

SUMMER/AUTUMN 2018

Keech Matters

The magazine of Keech Hospice Care

*"Keech is a
LIFESAVER."*

Our support for
Deon and his
family started
before he was
even born



**Living
life to
the full
with cancer**

Heidi had
Keech Hospice Care
at her side



**SIZZLING
SUMMER
SUCCESS**

Supporters flock
to KeechFest and
Bubble Rush

NEW

Children's garden
is a **BIG HIT**
at Keech

Letter from Liz

Welcome to the summer/autumn edition of *Keech Matters*.



Over the past year at Keech Hospice Care, we've been working hard on developing a new strategy to take us through the next five years and it gave us a chance to reflect on our achievements over the last four years. Back then, we supported 1,160 patients and family members a year; last year (2017-2018), this had grown to 2,344 - a massive increase which we're only able to achieve because you continue to support us. Thank you.

Under the old strategy we also developed our building and gardens, and introduced new services supporting children, adults and families across our community, which you can read about in this *Keech Matters*. In 2017, we also achieved an 'Outstanding' CQC rating for our care and gained a place in *The Times* 100 Best non-profit organisations to work for - an outstanding achievement for a medium-sized local charity like ours. I'm very proud to work with such an amazing team of staff and volunteers.

Our new strategy 2018-2023 builds on this success with exciting plans for the next five years which include increasing our education and research activities. We will work hard to spend our resources and the donations you give us in a very trustworthy way, making sure as much as possible goes towards caring for our patients and their families.

Our strategy also includes a new vision, mission and values, all of which will guide us and keep us focused.

So, once again, thank you for your much-appreciated support and for helping us to continue **making the difference when it matters the most.**

Kind regards,

Liz Searle, CEO

Stay in touch



Like us on Facebook
[facebook.com/keechhospicecare](https://www.facebook.com/keechhospicecare)



Follow us on Twitter
[@KeechHospice](https://twitter.com/KeechHospice)



Watch us on YouTube
[youtube.com/keechhospicecare](https://www.youtube.com/keechhospicecare)



If you have any questions or would like to find out more about getting involved, email us at:
letmehelp@keech.org.uk



Visit our website
www.keech.org.uk

In this issue

2 News in brief

4 Playing safe and sound

Our wonderful new children's garden.

5 "Keech is a lifesaver."

Our support for Deon, now 3, and his family started before he was born.

7 You've got a Friend in me!

What motivates our supporters? We talk to one of our Friends of Keech groups.

8 "It's such an important thing to do."

A Keech volunteer for 15 years, Maggie knows our care is vital.

9 Living life to the full with Keech

How our adult in-patient services supported cancer patient Heidi.

11 Simply the best

Get the buzz on our sizzling summer events.

12 On the cards for Christmas

Great events coming up for the festive season.

13 Caring for carers

For full-time carer Jean, Keech is a safety net.



NEWS in brief

What's been happening at Keech Hospice Care

Sadly missed: Dr Wink White and Zena Skinner



Dr Wink White



Zena Skinner

We were greatly saddened in April to learn that Dr Wink White, our founder, had died, aged 90. Along with his wife, Iris, Dr White - GP in Barton-le-Clay for 36 years - was the driving force in recognising the need for an adult hospice for Luton and south Bedfordshire and raising the funds to make it happen. HRH the Duke of Cambridge summed Wink up perfectly when he met him at our 25th anniversary celebrations in 2016, saying: "I understand you're kind of a big deal around here."

In March, we also said goodbye to Zena Skinner, who was one of our great early fundraisers. A well-known TV chef in the 1960s, she got involved in fundraising for the hospice after she retired from broadcasting and - with her brother Bruce - is credited with raising around **£100,000** over 26 years of committed fundraising.

Keech Hospice Care's CEO Liz Searle was honoured to deliver eulogies at memorial services for both these marvellous and much-missed leading lights on our hospice journey.

Making waves for Keech children's care

For Children's Hospice Week in May, we plumbed the depths - of the sea, that is! Children currently being supported by Keech Hospice Care, their families, staff and volunteers got together for a sing-along of *Under the Sea* from Disney's *The Little Mermaid*. Helped along by our Music Therapist Nathan, the children practised hard in the swim-up to the day, learning a specially written Keech version of the song. Staff got into the swing, too, by wearing their blue Keech t-shirts to create a 'sea' of singers. We then went live with it on Facebook and nearly **11,000** people viewed it.



