

# Keech Matters

AUTUMN 2021

“  
I was so wrong  
about what  
a hospice  
would be like”

See Edwards Story Pg.7

“  
Our daughter  
Charlie was cared  
for by the hospice,  
her and her sister  
Shannon were  
treated to so  
many wonderful  
experiences”

30 Years of  
memories Pg.11



Visit  
The Big  
Trunk Trail

See Pg.2



Keech  
hospice care

When future generations look back on the history of Keech Hospice Care they will see, as we have, that the pandemic has been a defining moment.

At the start of the crisis, we had to make very difficult decisions on closing our shops and stopping much of our fundraising activity at a time when the demand for our services was rising sharply. I am very proud of the team for working so hard and caring for patients during this difficult time including those with COVID-19. When fellow hospices needed help, we became a regional hub for their PPE and we offered virtual services and garden visits to families shielding with their children - all true to our vision of **Making the difference when it matters the most.**

During the pandemic, you kindly stepped forward to help us when we needed you the most and your support was incredible. Thank you for being a friend in this, our 30th year of caring. We are forever grateful for your continuing support.

I often say, 'we are never more needed,' and how true this is this year. As well as continuing to care for our patients and their families, we're helping people make new memories with our amazing Big Trunk Trail which you can read all about on the opposite page.

We're now looking forward with hope and optimism; hope that the challenges are receding and optimism that we are shaping services fit for the future.

Best wishes



Liz Searle, CEO



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If you haven't visited our **FREE**, family fun art trail around Luton's Parks and Landmarks yet, no need to panic as the trail is still in town until the **8 October.**

## CHARITY AUCTION

THURSDAY 11 NOVEMBER 2021

OVER 30 SCULPTURES WILL BE AUCTIONED AT THIS EVENT WITH RENOWNED AUCTIONEER CHARLES HANSON.

TO FIND OUT MORE, SECURE A TICKET OR REGISTER FOR ONLINE BIDDING, PLEASE VISIT:

[WWW.BIGTRUNKTRAIL.CO.UK/AUCTION](http://WWW.BIGTRUNKTRAIL.CO.UK/AUCTION)

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JOIN US TO SAY FAREWELL TO THE ELEPHANTS.

ZSL WHIPSNADE ZOO  
22 - 28 OCTOBER

FAREWELL EVENT  
STOCKWOOD  
DISCOVERY CENTRE  
30 OCTOBER -  
7 NOVEMBER

DOWNLOAD OUR FREE  
KEECH CONNECT APP  
FOR INTERACTIVE FUN.



# NEWS IN BRIEF

What's been happening at Keech Hospice Care.

*"The pandemic has pushed the team to the limits but we're looking forward with hope and excited to be able to open up more of our services again"* Elaine Tolliday, Clinical Director



We celebrated 30 years of care in April with a fantastic film from BBC Look East.

Compassionate Communities workshops have begun, creating a network of Compassionate Friends across our local communities.



Our Carer's walking group has started - a great way to get those who care for others together and provide the support they need.

Elaine Tolliday, our Clinical Director was awarded Key Worker of the year at the Love Luton's, Luton's Best awards.



Our hydrotherapy pool which is loved by many is open again, as is our gym for one on one sessions with the rehab team.

Our Play Services team have been busy organising some lovely trips for our families including a visit to The Fancott Miniature railway.



Nigel, our spiritual care lead (and vicar of St Margaret's at Streatley) continues to place a crucial role in supporting our patients and families, from all religions in both their homes and at the hospice.



## Smile Everyday

With the country slowly returning to some form of normality, we're encouraging everyone to smile through our community fundraising campaign: "Smile Everyday". We have designed a host of fun activities for everyone - individuals, families, colleagues, friends and community groups - to get involved and raise valuable funds to **#HelpUsHelpMore** in the future. Just email [letmehelp@keech.org.uk](mailto:letmehelp@keech.org.uk) to get involved.



