.

 **Compassionate care for everyone**

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