

Ashgate Hospice News

Spring 2025



A new chapter of care as Day Services reopens!

Welcoming patients back to our newly refurbished space (page 4)

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www.ashgatehospice.org.uk



Welcome

A message from our Chief Executive

You might have heard the news already, but I can't tell you how proud I am to share it with you: Ashgate Hospice has been rated Outstanding by the Care Quality Commission!

This is a huge achievement, and it's thanks to our community and to people like you. Whether you donate, volunteer, fundraise, or simply champion our work, you are part of what makes Ashgate so special.

When the inspectors visited the hospice, they looked at every part of what we do – how we care for people, how we support them, and how we make every moment matter. After their visit, we sent them more than 600 pieces of evidence to show just how much care and dedication goes into making Ashgate the place it is. And now, they've confirmed what we've always known—our care is truly **Outstanding**.

But while we're celebrating this achievement, we can't escape the funding challenges we face. Despite this exceptional recognition, **only 31% of our funding comes from the NHS**, leaving an £11 million shortfall that we have to bridge through fundraising and donations.

That's why we'll continue fighting for fair and sustainable NHS funding. Without better financial support, there's a real risk that we won't be able to serve everyone who needs our care in the future. We remain committed to delivering the highest quality end of life care and will keep campaigning to protect and sustain our services.

In this issue, you'll hear more about the people and projects that make Ashgate special, from our **Inpatient Unit volunteers** to our **Occupational Therapy team**. If you'd like to get involved, there are plenty of ways to do so – from joining our **Sparkle Night Walk**, celebrating its tenth year, to **dedicating a dragonfly in memory of someone special**. And if you love a bargain, don't miss out on our £5 mystery bags and clearance shop offers!

However you support us – by donating, fundraising, volunteering, or simply sharing our story – you are part of this achievement.

From every one of us at Ashgate, thank you.

Barbara-Anne Walker,
Chief Executive



We did it!

We're officially rated Outstanding by the Care Quality Commission (CQC)!

And, not only that, we scored **100%** in four out of five categories.

The CQC is the independent body that inspects and monitors health and social care services across England. Their job is to make sure care is safe, effective, caring, responsive, and well-led. They carry out detailed inspections to check we're meeting high standards, and now they've recognised the exceptional care we provide here at Ashgate.

This achievement belongs to Ashgate staff, volunteers and wonderful supporters like you.

Here's what they said about us:

Safe

Our patients feel secure and well-supported, knowing that we have the right processes in place to keep them safe.

Effective

We provide expert, evidence-based care, making sure every person's needs are met.

Caring

Our patients and those important to them told the CQC they feel truly supported and cared for.

Responsive

When someone needs us, we're there – day and night.

Well-led

We have effective leadership, an inclusive culture, and a team that works together for the best possible care.

Read the full report at www.ashgatehospice.org.uk/CQC



We've welcomed patients back to our newly refurbished Day Services

We're excited to share that our Day Services have had a makeover, and we've been able to welcome patients back to a refreshed space!

The changes we've made allow us to offer even more support, right from the moment of diagnosis, helping us be there for patients when they need us most.

So, what does this mean for our patients?

- **More activities at once**
Thanks to the new layout, we've been running more group activities, drop-in sessions and services simultaneously, so that more people can benefit.
- **Offer new activities**
Thanks to our refreshed new space, patients can now enjoy Tai Chi, yoga and other wellbeing activities.
- **A quiet space to reflect and relax**
We've added a new quiet room, which is perfect for private conversations or a peaceful moment of reflection.

- **A more modern, accessible experience**
Our new kitchen and serving counter make everything more comfortable, and we've also made sure there are wheelchair-accessible toilets, complete with a hoist and changing table.
- **Open for longer**
Thanks to our new facilities, we can now open Day Services up for a further two days a week and give more people the care and support they need.

A total of 34 businesses, trusts, and individuals have come together to make this refurbishment possible, saving the hospice over £320,000 through their incredible generosity. Thanks to their support, we can now reach more people in our community with the care they need, when they need it most.

Scan me →



Find out more at www.ashgatehospice.org.uk/help-and-support/day-services



Photos: Ellie Rhodes - <https://www.ekrpictures.com>

Making our Day Services and reception more inclusive

When we set out to refurbish our Day Services, reception area, and clinic rooms, we knew we wanted to create a space that felt welcoming and accessible for everyone – patients, staff, volunteers, and visitors alike.