## New patron and ambassadors

We've had the honour of introducing our new patron Helen Nellis CStJ, HM Lord-Lieutenant of Bedfordshire and launch our new ambassador programme. Our patron and our ambassadors are volunteers with diverse skills and experience who have great connections in our local communities. They support us in a wide variety of ways to achieve our mission. [www.keech.org.uk/ambassadors](http://www.keech.org.uk/ambassadors) to find out more about them.



## All our shops are open!

We are over the moon that all of our 33 shops are back open to the public! Our shops are currently open 9am-5.00pm Monday - Saturday, with donations accepted any time during opening hours. To find your nearest shop, visit our website [www.keech.org.uk/our-shops](http://www.keech.org.uk/our-shops).



## Get bidding today on ebay

During the pandemic, our ebay shop was so important to us. If you haven't visited before, please go to [www.keech.org.uk/ebay-shop](http://www.keech.org.uk/ebay-shop) and get bidding on the top-quality items that catch your eye!

**Did you know?** You can also raise money for us by shopping online with Amazon - just visit [www.smile.amazon.co.uk](http://www.smile.amazon.co.uk) and choose Keech Hospice Care as your chosen charity. Amazon will donate a small portion of money to us at no extra cost to you! Every penny really does count and whichever way you choose to shop with us, it really will **#HelpUsHelpMore**.

## Get ready for Christmas

It may seem a little early, but our Christmas shop, featuring some fantastic festive cards and our gorgeous 2022 Calendar is now live on the website. Time to get organised before everyone else!



# Keech turned a difficult situation into an amazing experience

**Coming to Keech made Terri and Mum Mary's last six months together much easier.**

Getting the help mum needed all in one place during the pandemic was always a struggle, until the wonderful team at Keech got on the case.

Mum was suffering from multiple conditions - myelodysplastic syndrome (which made her transfusion dependent), folate deficiency and chronic liver disease while also living with Alzheimer's.

In November, the Macmillan nurse at the hospital asked if we would like our care transferred to Keech as the ward were finding it difficult to guarantee appointment times because of the reduction in patient numbers due to the pandemic. I was apprehensive as the word 'hospice' made me think things were getting bad. I received a couple of introductory calls from Vicky (mum's lead nurse) and Katy. **They explained the situation and really put my mind at rest.**

Once Katy swung into action it was as if she'd pressed a magic button and all the support mum needed fell into place. In quick succession, my parents were contacted by the Occupational Therapy Team, Falls Team, District Nurses and the Council Adaptations Department and the contact continued regularly.

I immediately felt at ease from our first visit to Keech Hospice Care's Wellbeing

