

Keech Matters

KEECH HOSPICE | AUTUMN
MAGAZINE | 2024

We've continued to deliver high quality hospice care to people in our community

Read more about the increase in services at Bedford Daycare Hospice
Page 11

**“
Robin and I have immersed ourselves in Keech’
”**

Read Robin's story on page 7

Let's hear from Liz



We have lots to celebrate this year, especially with the exciting launch of The Short Tail Trail. We aim to boost town excitement and raise more vital funds this year with an even bigger art trail, building on the success of the Big Trunk Trail auction in 2021. **I trust you love the sculptures as much as I do! What's your favourite?**

We continue to build our Compassionate Communities programme. This work encourages us all to talk more openly about death and dying. We are more likely to have our wishes respected if we have shared them with our nearest and dearest.

Our brand-new Memory Tree was installed back in April, and it provides a place to remember and celebrate loved ones. Beautifully situated in Valerie's, the tree offers loved ones a chance to remember and reflect. **And how lovely does it look?** See page 10 for details.

Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity group have been busy hosting Ramadan and Eid celebrations. We held our second Open Iftar and welcomed colleagues to take part in a one-day fast. It was also great to see the Eid al-Fitr celebrations in Valerie's. The South Asian snacks looked delicious and were enjoyed by many!

In this issue of Keech Matters, we hear from Heather and Martin as they share their journey, from the loss of their lifelong partners to **finding a new beginning together**, on page 11. **You can also read about how we made a difference to Robin's family**, on page 5.

I hope you enjoy this edition of Keech Matters. We'd love to hear your feedback; to share your thoughts contact: 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

Celebrating 500 years of service

We held our **first ever** long service awards at the hospice to celebrate our staff and volunteers that have been with Keech from **15 to 30 years!** We celebrated with tea, cake and a few lovely words from Liz, our CEO. Can you believe that they have racked up a combined total of **500 years of service!** How incredible is that! We couldn't do what we do without our staff and volunteers, hard work and dedication over the years.

Roll the dice and land on Keech!

In March, we found out that Keech is making its mark on the **Luton Monopoly Board!** We're extremely proud to represent a **Community Chest** square on the board, alongside many other wonderful places within our local community.

Keech is **one of three** charity Community Chests on the board that celebrate the impact we've made to our community over the past **30 years.** The recognition that comes with featuring in this well-loved game will make sure we stay front of mind for 30 more.

Will you be purchasing the game?



Our super sprinters

In April, we had **15 incredible runners** (including our Events Manager, Lynn Russell, and Senior Children's Palliative Care Nurse, Beth Moorley) run the London Marathon in aid of Keech. **Congratulations** and well done to our Team Keech runners - **you are all simply amazing!** The money that was raised will allow us to continue making the difference when it matters the most.

Keech's Open Iftar

We celebrated Ramadan with an Open Iftar in Valerie's, at our Luton site. Our **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion** group set up some lovely decorations and supplied a beautiful array of traditional food. Colleagues came together to take part in a one-day fast with the opportunity to break their fast **together at 6.27pm.**

It was a great opportunity to be able to share and experience different cultures and traditions, which provided many with a better appreciation of the month of Ramadan.



Thurlow Nunn climbs to victory

The team at Thurlow Nunn Luton took on the challenge of climbing Ben Nevis, the highest mountain in the UK, alongside our very own Corporate Fundraiser, Kate Gooden, and Rob Davies, Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Services.

The team of **22** chose to climb Ben Nevis to raise those vital funds for Keech and to show their commitment and support.

They managed to raise over **£14,000**, smashing their target by 119% - how incredible is that? A big well done to all of those involved.



Making a splash!

We were pleased to announce that our **Hydrotherapy Pool reopened to patients**, after we embarked on a journey to transform the changing rooms. This project was made possible by 3 grant giving Foundations and we simply couldn't have done it without their generosity, so thank you.

The project has transformed the look and feel of the **Hydrotherapy Pool.** By rearranging the internal layout of the existing changing rooms, we have been able to create more individual changing spaces, each of which has its own shower and changing table for young children.

By completing this, we have been able to increase our daily patient usage to **120 users per day** and our overall capacity to **210 pool users**, meaning that more patients are able to benefit from this fantastic facility.