To help us get it right, we worked with local accessibility consultants, Access and Inclusion. They reviewed our plans and shared invaluable advice on making the space easier to navigate for people with physical and learning disabilities, dementia, and those who are neurodivergent.

Thanks to their insights and the hard work of everyone involved, we're thrilled to share some of the new features:

- **A fully accessible toilet** – Spacious and designed for ease and dignity.
- **A quiet room** – A calm space with neutral walls and soft lighting to support neurodivergent people and those with dementia.
- **Easy access seating** – A mix of chairs and tables to make sitting and standing more comfortable.

- **An accessible complementary therapy room** – A peaceful, private space for treatments like massage and aromatherapy.

Many of these improvements have been made possible thanks to funding from trusts and grants, as well as generous support from businesses who have donated materials, time, and expertise.

We're committed to making Ashgate a place where everyone feels comfortable and included, and we're seeing first-hand the difference these changes make.



Leave a lasting legacy – support Ashgate through your will



By leaving a gift to us, you're helping ensure that we can continue providing compassionate care to those who need it most, both now and in the future. It won't cost you anything today, but it will make a huge impact later.

Write your will for free

Thanks to the generosity of local solicitors, we're offering you the chance to write or update your will for free, in exchange for a voluntary £75 donation to Ashgate. Appointments are limited, so please book early!

Participating solicitors and dates:

- **Best Solicitors:**
2 June – 13 June
- **Graysons Solicitors:**
1 September – 30 September
- **Elliot Mather & Banner Jones Solicitors:**
Dates to be confirmed

If you've already decided to leave a gift, we'd love to hear from you. Please contact Liam Bittles at liam.bittles@ashgatehospice.org.uk

Your gift will help hospice care live on—for all, for now, forever.



Helping people live well, for as long as possible

By Sarah Nichol, Specialist Palliative Care Occupational Therapist

At Ashgate, we believe everyone should have the chance to live as fully and comfortably as possible, no matter their diagnosis. That's where our Occupational Therapy team comes in.

What is occupational therapy in palliative care?

It's about making everyday tasks easier, managing symptoms, and helping people continue doing what matters to them. This might mean adapting how they complete a task, providing equipment to promote independence and ease discomfort, or supporting people to care for someone at home.

Sarah Nichol, our Specialist Palliative Care Occupational Therapist, recalls a young mum who was discharged home. "We helped her family use a hoist safely and found the right seating so she could sit up for meals instead of staying in bed. These small changes made a huge difference."

Supporting comfort, independence, and dignity

The team helps with fatigue, breathlessness, pain, and falls prevention. They provide equipment like hospital beds,

wheelchairs, and bathing aids, helping people stay at home for as long as they wish.

But it's not just about physical needs – occupational therapy also supports emotional wellbeing, helping people stay engaged in the things they love. "We look at the whole person – their wishes, their priorities – and tailor our support to them," Sarah says.

How to access support

Patients can be referred by a healthcare professional or through our website.

Sarah, who has been part of Ashgate for 23 years, says: "It's a privilege to support people at such an important time in their lives. Every day, we make a real difference."



Sarah Nichol (right) and fellow Occupational Therapist, Joanne Hunter (left)

'Ashgate Hospice's Occupational Therapy team helped make my sister's wish of dying at home possible'



Yvonne and Margaret

Margaret Umney, a mother-of-three from New Whittington, was diagnosed with breast cancer days after she turned 40.

Before she died in 2023, Margaret had one wish: to be cared for at home. That's where Ashgate's Occupational Therapy team stepped in, providing essential equipment – including a hospital bed, hoist and rotunda – to make things easier.

Occupational Therapist, Sarah Nichol, was a real help throughout, said Margaret's sister, Yvonne Heaton.

"Ashgate ended up being a lifeline for us," Yvonne said. "The Occupational Therapy team sorted out a hoist to get her in and out of bed as well as other equipment.

"They basically helped arrange all the other services and supported us so we could care for Margaret.

"Before she got ill, she was a very bubbly, outgoing person; sadly, the illness took it out of her.

