



The Sunflower

supporter newsletter



Issue No. 03
Spring 2024



Registered Charity No: 279473

St Margaret's
Hospice Care



Dear Supporters and Friends,

I'm excited to share this spring edition of **The Sunflower** with you. I recently joined St Margaret's, working in our Supporter Care team. I've received such a warm welcome at the hospice and immediately noticed just how supportive and caring the whole organisation is, particularly towards our patients and their loved ones. I have also really enjoyed getting to know many of you, when you've rung to kindly make a donation or visited our offices to donate items. Supporting our patients at a time they really need it is only possible with you, and we are so grateful for your continued support.

In this newsletter, you can read stories about our Sunflower Centres,

patients receiving care at home and our great volunteers. There is also news about our fantastic furniture shops, amazing gardens open this summer for St Margaret's and views of the hospice from our Directors.

Thank you once again for all your support and I hope to see you at one of our events soon. In the meantime, please do get in touch with any questions – or please tell us what you would like to see in future newsletters.

Thank you for your kindness,

George

Supporter Care Manager

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James Rimmer,
St Margaret's Chief Executive

My first six months



After six months of working for St Margaret's, I feel a mixture of still being new to the organisation but also very settled. That is testament to how welcome you, our supporters, our staff and volunteers have made me feel.

Change, especially with a new CEO coming on board, can be unsettling, however it can also be an opportunity to reflect on what we have achieved in the past, especially with our 45th anniversary fast approaching. It is also a chance to look to the future, and how we can continue to best support the people in Somerset, who need us most.

Whether that's at one of our hospice hubs, on our In-Patient Unit, in either of our outpatient Sunflower Centres or in the community, we want to be here delivering great care for generations to come.

One message that has stood out for me over the past six months is that St Margaret's is a great organisation.

I felt I already knew this before I joined, having had a personal experience with the hospice when my father was looked after here. The impact St Margaret's makes, is now clearer to me than ever before. The way we look after patients and their loved ones is fantastic.

I know this not just from my observations, but because I've been told directly. Recently, a patient's relative knocked on my door and told me all about the great care their partner was receiving and how supported they felt. It warmed my heart. And a former colleague also paid me a visit when she came to see her relative who had come into our In-Patient Unit – she said that after months of being in pain, he finally felt comfortable.

So, what does my next six months look like?

For me, this year is going to be about consolidating some of the changes that have recently taken place in

the hospice. From bringing new trustees on board, to being joined by Clare, our new Clinical Director, as a team we're going to continue to reflect whilst also building our new organisational strategy which will be launched in 2025. As with any organisation, there are always areas that can be improved, and I am committed to ensuring that the strategy we create best serves our community. This includes focusing on:

- helping people to live well as well as die well
- continuing to connect with Somerset and serving the community here
- building on our 'one team' approach, working together to ensure we provide better, personalised care for people who need it

I am really looking forward to developing this new strategy with you, particularly as we can only achieve our vision with you by our side. You are the reason why St Margaret's is here nearly 45 years on, and with your support, I am sure we will be here long into the future. Providing the critical, end of life care that people in Somerset need and deserve, as well as supporting those closest to them. Thank you for all that you do, and I hope to see you at one of our upcoming community events or when I am out and about visiting shops in your local area soon.



James at our Christmas Tree Collection



St Margaret's Charity Ball, February 2024



Facing illness together, making the most of every day

For nearly two decades, Michael has suffered from a variety of illnesses which have had a big impact on his health and wellbeing, but his fighting spirit and warm smile has stayed constant throughout it all.

With his wife, Ann, by his side, Michael has battled his illnesses with calm determination and they have met any challenge together with a positive attitude. So, when Michael was told that he needed palliative care last year, Michael and Ann faced it in the same way, now with St Margaret's Hospice by their side supporting them.

Michael and Ann receive support at home from Ralph, a St Margaret's Community Nurse Specialist, who visits regularly to care for Michael and the couple said he's made a huge difference to their lives.

Michael

"Ralph comes out to see me regularly. He's such a lovely person and is really on the ball, if we ever have any questions or if there's anything we need he will sort it out for us.

"I recently told Ralph that I needed some new slippers to help with my walking and I'd seen some on the NHS website which he said he'd try and get for me.

He's also been great at suggesting new medications for me to try to help with my pain or itching I sometimes get, which have been really helpful.

"Sometimes I have issues walking and can find it hard stay on my feet for long periods. I told Ralph and he arranged for a physiotherapist to see me at home, which was wonderful. She gave me some exercises which I do every day, and I am already seeing a difference.