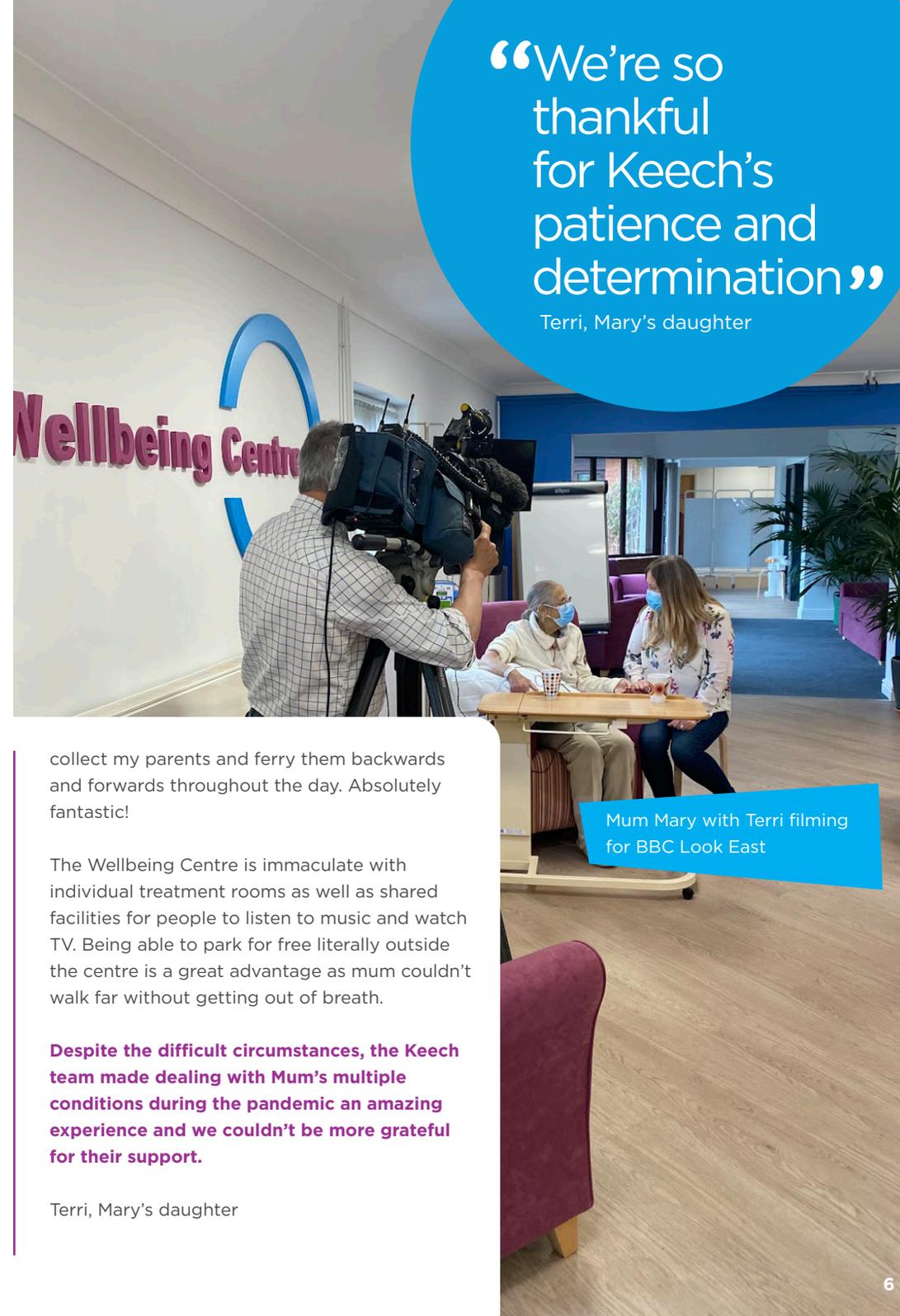
Centre. The staff were so friendly, while being utmost professionals and ensuring our safety during the pandemic at all times. Despite her Alzheimer's, the whole team really engaged with Mum and took the time to get to know her well. They were speaking to her in a way she could understand and sometimes even respond to, which was absolutely wonderful to see.

**I immediately felt that I could talk to them about any concerns I had during our visits or phone them whenever I needed to.**

Vicky, our lead nurse, was a great support when it came to questions about mum's health. Julia and Dr Joy were the experts when it came to finding a suitable vein to either give or take blood, which was really important with her transfusions. We're so thankful for their patience and determination. Kim who helped with her care even had a singalong and a bit of a boogie with mum over Christmas! I knew Mum felt comfortable at the hospice and with everyone looking out for her, I was able to leave her there and return to work.

On one occasion mum's haemoglobin count was very low, and the Keech team called saying we really needed to go in and organise a blood transfusion as a matter of urgency.

I was working in London that day so one of the Keech volunteer drivers stepped in to



“We're so thankful for Keech's patience and determination”

Terri, Mary's daughter

collect my parents and ferry them backwards and forwards throughout the day. Absolutely fantastic!

The Wellbeing Centre is immaculate with individual treatment rooms as well as shared facilities for people to listen to music and watch TV. Being able to park for free literally outside the centre is a great advantage as mum couldn't walk far without getting out of breath.