"But thanks to the team, Margaret was able to get out of bed and that gave us a little piece of the Margaret we knew back. That was just so lovely to see."

As her illness worsened, the hospice's teams worked together to provide practical support and emotional care, and other therapies to ease Margaret's discomfort.

Yvonne said: "They knew how to communicate with Margaret in a way that didn't overwhelm her.

"There were small things, like massages, which gave Margaret a boost – they helped her feel like herself again.

"We couldn't have cared for Margaret the way we did without Ashgate. The love and support they gave us were beyond words."



Find out more about our Occupational Therapy team on our website or by calling 01246 565 026.



Finding strength and calm: Tai Chi at Ashgate Hospice

At Ashgate, we're committed to supporting the physical and emotional wellbeing of our patients. That's why we're so excited to offer Tai Chi, a gentle yet powerful form of exercise, as part of our care.

What is Tai Chi?

Tai Chi is an ancient Chinese martial art that combines slow and controlled movements with deep breathing and mindfulness. It focuses on posture, balance, and fluid motion, and is an accessible way to exercise for people with different levels of mobility.

We teach a seated and standing version of the Yang 8 form, which is a short, structured sequence of movements for the whole body.

How Tai Chi helps patients

Tai Chi can improve strength and stamina, helping patients with:

- **Balance and coordination:** Helping with stability in everyday activities like getting dressed and moving around the house.
- **Muscle strength and joint mobility:** Increasing confidence in walking and reducing stiffness.
- **Breathing and posture:** Particularly beneficial for patients with chest conditions, improving lung function and digestion.
- **Relaxation:** Reduced stress and anxiety and improved sleep.
- **Social connection:** Group learning in a fun and supportive environment.

Day Services patient, Michael Siddall, has been enjoying Tai Chi.

He said: "Before the first class I felt a bit apprehensive, but the group gelled well together.

"We all support each other, and I couldn't wish for better teachers than Karen and Kirstie.

"Tai Chi has really helped me with my balance, and I find it relaxing.

"It's inspired me to explore other approaches to wellbeing."

Why we introduced Tai Chi at Ashgate

Ashgate Physiotherapist, Karen Minshull, has been leading the Tai Chi classes and providing video resources for patients to access at home.

She said: "Many of our patients were previously active and found it frustrating to lose access to their usual exercise routines. We wanted to provide an alternative that was gentle yet engaging.

"Tai Chi has become an essential part of our physiotherapy programme. It's a way for patients to regain confidence and stay as independent as possible for as long as possible. And, perhaps most importantly, it's something they genuinely enjoy.

"For those in palliative care, the ability to learn, grow, and connect with others can make all the difference."



The volunteers making a difference when it matters most



At Ashgate's Inpatient Unit, we're lucky to have a volunteer team that's nothing short of amazing!

Full of dedication and kindness, they play a huge part in making sure patients and those important to them feel supported.

The team of 50 volunteers help as ward and meal assistants, and activity volunteers. Many take on multiple roles, always happy to go the extra mile.

Patients and the people important to them tell us how nothing is ever too much trouble for our volunteers, and how "remarkable" they are in providing comfort during the hardest of times.

Many of our volunteers have personal connections to hospice care, and their compassion shines through. One even made a 36-mile round trip in awful weather, just to make sure patients had the support they needed!

But they don't just stop at what's expected—they're always looking for ways to make life that little bit better. Over the last year, they've launched two fantastic initiatives:

- **The Sweets and Treats Trolley:** A regular fixture on the ward, volunteers pop by with small treats and, more importantly, a listening ear. Working closely with our nurses, they make sure patients get just what

they need, whether that's a favourite snack or simply some company.

- **A welcoming whiteboard:** Volunteers helped introduce a board showing the names and photos of the nurses and volunteers on shift each day. It's a small change, but it helps patients feel more familiar and comfortable with the people looking after them. Thank you so much to our amazing Inpatient Unit volunteer team!

Could you be the difference? Our volunteers make such a huge impact on patients and the people important to them.

If you'd like to be part of something truly special, we'd love to hear from you: www.ashgatehospice.org.uk/volunteers



Navigating grief through doodles and honest conversation

Tune into The Life and Death podcast, where we have frank, heartfelt conversations about death, bereavement and everything in between.