Ann

"When Michael was first referred to St Margaret's I did feel upset. I felt sad that there was nothing more that could be done, but **I knew we had to make the most out of every day.**"
"The thing I love about Ralph is that he's never in a hurry. He's relaxed

when he comes to see us, and always has **time to sit and talk to us. He's taken the time to get to know us,** and always gives the time needed to make sure Michael has everything he needs.

"I do find caring for Michael hard sometimes and I think Ralph knows that. He always checks up on me when he comes to visit, which means a lot.

"If you ever need support from the hospice, they will be there for you.

All you need to do is pick up the phone and call the adviceline and they will give you all the support you need. Every time I've spoken to the nurses on the adviceline they've been really helpful and made sure we've got all the support we've needed."



Facing the future together

Michael and Ann said they "can't fault" the support St Margaret's has given them, and Ralph has helped to make difficult conversations about Michael's care in the future easier.

"The care that Ralph has given me has definitely been more personal than any other care I've had before, it's been one-to-one care which has been amazing. It's reassuring to know that he cares so much about us.

"We have spoken to Ralph about what my wishes are for when I become more unwell in the future. I've been straight to the point and honest about what my wishes are in the future, like Ann caring for me at home, and Ralph has just listened, advised, and helped us to get these plans in place."

"I don't know how long I have left – a month, a year, or a few years, I just don't know – but I do know that I am going to make the most of it."

Michael and Ann recently celebrated their 46th wedding anniversary and

said their love for each other has helped them to face Michael's illness together.

"My illness has had a big impact on our lives. It's not been an easy journey, but we've had support along the way. My motto is to 'wear it, bear it and keep going'. Sometimes I am in pain and it's taxing, but I just take each day as it comes with Ann by my side."

"Every day, I feel grateful that Michael is here with me. I wake up in the morning and give him a big hug and say, 'morning Michael, here's to another day' and it helps me to get through each day. I'm very independent and feel reassured that I have support from the hospice in the future as Michael becomes more unwell. I can't imagine what life will be like without him but there's nothing I can do to alter this situation."

Michael and Ann would encourage people to support the hospice so more people can benefit from this support in the future.

"It's a necessity to let these amazing people come and support you, so please support them. They make such a difference to me and many others like me and I want them to be there for others in the future."



To watch our interview with Michael and Ann, please visit:
st-margarets-hospice.org.uk/michael-ann-story



Sunflower Centres – renewed and better than ever

Our Sunflower Centres provide holistic care to help meet patients' physical, emotional, spiritual and social needs. They're for people who are well enough to live at home but need specialist support beyond their normal health and social care services.

In recent years, St Margaret's has supported patients using online tools, phone and video calls. We developed new videos to help patients improve breathlessness and mobility, as well as guided meditations. This blend of support led the hospice to a new approach for how best to meet the needs of patients and their families.

Our care needs to be responsive, sustainable and efficient. We sought input from patients to understand their requirements from St Margaret's services. The answer: a desire for a versatile blend of support that could adapt to their individual needs. Asking each patient **'what matters to you?'** is essential in tailoring our approach.

We can also reduce the demand on our Community Team by supporting patients who can come to the centres for treatment. As well as providing a safe, relaxed space for patients, the centre is also a hub for other care and therapies, to meet the needs of each patient. These include physiotherapy, complementary

therapies, psychological support, occupational therapy and spiritual care. The centre also provides advanced care planning and time to plan ahead in order that people can live well and die well, supported and with their loved ones involved.



How we support patients

Goal focused – patients work towards three personal goals.

Flexible – with face-to-face contact, video and phone calls. Enabling people to vary how often they visit.

Peer support – group sessions mean more patients feel able to speak about their fears and concerns and support each other.

Empowering patients to self-manage – by learning about their illness.

Evaluating for the future – regularly collecting feedback from patients and assessing our outcomes.

With these new principles in place since 2023, new staff and new opening hours, our Sunflower Centres in Taunton and Yeovil are a hive of activity again.



The Sunflower Centre and me

Susanne

Planning for the future when you have a life-limiting illness is a difficult endeavour. For Susanne, it was a big source of anxiety and seemed almost impossible.

Susanne came to the Sunflower Centre after being diagnosed with COPD. She had been shielding at home for nearly two years during the Covid pandemic and felt anxious about meeting new people and planning for the future.

Susanne knew she needed to make plans that would help her as she became more unwell, but she was unsure of where to start and how to speak to her family about her wishes. That's exactly how St Margaret's care helped.