**Despite the difficult circumstances, the Keech team made dealing with Mum's multiple conditions during the pandemic an amazing experience and we couldn't be more grateful for their support.**

Terri, Mary's daughter

Mum Mary with Terri filming for BBC Look East

# “I was so wrong about what a hospice would be like”

Skye's son Edward has been supported by Keech since the beginning of the pandemic.

I was initially very nervous about Edward being supported by a hospice, as I thought they were just places that had rows of beds and where people went to die. Meeting the team and visiting the hospice completely changed my mind.

Edward has a very rare genetic form of epilepsy; he's one of only 33 with it in the world. His needs are so complex that the only other people I feel I can trust to look after him aside from myself are the Children's team at Keech. He has overnight stays at the hospice, which is such an amazing support for me personally as it gives me a break and means I can have a proper rest, safe in the knowledge he is secure and being cared for. Although Edward is non-verbal, **I know he absolutely loves it at Keech as whenever I leave him (and pick him up) he is smiling, laughing and running around!**

**COVID has meant that we haven't been able to have any home visits, but Donna, our Social Work Assistant calls and texts regularly and I know someone is available 24/7.** She has accompanied me to meetings with the school and hospital regarding Edward's care and is always there for us.

Gloria, from Keech's Social Work team, has also been incredible. We needed to move house, as our home was unsafe for Edward's needs, and Gloria wrote a supporting letter to the council which helped them understand our situation and agree that we did need to move house. We've been able to stay in the same area which is great news, as it's familiar to Edward. One less thing for me to worry about now, which, when you have a child with complex needs really is a life-saver.

Mum, Skye

Leaving a gift in your will costs you nothing today yet makes a world of difference for **those we care for tomorrow**

**1 in 7 of our patients is cared for thanks to people who remember the hospice by kindly leaving a gift in their Will.**

Make a legacy to Keech in your Will today and you'll be ensuring that we're here to continue providing free, specialist care and support to seriously ill adults and children and their families for another thirty years.

**Writing your Will is easier than you might think.**

We've teamed up with Bequeathed to provide you with a hassle-free service to make your Will for Good. You can make your Will online from the comfort of your own home, often in less than 30 minutes and receive your free Will advice from your choice of accredited legal firm.

Getting started is easy; type in [bequeathed.org/p/keech](https://bequeathed.org/p/keech) into your browser and you'll be guided step-by-step through the process.

It's a free service and there is no obligation to include a gift to support our care. We hope however after providing for your loved ones it's something you might consider. A share of 1% or 2% of your estate can have a huge impact.

If you would like to know more about leaving a gift in your Will to Keech Hospice Care, please contact us on **01582 707940**, email [letmehelp@keech.org.uk](mailto:letmehelp@keech.org.uk) or visit our website at [www.keech.org.uk/giftsinwills](https://www.keech.org.uk/giftsinwills).



Edward, aged 4 with Hannah, Play Specialist

# Help when I needed it most

**Craig lost his mum during the pandemic, but Keech's Bereavement Service supported him through his loss.**

In May 2020, completely out of the blue, my Mum had a stroke. I called an ambulance which Dad and I were told not to follow because COVID meant we couldn't enter the hospital. That was the last time I ever held her.

Our only source of information when Mum first went into hospital was a nurse on the phone who was incredibly busy and only able to read us mum's stats from a chart.. What we wanted to know was whether she was eating, talking, how was she really?

Eventually, Mum was transferred to a rehabilitation centre in the hope of getting strong enough to come home. We were still only allowed to speak to her from outside through a two-inch gap in the window. The frustration was so overwhelming. Then mum unfortunately took a downward turn, and the call came to say she'd gone.

I remember screaming. I was so angry and upset. I drove straight to the hospital and found my dad and cousin and saw the paramedics. I was allowed a few minutes alone with her and when I left the room, the team outside were in full PPE waiting to take my mum away. COVID took away any sense of humanity and I'm sure the isolation away from our family is what finally broke my mum.

