



# Trustees Annual Report 2024/25

## The Mary Stevens Hospice

Trustees and Directors Annual Report, including consolidated audited financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2025

Care - Compassion - Kindness

Charity Reg No. 517656



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# Foreword from John Turner, Chair of Trustee Board



I am delighted to introduce the Trustees Annual Report, and I thank you for taking the time to read it.

As is apparent from the reports that follow the year has been successful in many ways. The range of our services has expanded while their quality remains consistently high. Furthermore, a financial surplus was generated so strengthening the hospice's financial resilience.

The quality of our palliative care services is essential to the hospice's existence. Our values "Care, Kindness and Compassion" are not merely words, they express the ethos which underpins the delivery of our services daily. The quality of those services relies on the continuing commitment of all staff. I should like to express, on behalf of the Trustees, our gratitude for that commitment and professionalism.

The clinical services of the hospice are made possible only by the many support departments. The Fundraising, Retail Trading and Lottery teams and the active management of legacy and grant incomes have all combined to secure the resources necessary to fund the activities of the hospice. Each of those activities operates in a competitive environment and their success is therefore even more commendable. The operations of the hospice and its trading subsidiaries rely heavily on the support of volunteers both in fundraising and the delivery of our services. They, together with those supporters who have been generous in supporting the hospice financially, are critical to its continued success.

I must also emphasise that the hospice is led by a very small management team, headed by the chief executive officer. That so small a team both runs the hospice on a daily basis while also planning the strategic development of the hospice is testament to their ability and commitment.

Finally, I should like to thank my fellow trustees for their support and guidance.

John Turner  
Chair of Trustees

# Welcome from Claire Towns, Chief Executive Officer



In my 5th year as Chief Executive Officer of The Mary Stevens Hospice, I take great pride in presenting this report to you, sharing both the successes and challenges that the hospice has faced across the past 12 months.

In April 2024, the hospice set out a clear strategic plan spanning a 3-year period. As a team there is much to be proud of when reflecting upon the achievements in this 12-month period which are highlighted throughout this report.

I remain ever conscious of the challenging funding situation we face in the hospice sector. The hospice received no concessions to escalating external financial factors, including significant inflationary costs in wages.

As a charitable organisation we are committed to prioritising long-term financial sustainability to enable us to continue to deliver outstanding care to those people that need it. Over the reporting period we continued in negotiations with our commissioners which successfully led to the first real increase in commissioned funding in over 15 years. The year end accounts recognised a financial surplus which is testament to the work of our teams.

It is a real privilege to lead the teams at the hospice and its subsidiary companies. Commitment to the wellbeing of our employees and volunteers who are at the core of everything we do and achieve is at the core of our strategic aims and this will continue to span across the next 12 months.

Claire Towns  
Chief Executive Officer

# Meet the Trustees



## **Chair of Trustee Board, John Turner**

Originally from Herefordshire, John obtained a degree in theoretical physics before qualifying as a chartered accountant, specializing in taxation, and subsequently becoming a partner in Deloitte. He is the former appointed treasurer of Stourbridge Tennis Club and long time supporter of West Bromwich Albion Football Club. John was appointed Chair of the Trustee Board in November 2024 and continues to chair the Finance Committee.



## **Vice Chair of Trustee Board, Peter Marsh**

Peter's career has spanned over 45 years working in the NHS managing major capital development, during which the last 15 years Peter was responsible for delivering non-medical facilities over multiple sites. Peter was appointed as a magistrate in 1997. In November 2024 Peter ended his tenure as Chair of the Trustee Board and was appointed vice chair. He continues to chair both the Fundraising and Governance Committees.



## **Chair of Lottery Board, Arthur Baker**

Arthur was a senior finance director for an international company, followed by many years working for a leading London merchant bank. In the 10 years prior to his retirement, Arthur was the chief executive of a UK casino company. Arthur is a Director of Lottery and chairs the Lottery Board.



## **Chair of Trading Board, Brian Blakemore**

Brian has over 40 years of experience in financial services, covering corporate banking and private equity. He has a range of non-executive positions across venture capital, corporate finance, private equity and online retail. In 2020, Brian was appointed Chair of Trading for The Mary Stevens Hospice.



## **Chair of Clinical Standards Committee, Dr Gillian Love**

Dr Gillian Love was brought up in Stourbridge and has served as a Dudley GP since 1996. She worked at The Mary Stevens Hospice as a salaried doctor for eight years, where she felt privileged to be part of a team supporting patients and their families through their palliative care journeys. Dr Love has always regarded this aspect of clinical care as one of the most important responsibilities held by a clinician. After leaving the hospice, she contributed as a senior GP to the restructuring of local community service provision, a role she held for five years. Dr Love shares, *"As I approach retirement, I've been able to reduce my non-clinical responsibilities in practice, giving me the time to give back to the hospice as a Trustee—a role I feel very honoured to hold."*



### **Spencer Hodgson**

Prior to retiring, Spencer had 30 years' experience in senior manager roles, gaining a mix of commercial, operational and administrative financial expertise across the private and semi-public sectors. Spencer is a fundraising volunteer for The Mary Stevens Hospice, a member of the Finance and Fundraising Governance Committees and is a Director of the Lottery Board.



### **Barbara Coles**

Barbara is a retired teacher with over 40 years' experience working in the education sector across Birmingham and Sandwell. Barbara has had links and experiences with several hospices in past years and seeing the wonderful work that they do prompted her to become a trustee at The Mary Stevens Hospice. Barbara is a member of the Clinical Standards Committee.



### **Steve Waltho MBE**

Steve is an alderman of Dudley Metropolitan Borough and also a former Mayor of Dudley, with over 23 years of public service for which, along with a lifetime of charity fundraising, he was awarded a Member of the Order of the British Empire in 2018. Steve has served on various health boards and currently sits on both the Fundraising and Trading Board Committees at The Mary Stevens Hospice.



### **David Martin**

David is a chartered accountant with over 35 years of experience working as an accountant in industry and more recently in practice. Now semi-retired, many of his clients are owners of SMEs. David is a member of the Finance and Fundraising Governance Committees.



### **Cllr Tony Creed**

Tony is semi-retired following a successful 35-year career in the engineering industry, which began with an apprenticeship and progressed to a managing director role. His career was marked by delivering results through a Management by Objectives approach. Currently, Tony works as an agent for a USA based company and suppliers in India. He is also a sole trader importing products from India and China. Tony serves as an Elected Member for Norton, Stourbridge on Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council.