"When I walked into the Sunflower Centre for the first time, I felt really anxious, I didn't know what to expect. But I was thrilled to meet nothing but smiling faces and a warm welcome, it **immediately made me feel at ease.**

There is a such great atmosphere in the Sunflower Centre, and this helped me to settle in right away. It's a kind and cheerful place where you can talk to the wonderful staff and volunteers **about absolutely anything.**

The team helped me to make advance care plans, something I had previously been anxious about. They took the time to sit with me and discuss planning for the future gradually and gently and it was a really empowering experience as I was in the driver's seat and got to **decide how I want things to be at the end of my life.**

The team also supported me to make a will, which I hadn't got around to, as well as getting a Do Not Resuscitate order in place which made me feel much more prepared for the future.

Talking about your wishes for the future is a difficult topic that no one wants to discuss, but the hospice made the process easy and really empowered me to do it. They helped me to get the **confidence to speak to my daughter about my condition which meant the world to me."**

Susanne also benefited from emotional support from staff, volunteers and even other patients in the Sunflower Centre and said coming to the centre gave her some dedicated relaxation time for herself which had a huge impact on her.

"You come to the Sunflower Centre with heavy bags filled with things like worries about your illness, hospital appointments and treatment, but the team helps you to put those bags down and just enjoy some time away from it for you.

"It's such a relief. Everyone builds up their own collection of bags and they can weigh you down.

When you're living with a terminal illness, you are so focused on your illness that you don't really have 'me time', but the Sunflower Centre gives that to you. **You are just yourself there,** not somebody's mum or somebody's wife, just you.

"Being able to spend time in an environment where I could sit and have open, frank discussions about my illness with no judgement from others was great. We were all in similar situations and it was great for me to have that support. It makes you realise that there are people who are worse off than yourself who are still positive which is a really important takeaway.

"You can talk as much or as little as you like, it's entirely up to you. You can also join in with crafts or activities going on and it's just such a nice environment to be in. You can also have Complementary Therapy treatments - I had reflexology each week which was a new experience for me, but I loved it. **It was a beautiful, relaxing experience which I cherished."**

"The people who work and volunteer there willingly give their time to contribute to something bigger and to make someone's day brighter and I think that's amazing."



Meet David Slack, Director of Finance

David joined St Margaret's in March 2022 after working in senior finance positions in the public sector, most notably the NHS in Somerset, including leading the Clinical Commissioning Group.

Since joining, David has helped the hospice navigate a number of challenges, including managing the recovery from the pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis as well as workforce shortages, particularly in our healthcare, housekeeping, and fundraising teams. Although this has been difficult, ensuring that St Margaret's can always deliver the best care for our patients and their families has remained central to David and the wider hospice team. This patient-centred principle is at the core of the decisions we make.

"Thankfully, you, our wonderful supporters, have remained committed to raising vital funds for St Margaret's, which has helped us weather the storm of the pandemic and rapid cost rises.

"When you have donated items to your local shop, taken part in one of our events, or pledged to leave a gift in your will, you have made a difference. Especially during this time when we know you have also faced challenges due to the cost-of-living crisis."

David and everyone at the hospice would like to extend a big thank you for your support. With you by our side, we will continue being here for those who need us most, whenever we're needed.

"Your support is vital and makes a difference to people across Somerset every day. Thank you."



Iceland Trek

2025 could be your year to take on a once in a lifetime adventure! Join other St Margaret's Hospice supporters on an exclusive trek across Landmannalaugar in southern Iceland, one of the most volcanic regions on the planet.

Weave through vast steaming lava fields, camp in some of Europe's most spectacular terrain and bathe aching limbs in the blue lagoon. With awe-inspiring views at every step, this tough challenge will be incredibly rewarding and you'll create memories to cherish forever.

You'll be supported every step of the way throughout your fundraising journey, and the trek is fully guided.



Dates: 27 – 31 August 2025

Minimum fundraising target: £3,599 per person

Find out more or register your place:
st-margarets-hospice.org.uk/icelandtrek



Why we love volunteering – and you will too!

Ken and Lynne have been volunteering at St Margaret's since 2016 and they now support many of our fundraising events and activities in the Somerset community. In conversation with them and Kerry Baillie, Community Partnerships Manager, their passion for giving their time to help shines through - and the fun they have volunteering with friends is obvious.

Ken, a retired lorry driver, started volunteering a year after his wife died having been cared for by St Margaret's. "I worked in the gardens every Wednesday – there were eight of us – it's a social thing as well. We've made some nice friends with fundraising and I enjoy it – with the banter too!"

Lynne worked in accounts and first volunteered at Christmas 2016. "I got together with Ken, and he was

already a volunteer, I was in a Rotary Club so this was another thing to get on with and help in the community. I first helped with a bucket collection at Yeovil Town Football Club. It's brilliant because we've got rapport together – we have a good time because we know one another too."