In our latest series, we welcome **Gary Andrews** – an illustrator, animator, and author from Surrey, whose work explores grief, love, and the healing power of creativity.

Gary's life was forever changed when his wife, Joy, died suddenly from sepsis in 2021 after 19 years together.

Left to navigate profound loss while becoming a single parent, Gary found an unexpected lifeline in doodling.

What began as a nightly sketch quickly evolved into a daily ritual – a simple yet powerful way for him to process his grief. Sharing his doodles on social media, Gary offered his followers an honest, raw, and occasionally humorous look at life after loss.

Speaking with our host, Stephen Rumford, Gary said: "When people ask what it was like, surreal is the word that springs to mind. Suddenly your life is being turned upside down in a moment.

"We had 19 years together, which is more than a lot of people get, so I always consider myself really lucky.

"One of the things that I kept going back to after she died was instead of 'poor me, poor me, what have I lost' was 'lucky me, lucky me, what did I have'."

"I think that attitude is important to remember. You may have lost someone, but if you loved someone that much, how lucky are you.

"Doodling was like self-counselling. If there was something worrying me, I would put it down on paper and it would exorcise that demon.

"Realising it was helping people made Joy's death less pointless. How could someone like Joy be taken away? But suddenly – from beyond the grave – the fact of her death was helping people."

The Life & Death Podcast



Discover the full story behind Gary's journey and explore more inspiring episodes at www.ashgatehospice.org.uk/podcasts

Light up the night at Sparkle Night Walk!

Turn Chesterfield pink this June as we celebrate the tenth anniversary of our Sparkle Night Walk!



Join thousands of walkers for a night to remember at our biggest fundraising event, proudly sponsored by Magpie Beauty.



Last year, more than 3,400 supporters raised a record breaking £340,000 for Ashgate – can we go even bigger this year?



Photo: Kane KG Visuals

Sign up TODAY for just £20

We'll send you everything you need, including fundraising tips, a bright pink t-shirt, and, of course, flashing bunny ears!



Photo: Nick Rhodes

Scan me



Footballer's hospice care inspires family to join Sparkle Night Walk

When former Doncaster Rovers and Burton Albion striker Glenn Kirkwood was cared for by Ashgate, the compassionate support he received left a lasting impact on his family.



Glenn was diagnosed with an aggressive cancer in August 2023 and died at the hospice in July last year, aged 47.

Now, his partner Kate and daughter Freya are honouring his memory by taking part in this year's Sparkle Night Walk.

Kerry said, "We are very lucky to have the hospice, and we must continue to support it. I hope that our fundraising contribution can help to provide these services for the families and patients that need them now and in the future".



Find out more: www.ashgatehospice.org.uk/sparkle-night-walk



Sponsored by



Superheroes assemble!

Entry is open for Ashgate's Superhero Night Walk

Lace up your boots, swish your cape and get ready to channel your inner superhero!

walk
1 mile
or
3 miles



Calling all little heroes! Get ready for an action-packed adventure on **Saturday 18 October at Queen's Park, Chesterfield.**

Choose your mission – a **one-mile or three-mile walk** – and enjoy plenty of fun and entertainment along the way.

Every young superhero will receive a **glow-in-the-dark mask, cape, and a finisher's medal**, plus an interactive fundraising pack to help them on their way.

Entry is just £7 and accompanying adults go free.



Find out more and sign up:
www.ashgatehospice.org.uk/superhero-night-walk

The £5 Mystery Bags: Saving stock from recycling and raising hundreds for Ashgate!

At Ashgate, we're always looking for new ways to make every donation count. That's why we've launched Mystery Bags across all our clearance shops in Hasland, Matlock and Alfreton!

Here's how it works: We take items that have been out for sale in our shops but didn't sell. After being reduced and sent to a clearance shop, if they still don't find a home, instead of being recycled, we bundle them into Mystery Bags.

The response so far has been amazing. Since we launched in January, we've sold 135 Mystery Bags, bringing in an extra £515 – money that would've been lost if these items had gone to recycling, which would've brought in less than £20.

Each Mystery Bag is packed based on size, so you know you're getting great value.

It's not just bargain hunters grabbing them either. We've got crafters, resellers, and upcyclers getting involved, proving that even the most unexpected donations can be turned into something great.