### **John Graham**

John is proud to be of Scottish heritage, his parents are from Fife and he is named after his grandfather, who was a coalminer in Scotland. Born and raised in Kent, John was inspired by his police officer father and read law at Birmingham University, followed by studying at the College of Law before qualifying as a solicitor in 1981. After initial employment in West Bromwich, John moved to Tanfield's in Dudley until his retirement in 2020. During his legal career John practised in litigation and disputes, appearing regularly in local courts. John lives in West Bromwich, where he is a treasurer and bell ringer at All Saints Church. His interests include performing arts, music, theatre and Dudley Rotary Club amongst many others. John is a carer for his partner Christine.



### **Dr Victoria Smart**

Dr Victoria Smart graduated from Birmingham Medical School in 1984 and dedicated 41 years of continuous service to the NHS. For 37 of those years, she served as a GP partner in a Dudley-based practice, retiring in June 2024. Dr Smart is well known to The Mary Stevens Hospice, having also worked for 17 years as a salaried doctor on the Inpatient Unit. In addition to her medical career, Dr Smart has 15 years of experience as a secondary school governor. She lives in Hagley with her husband, an accountant, where they raised their four now-grown children. One of their children lives locally, and Dr Smart and her husband enjoy helping with grandparent childcare.

She shares, *"My son has cystic fibrosis and diabetes, so I have also experienced the service user side of care. I look forward to hopefully being a positive contributor to this great hospice facility."*



### **Tom Westley**

Tom was born in Dudley and attended Dudley Grammar School before graduating from Imperial College, London as a Metallurgist and Engineer. He began his career in the early 1970s working on a copper mine in Zambia before joining the family business – a foundry specialising in copper-based alloy castings in Dudley and Cradley Heath. Following his father's death, Tom became Chairman and has successfully grown the business into one of Europe's leading foundry groups.

Tom is Chairman of Westley Plastics Ltd., recently recognised with the King's Award for Enterprise for its export achievements. He also served as Chairman of Castings Technology International Ltd. until its sale in 2013. Tom is committed to regional economic growth and sits on the board of the West Midlands Growth Company, a business directed by the West Midlands Combined Authority to encourage investment and economic growth in the West Midlands. He was appointed Deputy Lieutenant of the West Midlands in 2017.



### **Cllr Steve Clarke**

Awaiting bio

### **Farewell and thank you**

During the year under review, we said farewell to Dr Jane Flint Bridgewater and Councillor Angus Lee, who stepped down from their roles as trustees. We are deeply grateful for their dedication, insight and valuable contributions to the governance and strategic direction of the organisation.

# Charity Governance

## Constitution

The charity was formed as a company limited by guarantee on 22 November 1985 and is governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association. The charity was incorporated in England and Wales. As a company limited by guarantee it has no allotted share capital. Members of the company have a contingent liability arising from the guarantee given by each member to contribute, if required or on winding up, an amount not exceeding £1.

## Trustees

Trustees are appointed by the Board of Trustees at a Board meeting, with appointment taking effect once ratified by the majority of Company Members voting at a General Meeting or by written resolution. Under the Articles, trustees are appointed for an initial 4 year term, and may serve up to a maximum of 2 terms of 4 years. After completion of their second 4 year term, a trustee may only be appointed for subsequent 1 year terms where the Board of Trustees decide it is in the best interests of the company to do so.

The chair is elected by their fellow trustees following a recruitment and selection process. John Turner (Chair) was appointed with effect from the 5th November 2024. Potential new trustees are identified from external recruitment, personal recommendation or sometimes will have previously been associated with the work of hospice as a volunteer, in a professional capacity or in the activities of a subsidiary company.

The charity trustees are directors of the company for the purposes of company law. Trustee indemnity insurance is provided for the benefit of the trustees.

## Subsidiary Companies

The charity has two wholly owned subsidiary companies which operate for the purpose of raising funds and promoting public awareness of the charity.

- The Mary Stevens Hospice Trading Co. Limited (registered company number 02648133) which operates 14 trading outlets.
- The Mary Stevens Hospice Lottery Limited (registered company number 03885815) which operates regular lotteries.

Each subsidiary company has its own separate Board of Trustees that meet quarterly and is focused on the company activities, compliance and performance. Each company claims gift aid with any profits made to the charity.

## Corporate Governance and Internal Control

The charity is governed by the Board of Trustees who meet regularly throughout the year and are responsible for setting the strategic direction of the organisation, establishing policy, agreeing the annual financial budget, business planning and monitoring progress against the budget. Overall responsibility for the day-to-day management of the organisation is delegated by the Board of Trustees to Claire Towns, Chief Executive Officer.

## **Charity Governance**

At The Mary Stevens Hospice, governance is underpinned by our commitment to integrity, accountability and continuous improvement. Responsibility for governance structure is shared across several committees and the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), with oversight from the Governance Committee. We align our practices with the Charity Governance Code, ensuring that our approach is transparent, effective and grounded in our organisational values.

## **Senior Leadership Team**

The Senior Leadership Team meets twice monthly to provide strategic leadership, drive organisational development and ensure the delivery of our mission. Members of the Senior Leadership Team are Claire Towns, Chief Executive Officer, Simon Henwood, Director of Finance, Amanda Bowen, Director of Fundraising and Supporter Relations, Gemma Allen, Director of Strategy, Innovation and Communication, and Alex Winstanley, Director of Strategic Funding. The team are supported by James Totney, Deputy Head of Fundraising, and Gail Phillips, Retail Area Manager.

## **Clinical Standards Committee**

The committee is responsible for monitoring and assuring the clinical quality of services and that standards defined by external regulators are met.

## **Remuneration Committee**

The committee is responsible for ensuring the remuneration arrangements support strategic aims, monitoring of the hospice remuneration policy, reviewing salary and reward packages, approving non-consolidated pay awards, succession planning and talent management.

## **Finance and Resources Committee**

The committee is responsible for ensuring the financial viability of The Mary Stevens Hospice, providing stewardship and overseeing the charitable assets and the annual external audit.

## **Fundraising Governance Committee**

The committee is responsible for the oversight of fundraising activities, including evaluation against the fundraising strategy, reviewing the financial position and performance, and ensuring compliance with the Code of Fundraising Practice and other standards.

## **Fundraising Standards**

We are committed to ethical and responsible fundraising. We strictly adhere to the Fundraising Code of Practice, The Data Protection Act 2018, and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The hospice upholds a robust Safeguarding Policy to protect members of the public, including vulnerable individuals. All fundraising staff and trustees are registered with the Disclosure and Barring Service. Additionally, all events undergo comprehensive risk assessments. In 2024/25, no formal complaints were received regarding fundraising activities and we did not engage external professional fundraisers.