Keech in the NEWS

Here at Keech Hospice Care, we want to let as many people as possible know what we do so it's great when local media help to get our message out there.

A big highlight so far this year took place in May, when the launch of our new children's advice line was covered by BBC Three Counties, Heart FM, BBC Look East, ITV Anglia News and Bob FM.

For all the details about our amazing new advice line, turn to **page 6**.



Success for new adult care services

In just one year, new referrals to our Independence and Well-being Service have more than doubled, from **103** referrals to **257**. The Service, which is a collaboration between Keech and Macmillan, is all about supporting adults with life-limiting conditions to stay active and independent for as long as possible. As well as one-to-one appointments with our occupational therapist, physiotherapist and therapy assistant, people can also join fun but focused group sessions in circuit training, walking (pictured below) and dance. To use the Service, approach your GP or specialist nurse. Find out more at www.keech.org.uk/wellbeing.

Also last year, Keech piloted a service to help people with rare neurological conditions get the support they need. Working with the Motor Neurone Disease Association, we funded a specialist nurse, Liz, to set up and deliver the service. "I'm patients' first point of contact," she says, "so they're not overwhelmed about which service to call." Since its launch, the number of people using the new service has tripled with Luton and Dunstable Hospital, as well as other specialist centres, referring patients as soon as they are diagnosed.



New shop opens in Great Denham

Our **32 shops** are central to what we do as a charity, raising over £1 million of our funding every year, and a new store is a big highlight. We're very proud of the latest addition, situated in the 'new village' of Great Denham, North Bedfordshire. The new shop had its grand opening in May when Shayne, one of the children currently being supported by the hospice, cut the ribbon - with a little help from our CEO Liz and Shayne's grandma, Kara. If you are in the area, why not pay the new shop a visit? You can find its location - and that of our other shops - at www.keech.org.uk/findshop.

Come for a hospice tour!

Every day we're told Keech is a hospice full of life - why not visit us and find out for yourself? You're invited on a tour of the hospice to see first-hand how we're making the difference when it matters the most for adults and children with life-limiting and terminal illnesses.

Tour dates for autumn are Wednesday 19 September, 10 October and 7 November. Tours take place at 10.30am, 2pm or 6pm and last around 1½ hours. To book or for more information, email letmehelp@keech.org.uk, call **01582 707940** or go to www.keech.org.uk/tours.

Keech shares expertise with Herts students

In May, our Art Therapist Kayleigh went to the University of Hertfordshire to talk to Art Psychotherapy Masters students on the role of art therapy in supporting grieving families. Students said the talk was 'informative and moving' and, as a result, Kayleigh has been invited to be on the university's visiting lecturer programme. It's all part of your local hospice's commitment to sharing its knowledge and specialism.



Did you know...

...you can raise money for us simply by shopping online as normal on Amazon? All you have to do is swap your Amazon account to an Amazon Smile account and choose Keech Hospice Care as your charity. Then, every time you shop, Amazon will make a donation of 0.5% of all your orders - at no extra cost to you. Sign up at smile.amazon.co.uk. For more about this - and other ways to 'shop and support' us - go to www.keech.org.uk/shopandsupport.

PLAYING safe and sound



Keech Hospice Care's new children's garden - with its grand-scale musical instruments - is a big hit with young patients and their families.

Through generous supporters and donations, we've been able to turn the garden next to our children's unit into a wonderful sensory experience for the children. As well as garden toys which encourage the children to be active - like a Wendy house, ride-alongs and lots of push and pull play equipment - we've also added some unique extras: super-sized garden percussion instruments for the children to whack, stamp on and produce a satisfying amount of big noise.

The garden has been purpose-built to meet the needs of children with life-limiting conditions including a large canopy for much-needed shade. "The garden provides a safe place for children to learn through experiences," says Elaine Tolliday, Clinical Director at Keech Hospice Care. "They can explore new sounds, smells and textures while having fun. Families can create memories together."



"The instruments are a great way for the children to explore the garden and have fun playing music. The children get a lot of pleasure from listening to the different sounds they can create and playing with others." Nathan, Keech's Music Therapist, pictured top right.



