

SUMMER/AUTUMN 2022

Keech Matters

If you or someone
you know has a
life-limiting illness,
contact us.
For **FREE**.
It's that simple!

I'M
LIVING
A GOOD,
FULL LIFE
thanks to Keech!

Check out
page 11 and 12

Let's hear from Liz



As the nights start to draw in, I look back on the year so far with great pride.

We've moved forward in this "new normal," or as I like to say, "revitalised way", with one goal: to make sure our specialist care is always there, whenever and wherever it's needed.

In this edition of Keech Matters, we hear from patients about the impact we're having on their lives, and what support we're providing their families and friends, too. We give you an exclusive look at our events and we meet one of our amazing fundraisers. Mark cycled to every Luton Town FC away game for us, helping us make the difference when it matters the most.

Looking ahead to Christmas (where has the year gone?), I'm delighted to tell you that our Light up a Life remembrance service is back in person at the hospice on Sunday 4 December 2022, as well as online. I love to see the tree lit up outside the front of the hospice every year as we remember those we love.

I hope you enjoy this edition and I look forward to seeing you at one of our events soon. (Check out the back page for news on what's coming up.)

Best wishes,

Liz Searle, CEO

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www.keech.org.uk



Watch us on YouTube
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

KEEPING UP WITH KEECH



More access to more people with 'Your Hospice Care'

We've joined up with Bedford Daycare Hospice and Sue Ryder St John's Hospice to encourage more people to get in touch with us **from the moment they're diagnosed with a life-limiting illness.**

Your Hospice Care gives more people access to our free, specialist care and support from day one.

The earlier you contact us, the more we can help you live well and remain as independent as possible, for as long as possible.

Please help us spread the word to others who may benefit from our excellent free care and support.

www.keech.org.uk/refer 0808 180 7788 letmehelp@keech.org.uk

Tea with the Queen

Our volunteers Peter and Margaret attended the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service Garden Party at Buckingham Palace as part of the Platinum Jubilee celebrations.

Joanna, Manager at our Birdsfoot Lane store, accompanied Margaret. They even managed to coordinate outfits! A highlight of their day was saying hello to the Duchess of Cambridge. What a fabulous opportunity!

Our volunteers are the backbone of our charity and our army for good. Whatever time you can give, we have so many roles to choose from. You can volunteer at the hospice or out in the community.

Get in touch at volunteering@keech.org.uk and find out how you can help us keep making the difference when it matters the most.



Did someone say delivery?

Did you spot us on ITV News recently along with SERV Herts and Beds and some of their incredible lifesaving bikers?

Last year, we carried out around 400 blood transfusions and 600 blood tests at Keech, which contributed towards saving the NHS £6.5million pounds.

We couldn't do this vital care without the support of volunteers from SERV Herts and Beds who transport bloods taken at the hospice to the hospital. This means our patients can have their transfusions and tests at a time which suits them in the comfort of the hospice rather than in hospital.

The volunteer bikers not only give up their time but even pay for the fuel for their bikes themselves. Thank you SERV Herts and Beds.

Ramadan campaign funds new Community Connector

Mostaque Koyes, Director of Community Interest Luton and Keech Ambassador, set a challenge to raise **£25,000** over Ramadan to fund a new Community Connector role for us.

With the incredible support of local businesses and wonderful individuals, he's done it! This new role, within the south Asian community in Luton, will see the successful applicant be a bridge between us and the community as they spread the word about what hospice care really is to individuals and groups.

Thank you Mostaque for your hard work! We know this will have such a fantastic impact on our local community.



“Whenever we need it, whatever it is, Keech is there for us.”



“Before Amelia was diagnosed, and before Keech Hospice Care, I was really lonely. I didn’t know what to do with myself. **I tried to carry on as normal, as if nothing was wrong, but you can only do that for so long.**

Initially, when I had my 12 week scan, the hospital was concerned with some of the checks Amelia had. They thought she had Edwards Syndrome or Patau Syndrome. We had genetic testing, but all the results came back clear. They continued to give Amelia extra scans to keep an eye on her. At one point, they thought her kidneys looked dilated, but they put it down to an infection because we’d had the genetic testing. First, they thought something was wrong, then they thought differently, but obviously there was a problem.

We expected Amelia to be okay at the birth – we were completely unprepared. We knew she’d need antibiotics for the infection in her kidneys, but we thought that would be all.

Amelia was very poorly when she was born. I didn’t get to meet her for over four hours. She wasn’t breathing properly and was really swollen. They rushed her to

NICU (neonatal intensive care unit) and then when we were allowed to see her. We were told something was wrong and that she needed lots of tests. We were in hospital for about a month.