## **Principal risks and uncertainties**

The trustees are aware of the need to identify and assess the principal risks and uncertainties faced by the hospice. A risk register is maintained and reviewed at all trustee meetings. The register extends to 59 separate risks and assesses the likelihood of a risk occurring and its consequence, enabling the relative significance to be determined. The risks cover clinical, financial and regulatory issues.

# Successes and Objectives 2024/25

The start of the 2023/24 financial year marked the implementation of our new hospice strategy, providing a clear direction to navigate the significant challenges currently facing the hospice sector, particularly ongoing financial insecurity. In our previous Trustees' Annual Report, we identified a number of activities of strategic importance, and we are pleased to report strong progress in many key areas:

- We maintained our commitment to delivering safe, effective and person-centred care by upholding strong governance standards across all services.
- Investment in research and innovation remains a core priority, exemplified by the continued success of No Barriers Here. This programme is not only expanding our influence beyond the UK but shaping policy, practice and public engagement in palliative and end of life care.
- Supporting and developing our workforce has been a key focus. This year, we strengthened internal capacity through the internal recruitment of a training coordinator, continued our partnership with external HR consultancy and introduced new staff wellbeing programs and professional development opportunities.
- Our bereavement services were enhanced through team expansion and the introduction of innovative, accessible approaches that offer more personalised support for people navigating loss and grief.
- We successfully transitioned to a consultant-led model of care, with two weekly consultant board meetings.
- To support long-term sustainability, we focused on income generation through strengthened stakeholder relationships, national advocacy participation, service mapping, the introduction of new events, staff training and growth within our hospice subsidiary companies.
- We also began the refurbishment of our In-Patient Unit to ensure our facilities remain fit for purpose and reflective of the high standards of care we deliver.
- To improve strategic oversight and streamline decision-making, we merged the Strategic Development Team and Senior Leadership Team into a unified leadership team, with formal appointments made at the end of the financial year. This team is responsible for driving forward our strategic objectives and organisational development.
- Our voice continues to be heard at a national level. We were honoured to represent the hospice sector at Westminster for the launch of a new manifesto for palliative and end of life care and we have actively participated in national campaigns lobbying for fair and sustainable hospice funding.

# Our Strategy 2024-27

The Mary Stevens Hospice Strategy commenced in April 2024 and was formally launched to the community at our summer fayre. Our strategic plan sets out clear priorities for the organisation, ensuring we remain responsive, sustainable and focused on delivering outstanding palliative and end of life care. The strategy is built around three overarching objectives that guide our work across all areas of the hospice: Extending Reach and Capacity, Environmental Sustainability, and Financial and Operational Resilience. As we approach the new financial year, we reflect on a successful first year of our hospice strategy and are proud to report significant progress across all areas.

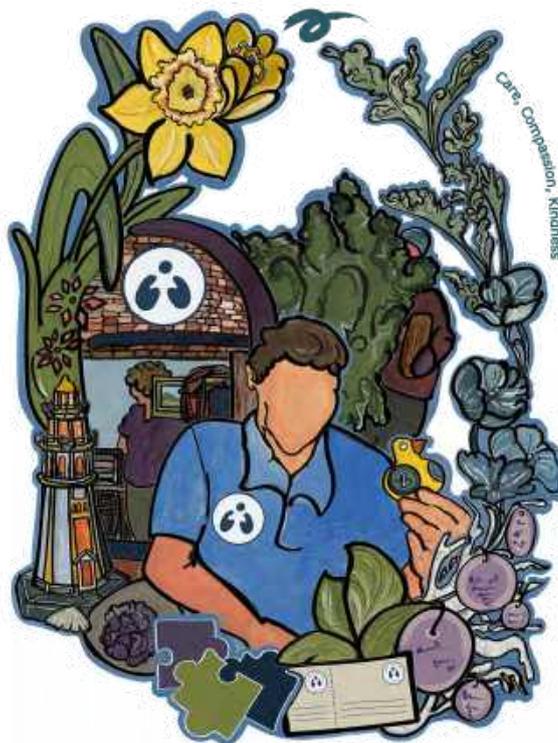
## Extending Reach and Capacity

- Strengthened community presence with the appointment of a community engagement worker, resulting in greater visibility, new relationships and increased community engagement initiatives.
- New literature developed to increase community understanding and awareness of The Mary Stevens Hospice.
- The internal appointment of a volunteer and community engagement lead with plans to expand the team to meet new volunteering and community engagement initiatives.
- Secured funding from Hospice UK to pilot a community response service for people living with neurological conditions.
- Funding received to pilot a hospice outreach service.
- Enhanced use of hospice facilities by relocating the bereavement team to the newly refurbished lodge building, enabling us to meet the increasing demand for bereavement services support and counselling.
- Exceeded targets for the No Barriers Here education program, including a commission to deliver in Canada.
- Progressed No Barriers Here research with two studies. A third research application in partnership with University College London (UCL) and The Alzheimer's Society was approved at the end of the year under review.



## Financial and Operational Resilience

- Undertook financial mapping exercises, providing targeted recommendations to strengthen long-term sustainability.
- Developed staff financial awareness training.
- Introduced new frameworks to support informed and transparent decision-making around project proposals and purchases.
- Supported national hospice funding campaigns, contributing to sector wider efforts to secure additional capital expenditure funding from the government.
- Continued to build strong stakeholder relationships to secure an increase in statutory funding.



- Launched a monthly staff bulletin to improve internal communication and engagement.
- Strengthened our induction and onboarding process, creating a more structured and equitable experience for all new employees.
- Appointed a training coordinator to support training and development.
- Secured two years of external funding to provide creative wellbeing sessions for staff and volunteers.
- The external Winning Temps staff survey was reviewed and discontinued. It will be replaced by a new and improved staff feedback tool, staff pulse survey, launching in April 2025, to provide improved insights and better support staff engagement and wellbeing.
- Delivered HR training to hospice line managers to improve consistency across teams.

## Environmental Sustainability

- Installed solar panels to reduce our carbon footprint and improve energy efficiency across hospice facilities.
- Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points have been scheduled for installation
- A full waste management review is in progress to identify improvements and increase sustainability.

***As we move into the second year of our strategy, we look forward to building on this momentum to continue to meet our strategic objectives.***





## In- Patient Unit

This year has seen significant progress across the In- Patient Unit, with improvements in staffing, training and development and planned refurbishments. These developments reflect the hospice's continued commitment to delivering compassionate, high-quality palliative and end of life care.