“Keech is a LIFESAVER”

Carina and husband Riaan found out at the 20-week scan that their baby might not survive the pregnancy. But Deon, now 3, is a fighter. Carina describes the family’s journey and the part Keech played from the start.



As parents already to our beautiful little girl, Mia, my husband Riaan and I were absolutely thrilled when our second child came along. But, at my 20-week scan, our whole world came crashing down: **our tiny boy had a serious heart condition** and might not even make it through the pregnancy.

Deon’s condition means the left side of his heart is very under-developed so the right side needs to work harder to pump the blood around his body.

He had his first open-heart surgery at just four days old, his second at 10 weeks. Both operations went well but Deon spent five months in hospital, being rushed to the children’s intensive care unit time and time again. It was terrifying for us as a family.

Then everything changed again – **barely a few months old and Deon had a stroke.** It affected the right side of his brain, which controls the left side of the body. He walks with

a slight limp on one side and he only uses his left arm to balance himself.

Keech helps at home

From the very beginning, the amazing team at Keech Hospice Care has been there for us, starting with **one of Keech’s specialist nurses, Judith, who’s been part of our family life since before Deon was born.** She visited us during the pregnancy, in hospital and at home, and gave us so much support when we didn’t know what to think or do. If it wasn’t for Judith and Keech, I don’t know if we’d have got this far.

When Deon was finally well enough to leave hospital, it was a really tough time for us. We had a three-year-old and a seriously ill baby who needed medication five times through the day and night, and was fed through a tube every three hours, 24/7.

His sister Mia is amazing at helping us keep Deon as healthy as possible. She understands Deon can become poorly very quickly so she, too, watches out for any signs his heart

might be failing, even when they’re playing together.

All those little things that seem normal to most families can mean the difference between life and death in our house. Deon picks up bugs easily, which is a nightmare because Mia brings all sorts home from school. But there’s nothing we can do about it – she has to go to school.

So worried

For the first year of Deon’s life, Riaan and I barely left the house because we were so worried about him contracting an infection. We had to take his feeding pump and bag everywhere along with all his medication. It was too much so we just stayed home.

I can completely understand how some couples don’t stay together through something like this. It’s hard to stay positive with the pressure it puts on both of us but we just want to give both our children the best life possible.



“We’re in a better place now and I don’t think any of it would have been possible without Keech’s support.”

Fun splashing around

In 2017, we started going to Keech’s Tots ‘n’ Toys sessions on Thursday morning at the hospice. We also used the hydrotherapy pool - Deon has so much fun splashing his arms and legs around. He can’t go to normal swimming pools because they’re too cold and he could easily catch an infection. Keech’s pool is perfect because it has a higher temperature than normal pools.

Tots ‘n’ Toys has been a lifesaver! It gives me the chance to get out of the house and socialise - you can have time to yourself without worrying because there are trained people watching out for him. It allows Deon to play in a safe environment and meet other children. Many of the children there have low immunity so everyone’s in the same situation.

It’s done his confidence the world of good, too - he’s coming out of his shell and making friends. He also likes his music sessions with Nathan, the Music Therapist – it’s the only time he sits still!

For me, letting anyone else care for Deon has been difficult because only Riaan and I know all the signs and symptoms to look out for. But I know I need to relinquish control and leave him with someone else, for both our sakes. **It’s hard to put that level of responsibility on another person. But I can at Keech.**

Deon is due another heart surgery around the age of three or four and I know Keech Hospice Care will be there for us once again. We’re in a better place now and I don’t think any of it would have been possible without Keech’s support. The care we’ve received - at home, in the hospital and at the hospice - has been amazing.

You can help us continue making the difference when it matters the most by donating today at www.keech.org.uk/donate or call 01582 707940 (Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm). To make an instant £5 donation, text NEWS18 £5 to 70070. Thank you!



Free 24 hours a day, seven days a week
0800 035 6497

Do you have or know a family with a child who has a life-limiting condition? Keech Hospice Care has launched a **free 24/7 children’s advice line** so our support is just a call away - any time, day or night - for any family in Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Milton Keynes who has a child with a life-limiting condition. The advice line can also be used by GPs and other health professionals needing specialist advice. Find out more at www.keech.org.uk/adviceline.