So, if you're near Hasland, Matlock or Alfreton, pop into one of our clearance shops and pick up a Mystery Bag. Who knows what treasures you'll find? And remember, every purchase helps us provide care for people right here in the local community.

- Ladies' clothing bags, with ten items in a specific size (for example, size 14), are just £5.
- Kids' clothing bags, like bundles of baby grows, are £2.50.
- And in our clearance shops, we've also turned stock from the 50p bin into 10-kilo Mystery Bags, still just £5 each!



A huge thank you to our generous community

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

Hilda and Abigail

Thank you for your incredible generosity! You raised **£111** selling Hilda's beautiful knitted creations – and then donated even more to help raise vital funds for Ashgate. **We're so grateful!**



United Rental Group

You went above and beyond for our **Christmas Treecycle** campaign, collecting **1,100+ trees** – and even gifting us a **Ford Transit van!** This will help us save money on vehicle hire and do even more for our community.



Lindt volunteers Ruth and Gabrielle, and our amazing long-standing volunteer Andrea

Thank you for transforming Ashgate into a Christmas wonderland! Your decorations brought so much comfort and joy to our patients and visitors.



Mick Gregory and The Good Shepherd Stage Group

Your fantastic pantomime, performed in memory of Dorothy Gregory, raised an **incredible £3,304.44**. This will help us buy vital equipment for our **Inpatient Unit** – thank you!



Amazon Wishlist – thank you!

To everyone who's purchased a gift from our **Amazon Wishlist** – **thank you!** Your kindness supports our teams in providing the very best care. Want to help? Visit: www.ashgatehospice.org.uk/amazon-wishlist



Brookfield School students

Thank you for choosing Ashgate as part of your **Youth Award Scheme**. Your thoughtful Christmas gifts for patients in our **Inpatient Unit** meant the world.



Charity Golf Days

Laurence and Chris Armstrong from Chemodex, your **11th Golf Day** raised an incredible **£5,000** – and **Terry Branson at Chatsworth Golf Club**, you raised **£9,250** at your Charity Golf Day! Your generosity helps us continue our vital care.



Kingfield Electronics

Your support is amazing! From **sponsoring a hospice nurse** to taking part in **Sparkle Night Walk** and funding our **sweets and treats trolley** – you help bring comfort and joy to so many.



Dedicate a dragonfly in memory of someone special



Our Dragonfly Appeal is a beautiful way to honour someone important to you. By making a suggested donation of £30, you'll receive a handcrafted stainless-steel dragonfly, which will be part of a stunning display at Chatsworth from 1 to 22 May before becoming a lasting tribute for you to keep.

Each dragonfly is crafted by local sculptor James Sutton, whose intricate metalwork is displayed across the country.

Barry Hancock, whose wife Sue was cared for at Ashgate,

is supporting the appeal and said, "Being at the hospice felt like home. It was so serene and calm... It wasn't just Sue they cared for; they looked after all of us".

Dragonflies symbolise resilience, transformation, and living in the moment. Placing yours in your home or garden will serve as a meaningful reminder of someone special while also helping to provide care for people living with life-limiting and incurable illnesses.

Find out more and dedicate yours today:
www.ashgatehospice.org.uk/dragonfly-appeal



Ashgate cryptogram

Try to decode the message.

Each letter in the phrase has been replaced with a random letter.

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

$\frac{W}{K}$ $\frac{A}{C}$ $\frac{O}{I}$ $\frac{C}{G}$ $\frac{A}{C}$ $\frac{A}{O}$
 $\frac{U}{U}$ $\frac{O}{U}$ $\frac{Y}{Y}$ $\frac{G}{A}$ $\frac{L}{L}$ $\frac{M}{M}$ $\frac{X}{X}$ $\frac{U}{P}$
 $\frac{O}{I}$ $\frac{A}{C}$
 $\frac{S}{S}$ $\frac{H}{X}$ $\frac{Q}{P}$ $\frac{G}{G}$ $\frac{Q}{N}$



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www.ashgatehospice.org.uk/ashgate-hospice-news



Essential contacts

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Other enquiries: info@ashgatehospice.org.uk
Magazine editorial: marcomms@ashgatehospice.org.uk

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Follow us:



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**

Registered Charity No. 700636