### **Staffing**

The unit staffing establishment only has 12 hours per week vacant for both a healthcare assistant and registered nurse. We have an excellent staff-to-patient ratio which supports both the quality of care provided and staff wellbeing. Whilst it is important to ensure that the unit is appropriately staffed, we remain mindful of cost implications when covering for sickness and annual leave.

Permanent contracted staff can take on additional shifts with enhanced pay and we have a small team of bank colleagues who support the rota, however the use of bank staff has declined significantly in recent months as fewer shifts require covering and reduced sickness related absences. To strengthen the hospice's flexible nursing workforce, we aim to advertise and recruit new staff to the bank team during 2025/26.

### **Development, Education and Training**

All Band 6 nurses have completed the Health Assessment module at Birmingham or Wolverhampton University, equipping them with advanced clinical assessment skills. This key module enables nurses to develop their knowledge and skills relevant to their key area. A new Band 6 development programme has been created to upskill existing Band 5 nurses, and support their career progression. This initiative enables support and mentorship by senior nurses and forms part of a long-term workforce development strategy.

The Education and Research Centre continued to oversee and coordinate the delivery of training, with staff having the opportunity to update their knowledge and skills throughout the year and encouraged to not only attend but to support the facilitation of sessions. Training over the past twelve months has included symptom management, communication skills, mandatory training and other sessions relevant to palliative and end of life care.

### **Refurbishment**

Significant progress has been made in upgrading the In-Patient Unit facilities to improve patient care and visitor experience. An upgrade of an external area included the installation of a new covered area, gates and screening. This is the primary route for transporting deceased patients from the hospice and with the refurbishment of this area complete, we support loved ones to join staff in escorting the patient as they leave the hospice. Further improvement to the outside space and internal corridors is planned for completion towards the end of the refurbishment.

Completed work includes the relocation of pharmacy, re-siting of female changing room and staff room, the creation of a new small lounge with kitchenette and an overnight twin-bedded room with ensuite. The next phase will see closure of some of the existing bedrooms to create en-suite rooms, the refurbishment of the visitor lounge, upgrading of reception and the development of an open-fronted nurse's office.

### **Occupancy and Dependency**

Overall, the average occupancy rate on the In-Patient Unit was 61% and the dependency needs of the patients we are caring for have increased. We continue to work closely with community partners to ensure referrals are received in a timely manner, and pride ourselves on the frequently rapid response from our administration, liaison and assessment staff when referrals are received.

### **Cuddle Bed**

We were delighted to receive a £15,000 grant to purchase a cuddle bed which has been used multiple times by patients and their loved ones. The bed is a great asset to the hospice and has already made a difference to the care we provide.





## Medicines Management

Excellent medicines management at the hospice remains at the forefront of our care. The Electronic Prescribing and Medicines Administration (EPMA) system is well embedded now, and we see the advantages of using such a system in reducing the risk of medication errors and incidents; it also ensures that patients 'Get it on Time, Every Time'.

Whilst nationally supplies of certain medications at times has been problematic, we have worked with our supplier to ensure our patient care is not affected, and this is reflected in the high level of compliments we receive both formally and informally.

The clinical use of medications and integration of the pharmacist within the clinical team, that now includes consultant level cover not only ensures the clinical service we provide is appropriate but also that we are delivering robust symptom management using novel agents and approaches in line with new evidence as it emerges in the rapidly developing realm of palliative and supportive care.

The hospice pharmacy has also been relocated and upgraded as part of the In-Patient Unit scheme of building works; such that we now have a bespoke and fit for purpose area with plenty of space. This again reduces errors and reduces time to administer medications due to the ability for more than one staff member to work in there at any one time.



## Day Service Unit

The Day Service Unit provides care and support for people with palliative care needs and often complex co-morbidities. The unit is open Monday to Friday and is staffed between the hours of 8am to 5pm. During the year, we have increased patient referrals received from community and hospital healthcare teams. We have worked closely with community teams to support patients and their families to improve quality of life and wellbeing. We are part of Dudley Neuro Community Team multidisciplinary meetings and host the Motor Neurone Disease (MND) multidisciplinary community team meetings, who also see patients in a joint clinic onsite in partnership with the team from the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham.

### Staffing

The service has seen an increase in demand and patients with increased complexities. Over recent months the team has been supported by bank registered nurses and health care assistants, in addition to recruiting a part time, permanent registered nurse to support clinical assessments and day to day care. This appointment has enabled the reduction of waiting times for new patients. Student placements have continued and we have worked with Worcester University and Bristol University supporting occupational therapy students and a music therapy student.

### Care, support and activities

The Day Service Unit provides a variety of groups and sessions daily which reflect our commitment to holistic, person-centered care and supporting individuals to live well. Patients who have attended one of our groups such as Fatigue, Anxiety and Breathing (FAB), exercise, neuro wellbeing or mindfulness and resilience can also access mindfulness monthly retreat, 'Monday Musings' wellbeing session or creative wellbeing sessions.

All new patients referred are assessed in a nurse led clinic which enables an individualised support plan to be agreed. This initial meeting enables the patient and family to share their experiences and uses a holistic approach. From this assessment patients will be signposted to a particular group or service within the hospice such as social work, spiritual care, complementary therapies, physiotherapy or symptom management clinics. In addition, the physiotherapist and complementary therapy team see people on an outpatient basis, patients attending one of the sessions or groups, and patients admitted to the In-Patient Unit. The Day Service Unit are further supported by an art psychotherapist and hypnotherapist/mindfulness teacher to support individuals needing specialist support with emotional distress.

### **New outreach program**

In March 2025, the hospice was awarded funding from the Masonic Charitable Foundation, managed by Hospice UK, to develop a new outreach program. The community-based neurological condition crisis service will provide immediate support and intervention for individuals experiencing a crisis related to their neurological condition. Key features of the service include mobile crisis rapid response, comprehensive rapid assessments, stabilisation and ongoing support.

The service aims to improve access to timely support, enhance quality of life for individuals with neurological conditions and provide effective and compassionate care that enables people to recover from crisis. We will provide ongoing support to help avoid future crisis through advance care planning and enabling access to our wider palliative care, therapy and wellbeing services.

We have worked closely with social work and patient and family support teams to support carers through a monthly carer support group and the community companions service which we hope will be further developed by this program.



# Creative wellbeing

At The Mary Stevens Hospice, we believe that creativity can be a powerful tool for supporting emotional, social and psychological wellbeing. Our creative wellbeing program, funded by The National Lottery, is facilitated to Day Service Unit patients (weekly), and staff and volunteers (monthly). Activities are designed to appeal to as many people as possible and be inclusive, taking into account varying abilities and levels of creative confidence. Patients are supported by staff, volunteers and occupational therapy students, helping them to enjoy and benefit from the sessions.

