

How your kindness helps families stay together

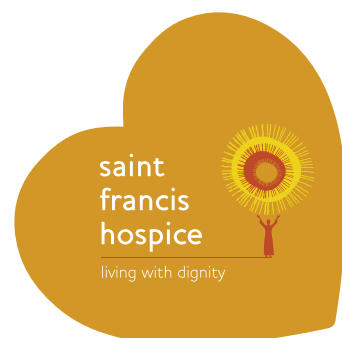


Louise and Theresa Prentice

Plus

- Love doesn't stop for Covid-19
- Moments of love...
- "My pandemic lifeline"

And more...





LOVE DOESN'T STOP FOR COVID-19

March 2020 to July 2021

Do you remember that day in 2020?

It was 23rd March that Boris Johnson told the country that people must stay at home and certain businesses must close.

Patients and their loved ones were catapulted into a whole new dimension of fear and worry. How could they love each other while being isolated at home?

The answer was....change. And fast.

Every one being cared for by the hospice was contacted immediately. Patients who wanted to go home were picked up by relatives or taken by ambulance. Non-essential staff and volunteers started working from home. Doctors, nurses and therapists donned their PPE. The kitchen staff signed for deliveries outside and from a distance.

Hand sanitiser was everywhere and no-one was allowed in the hospice unless their loved one was under our care.

During a time of uncertainty and fear, the top priorities were – and still are – to keep caring for patients and those who love them while, at the same time, keeping everyone safe.

During this time more people needed Saint Francis Hospice care than at any time in the last eight years! The ward was full and even more patients and families were being cared for at home. Nurses, doctors, physios, cooks and cleaners made truly herculean efforts to make sure that everyone receiving care on the ward was safe and cared for during their stay. One ward sister described it as 'an anxious time' for everyone. And everyone missed the hugs!

The Hospice Heroes behind the scenes



The kindness of local people played a huge role in making sure the Hospice could care for patients and those who love them. Four year-old Meadow raised £600 by selling her toys and thousands of people from Romford to Dagenham gave money – from £1 to £1,000, not to mention all the generous support from local companies. Every donation mattered: helping keep our doors open, paying for all the extra PPE and cleaning as well as the care for patients and making sure no call for help and support went unanswered.



“I am so grateful to you and the Hospice for arranging bereavement counselling for me over the past difficult months after the loss of our beloved son. I have benefitted very much from my ten sessions with the lovely Rebecca and I cannot begin to thank her for all the time she devoted to listening and offering her valued support all the way through. I shall miss her wise counselling but feel I am ready to face the future.”

Care over the phone, online and in the home



Isolated at home, with GPs in high demand, more people were calling on the hospice for help. Orangeline, Bereavement Services and the therapies teams, all quickly adapted to helping people online, Facetime, Zoom and the phone. It was strange. And different. But everyone received the care, support and help they needed.

“I am writing to bring your attention to the brilliant care of my late father, from your Hospice at Home operation. Sadly, dad passed quickly, but the kindness, sympathy and understanding shown during that short time was priceless and my mum, brother and I will always be grateful for it.”

Hospice-at-Home changed dramatically because of the need to stop the spread of infection. This meant patients and loved ones were contacted by phone and video calls. Understandably, many patients and families were very worried about the risk of having people in their homes. But their minds were set at rest once they were assured that their care would continue.

Moments of love. Together.



For people in the very last days of life, this was an especially worrying time. But the pandemic didn't stop families and friends from loving and caring for each other, either face-to-face or virtually.

Hospice-at-Home staff continued visiting people at home when needed: wearing full PPE and taking every precaution to keep everyone safe. They told me how difficult and poignant it was – and still is – when they couldn't give a family member a hug or offer a simple smile of encouragement without a mask to hide it. However, families and staff came together and adapted, so no one missed out on their precious time together.

“ Thank you all so much for caring for our beautiful mummy. We cannot ever repay you for your kindness and support. You are true angels. ”



The day hospice at Pemberton Place, sadly, had to close. But again no one was left behind. People who would normally attend sessions and groups at the hospice were contacted every week. Conference calls were set up to keep groups connected and creative packs were sent monthly to help with the boredom and isolation felt by so many.