Last year:

341 children were supported through our children’s services.
163 children attended day support with
289 attendances at Tots ‘n’ Toys.

You've got a Friend in me!

A chat with Jane Leonas, chair of Friends of Keech Potton, about why they love fundraising for Keech Hospice Care.



“It's such an important thing to do.”

Maggie has been a Keech volunteer for over 15 years, doing “anything and everything” for the local charity closest to her heart. Now she and her husband have taken the generous step of including a gift to us in their Will.



What is it about our charity that motivated you to start a Friends group in Potton?

Two years ago, a group of us decided we'd like to raise money for seriously ill children in our local area. Someone suggested Keech Hospice Care so we went along to an open day at the hospice. We were so impressed by what we saw - amazing therapy suites, hydrotherapy pool, play areas, quiet spaces and a cheerful atmosphere.

We felt that, by becoming Friends of Keech, we could help promote the charity and raise much-needed funds.

What's been your best fundraising event so far?

I think it's our Santa's Grotto last December, which raised just under **£500**. Lovely craft stalls, a local choir, mince pies and mulled wine! Children loved meeting Father Christmas and all the presents were made by members of Friends Potton. It was a pretty magical event!

What other fundraisers are planned?

We have many exciting activities coming up from street collections and craft fairs to cake sales and a glitzy fashion show. If you live locally, we'd love to see you there!



“I first discovered Keech Hospice Care when my husband and I volunteered to collect for the hospice with the Christmas ‘train engine’, Smiley Sam,” said Maggie. “Then we discovered there were more things we could do for the hospice throughout the year so it became

almost compulsive on our part. We did fetes, stuffed envelopes, contacted supporters by phone - anything and everything we were able to do - and thoroughly enjoyed it, too!

“We needed to update our Will and we just had to include Keech. We know it costs a lot to run the hospice and that

money can come in lots of ways. Making a Will and gifting money to Keech is just another way we can help.

“We thought that Keech's Make a Will Fortnight was the ideal opportunity to update our Will. Keech gives you the addresses of participating solicitors and we found one local to us, which made it very easy.

“Please make a Will if you haven't already because it's such an important thing to do. Don't wait till it's too late - your family deserve your preparation.

“We won't look back now we've got it done. And Keech helped us do it.”

As our newest community group, Friends of Keech Potton joins Friends of Keech Bedford and Friends of Keech Luton in supporting Keech Hospice Care. We are very grateful for all the amazing fundraising events the groups organise for us. You, too, can become a Friend or set up your own Friends group! To find out more, call **01582 707940** or email letmehelp@keech.org.uk.

Gifts in Wills help us care for **1 in 7** of our patients.

Will you remember us?

Our work is only made possible because of thoughtful people like you. As a charity, we rely on our supporters for around **70%** of our funding. This means we need to raise around **£6 million** every year to continue our specialist care for children and adults, and their families.

If you would like further information about leaving a gift towards our work, please call us on **01582 707940** (Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm) or email letmehelp@keech.org.uk to request your free guide.

You can also go to www.keech.org.uk/wills. Please use these contact details as well to find out when our next Make a Will Fortnight will take place.

By leaving a gift in your Will to Keech Hospice Care, you can be part of making the difference when it matters the most long into the future.

You don't have to be rich to leave a gift in your Will: a cash gift can be as small or as large as you like. You could also consider leaving a percentage share of your estate - just a **1%** or **2%** share can have a huge impact.

After looking after your family, friends and loved ones, we are enormously grateful for whatever support you can give.

1st Prize £1,000

2nd Prize £250

3rd prize 150 prizes of £5

Plus, four times a year there's a top prize of £3,000

Keech Hospice Care weekly Lottery

From as little as 14p a day, you can help us continue to care for adults and children living with life-limiting and terminal illnesses.

Sign up today at www.keech.org.uk/lottery or call **01582 707940** to play.

Be a WINNER - and show you care!

For just £1 a week, you'll be in with the chance of winning one of our 152 cash prizes every week.

LIVING LIFE to the FULL with Keech

Heidi (front) with Shelley

For eight years, Heidi, 43, battled cancer, determined to live her life. Keech Hospice Care was there every time she needed our specialist support. Her sister Shelley tells their story.