The social element of these sessions has been particularly impactful; with conversation and peer support encouraging a strong sense of community. Activities encourage self-expression and exploration of colour, pattern, and design, while supporting fine motor skills and cognitive stimulation. The creative wellbeing lead works in collaboration with other teams within the hospice, supporting and developing activities as part of bereavement, carer support, human resources and community engagement initiatives.

We are committed to the wellbeing of our staff and volunteers and our monthly creative wellbeing sessions, also funded by The National Lottery, reflect our strategic focus on workforce wellbeing of staff and volunteers.

Building on the success and positive feedback from this program, we plan to deliver sessions to community groups as part of our ongoing community engagement initiatives. At the same time, we will create a new income stream by offering paid public sessions. This approach allows us to increase our social impact, raise awareness of hospice services, reach more people in our community and generate new income. Looking ahead, we are committed to expanding our creative wellbeing programme into community settings.



## The Wisdom Tree project

Featuring contributions from patients, staff, volunteers and visitors, this work from the creative wellbeing program created a powerful legacy installation in the Day Service Unit. The hand built tree was made at the hospice using recycled cardboard and sessions invited people to decorate leaves and write their 'words of wisdom' for others. The tree is a symbol of life, change, community and strength with leaves continuing to be added on a regular basis.



## The Beach Hut project

The creative wellbeing lead worked with Day Service Unit patients to create a wooden beach scene display to enter in the hospice Summer Fayre competition. Everyone was delighted to win first place!



# Social work

## Education

The hospice provides placements for students enrolled on BA, MA and apprenticeship programs. All students are offered shadowing opportunities and each placement includes weekly supervision led by the social work practice educator. During 2024/25 the hospice social worker continued to guest lecture at various universities which has led to increased student interest in pursuing careers in palliative and end of life care. During Dying Matters Week 2024, the social worker participated in a panel of frontline professionals at the University of Wolverhampton, sharing experiences of working in palliative and end of life care. A presentation was also delivered at the Association of Palliative Care Social Work National Conference, highlighting social work at The Mary Stevens Hospice. Furthermore, safeguarding training was delivered internally to colleagues and throughout the year multiple shadowing opportunities were offered to students.

## Advocacy and Community Engagement

During the time under report, the social worker contributed to Dudley Carers Alliance, dedicated to identifying carers in the community, arranging support activities and lobbying for improved provision for unpaid carers. Furthermore, she campaigned for improvements in dementia services in Dudley, advocating to maintain and enhance services and played a key role in a national working group to secure social work representation on the UK's Assisted Dying Panel, making the UK the first country to include a social worker on such a panel.

Our social worker facilitated multiple public exhibitions and presentations to promote awareness of The Mary Stevens Hospice and the services that we provide. In March 2025, an external exhibition amplified the role of social work in palliative care and provided information on the educational routes into the social work profession. During the exhibition our social worker engaged with people and explored their perceptions of social work with the hope to increase public awareness of the presence of social workers within hospices.



## **Support for Carers**

Carer support continued during the year under report with an average of 450 people with caring responsibilities being supported by The Mary Stevens Hospice. This was delivered across a variety of settings, including at home and in the community. The monthly carer-led support groups, now well-established, continued to flourish with approximately 50 individuals attending sessions on a regular basis. The group adopts a holistic approach, offering educational sessions, therapeutic engagement, relaxation, socialisation, and peer support. Carers also stay connected daily through a self-managed WhatsApp group, which has proven highly effective.

## **Combating Loneliness**

We continued to provide targeted support to patients experiencing loneliness and social isolation, with the aim of helping people to reconnect with their communities and engage in meaningful activities. The support provided by The Mary Stevens Hospice included conducting home visits, raising awareness and signposting to other community services, and assisting individuals in managing social anxiety.





## Spiritual Care

The Spiritual Care team, comprising our spiritual care lead and four volunteers, continued to provide compassionate support to patients, family members and friends, and staff across the hospice.

### **In-Patient Unit**

The team aim to offer spiritual support to all patients and visitors, as well as for staff. Alongside regular weekday and weekend visits, activities included end of life blessings, visits from PAT dogs, decorating rooms and organising special occasions such as weddings and birthdays, and creating bespoke ceremonies for patients. We ensured accessibility by producing a visual booklet for a young person with autism prior to visiting his parent on the unit and facilitated religious practices which were tailored to individual beliefs. The team introduced patient welcome bags that brought visible comfort to many individuals. Spiritual care extended after death with the spiritual care lead taking nine funerals of patients cared for by The Mary Stevens Hospice. At Christmas, The Salvation Army performed carols on the patio for patients and visitors.

### **Day Service Unit**

Spiritual care remained integral in the Day Service Unit, with support provided through a variety of activities including talks to patient groups, "Monday Musings" sessions which explored themes such as laughter, distress, space and World Poetry Day where we wrote a poem and Hauki. The team also provided home visits and supportive phone calls, offering personal guidance and helping with funeral planning when needed. Creative activities also played a key role, including visits from the Black Country Woodturners, during which patients enjoyed painting pre-made snowmen and Christmas trees.

### **Spiritual Care events**

Despite the cancellation of one of the Tree of Light event due to severe weather, a video was produced for our community to see the lights being turned on whilst the church service went ahead successfully. The annual Wassailing event provided the opportunity for staff and volunteers to share their hopes, blessings or prayers for the hospice for 2025. We worked collaboratively with the bereavement team and introduced a summer memorial picnic, which featured meaningful, all age activities, and hosted a festive Christmas gathering in the Day Service Unit for patients and families.

## **Staff support**

Supporting new staff members, student nurses and social workers through discussions about the breadth and significance of spiritual care remained a valued component of staff support offered during this year. Emotional support continued to be available for all staff, with regular drop-in sessions and ongoing one-to-one support. Looking ahead, plans are underway to develop retreat opportunities and expand drop-in offerings in 2025–26, with the aim of deepening support and resilience across the team.

## **Additional Highlights**

This year, the spiritual care lead completed Mental Health First Aid training and mentored a chaplaincy student from Newman University, offering reflective practice and guidance. A training session was also facilitated for the Birmingham and Black Country Chaplaincy Collaborative, exploring the themes of Endings, Boundaries and Holding the Unknown.

New resources were developed to support blessings and legacy work, including postcards, stones and jigsaw pieces. Informative display boards were introduced in both the Day Service Unit and In-Patient Unit, encouraging memory-making and legacy conversations. Work also continued on faith boxes for each Peace Room, helping to ensure spiritual and faith-based resources are accessible for all who need them.

