

SPRING/SUMMER 2024

Keech Matters

**“
Keech has
reminded
me that
I’m just as
important.”**

Read Zeb’s story
on page 5

**“
I never knew
hospices
offered such
a range of
services.”**

Read more about
our wellbeing
services on page 9



Let's hear from Liz



We had a fantastic end to 2023 with the support we received across our Christmas festivities, including the brand new Smiley Sam Jnr, who took over from Smiley Sam following his retirement! Barnfield College did a great job, and he was a big hit within the local community. We hosted our annual 'Light Up a Life' event at our Luton site and virtually at our Bedford site, remembering loved ones that have died. It was lovely to be able to host across both areas of the county.

We also shared the amazing story of Robin. Robin's parents say, "Following, the care from Keech, he's now a thriving, happy and content two-year-old. He's our miracle boy, defying the odds that were stacked against him, both in those early days and from a rare diagnosis."

As a charity, it takes around **£7 million** every year, that's over **£19,000** every day, to provide our specialist care to everyone living with a life-limiting illness from day one. Like many of you, we have been hit hard by the cost of living increases. Watching our energy bills go up is chilling. We can't have a cold hospice! I want to sincerely thank you for all the support you give us. I know it's tough for you too. Every bit of your support helps us keep going through these difficult times.

Thank you for helping us to make the difference where it matters the most. In this edition of Keech Matters, we hear from Zebulan's dad Michael, to learn how Keech has supported him and his family through his son's diagnosis. As well as that, we share the exciting events we have coming up this year, including The Short Tail Trail!

I hope you enjoy this edition of Keech Matters. We'd love to hear your feedback; scan the QR code to share your thoughts or contact us: letmehelp@keech.org.uk

Best wishes,

Liz Searle, CEO Keech Hospice Care



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



We recently updated our Privacy Policy and we wanted to let you know about the main changes, as your trust and privacy are important to us.

KEEPING UP WITH KEECH



A trip to remember

In September, #TeamKeech took on the challenge of trekking the length of Hadrian's Wall. Collectively, the team walked over **4.5 million steps**, suffering many blisters and tears along the way. They even dealt with some unexpected national news coverage as one of the last groups to see the great Sycamore Gap tree before it was sadly felled.

But, nevertheless, the challenges didn't deter from what was a truly memorable and fun experience for all. Most days ended in tears from laughter, and friendships for a lifetime were formed – all while raising vital funds for Keech Hospice Care.

Smiley Sam has retired!

After **25 years** of touring Luton's streets, spreading festive cheer and covering more than **2,100 miles**, it was time for Smiley Sam to take a well-earned rest. We knew we had to come up with something better to take the reins - **Say hello to Smiley Sam Jnr!**

Barnfield College was delighted to take on the project of Smiley Sam Jnr and with financial support from The Connolly Foundation. Barnfield students spent over **600 hours** building and bringing a new train to life in time for the festive period last year. Doesn't Smiley Sam Jnr look great?!



A fundraising super-sprint!

In October, we set ourselves the biggest fundraising challenge we've ever done with the aim of raising **£500,000** in just **48 hours**. All donations made during the **48 hours** were matched, meaning each donation would have **double the impact for our patients and their loved ones**.

Thanks to the hard work of many of you, our amazing Keech Champions, we raised more than **£300,000** over the weekend, not what we hoped for but nevertheless, fantastic! We couldn't be the hospice we are without the generosity of our supporters and the local community, so **Thank you!**

Supporting our staff

In November, we celebrated the **10th anniversary of our My Care Co-ordination Team**. The team not only offer a 24-hour advice and support phone line in Luton, but also enable those who wish to stay at home to receive care to do so.

The service was set up to provide people with a choice in their end of life care and we're proud to share that last year the team prevented **516 hospital admissions** and made over **1,600 home visits** to patients in our local community. We're looking forward to another decade of supporting our community in Luton.

Celebrating Black History Month

We are working hard on being a hospice for everyone. We chose to celebrate Black History Month with an evening of conversation and education, including a talk from our guest speaker, Eric, a patient attending our Bedford site.

He became the first black male police officer in Bedfordshire and described his career and life, including challenges and how he overcame them.

Another great example of why our Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity group is so important for our staff and patients too.



“We’re making memories at Keech”

“No one asked me how I was feeling or coping and why would they? All the questions were directed to my wife and rightly so. That said, it’s easy to feel shut out, like your voice doesn’t matter – but with Keech, they’ve reminded me that I’m just as important on this journey.”

I’m Michael Day, dad to our two-year-old son, Zebulan. I’d always pictured myself being a stay-at-home dad, unconventional I know, but when Covid hit I was given the chance to make it my reality. Soon after, my wife Jordan and I found out we were expecting our third bundle of joy, and we were over the moon.

We eagerly anticipated our 20-week scan where we would find out our baby’s gender. The sonographer told us the devastating news that our baby boy had an extra vessel in his heart. Soon after, we were then sent to University College London Hospital for another scan where the doctors explained everything to us. The more we were told, the more I struggled to comprehend what it meant for my son.