“Our world turned upside down in 2009,” Shelley remembered, “when Heidi was diagnosed with breast cancer which had gone to one of her lymph nodes.

“The two great loves of Heidi’s life were music and her husband-to-be Jodey, and Heidi was determined cancer wasn’t going to stop her getting married. After the wedding, in May 2009, she continued with treatment, and had the tumour and her lymph nodes removed. When she finished treatment later in 2009, for all we knew she was better – she just had to go for check-ups every six months.”

But, in May 2013, Heidi started to get backache; doctors confirmed the cancer was back and had spread to her central nervous system. “Heidi was told there was a possibility she wouldn’t be around for Christmas,” explained Shelley, “but Heidi said she was going to celebrate her 40th birthday the following year - **she was determined to have treatment, fight and get better.**”

Keech home from home

It was at this point that Heidi came to Keech Hospice Care, where she was supported with all the care she needed, including physio, until she was ready to be discharged home.

Heidi was at Keech’s in-patient unit for about two months. **“The staff were lovely - the care team helped Heidi and the family so much,”** Shelley stated. “It was like a home from home for us because we could come and go as we wanted. I used to go over every morning after dropping my girls at school to sit with her and have a cup of tea.”

For a while afterwards, Heidi seemed to go from strength to strength and even took part in a sponsored race in 2014, walking the last 100m on crutches. But things took a turn for the worse when a scan picked up something on the top of her spine. There had been a tumour in her brain the whole time.

Chemo hit hard

“In November 2016, Heidi started treatment again,” said Shelley, “but - although it seemed to be working - this time the chemo hit her hard. In June 2017, Heidi was referred to Keech for the second

time. The nurses at the hospice were amazing.” The care team worked quickly to adjust her medicines so her symptoms were soon under control, and Heidi was immediately more comfortable.

Heidi had to go back into hospital as the cancer progressed and it reached a point where there was nothing more they could do for her. So Heidi came back to Keech for a third and last time.

“We had to give her the bad news when she woke up,” Shelley remembered. “She said OK, I need to get everything sorted, write my Will, and then go back to getting better. Heidi would never give in to anything.

“We celebrated her birthday at Keech and it was lovely. Everybody came and we had the best time.”

Not long after, Heidi went home, where she died on 25 August 2017.

“Keech’s family support workers have made all the difference in the world to my girls.”



Heidi with her nieces

“We celebrated Heidi’s birthday at Keech and it was lovely.”

A world of difference

But Keech Hospice Care was still there to support the family, as Shelley explained: **“I had a letter from Keech saying, if we needed anything, they were there for us as a family** and I contacted them a few months after Heidi died.

“The difference Keech’s bereavement support has made is just amazing. Heidi had been like a second mum to my girls - Grace, 14, and Ava, 10 - and it has been so hard for them to lose her. Ava was crying all the time. Grace was holding back because she didn’t want to make me upset.

“Keech’s family support workers made all the difference in the world to Grace and Ava - somehow Steve just gets Grace and she can talk to him about anything. My brother Kieran went to Steve - just the once because I think that’s all he felt he needed. My mum also goes to a Keech support group once a month and sees Steve, too.

“I first spoke to another of the family support workers, Ela, while Heidi was alive and speaking to her now really helps me talk about how I feel. I’m a bit like Heidi - I always want to look after

everybody else but I know I need to deal with my own feelings, too. I’m like Grace as well in that I won’t always talk to my mum as I know she’s going through her own grief.

“It makes such a difference to speak to someone who isn’t involved so you’re able to say exactly how you feel without upsetting them. It’s my time to let go.”

You can help us continue making the difference when it matters the most by donating today at www.keech.org.uk/donate or call 01582 707940 (Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm). To make an instant £5 donation, text NEWS18 £5 to 70070. Thank you!

Caring for adult patients at the hospice

Last year we cared for **138** patients on the adult in-patient unit, including support for those at the end of life. But the in-patient unit is not only there at the end: **62%** of patients went home.

Like Heidi, many of our patients are admitted to the in-patient unit if they need our expert team to get their symptoms or pain under control before going home.

We also offer families of both adult and child patients pre- and post-bereavement support. Last year, **590** patients and their relatives benefitted from this service.

Overall, it costs around **£6 million** a year to provide our care services, and around **70%** of our funding comes from our local community and supporters.