Short tails... BIG NEWS!

After the launch of our epic new sculpture trail in July, **The Short Tail Trail** displayed **90 hare and tortoise sculptures around Luton**. Our wonderful team of artists created a collection which reflects the spirit of Keech Hospice Care, of Luton and its communities.

Every sculpture tells its own story, some with a nod to Luton and its past, present or future. And how amazing do they look?

So many of the sculptures, created by our partnering schools and community organisations, also share positive messages of love, hope, inclusion and care for the natural world.

As the trail draws to a close, our large sculptures will be auctioned off at our special charity auction that takes place on **3 October 2024, at The Conservatory, Luton Hoo Estate**.

Would you like to give one of our large sculptures a forever home? The vital funds raised will go back into helping us to support patients and their families when and where they need it most.

THANK YOU

THE SHORT TAIL TRAIL WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE WITHOUT THE GENEROSITY OF OUR PARTNERS:

Our Community and Volunteering Partner:



Luton Rising is a business and social enterprise that is owned by Luton Council entirely for community benefit, not private shareholders. Their largest asset is London Luton Airport, which is by far the most socially impactful in the country, supporting and improving lives across the communities it serves.

Project Presenting Partner:



Love Luton is a partnership of local organisations who work together for one common goal - to create confidence, pride and a positive image for Luton. The team is made up of people representing various organisations that support the Love Luton campaign and who organise events and initiatives to bring the community together while promoting the town.



LUXURY GIFT FAIR

Shop in the delightful surroundings of the Woburn Safari Lodge, with over **40 stalls** of inspiring gifts, including Keech's. Come and see us!

Tuesday 19 November
6 - 9pm

Entrance:
Star Lodge MK17 9DW

Wednesday 20 November
9:30am - 4pm

Entrance:
Tumpike Road MK43 OXB

Woburn Safari Lodge is in the grounds of the Safari Park.

From stocking fillers and Christmas presents to sheer indulgence and lots of new stalls.

Suggested donation £20. All proceeds will go to Keech Hospice Care



Scan to book tickets



DONATE Feel Great



Turn your great clutter into great care

#DonateFeelGreat



Scan the QR code to find out more.

[keech.org.uk/shop](https://www.keech.org.uk/shop)

“ WE WILL BE FOREVER GRATEFUL HE CHOSE US TO BE HIS MUMMY AND DADDY. ”

I'm Emma, Robin's mummy. Being his mum is something I feel like I've dreamed of forever, but our experience was far from the dream we imagined.

Shortly after Robin's birth we were told he potentially had multiple holes in his heart, and we began to understand more about his oblique talus (a type of clubfoot). His perfect (to me) little feet were facing upwards towards his face.

At around six hours old, we were told that the doctors were concerned that Robin had 'dysmorphic features', a term I've learnt to hate. He was exactly who I expected him to be, and for Ben and I, it was hard to really see what they meant. After a difficult labour, there was a constant stream of professionals delivering blow after blow.

It was heartbreaking.

What came next was over 11 weeks of torture for our little family. When we were discharged, it felt like we were heading into the unknown. I was back and forth to the GP as I was concerned Robin wasn't feeding well; we discovered he had an airways condition called laryngomalacia.

I didn't know what was happening, I was a new mum with a baby I didn't understand. I felt alone.

I spoke to our GP about further concerns I had for Robin. By this time, he was already 13 weeks, he hadn't smiled yet and **I felt like he was just 'existing'**. We were quickly referred to the hospital for an MRI to try and get some answers.

His MRI showed he had hydrocephalus, which is additional fluid around the brain. We stayed in Addenbrookes for 29 long days. Robin had surgery on his larynx and Whole Genome sequencing was carried out to test for genetic differences.

Diagnosis

Robin was diagnosed with Coffin-Siris syndrome, discovered from the findings that he has a duplication of the SMARCA4 gene. I will never forget that life altering phone call; the juxtaposition of feeling both distraught and relieved at the same time. **Our lives had just changed forever. Those days were difficult, but we finally had answers and the support of specialist consultants, doctors and nurses.**

The word hospice is scary

Our community nurse referred us to Keech Hospice Care in June 2021. Sadly, I know so many people don't really understand what hospice's offer families like mine. **The word**

hospice is scary, but it doesn't mean you're dying.