It was an extremely scary and difficult time. The tests showed Amelia had five holes in her heart and the artery to her right lung was too narrow. Her hips were dislocated, her kidneys were dilated, her left leg was bent the wrong way, her body was bruised, and she had a large lump on the back of her neck; they weren’t sure what it was. **They didn’t know what was wrong with Amelia, so we had another seven scary months of testing. It was so worrying.**

At eight months old, Amelia was finally diagnosed with a rare genetic condition called Au-Kline Syndrome. We had no idea what it was. We’d had the genetic testing, and nothing had been identified. It was both confusing and devastating news. Au-Kline syndrome is an illness that affects many parts of the body. Amelia has weak muscle tone. This affects her being able to walk on her own, as well as lots of other problems, including her speech being delayed.

Amelia was around nine months old when we first came to Keech Hospice Care for the play group, Tots and Toys. Keech has really helped to bring Amelia out of herself.

Amelia especially loves going to Keech’s music events. They are a real favourite with her. Throughout COVID, **Keech would arrange Zoom sessions** for just Amelia or she would join in with the Tots and Toys sessions. There were lots of singing and fun activities and it made a big difference while we were shielding. We stayed at home in isolation for just over a year, but Keech made sure we had something every week. As we started to come back out into the world, **we even we had a socially distanced picnic in Keech’s main garden,** which was really nice.

It’s great to now be finally back in the hospice enjoying all the sessions and support. I feel comfort knowing I can text, ring or ask Keech for help anytime – even when we were on Zoom and couldn’t come into the hospice. Keech’s support makes you feel so much better and not alone.

Victoria, Amelia’s mum

We provide free, specialist care for adults and children with life-limiting illnesses as well as specialist support for family and friends.

Did you know, around two thirds of our work takes place out in the community across Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Milton Keynes. So, when we say hospice care is everywhere – we really mean it! Be it in a family’s home, hospital, care home, school or at the hospice itself, every day at Keech we strive to be making the difference when it matters the most.

If you, or a child or adult you know has been diagnosed with a life-limiting illness, we can help you today. Please find out more at:

www.keech.org.uk/refer

THE GIFT OF TIME



Meet Bryan

“I am 79 years old and have been married to Pam for 57 years. I was diagnosed a few years ago with an uncommon liver condition, which has affected my life badly. I get my blood tests done at Keech Hospice Care and it's so different from going to the hospital or my GP. The care team at Keech are so friendly - even on days when I don't feel so great.

I've recently also been diagnosed with dementia and I'm not always able to look after myself. My wife Pam takes care of me, mostly at home. **Keech provides support to Pam and me** through its Hospice at Home service, where Richard, a volunteer at Keech, comes into our home regularly to support us.

Keech's Hospice at Home service allows me to be at home in familiar surroundings.

With support from Richard, I also get to go outdoors, giving Pam a vital break to do what she likes without worrying about me.

It's made such a massive difference to me. I'm able to talk to Richard and get his support with things like navigating my medical appointments and the healthcare system. He is a vital lifeline for me and Pam.”

Bryan, patient of Keech Hospice Care. Died in July 2022.

Thank you to our 1,469 volunteers who are the backbone of our hospice charity. None of what we do would be possible without them. Find out more at www.keech.org.uk/volunteer.

Meet Richard



What do you do as a volunteer?

To be a Hospice at Home volunteer is a privilege, at times challenging but also humbling. Our training helps us to be professional in our roles, but ultimately so much of it is about building relationships and simply doing your best to help people as they deal with their condition and situation.

I started helping Bryan in May 2021. He is my third patient since I started volunteering.

I see Bryan (and his wife Pam) once a week, usually on Tuesdays. Bryan and I get on really well. We talk about things that are of interest to Bryan (and me!), including football, cycling and other sports. We are both engineers and this also has helped us to gel, as well as our having a shared sense of humour.

How does volunteering help you?

The training and experience I have gained also provides life skills: how to better engage, empathise with,

and support others who themselves are in very challenging and sometimes frightening situations.

Keech does a great job in joining the dots - helping patients, families and volunteers to navigate the complexities of the health and social care services, and linking up with the GP, health care professionals, social workers and other supporting parties.

What would you say to others who might be thinking about volunteering?

You can contribute, however small that may feel to you, in making the natural flow towards the end of a person's life the best it can be for them. Think of it perhaps as being more about helping them to live their life.

Go on: Make a difference.