## After Mum died, I went into myself.

Because of COVID, everything took so long to organise - the funeral, retrieving Mum's ashes - and just when I was starting to heal something else would happen to rip the wound open again.

I turned my phone off and wouldn't speak to anyone. The anger I felt started to build and I took it out on complete strangers, as well as those I love. My dad and my wife urged me to speak to somebody. Luckily, my cousin did some research online and found Keech's Bereavement service.

## Support from Keech saved me from crashing

Once we'd made the call, I was put in touch with Sam. I can't tell you how helpful it is talking to someone with no vested emotional interest. People who love you aren't always the best ones to help you through really painful stuff.

Like a lot of men, I do need to talk, but when I'm ready and in small, manageable amounts. Sam listens, asks the right questions, and lets me lead so I eventually work through things on my own, giving me new coping strategies.

I'm feeling so much more in control now. When I suffered a set-back due to work stress, Sam extended my sessions and I'm so grateful. Things are better now but I would have crashed and burned without her help.

Its now approaching those dreaded first anniversaries - mums birthday and the first anniversary of her death, so Im finding myself getting really emotional again but getting my coping mechanisms in place. Im back at the gym and I've got my motorbike both of which are really good for me.

## There is no shame asking for help.

Call. Don't hesitate. So many men out there would benefit from counselling. There's no shame needing a chat or a good cry. If you don't release that emotional pressure when it builds it comes out in destructive ways. The service Keech has given me has been invaluable, which is why I'm sharing my story. If I can help just one other person, then it will be worth it.

Craig, supported by Keech Hospice Care



**If you're struggling with the death of a loved one**

**Let our friendly bereavement team support you through your grief for free.**

Call **0800 0353 011**

**There's no right or wrong way to grieve but there are many ways to cope.**

This service is available to anyone from Luton and Bedfordshire, aged 18+. No connection to the hospice required.

“Support from Keech saved me from crashing”

Craig, supported by Keech Hospice Care

# 30 YEARS OF MEMORIES

As part of our 30th Anniversary year, we're making new memories with The Big Trunk Trail whilst asking people to share their memories of the past 30 years with us. Here's just a few fantastic memories people have kindly shared.



**M**y Mum Eve was cared for by Keech in 2016. I can't thank the staff enough for the care they gave her, it was incredible. We were lucky enough to meet some very special guests 10 days before mum passed away. They were so easy to talk to and chatted to mum about their children, pets and family. Such a special moment that Keech arranged for her. Thank you.  
Jayne, Eve's daughter



**B**renda has been volunteering for Hospice at Home since 1988, after caring for her husband who sadly died of cancer. "I saw an ad in the paper for volunteers to provide in-home support to families facing terminal illness and wanted to get involved. I knew from experience there was just no support of that kind in the Luton area at the time". Brenda has been involved ever since. "I go to the house and the carer has the afternoon off while we have a coffee, a bit of a gossip, and do crosswords. And I listen. In that situation, sometimes people just need a chance to talk."

I have some fabulous memories of Keech. My Dad, George was instrumental in helping start the hospice back in 1991. He also got the hospice lottery going and was Santa with Smiley Sam for many years. Sadly, we lost Dad in 2020. We'll always be very proud of what he achieved with his time at Keech and know he would have loved to have been part of your 30-year celebrations.  
Nicola, George's Daughter



**J**ohn and Jan have been involved with Keech since Dr. White stood up at a Round Table charity boxing night and announced he'd got some land and needed to raise £1 million to build a hospice on it. Since then, they've helped open one of our first shops (which Jan still volunteers at!); organised fundraising events and created Friends of Keech Luton and South Beds, which consistently raises over £10,000 a year. "30 years is a long time", says John, "We could not have achieved what we have without the help of friends and colleagues and their commitment to the hospice."