They lead an active life, loving holidays, spending time with family, looking after their grandchildren, regularly watching Exeter Chiefs and

volunteering at their local sports club, as well as St Margaret's. "I look at the diary and think 'oh I'm not sure I can fit that in' Lynne said. "But if we are not doing anything else, we will always help – if we are busy doing something else, it's normally family or rugby!"

What do you love about volunteering?

"Going out to a 'proper function'! Like when Alfie Boe was at Live in Somerset" responded Lynne "Because we're volunteering, we're working – but we're also getting enjoyment out of it as well."

"You do have good fun" added Kerry, "when you're at these events, I look forward to doing them with you. And I think of the friendships that you create too."

The couple are also driven by putting something back into the community and helping others.

Ken added "We've met some really nice friends here, who we wouldn't have met without the hospice. And you feel you get something out of it yourself, inside – giving something back because I've had such a lot out of the hospice with my wife and my family."

Get in contact

Find out more about giving time to support the hospice:

🌐 st-margarets-hospice.org.uk/volunteering
 ✉ volunteering@st-margarets-hospice.org.uk
 ☎ **01823 333822 / 01935 709480**

Fundraising events coming up that will need volunteers include:

**Colour Run (& Bubble Toddler) • Dunster Show
 Big Somerset Cricket Bash • Taunton Flower Show
 Royal Bath and West Show • Sunflower Stroll
 Santa Abseil • New Year Dip • 2025 Charity Ball**





Spring has Sprung at St Margaret's Furniture shops

Furniture has always played a big part in St Margaret's shops, providing vital income for Hospice services. Today we shine the spotlight on our 'big three' furniture shops in **Bridgwater**, **Taunton** and **Yeovil**. The range of products has grown over the years to so much more than just furniture, offering books, media, home décor and even bargain clothing at amazing prices!

The Old Cinema, Yeovil

An iconic Art Deco building close to the town centre and St Margaret's fabulous furniture shop since 2015. Find pre-loved furniture, new beds and mattresses as well as a clearance shop on the top floor.

The shop is a great drop-off point for local donations of furniture, clothing and other items - with free and convenient parking.

📍 Old Cinema, 1 Court Ash, Yeovil, BA20 1HG
☎ 01935 413413



Taunton Furniture Shop

Boasting modern flair and an array of items including sofas, living and bedroom furniture, brand new and second-hand beds and much more"

The shop also makes donation drop-offs and collecting items a breeze with free parking in the busy town centre.

📍 151-152 East Reach, Taunton, TA1 3HN
☎ 01823 283140

Bridgwater Furniture Shop

A community shop in the heart of the town, supported by a team of wonderful volunteers who create a warm shopping experience and make everything run smoothly.

With a range of quality and affordable new and pre-loved furniture, clearance clothing and bric-a-brac, it's a shop to meet all your needs!

📍 30 High Street, Bridgwater, TA6 3BJ
☎ 01278 458785



Free furniture collection

Available across Somerset for people donating quality used furniture.

For more information, visit:
st-margarets-hospice.org.uk/furniture-collection



DID YOU KNOW?

- We also have furniture shops in **Minehead** and **Wincanton**
- In 2023 our furniture shops saved over **4,500 tonnes** of CO₂

Weekly Prize Draw

Join our amazing community of Weekly Prize Draw players

Playing our Weekly Prize Draw is a fun and exciting way to make a real difference to our patients, and their loved ones. Every ticket counts – and your £1 each week will help us to deliver compassionate care and vital support to those who need us.

Together, our amazing community of Prize Draw players **raise an incredible £7,600 every single week**. That could pay for someone to receive 24/7 care on our In-Patient Unit for a whole week.

So when you join our Weekly Prize Draw, you know that you'll be joining something special. Joining an amazing community of supporters who collectively enable us to provide care, compassion and comfort to individuals and their loved ones, when they need it most.

28 cash prizes up for grabs every week

The draw takes place every Friday, and offers the chance to win one of our **28 cash prizes every week**. This includes our rollover prize, which has already reached £5,000+ on 2 separate occasions in the last 12 months.

So don't miss out. Sign-up today, and be in with a chance of winning big.

To join our Weekly Prize Draw or for more information, please complete the form sent with this newsletter, email or sign up online:

🌐 st-margarets-hospice.org.uk/weekly-prize-draw

✉ lottery.office@st-margarets-hospice.org.uk

1st Prize
£1,000

2nd Prize
£500

Rollover
Prize
£250*
*Up to £10,000

plus **25**
prizes of
£10



St Margaret's
Hospice Care



Visit our Glorious Gardens this summer

Over 60 Somerset gardens
open from April to August



st-margarets-hospice.org.uk/glorious-gardens

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