Robin and I have immersed ourselves in Keech - **the care, advice and support we get when we need it is so important, to both of us.** We have access to doctors and nurses who really understand us, that know Robin, and are ready to answer our questions or concerns. That's so valuable.

I've made some lifelong friends with other people who 'get me' and we can have those difficult and uncomfortable conversations together. Friends like this have allowed my voice to be strong and loud for Robin.

We join the weekly play sessions where Robin is often front and centre with his friends. We've enjoyed the safety (and warmth) of the hydrotherapy pool, **and I know that I can call on the team at Keech when I need some reassurance and they are always there.** The connections we've made and the friends we've chosen will stay with me forever.

The future can be a scary place to look to, but as a family, we're so grateful that Keech will be there for us. **Life is precious and so is our time with Robin.**



Scan the QR code to Robin's full story.





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%.
- 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, Streatley, 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**

CHERISH MEMORIES THAT LAST FOREVER

Whether your loved one was supported by Keech or not, you can dedicate a leaf in their memory.

Is there someone special you want to honour and remember? At Keech Hospice Care in Luton, our beautifully crafted Memory Tree offers a heartfelt way to celebrate your loved one.

Each leaf on the tree can be engraved with a name or a short personal message, creating a timeless tribute.

Our Memory Tree, designed by the talented Claudia Ashley-Brown, stands in the communal space of Valerie's. Claudia, renowned for her work with various hospices, has poured love and care into crafting this stunning wall sculpture.



As a family, we want to keep Amani's memory alive. We will never forget our daughter, but our biggest fear is that she will be forgotten by others. Having Amani's name displayed on Keech's Memory Tree ensures that she lives on.

- Yasmin, Amani's mum

How to Choose Your Leaf

You can choose between three vibrant colours, bronze, silver or gold leaf, for a monthly donation from **£10** or **£120** annually. Each leaf has the space for up to **28 characters** for your personal message or name of your loved one.

Once in place, we'll send you a picture of your leaf and you are welcome to visit the tree at a time of your choosing. Your leaf will be displayed on the tree for the duration of your gift, or if paying annually you'll have the option to renew.

For more information or any questions, please contact our In Memory Fundraiser, Stefanie Cuff on **01582 707940** or email letmehelp@keech.org.uk



By dedicating a leaf, you're not only creating a lasting tribute but also supporting the essential care provided by Keech Hospice. Join us in making memories that last forever.



A POWERFUL PARTNERSHIP!

Guess what? In June last year, Keech Hospice Care and Bedford Daycare Hospice teamed up to make it a whole lot easier for more patients to enjoy the fantastic services both charities offer.

Together, we've continued to deliver high quality hospice care to people in our community.

Here's what you can look forward to at our Bedford site:

- **Nursing and Medical Assessments:** Get the expert care you need, face to face.
- **Personalised Goal Setting:** We help you achieve what matters most to you.
- **Specialised Symptom Control Programmes:** Tailored just for you, because you deserve the best.
- **Future Planning Support:** Let's map out your Personalised Care and Support Plan together.
- **Complementary Therapy Access:** Relax and rejuvenate with our holistic therapies.
- **Community Connections:** Meet others on the same journey and share your experiences.

Here's how Keech can help:

- Self-Refer: **Take charge and refer yourself!**
- Talk to Your Care Team: Chat with a member of your care team or health professional.
- Call My Care Coordination Team: **Dial 0808 180 7788** and we'll do the rest.

Our aim is to help patients stay at home, live well and be independent for as long as possible.



If you would like to refer yourself, or gain information for a relative or partner, please scan the QR code here.



READY TO JOIN US?

LET'S FIND THE RIGHT SESSION FOR YOU...

Let us help you and find the support you need on your journey.
WE'RE STRONGER TOGETHER!