If you'd like to volunteer in our shops please go to: [www.keech.org.uk/joinme](http://www.keech.org.uk/joinme)

**T**ina started working at Keech in February 2002 just before the Children's hospice opened.

"I remember putting on a hard hat and walking around the building, deciding on final touches. We were excited and nervous as opening day arrived. I was on shift to welcome the first families to Keech, and it went really well. Keech was a happy place to work but obviously had its moments of sadness.

I have precious memories of my time at Keech and made some wonderful friends for life. We still meet up regularly and our nights often end with us reminiscing about our journey together in such a remarkable place. We all started together and were there for the same reason - to make memories for the children and their families."



I have so many lovely memories from our time with Keech.

Our daughter Charlie were cared for by the hospice, and her and her sister Shannon were treated to so many wonderful experiences including meeting celebrities such as Harry Judd (who was so lovely and compassionate) to meeting the elephants at Woburn during one of many days out, to Shannon modelling clothes for the charity shop posters!

Charlie was eventually discharged from Keech's care, but I can't tell you how wonderful the nurses were who looked after her and often smile when thinking about the wonderful times we had there.

I'd like to wish Keech a very happy 30th birthday and thank you all from the bottoms of our hearts for the support you gave us for over 10 years. Laura, Charlie's Mum



## Making the difference when it matters the most FOR OUR PATIENTS IN THE COMMUNITY

**D**id you know that we have teams out in the community supporting our patients and their families as well as at the hospice? In this edition of *Keech Matters*, we're putting a spotlight on our My Care Coordination team (MCCT) who support adult patients at home by offering personal care, practical help and emotional support to them and their families.

### What do MCCT do?

Patient choice is at the centre of everything MCCT do. Many people would rather be at home than in hospital towards the end of their life, and that's where the team come in. They work in collaboration with local hospitals, paramedics, community nurses and GPs to ensure everyone involved in the patient's care is kept up to date. From chasing prescriptions to making medical appointments, to just being there, the MCCT team are there to support the patient and their family. In the last year, they have made 2,013 home visits and prevented 423 hospital admissions. MCCT also provide a 24-hour advice line for patients, families, Carers and professionals and have taken a staggering 1,238 calls in the last year.



Sarah, MCCT lead

### Caring during COVID

"People's final moments are so precious, and it means so much to the team to be allowed into their world and know you can make a difference. We've had to make adjustments due to the pandemic - like wearing more PPE than ever before and not being able to smile through our masks or hug those

who are really struggling but we've ensured the care we've delivered has been of the highest standard and continue to always give our all."

**"The time came when mum just wanted to stay at home and MCCT stepped in. The staff were a godsend, so kind and caring. They came to see mum twice a day and were a vital support to my dad. As a family we will never forget how they helped our lovely mum during this time. Thank you from the bottom of my heart."**

Terri

**Helpline:**  
**0808 180 7788** (24 hours a day, 365 days a year)

This service is available to anyone from Luton and Central Bedfordshire.

# WINTER EVENTS 2021

## KEECH CHRISTMAS MARKET

4 - 5 December  
Barnfield College

Kickstart your seasonal shopping with over 40 stalls packed with gift ideas.

[www.keech.org.uk/christmasmarket](http://www.keech.org.uk/christmasmarket)

## Light up a life

5 December

Our virtual memorial service to remember loved ones and shine a light in their memory.

[www.keech.org.uk/lual](http://www.keech.org.uk/lual)

## SANTA RUN

12 December  
Embankment, Bedford

Join a sea of festive red for our 5km Santa Run. Sign up today!

[www.keech.org.uk/santarun](http://www.keech.org.uk/santarun)

## Smiley Sam

1 - 24 December

Our iconic Smiley Sam, Santa and our Sleigh take to the roads around Bedford, Luton and surrounding areas. Keep an eye out for routes and more information.

[www.keech.org.uk/smileysam](http://www.keech.org.uk/smileysam)