Richard, Keech volunteer who supported Bryan, patient of Keech Hospice Care.



Hi, I'm Faith, Head of Volunteering at Keech. The difference our volunteers make is incredible, but we urgently need more. Whatever time you can give, we have so many roles to choose from. You can volunteer at the hospice or out in the community!

visit keech.org.uk/volunteer, email volunteering@keech.org.uk or call **01582 492339** for a friendly chat with us today.

BORN TO RIDE

(and make a difference)

How one man with a passion for cycling and raising money set out on an adventure with football on his mind.

We're delighted Mark's been recognised for the Fundraiser Award by BBC Three Counties Radio's Make a Difference Awards.

“I found the lockdowns during COVID really challenging. I missed not attending Luton Town Football Club games or seeing my friends. Working from home had a bad impact on my mental health. So, about 18 months ago, I decided to find something positive to do and I wanted to raise awareness of the fantastic work of charities.

My passion for cycling and raising money has led me to do many cycling adventures and raise thousands of pounds for good causes. But my latest adventure was by far the most demanding, but it brought together my two greatest passions – cycling and Luton Town Football Club; I've been a fan for over 40 years.

I decided I'd cycle to every Luton Town away match for the 2021/22 season and fundraise for three charities, including Keech Hospice Care, close to my heart.

Once the fixtures were announced, I started to map out the challenge – carefully working out the route and timings, booking accommodation where needed, deciding which cycle to use depending on the terrain, and booking annual leave from work.

This all started in August 2021, with the first run to Stevenage and the final leg being to Fulham in West London on 30 April 2022, covering over 3,000 miles.

The biggest challenges I faced (apart from catching COVID-19) were the elements. **Cycling through the winter months in freezing weather, gales and driving rain to get to each game was tough.** Sometimes I even got lost. But I was determined to remain focused on the job in hand.

This challenge has been a massive part of my life for a year, but it's been very rewarding and humbling. The support I've received has been way beyond my expectations and the response has been staggering. I thank everyone who has supported me. I've met so many fantastic people – not just Luton Town supporters,

but the away fans too have been fantastic and made donations.

Keech Hospice Care provides fantastic care to children and adults who need it at a difficult time in their life. **If, through my challenge, in a small way I can contribute something to the incredible work Keech does in supporting people with life limiting illnesses, then it's worth it.**

Cycling solo through unknown terrains was tough at times. During these moments, I liked to break down the journey into short chunks of five-miles each. As you reach the five-mile target, set your sight on the next five-miles. Eventually, you feel better and get to the end.

At my lowest, I reminded myself why I was doing this challenge and the incredible work Keech does to support everyone – my challenge is nothing compared to the challenge they face every day.

I'm proud of my achievement and would recommend finding something to make a difference for you and someone else too.”

Mark has raised over **£15,800** completing his cycle challenge. Can we get him to **£20,000**? There's still time to donate at www.keech.org.uk/donate. Massive congratulations Mark and **THANK YOU!**



I'M LIVING A GOOD, FULL LIFE – thanks to Keech!

“ I am 47 years old and was diagnosed with breast cancer in early 2022. I'm married to Jal, and we have two children. We moved from London to Luton 11 years ago. I'm a British-born Muslim with roots in Pakistan. I'm an English teacher and spent many years teaching at a school locally but stopped teaching in classrooms just before the pandemic.

I've been in good health generally but in December 2021, I started to get spots on my body which spread. I contacted my GP and was given a medicated cream. I also had chronic anaemia and I was referred to the hospital's dermatology team who did a biopsy – it showed I had cancer cells – but an ultrasound found them to be benign.

In January 2022, I had intense stomach pain and went to A&E. I was admitted for more tests and that's when they found I had cancer that had spread to my stomach membrane. There was a lot of fluid built up and I looked like I was pregnant!

The breast cancer had spread already, and I had chemotherapy immediately. I also had two blood transfusions and suffered chronic fatigue.

The first time I came to the hospice, I thought it was a small hospital. I get my blood tests done here regularly and the results are shared with the hospital to monitor my progress. **I've seen the same nurses at Keech for my blood tests and injections.** All the nurses in the well-being centre are excellent. Vicky's brilliant and this **continuity is really important to me to set my mind at rest.**

Without Keech, I'd be really lost; I was quite apprehensive about a lot of things. Now **I feel really supported with my ongoing monitoring via blood tests and Keech's physio team.**

My faith is also important to me as Muslims, we believe that death is written when we are born, and it will happen one day. Dwelling on that is not important – living a good conscious life is.