Simply the best KEECHFEST and PROMFEST

With the sunshine arriving right on cue, Keech Hospice Care delivered a fantastic live-music 'Big Weekender'.

Our supporters loved it - whether they were soaking up the sounds at PromFest or enjoying a family day out at our ever-popular KeechFest. Where else would you get the chance to eat, drink, listen to bands, entertain the children and support your local hospice?

Yet again, our local community came out in force and made sure the weekend was a huge success, raising funds and finding out about our work. A Fest-ive thank

you to all the wonderful supporters who attended.

A 'Big Weekender' thank you as well to the fantastic stage acts who donated their time and energy to support us. From opera and Rock Choir to the British Rat Pack and rockabilly, all the live music was there to make sure you had a memorable day. Add to that the amazing food outlets, ice-cream, children's entertainment, competitions and retail stalls, and it's no surprise the weekend rocked!

"We just love coming to KeechFest - there's nothing better than sitting in the stunning Alan Titchmarsh garden and watching live bands on stage before visiting the children's garden and seeing the snakes!"

Mark and his family at KeechFest



What a RUSH!

Around **1,500** Bubblers of all ages braved the foam cannons in July at Bubble Rush, our new summer run event at Cranfield University, Bedford, to raise funds for our charity. It was fun for all the family: an accessible 5km course participants could run, jog or walk at their own pace. The catch? Eight 4ft-deep foam-filled Bubble Stations dotted along the route. The atmosphere was amazing so we were all in the mood for the Bubble Party at the end!

Thank you to everyone who got involved.

On the cards for CHRISTMAS

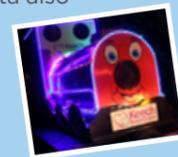
We've literally got Christmas on the cards! Get your **Keech Christmas cards** sorted early - and show your support for Keech at the same time - by ordering from our tinsel-tastic range, all great value at £3 for 10. To pre-order, call our order hotline on **01582 707955** (Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm). Available in Keech shops from the end of September.

In the run-up to the Big Ho-ho, why not raise funds for Keech with a quiz? We've got our **Big Keech Quiz** - created for us by Heart FM's Gareth Wesley - for you to organise an event around. Download it at www.keech.org.uk/quiz.

Keech Christmas Market will kickstart your seasonal shopping with over 40 stalls packed with gift ideas. It takes place at Barnfield College in Luton on **24 and 25 November**. www.keech.org.uk/christmasmarket



Smiley Sam and the Sleigh are out and about helping Santa from the end of November. To find out where they're going this year, visit www.keech.org.uk/smileysam. Santa also needs volunteers - please contact letmehelp@keech.org.uk or call **01582 707940** (Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm) to become one of his elves.



Enjoy Dunstable Ladies' Choir and Priory Girls' Choir in the beautiful setting of Priory Church in Dunstable for **Keech's Carol Concert** on **17 December**. Mince pies and festive drinks add to the Christmas cheer. www.keech.org.uk/carols

Join a sea of festive red for our **5km Santa Run** when hundreds of Santas run at their own speed around Wardown Park in Luton or along the Embankment in Bedford. Bedford Run on **2 December**; Luton Run on **16 December**. www.keech.org.uk/santarun

Keech

CHRISTMAS MARKET

www.keech.org.uk/christmasmarket

**Barnfield College,
New Bedford Road, Luton**

**SATURDAY
24 NOVEMBER
10AM - 4PM**

**SUNDAY
25 NOVEMBER
10AM - 4PM**

Keech: caring for carers



Jean, 75, became a carer in 2013 when her husband, Barry, developed severe lung problems. Here, Jean tells us how Keech Hospice Care's services for carers have helped her find balance in life.

We first discovered Keech Hospice Care in 2016, when Barry was in hospital. The doctors didn't expect him to recover but Barry is very strong-minded. When hospice care was mentioned, I wasn't shocked - I just thought, well, I know he has a terminal prognosis. At the time I didn't realise Keech does so much more than end-of-life care.

Constant caring

It was around this time that Barry's breathing really started deteriorating. Now, he's on oxygen and needs a nebuliser. He also gets a build-up of fluid around his lungs and heart, and his kidneys aren't that brilliant, either. Barry's doctor calls him a walking miracle - although, bless him, he can't walk far.