Our unborn baby was diagnosed with TAPVD (Total Anomalous Pulmonary Venous Drainage). We were told there

was a high chance of him not surviving after he was born. While most parents would be preparing for their child’s birth, we were putting plans in place for a funeral. I didn’t have time to think about my own feelings.

The moment Zebby was delivered by c-section, the doctors whisked him away into a separate room. We couldn’t pick him up or hold him as he was quickly moved to another hospital for the vital care. **I was torn between my wife’s recovery in one hospital and my little Zebby, who was now at another across the city.**

What followed were more challenges, from heart surgery to brain surgery. Within 10 weeks Zebby had been through countless tests, procedures, and surgeries. It was chaos and looking back I don’t know how I managed to stretch myself so far. As a husband and a father that’s what we ‘have’ to do, right?

Amidst the chaos and despair, **I found a beacon of hope when we were referred to Keech Hospice Care.** Initially, the word ‘hospice’ filled me with dread, but I soon discovered that Keech was not just a place for the end. It’s a sanctuary, a place where we can relax as a family and feel comfortable with our surroundings.

Zebby has fully immersed himself in Keech. We regularly attend ‘Tots and Toys’, have long daycare sessions and even overnight stays. The team at Keech are more than just specialists – they’re extended family, who understand our needs. They have supported me, my other two children and my wife to really understand how we’re feeling. They help us work through our feelings by giving us a safe space to talk and allowing us to have time as a family. **That is so important, we’re making memories at Keech.**

Before I came to the hospice, I was never asked how I was feeling or if I was coping. Instead, all the questions were directed to my wife. But dads are important too, aren’t we?

In my experience, it’s easy to feel shut out as a dad, like your voice doesn’t matter. But Keech has reminded me, I’m just as important on this journey and their support is always there whenever I need it.

Keech has played such a pivotal role in supporting me and my family through this challenging time; I really feel the specialist care, advice and support has made my life as Zebby’s dad just that bit easier.



Scan the QR code to read Zebby’s full story.





MAKE THE DIFFERENCE VOLUNTEER

Why don't you encourage your organisation to join our Keech Corporate Volunteering Programme – there are lots of rewarding benefits to both employee and employer available at both Bedford and Luton sites. We can also offer meeting space and refreshment packages.

Why should employees participate?

- Experience a rewarding day at Keech Hospice Care
- Enjoy a chance to be heroes for a day
- Support your local Hospice by providing much needed time, expertise and donations
- Inspire and engage individuals

Why should your organisation participate?

We can offer a range of volunteering options and can scale our volunteering package from 4-20 employees.

- Build teamwork within your organisation outside the office environment and align with your employees' social responsibility values
- Work in partnership with us to achieve your social aims
- Benefit from your community investment with shared networking and promotion opportunities across your chosen social media channels

Corporate Volunteering at Keech is an excellent way to team build and give your time to a great cause!

Volunteering activities

- Gardening projects
- Volunteering in one of our retail shops
- Maintenance work – e.g painting fences and furniture or supporting a special project (available at both sites subject to availability)



Scan the QR code to find out more or contact us at letmehelp@keech.org.uk or call 01582 707940.



**SCAN ME AND
SIGN UP TODAY**
keech.org.uk/volunteer

#BeTheReason



A JOURNEY THROUGH OUR SERVICES



Pam



Diagnosed in 2022 with a rare form of blood cancer



Self-referred myself to Keech shortly after diagnosis



Physical support by way of stretch and balance groups



Counselling for my family



Support groups for me and all the family

“ I knew of Keech, I knew it was a brilliant hospice. I now know one of the first things I should have done after diagnosis is call them and ask for help. ”

“ My husband Lee has been supported with counselling, they met him straight away and gave him so much time. ”

“ Change what you think about hospices – there is so much support that can help you live well for as long as you can. ”

“ Getting the diagnosis is bleak but it doesn’t mean you can’t live beautifully. ”



David



Diagnosed in 2022 with Motor Neurone Disease



Sister-in-law introduced me to Keech



Hydrotherapy pool



The gym for circuits



Counselling for both for myself and my wife



Complementary therapies

“ Donna my Occupational Therapist nurse is so valuable to us on this journey. ”

“ There is so much on offer, I struggle to attend all the groups, even though I’d love to. It has really made a difference to my everyday. ”

“ Keech are not just here for me but my wife Sonia too, I’m delighted she is also supported – it takes away the burden just a little. ”

“ Keech is a place of joy, care and love and is helping me live well for as long as I have left. ”



If you’d like to find out more about the full range of services Keech Hospice Care offer, please scan the QR code.



Compassionate communities

A person living at home with a life limiting illness may encounter healthcare services up to 5% of any day. As a community what can you do to occupy and support that 95%?