Health and Wellbeing sessions

(Referral required)

Tuesday and Wednesday: 10am-3pm

- Dive into a 12-week Health and Wellbeing programme
- Access symptom control clinics on site
- Enjoy chair-based exercises to keep you active
- Unwind with relaxation and mindfulness sessions

Life Celebrations and Memory Making

(Referral required)

Thursday: 2-4pm

- Celebrate your life with personalised sessions
- Access nurse-led advice and support
- Record your memories to share with loved ones
- Create lasting memories with hand moulds
- Unwind with relaxation and mindfulness sessions

Live Well Sessions

(Just drop in)

Thursday: 10am-12pm

- Group support for those with life-limiting conditions, their loved ones, and carers
- Learn about symptoms and services available within the community through our rolling programme
- Topics include eating and nutrition, breathlessness, fatigue, finance, future planning, carer support, mindfulness and navigating the system

Cancer Support Group

(Just drop in)

Friday: 10am-1pm

- Weekly cancer support drop-in group sessions
- Get nurse-led advice and support
- Participate in complementary therapies, yoga and exercises
- Connect with others who share similar experiences



FROM LOSS TO NEW BEGINNINGS

Newlyweds Heather and Martin met at a Bereavement Support Group at Keech Hospice Care. They share their uplifting journey, from the loss of their lifelong partners to finding a new beginning together.

Heather's story:

If someone had told me that I was going to get married at 78 years old, I would not have believed them.

When my husband Mike was diagnosed with cancer, my life was destined for a new course. I became a full-time carer for Mike at home, and I found that I needed help to cope with this.

I was welcomed to the **Carers Support Group at Keech** where I met others in a similar situation, and I could get extra support. When in December 2012 Mike's condition deteriorated, he was admitted to the Adult In-Patient Unit.

After one week with the team at Keech, Mike died on 15 December 2012. This was an incredibly important time for us to share together. My family and I will be forever grateful for those final moments together. **I'll always remember.**

Every time we looked out, there was a robin there. So, now when I see a robin it always reminds me of Mike's time at Keech.

I continued to attend the Carers Support Group for a while. This is where I met Martin. I met Martin at the **Bereavement Support Group** and felt like a teenager

when he invited me out on our first date. When you lose a partner, you go home, shut the front door and you are all alone, so I felt lucky to have met someone who really understood what I had been through.

We sold our houses in 2014 and moved in together and slowly we got to know each other's families. We had talked about getting married and **on Valentine's Day in 2023, Martin proposed, and I accepted.**

Martin's story:

I had started receiving support from Keech, while I was caring for my wife. Gerry's MS became progressively worse, and we needed a lot of support in our home. I had to stop working and **Jason, at Keech was incredibly helpful. He stepped in to help me get the best care for Gerry.** He met with us at our home, helped to assess our needs and supported us in getting NHS funding for her care.

It's impossible to explain what it is like to watch your life-long partner decline day by day and **I was exceptionally grateful for the respite I received at Keech during this time.** Eventually, Gerry had to move to a care home and died aged 68, in March 2013.

I was coming to terms with being on my own when I joined the **Keech Bereavement**



Support Group. This is where I met Heather and **the rest as they say, is history. 10 years after we met at Keech on Valentine's Day in February 2023, I went down on one knee and asked Heather to marry me.** Heather asked if she needed to call a paramedic to get me up but fortunately, she said yes!

The Big Day

We were blessed to have had a beautiful wedding day at the Mercure Hotel in Daventry. We asked our guests to make a donation to Keech in lieu of presents. My daughter-in-law with help from my granddaughter, Chloe, made a beautiful box for anyone that wanted to contribute.

We wish there were more places like Keech to access help. We have friends and family who have had no support with their bereavements.

We were part of Keech's community before and after our partners died and we always tell everyone what amazing support we had - we wouldn't be where we are without it.



Scan the QR code to read Heather and Martin's full story.

to find out more about our Bereavement Group and other support services visit [keech.org.uk](https://www.keech.org.uk).

★ Light up a life

7pm
Friday 29
November

Bedford Daycare,
Bedford

4pm
Sunday 1
December

Keech Hospice Care,
Luton

Save the date

Join us to celebrate the
life of a loved one and
dedicate a light to them

Visit our what's on pages on
our website to find out about
our events and to register your
interest, [keech.org.uk/whatson](https://www.keech.org.uk/whatson)