I sort his medications, including insulin, and organise his oxygen and nebuliser. I wash him, dress him and cream his skin every morning.

I go in the shower with him because he could fall. There was a time when I was getting up in the night a lot but he's better where that's concerned so I'm getting a bit more sleep. I'm

grateful because you need sleep to cope with the days.

Constantly caring drains you. It can seem like you've got no life outside of it. You can't make plans and we don't go away because - understandably - he only feels safe in his own place. If we do go anywhere, there's so much to pack!

I still manage but I can't do what I used to. I've got arthritis in my spine, making lifting and bending difficult but, caring for Barry, I'm always up and down. I'm lucky that the family are so involved - for instance, I had a new hip around four years ago and they came in relays to care for us.

Keech gets in touch

After agreeing to try out Keech, someone from the hospice got in touch as soon as we were home from hospital. It was like suddenly having a safety net appear. Barry came to Keech's Palliative Care Centre for 12 weeks and loved everything about it. They picked up on so much about his condition and needs. For instance, they quickly realised why he had no energy and got in touch with

respiratory services for us. Keech's social work team have helped us, too, by chasing up a referral to a heart specialist.

Barry felt comfortable at Keech straightaway - so much so that he has decided he would like to be at the hospice at the end of his life. Who knows what's going to happen but Keech is where he wants to be.

Care for the carers

The social work team also encouraged me to come to the carers' drop-in group. At first, I was sceptical but I'm so glad I gave it a go! It's a bit hard to start with



“*I'm able to relax and say how I really feel, things I wouldn't admit to anyone else.*”

because you don't know anyone but they are such smashing people. We all told our stories - some were heart-breaking but made me realise there were people a lot worse off than me.

Now I come most Mondays. You easily make friends and we can also have some great laughs! I'm able to relax and say how I really feel, things that I wouldn't admit to anyone else. As a carer you often think, 'Why me?' Coming to Keech has shown me that all carers have these thoughts sometimes, so it makes you feel less guilty.

All the Keech staff are spot-on, too - so patient without being 'gooey' - and able to support us in so many ways. You can ask questions and get straightforward answers you understand.

I've also had reiki sessions at Keech where I'd nearly nod off. You feel tremendous heat wherever the therapist's hands hover and it's like you're floating. Massage sessions are lovely, too - very relaxing especially across my shoulders.

After a visit to Keech Hospice Care, I carry the good feelings home - there are times when I actually feel elated. I certainly always feel better.

Keech Hospice Care's carers' drop-in service runs every Monday, 1.30-3.30pm, at the hospice. It's open to any carer of someone with a life-limiting illness; you don't have to be the carer of a Keech patient. To find out more about the service, call 01582 497669 (Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm) or visit www.keech.org.uk/carers.

Keech pilots support tool for carers

Keech Hospice Care has always supported carers with services like the carers' drop-in group and our Coping with Caring courses. In May, we piloted something new for Keech: the Carer Support Needs Assessment Tool (CSNAT), which works to give the carer a more targeted understanding of what support they need to care for both their relative or friend and themselves.

The 14 questions in the CSNAT, which has been developed by the Universities of Manchester and Cambridge, "can help a carer explore areas of support they may not have considered before, to help them cope better in the future," explains Elaine Tolliday, Clinical Director at Keech. "The carer can prioritise what support they most need."

So far, we've had positive feedback from carers who've completed the assessment tool so Keech is considering how its use can be developed and extended in the near future.

Last year, our social work team supported **200** adult patients and **65** families of child patients.

You can help us continue making the difference when it matters the most by donating today at www.keech.org.uk/donate or call 01582 707940 (Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm). To make an instant £5 donation, text NEWS18 £5 to 70070. Thank you!

10km

SPOOKTACULAR



GLOW WALK

Walk, glow and party for
Keech Hospice Care
this Halloween!

SATURDAY

27

OCTOBER
from 6pm

Keech Hospice Care,
Luton

**Age
14+**

Sign up at:

www.keech.org.uk/glowwalk

01582 707940



Registered Charity No. 1035089



Tel: 01582 707940
letmehelp@keech.org.uk
www.keech.org.uk

Keech Hospice Care, Great Bramingham Lane, Luton, LU3 3NT.