“We would like to thank you for all the help, advice, support and kindness when you visited dad at home. We would not have managed without you. You are a wonderful team.”

“Myself and my family cannot thank you enough for the support and kindness shown to us during the last few weeks. We are forever grateful. You are guardian angels. You were all special and lifted our spirits. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts. With love.”



Thank you. I wanted to write to you all specifically to express my appreciation for your care and compassion. Whether it be the advice line in times of crisis, someone to share frustrations with regularly or a home visit to see mum and explain the details we needed to plan for end of life care. Without you, life limiting illness care would be impossible. Please always remember the difference you have made not only to my mum but myself and family.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Nurses, doctors, therapists and everyone at the hospice could not have kept going without your kindness and care.

“Why OrangeLine was a lifeline for me”

Linda, a retired primary school teacher tells her story.

“When you are having to cope with a serious illness, along with a year of isolation due to the pandemic, the confidential telephone service OrangeLine becomes a lifeline.

When I was first diagnosed with myeloma, a rare form of blood cancer, I got an almighty shock. There is no cure for myeloma but it is treatable and I've had a lot of treatments. I was attending a support group in Woodford with my husband until the pandemic, when everything had to stop. The group, which is run by volunteers from OrangeLine, was such a great help. I was able to find out more information about my cancer and meet with people who were in a similar situation.

This was my outlet to discuss something that some people find very difficult to talk about. And my husband benefited from it too. I looked forward to it every month.

Once we were in lockdown, Saint Francis Hospice told me about OrangeLine. I got in touch and I am so glad I did. Now every Monday, Ruth, who is one of the volunteers, gives me a call and we have a chat. Her calls are so valuable to me.

I have been shielding since the first lockdown in March last year and even though I live with my husband and he is wonderful, I can still get very lonely.

The pandemic has given me such a fear of being around people. I have no immunity and if I caught Covid, it would be terrible for me.

I had a stem cell transplant last year and I was in isolation. It was horrendous. The staff at the hospital were wonderful but being in isolation during the pandemic was worse than normal. I look back now and I don't know how I got through it. I put on a brave face but some days I wake up in an awful dark gloomy mood and I cannot shift it. The support from Ruth is a great help to me at such times.

It helps me so much to know that if I have any issues or worries, I can share them with Ruth. She is fantastic – she just listens and we talk about everything and anything. She is a person I feel I can say anything to. You need something to hold on to for sanity's sake and Ruth is there.

I know other people will be going through a difficult time, just like I am, but they really don't have to go through it all alone.”

You can find out more about OrangeLine here:
sfh.org.uk/orangeline



Never forget the grief-stricken children

At the beginning of the pandemic young people were hearing over and over again about the number of deaths that the virus was taking.

They worried about their loved ones, like their grandparents, or their mother who has cancer, would they get Covid-19 and die. That is a huge fear to live with.

Frightened or grieving children can, at times, be forgotten or misunderstood. But with Stella and Emily supporting them, they are able to pour their hearts out to experienced professionals who are there to listen and help.

“The children need us for two very important things. First to acknowledge and support them after their loss. Second to look after their mental well-being and help them process the impact the pandemic has on their lives and their grief.”



Emily and Stella, Child and Family therapists holding pictures and cards drawn by the children.

So far this year Emily and Stella have supported 60 young people, but as they were not able to carry out face to face sessions earlier in the pandemic, they began to offer online therapy sessions and telephone sessions.

They created around 50 packs for young people which they delivered socially distanced, so that young people knew that they were not alone at their time of grief. These packs had art materials and resources that they could use during their online sessions.

As lockdown eases and schools open, they are now able to offer socially distanced therapy sessions at school again and at the hospice. This has been welcomed by parents and guardians and the young people themselves.



Emily helps a child express difficult and confusing emotions.

Face to face counselling is particularly vital for children up to 6 years of age who struggle to talk over the internet. It is important that they are now getting the support they need.

How you can deal with post lockdown fear and uncertainty



As we approach the release from lockdown, our common emotional response will be the fear and anxiety of uncertainty. These feelings are normal and reasonable, and we must expect them. But here are positive steps you can take:

Control what can be controlled

– Focus on those things, not the ones you have no control over at all. List the things to be hopeful about, draw up an action plan of things you can do to stay positive and include time for mindfulness meditation to bring your mind back to the present.