Compassionate Communities is part of the UK's wellbeing movement, collaborating with diverse stakeholders—healthcare organisations, local services, hospices, and businesses. Rooted in public health palliative care, we strive for community-led solutions to foster healthier, more compassionate communities.



Hello, I'm Mohammed and my role at the hospice is as a Community Connector – the ability to engage and sustain relationships while promoting conversations about planning for ill health, death, dying, loss, and bereavement.

In South Asian communities, end-of-life care is often stigmatised. It can be considered unacceptable that someone outside the family should provide this care. As a result, many people who would greatly benefit from receiving hospice care aren't.



Hi I'm Karen and my main focus is to bring our community together to support each other through difficult times associated with care, deteriorating health, dying and bereavement.

To encourage, facilitate, support and care for one another and build resilience within the community to talk about death and dying by providing people with the skills and confidence to do so.

Our workshops

Compassionate friends skills workshop

A compassionate community is one in which everyone recognises that we all have a role in supporting each other, particularly during periods of crisis and loss. We want to create a community of Compassionate Friends across the areas where we deliver care to help dispel the myths about dying and bereavement, helping communities to be better informed and more confident in having these conversations.

Your digital memories matter

Have you thought about what will happen to your digital footprint? What do we mean by digital assets? This workshop will provide you with an understanding of what your digital legacy means, what your digital assets are, where to go for help and how to turn this into conversation with family and friends. We are currently trialling this with patients that attend our Bedford site.

Musical memories – Playlist for Life Awareness

Keetch has become a Help Point for PlaylistforLife to help people make that connection and memories, and provide helpful leaflets and materials to make their own personal playlists. Join us for a short introduction on how sharing personal playlists can help people live well with dementia and other life limiting conditions. Our next session is on Tuesday 7 May 2024 - 12-1pm. Scan our QR code below for more information.

Death Cafe

Come enjoy a slice of cake, tea and a group chat where we talk about death, bereavement and the end-of-life. Together, let's shatter the silence around discussing death.

No Barriers Here

Ever wondered about the things that will hold value to you at the end of your life? Do you think it's too early to contemplate the end-of-life because you're young, or healthy? A free face to face session where we will be getting creative with arts and craft to explore what matters most to you and gently unlock conversations about the end-of-life.



Scan the QR code to find out more.



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into great care**

#DonateFeelGreat



Scan the QR code to
find out more.

keech.org.uk/shop

“

People are living longer with increasingly complex illnesses. Your support will help us to continue to reach out to people who may not know of us and how to support them. ”

Elaine Tolliday, Deputy CEO and Clinical Director, Keech Hospice Care.



Imagine the difference a gift in your Will would make – ‘1 in 5 of our patients and their families are cared for by a precious gift left in a Will.’

1

Making a new Will or changing an existing one, you may like to consider:

- What it is you own (particularly important if you want to leave something specific to someone).
- Who it is you want to remember in your Will – family, friends, charities.
- What to do with your social media accounts or other online storage, e.g photos or music.
- If you already have a Will, it is a good idea to review it every 5 to 10 years to make sure it still reflects your wishes.
- For unbiased advice go to www.gov.uk/make-will or visit www.law.society.org.uk and search for 'making a Will'.

2

Think about the types of gift you can leave, your gift can be as small or large as you like. There are three ways of leaving a gift.

- A share of your estate from 1% to 100% or anything in between.
- A cash gift, £1,000, £100,000 – the amount is up to you.
- A specific item you own, for example, a piece of jewellery, a collection or a classic car.

3

If the time is right for you to support our care and remember Keech Hospice Care with a gift in your Will, it might be helpful for you to know the following:

Our official charity name is
Keech Hospice Care
Our address is;
**Great Bramingham Lane,
Streetley, Luton
LU3 3NT**

Our registered charity number is 1035089. We can provide some examples of wording for your Will but we'd recommend you get professional legal advice.



Scan the QR code to
find out more, or contact Stef Cuff:
Stefanie.cuff@keech.org.uk
or call **01582 707940**



INTRODUCING

THE SHORT TAIL TRAIL LUTON 2024



AFTER THE SUCCESS OF THE BIG TRUNK TRAIL, WE'RE BACK WITH NOT ONE BUT TWO LOVEABLE SCULPTURES! – OUR HARE AND OUR TORTOISE ARE SET TO FILL LUTON ONCE MORE WITH COLOUR AND ENERGY AS WE 'SHELL'EBRATE OUR COMMUNITY.

From 6 July to 12 September 2024, Luton will be brought to life by a display of vibrant and colourful, uniquely decorated hare and tortoise sculptures as **The Short Tail Trail arrives in town!**

The trail will bring communities and visitors together to make amazing memories. Trail explorers young and old will have fun rediscovering Luton, learning about the artwork and spending time together.

Our tribe of hare and tortoise sculptures are well underway with painting, and they look forward to uniting to create one unforgettable event. Follow us for updates [@shorttailtrail](https://twitter.com/shorttailtrail) for all the fun!



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