Physiotherapists Nicky and Charlotte are really helpful. I had been struggling to know which exercises I can do safely. It's important for me to stay mobile during the treatment and for my mental wellbeing.

I've had an assessment at Keech to test my stamina levels and I was prescribed a set of exercises I could do at home. I was

also offered some sessions in Keech's gym. Yes, Keech has a gym! I would not join any gym in my current situation but the gym at Keech is lovely and very private, so I feel reassured.

I've also seen Keech's complementary therapist Sarah. She provides massage and other alternative therapies. And I'm supported by Keech's social care team too. Keech is not what I expected. I'm pleasantly surprised.

Keech has made a huge difference in my journey. My family and I have talked about my cancer and treatment. They understand I have a life-limiting illness but, being open with them, has helped them to come to terms with this.

Keech's support has made my cancer journey easier and taken a lot of stress away. I really look forward to coming to Keech every fortnight. It's a strange thing to say but I am coming to the Wellbeing Centre to help me live a good, full life with the time I have.”

Syeda, patient of Keech's Wellbeing Centre.

We help everyone live well and remain as independent as possible, for as long as possible. From the moment you or a loved one is told you have a life-limiting illness, please get in touch.

We can support you for FREE.
www.keech.org.uk/refer
0808 180 7788





IT'S 'SLICE' TO MEET YOU!

Our children's community team cared for **310** children and **950** specialist clinical phone calls. Our play services team held **789** activity sessions for **155** children.

Thankfully, our play services, music groups and children's therapy sessions have all returned following the Pandemic. We continue to provide individual care every day as we strive to continue making the difference when it matters the most for our patients and their families.

“William has Medulloblastoma (the most common type of brain tumour in children) and has not eaten food for the last two years while on treatment. Jennie, from Keech's play team, has been fantastic! She's been visiting us, playing with William in the garden, organising activities he enjoys doing and really getting to know him.

When Jennie learned William enjoyed cooking, she contacted a pizza company in Hatfield and asked if William could come along and make pizza. He took pizza orders from me, his dad and his granny, who was also celebrating her 80th birthday. He then made and cooked our pizzas. William started enjoying food again about a month ago. He picked out pizza from a buffet as his first

taster, so a pizza was the perfect thing to make!

Thank you again SO much for such an amazing experience for William (and us!) He absolutely loved it.”

Mollie, mum to patient William.

“We absolutely love working with children and seeing them have fun just being a child. Our play programmes help children to develop and find coping mechanisms for their feelings. Above all, they help make memories. Parents have a safe space to see their child just be a child and be with other families who are in a similar situation. We're so proud that our new ways to play have helped us reach more families and create greater choice of activities for our children.

Jennie, Hannah and Rosey, Children's Services Team.

Make a decision today that will make the difference tomorrow

For every £7 we receive, £1 is from a precious gift left in a Will.

Only 4 in every 10 people have made their Will.
What's stopping you from making yours?

1 It's too expensive!

How about if we told you, it's free? We understand the importance of having your wishes captured so we've teamed up with www.bequeathed.org/keech to help you get organised for free. We'll guide you step-by-step and it often takes less time than you think.

2 I don't want to think about it!

Do you find the subject of death uncomfortable? Is it the reason you're putting this life admin task off? As part of our partnership, you'll get up-to 30 minutes expertise from an accredited legal firm and there's no obligation for you to include a gift to support our care *(but we hope it's something you'll consider after reading this).*

3 I'm too young to think about a Will!

You're never too young to capture your future wishes and it's important to make sure your loved ones are provided for. Getting started is easy.

Hi, I'm Stef, In Memory & Gifts in Wills Fundraiser. A gift in your Will costs nothing today – but makes a world of difference for those we care for tomorrow. If you want to find out more, get in touch! Please email me at **Stefanie.Cuff@keech.org.uk** or call me on **01582 707940**

WINTER EVENTS 2022

Keech Hospice Care's

CHRISTMAS MARKET

26 - 27 November 2022

**Barnfield
College,**

**New Bedford Road,
Luton, LU2 7BF**

**Christmas gifts
Festive food
Free parking
Over 50 stalls
Beautiful crafts**

keech.org.uk/christmasmarket

SANTA RUN



**Sunday 11 December
Bedford Embankment**

Meet Father Christmas

Big Santa warm up

Festive favourite tunes

Santa suit included

5km run, walk or scoot for all the family!

Sign up at:

www.keech.org.uk/santarun

All the festive feels!

ONLY £10 for adults

£5 for children

Family saver available.