An act of remembrance took place on the hospice patio on Remembrance Day. Engagement with local faith leaders continued and a visit to Acorns Hospice provided insight into supporting young people transitioning from paediatric to adult hospice care. The spiritual care team also participated in an engagement event with Sikh and Hindu communities, alongside the community engagement lead.

We remained active in the Association of Hospice and Palliative Care Chaplains (AHPCC) contributing to professional learning and shared practice. In addition, the spiritual care lead co-managed the PAFSS Facebook page, producing video content on child bereavement and the power of storytelling, while also marking key religious festivals important to honour the diverse beliefs within our community.

Finally, the hospice won a Love Hearts competition that boosted staff morale and proudly sharing the message "MSH Staff Rock!"





## Bereavement

This year marked a significant period of growth and innovation for our bereavement service. We strengthened community partnerships, expanded service provision for children and young people and responded to rising demand across all areas. From April 2024 to March 2025, the service supported 219 individuals, delivering 675 hours of tailored bereavement support.

### **Bereavement Support**

The Supportive Listening Service received 120 new referrals and delivered approximately 376 hours of one-to-one support through face-to-face and telephone sessions. Qualitative feedback highlighted high levels of satisfaction and emotional impact, with individuals describing the service as comforting, empowering and supportive.

A bereavement support room at the Kingswinford hospice shop offered an accessible, non-clinical space. Memory bears and wellbeing baskets were also introduced and well received.

Bereavement hubs continued to provide a blend of professional and peer support. We welcomed 43 new attendees which resulted in 98 visits to direct group sessions. Attendance was strong into early 2025 with the team actively exploring new locations to increase reach and accessibility during 2025/26.

Our Bereavement Information Points, located in hospice shops and community libraries, continued to offer accessible grief resources and extend our community reach, with further expansion plans next year. Meanwhile, the telephone support line received 459 calls during the year, providing immediate support and guidance to bereaved individuals and professionals. An additional 57 people visited the hospice seeking ad-hoc support, often spending reflective time in the Peace Room and onward bereavement care.

Demand for counselling and therapy services increased significantly, with 67 therapy sessions delivered. A rise in child referrals and increased complexities in grief led to wait times up to six months by late 2024. In response, a new triage and assessment tool was introduced.

The appointment of a children and young people's coordinator marked a significant development and enabled a review of our children's service. This led to the introduction of creative and age-appropriate support across various settings, including one-to-one sessions in schools and libraries, direct support to families on the In-Patient Unit and storytelling and creative sessions.

A highlight of the year was being the first UK hospice to install a Wind Phone as part of the support that we offer. This resource offers a symbolic space within the hospice grounds and though usage is unrecorded due to its sensitive nature, feedback is collated through a message book which demonstrates its impact.

### **Community Engagement and Events**

This year saw increased community engagement through participation in awareness campaigns and public events. During Dying Matters Awareness Week, the team led displays and events, raising awareness around bereavement. For Children's Grief Awareness Week and National Grief Awareness Week we shared resources, activities and information on supporting children through grief. The team also took part in events including Dads Rock, Coffin Club and a death education session, creating space for public dialogue around loss and grief. In collaboration with the spiritual care team, we hosted our first Picnic to Remember and Christmas event where children were invited to share memories with Santa's elves.

Our work was showcased nationally through abstracts at Hospice UK National Conference, highlighting the development of our bereavement hubs and information points.

### **Staff and Volunteer Development**

New appointments supported service capacity including the expansion of bereavement hubs, children's bereavement and overall service capacity. The bereavement manager led training in supportive listening for staff and volunteers with further training in memory-making and the use of arts and crafts in bereavement work. Monthly supervision and training updates were provided to volunteers and staff undertook training in Mental Health First Aid, Level 5 Counselling, communication skills and creative grief. Two team members completed specialist training through the Ruth Strauss Foundation, with plans to share learning with colleagues later in the year.

Our priorities for 2025/26 include the launch of new Bereavement Hubs, the refinement of triage tools and the expansion of training for staff and volunteers



# Our Impact

## **In-Patient Unit**

- 351 referrals
- 167 admissions (31 for symptom managements; 110 for end of life care; 23 hospital admission avoidance; 3 for other reasons)
- Average occupancy 61% (3 beds closed for major refurbishment)

## **Day Service Unit**

- 246 referrals
- 2577 booked spaces

## **Social work**

- 262 social work referrals received
- 86 statutory assessments
- 450 carers supported
- 158 carer's need assessments
- 21 family best interest decision meetings
- 27 people supported to access financial assistance
- 11 mental capacity assessments
- 22 individuals received respite care and 22 accessed nursing home care
- 56 home visits
- 25 people referred for legal support

## **Bereavement support**

- 675 hours of bereavement support provided
- 376 hours of one to one bereavement support
- 167 therapy sessions

## **Volunteers**

- 11,541 hours donated by volunteers
- Our volunteers saved the hospice £132,029.04 this year



## No Barriers Here: Research and Education

This year, The Mary Stevens Hospice continued to lead and contribute to equity-orientated research in palliative and end of life care.

In June 2024, we celebrated the completion of The Victoria and Stuart Project, an NIHR-funded study with Kingston University, which launched a national toolkit for healthcare professionals supporting people with learning disabilities in advance care planning. No Barriers Here was recognised as one of four “gold standard” resources. We are proud to have been the only hospice and small organisation represented on the study team.

Our Marie Curie-funded study, “It’s More Than Rainbows in Receptions,” explored the experiences of LGBTQ+ people in palliative care. Findings and a new learning resource were presented internationally and nationally, including at the Public Health Palliative Care International Conference (Switzerland) and the Hospice UK Conference (Glasgow). The resource is now being used to support learning and development across hospices and healthcare settings.

We continued to work with Marie Curie and the Terrence Higgins Trust on a study using the No Barriers Here methodology with older people living with HIV. Training was delivered in Brighton and early findings were shared at the Marie Curie Research into Practice Conference in early 2025.

In collaboration with Fanshawe University (Canada), we are also supporting research into the role of doulas in promoting death literacy, reshaping end of life care conversations using No Barriers Here and the doulas’ role in breaking down barriers to advance or future care planning.

In June 2024, we launched a new study with Marie Curie exploring inequities in care for LGBTQ+ people from minoritised ethnic groups. Findings will be shared in late 2025.

Finally, we were invited to join a new study with University College London (UCL), funded by The Alzheimer’s Society and Marie Curie, focusing on improving palliative care for people with rare dementias. This work begins in summer 2025.