Pace yourself

– Recognise that you need to go at a pace that suits you and allow others space to move at their own pace.

Build your strength

– Try doing something different every day, try a new supermarket perhaps, and set yourself small challenges. Then reflect on the pleasure of achievement. Note them all down, they are valuable.

Talk to people

– Talk to work about ways you might work more flexibly. Talk to people you trust about how you feel. Don't dismiss your concerns or judge yourself too harshly.

Grief

With the greatest national loss of life for generations, many are grieving. And most will have endured the additional hurt of restricted funerals and the inability of family and friends to grieve together.

If you have been affected in this way, our trained counsellors are available and would welcome your call. To find out more, visit sfh.org.uk/family-support or call us on 01708 753 319.

All of us have a role to play, supporting those close to us who have been bereaved.

Looking after children and family

Lockdown brought challenges that were new to most of us. But it also gave us more time to be together and brought a closeness that many will be unwilling to lose. Talk to friends in similar circumstances and challenge the pre-pandemic patterns of work and home life. Doing what you did before may not be the answer.



“Coming out of lockdown”, says Shahina Haque, the manager of Family Support Services, “might be just as hard as the start was.

Re-connecting with life and realising it will never be quite the same as it was, will be a challenge for all of us. It’s time to look after ourselves”



Shahina Haque

NEW

A keepsake for you.

With love from everyone at the Hospice.

Grant Boosey, a Charge Nurse on the ward at Saint Francis Hospice, has come up with a thoughtful way for families to remember their loved ones.



A keyring with a finger print of their loved one, placed in a small orange bag with a copy of a poem.

Grant says: “I want to provide some consolation after the death of a loved one. My hope is that families and friends of our patients find comfort in their grief by keeping their loved one’s fingerprint with them.

“Thank you to all the kind people who supported us during this difficult time. You made gifts of this special keepsake possible.”

“ Saint Francis Hospice is a very special place for me. It is where I receive so much love. ”



Henrietta (left) with her counsellor Sue Spong.

“I have a degenerative disease that affects the nervous system called Multiple System Atrophy. I remember going to my bedroom crying, thinking to myself, I will die very young. What about my children? I always promised myself that I would live to carry my grandchildren.

God has given me another chance which has humbled me. I regularly chat with Sue – a counsellor at the hospice – on the phone. She gives me so much joy. She gives me ways to love myself again.

The community nurses are also there to care for me. Everyone I meet really listens to me and makes me feel like a human being. I know that my thoughts and feelings matter.”

“Thank you for caring for us, while we cared for the people who need us.”

“Your kindness really touches my heart.”

To everyone in our local area who gave so much to us during the pandemic, “We are so grateful to have you on our side.”



“Your kindness and compassion helped families during the worst of times. Thank you.”



“Everyone at the hospice wants to thank you for your loving support during the last 15 months.”



“We are so fortunate to have your care and kind-heartedness.”

Your loving support helped do all this

325  people were admitted onto the ward.

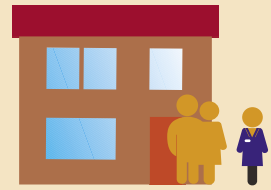
 **4,346** face to face or telephone counselling sessions were given to **437** adults and **76** children. 



1,872 patients were cared for in the past year.



1,589 people were supported by specialist community nurses.



585 people were cared for by Hospice at Home nurses.



533 face to face or phone consultation sessions of pastoral care support were made to patients or relatives/carers.



1571 hours of calls were made to lonely and isolated people, by our OrangeLine telephone service.



10 days is the average length of stay on the ward.



Each day of care on the ward costs **£606**



An hour of Hospice at Home care costs **£54**

A big hug of thanks to every Hospice Hero.

We can't give you a real hug of course, but we can give you a huge thank you for all your wonderful donations, kind messages and support during the pandemic. Without your kindness, local people and their families would have had to cope with illness and death all alone. You are the ROCK that helps loved ones stay together while we care for them.

Thank you again.