## **Education**

The No Barriers Here facilitator training program continued to grow in reach and impact throughout the year. Education sessions were delivered at The Mary Stevens Hospice and in external settings, tailored to meet local needs. The program was once again commissioned by Integrated Care Boards across the country, supporting place-based delivery and wider national engagement. In 2024, we proudly reached the milestone of training 500 No Barriers Here facilitators. These facilitators are now embedding the methodology within their organisations and extending its use to underserved groups, including people living with dementia, veterans, individuals experiencing homelessness, and people with learning disabilities.

Additional education sessions were offered throughout the year, alongside workshops for healthcare professionals and presentations at national and international conferences. Working again with Zebra Digital, the team launched a third film in late 2024, which involved several collaborations and received high praise from across the world.

## **A trip to Canada!**

In May 2024, No Barriers Here was launched in Ontario, Canada. The trip, funded by Canadian organisations, enabled the delivery of a range of education, facilitator training and the delivery of keynote speeches. During the trip, the team visited hospices, universities and healthcare settings, including one of the first AIDS hospices and the PEACH programme for people with palliative care needs experiencing homelessness in Toronto.

This experience strengthened the hospices international relationships and has led to new opportunities, including a research study with Fanshawe University. It provided insights and learning into how hospice care is funded and delivered in Canada, including reflections on Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) and other current issues that resonate across both the UK and Canadian healthcare contexts. We are exceptionally proud that since this visit, No Barriers Here workshops have been, and continue to be, facilitated by and with indigenous communities in Ontario.





## Community Engagement

At The Mary Stevens Hospice, we are dedicated to developing relationships with our local community. Our community engagement work aims to raise awareness of hospice care, build trusting relationships and empower people to feel comfortable discussing death, dying and bereavement. Since the community engagement role commenced in November 2024, a strategy was developed which is focused on three key themes:

- **Awareness:** Raising the profile of The Mary Stevens Hospice, increasing understanding of services, and ensuring people know how to access care.
- **Community Engagement:** Building relationships with community groups, faith groups, external organisations, and underserved communities to understand needs and remove barriers to care.
- **Community Conversations:** Creating safer spaces for open discussion about death, dying and hospice care, encouraging more people to engage with these important topics.

We have developed partnerships with a range of organisations and groups, including Dudley Community Development Workers, Dudley CVS, the Dudley Health and Care Partnership, social prescribers, funeral directors and local libraries. These connections have led to collaborative events and awareness activities.

The team represented the hospice at local events and hosted information stands at the Older People's Information Fair, Dudley Health and Wellbeing events for Sikh and Hindu communities and gatherings at Ghausia Community Hall. These have been valuable opportunities to learn directly from the community about perceived barriers to hospice care and explore ways to address them together.

The Mary Stevens Hospice shops in Dudley, Kingswinford and Stourbridge have also become important community engagement spaces, providing opportunities to share information and speak with members of the public. In addition, the community engagement team have a regular presence at Russell's Hall Hospital with a monthly slot at the Health Hub and twice-monthly sessions in the Information Hub, enabling engagement with the public and healthcare professionals. Other engagement has taken place through hospice fundraising events, providing information to raise awareness among audiences who may not be familiar with hospice services.

To further reach people a series of community sessions were developed, designed to align with people's interests including book clubs, craft sessions and presentations. In response to growing demand, the team has expanded with volunteer and community engagement assistant roles to commence in April 2025. In collaboration with the communications and marketing team new hospice literature is now available about hospice community engagement.

Looking ahead, we will continue to develop and increase hospice community engagement, breaking down barriers and ensuring hospice care is accessible, understood and valued across all areas of our community.





## Volunteering

Volunteers remain at the heart of the care we provide at the hospice, contributing their time, skills and compassion in a variety of roles. We began April 2024 with 108 volunteers and over the course of the year, welcomed a further 22 new volunteers. While we were sad to say goodbye to 14 volunteers due to changes in their personal circumstances, we finished the year with a team of 116 volunteers. We continued to provide a community companion service and expanding this service remains a strategic priority.

In June, four of our volunteers were nominated for the 50 for 50 WM awards, a special initiative marking the 50th anniversary of the West Midlands County and the West Midlands Lieutenancy, designed to celebrate and thank exceptional volunteers across the region. Later in the year, several volunteers were recognised at the annual Dudley Voluntary Service awards, receiving certificates of recognition for the support they provide to the hospice. In December, we celebrated our volunteers with a festive event including a vintage-style afternoon tea and a special performance from the hospice choir, many of whom are volunteers themselves.

We are committed to providing volunteers with the training they need to feel confident in their roles. Between November 2024 and January 2025, volunteers accessed mandatory training and refresher training updates.

The current volunteer coordinators will be retiring in April 2025, and we thank them for their commitment and dedication in shaping our volunteer service. From April 2025, the role will combine community engagement and volunteering, reflecting our commitment to integrated, community-focused support.

The total contribution of volunteer hours for 2024/25 demonstrates the scale of volunteer support but also highlights the significant financial value of their contribution. We extend our thanks to every volunteer for their time, energy and commitment. Their generosity of time continues strengthens the hospice and we could not continue the work that we do without them.



## Education and Training

The education department started the financial year April 2024 without a clinical educator in post. During this period, staff training was maintained through eLearning resources provided by Blue Stream Academy and clinical mentorship and skills training delivered by our head of nursing. Whilst the eLearning resource ensured that all fundamental training requirements were met, it lacked some of the benefits which face-to-face training provides, such as interactive discussion and shared learning.

Recognising this and to ensure that the education centre was utilised to its maximum, a training co-ordinator was appointed. The new role has focused on organising face-to-face training and awareness sessions, leading new staff inductions, and to monitor eLearning compliance. There has been an upward trajectory in eLearning compliance up to 31st March 2025, which is monitored against our commissioned contract.

The hospice understands the value of a comprehensive and welcoming induction for all new employees and throughout the year the education team delivered 26 induction sessions for new starters, including bank staff. In addition to core training, it is important that the Education Department responds to the needs of the staff development and at the request of managers from across the hospice, training sessions were delivered on effective communication, safeguarding, food hygiene, volunteer training and fire marshal training.

The education team provided placements and support to a number of healthcare students, including nursing students from Birmingham City University and University of Wolverhampton, as well as fourth year medical students from Birmingham University and Aston University Medical School.

We began an interior upgrade of the education centre during the year, which is scheduled for completion by the end of 2025.



## Fundraising

Over the course of the year, the fundraising team worked with energy, enthusiasm and commitment in planning and delivering a diverse calendar of events, combining much-loved annual traditions with new initiatives to engage the community and raise essential funds.

Highlights from the start of period under report included our Football Fun Day at Stourbridge Football Club and the annual fundraising day at Ascot Racecourse, both of which are popular hospice fundraising events. Alongside these, the team focused on building long-term success by securing new Charity of the Year partnerships and event sponsorships for future campaigns. The publication of the Spring Newsletter provided supporters with important updates and outlined the fundraising event calendar for the year ahead.

The summer months we engaged in a full programme of internal summer activities and supported end-of-school celebrations through a successful ice cream sales initiative. Our presence at a range of seasonal external events helped to further increase visibility and engagement with the local community. Preparations for the annual pantomime also began during this period, with auditions and rehearsals commencing shortly after. This key annual event generated enthusiasm from participants and volunteers alike, and was, as always, well received by our supporters.

Throughout the year, we continued to develop and strengthen relationships with local businesses, securing both financial and operational support. These strategic partnerships are essential to sustaining our services and expanding our reach within the community and fundraising initiatives.

As we moved into the festive period, the fundraising team prioritised seasonal engagement and community outreach, supported by the publication of our Winter Newsletter. This highlighted events such as The Tree of Light Remembrance Campaign which invited supporters to participate through donations and sponsorships. This time was particularly busy, with key events including the Santa Jog, Christmas Coffee Morning and participation in community events such as Town Centre Christmas light switch-ons, festive fairs and charity concerts.

Our activities not only helped to raise vital funds but also supported community relationships and increased awareness of our work. In addition, we actively pursued corporate festive gifts and donations, helping to boost our seasonal fundraising efforts. Planning also continued for a busy start to the new year, with two of our biggest internal events scheduled for January and February 2025.

The return of our Tree-cycle campaign commenced in January 2025, which saw over 1,500 Christmas trees collected from local streets to raise an incredible amount to support our care services. Supported by more than 50 volunteers and the fundraising team dedicating their time over the festive period, the operation was meticulously planned and ran seamlessly, marking our most successful Tree-cycle to date.

February brought the highly anticipated pantomime, *The Little Mermaid*, taking to the stage at Stourbridge Town Hall. With an outstanding cast, dedicated volunteer backstage crew and expert technical support, the production delivered 15 performances, including special matinees for nine local schools, community organisations and even a coach group! We were delighted to exceed fundraising totals from the previous year, reflecting the continued success of this annual event.

Towards the close of the financial year, the fundraising team focus on consolidating donations by collecting Blue Collection Boxes from across the community ensuring that the final total collected was true reflection of the donations made during the financial year.

**In total, hospice led events raised £287,310. 87 this year with a further £205,133.79 in general donations.**





**£13,200**  
**Santa Jog**

**£60,000**  
**The Little  
Mermaid  
Pantomime**

**£25,215**  
**Treecycle**  
**+(£8,300 giftaid  
captured)**





## Corporate Fundraising and Engagement

Our fundraising efforts extended through corporate fundraising and engagement, maintaining strong relationships with both local and national businesses during the year. This secured support for event sponsorships, in-kind donations, major gifts, volunteering days and ongoing corporate partnerships.

### Corporate Networking

The business partnership fundraiser participated in several networking opportunities, including Business Network International (BNI) and Top Networking breakfast groups, as well as weekly meetings with the Rotary Club of Dudley. These engagements helped to create new and strengthen existing relationships between businesses and The Mary Stevens Hospice resulting in increased charitable contributions. Corporate involvement included sponsorships, donated goods and services, financial donations, and pledges to cover the cost of legacy keepsakes.

### Corporate Volunteering Days

We engaged with and hosted corporate volunteer teams throughout the year, inviting businesses into the hospice for corporate volunteer days, including:

- Centrica
- Pegasus Group
- West Bromwich Building Society
- Enterprise Vehicle Hire
- Marsh McLennan
- Sky/Virgin
- Coventry Building Society
- British Gas
- National Highways
- Worcester Bosch

## Charity of the Year

We were charity of the year partners with:

- Coventry Building Society
- McDonalds, Merry Hill
- George Green LLP
- National Highways
- ACE Embroidery
- Ian Perks Estate Agents
- Higgs LLP
- Enterprise Vehicle Hire, Stourbridge

Corporate event sponsorship amount to a total of £19,300 which included contributions to popular events such as Duck Race (£2,000), Pantomime (£10,800) and Summer Fayre (£2,250). Other support included £120 sponsorship towards memory bears and hand casts and £750 for Christmas tress for outside of patient rooms.

**In total The Mary Stevens Hospice received £24,800 of corporate support and donations during 2024/25.**





## Community, Third Party and Fundraising Groups

The continued success of our fundraising is driven by the dedication of individuals and community groups who independently organise events and initiatives in support of the hospice. These groups engage both longstanding and new supporters, playing a vital role in raising awareness and generating consistent financial support through a variety of creative activities. Their efforts not only contribute essential funds but also help to build and sustain relationships within the local community.

The fundraising team collaborates with these groups to ensure all activities comply with relevant legislation. Support is provided in the form of promotional materials, raffle prizes, logistical advice and marketing opportunities. The team also assists in identifying suitable venues and events where volunteers can represent the hospice in a fundraising capacity.

### **Stourbridge Jigsaw Library**

The library has experienced significant growth, progressing from a small initiative to occupying a dedicated room within the lodge building. This expansion has enabled an increase in both community engagement and the funds raised for the hospice. Working in partnership with the fundraising team, volunteers have taken part in hospice-led events and attended numerous community events across the borough, offering popular jigsaw tombola's and sales. The absence of return deadlines ensures the library remains accessible to individuals of all ages, backgrounds and abilities. Operated six days a week by a team of volunteers, the library has become a valued community hub.

**During 2024/2025, Stourbridge Jigsaw Library period, the library reached over 1,600 social media followers and raised £23, 617.87.**

## The Friends of Mary Stevens Hospice

Founded by two dedicated long-standing volunteers, the Friends of Mary Stevens Hospice is a small but passionate team supported by close friends. Working independently, they organised a wide range of fundraising events such as race nights, quiz nights, and pop-up sales featuring donated items.

The team actively pursued opportunities that the fundraising team may be unable to attend or support due to workload, stepping in with energy and determination to meet their fundraising goals. Despite their size, their impact has been remarkable with their efforts making a valuable contribution to the hospice's fundraising targets but have also helped to build relationships within the local community.

**In 2024/2025, The Friends of Mary Stevens Hospice generously raised and donated £3,053.47 to the hospice.**

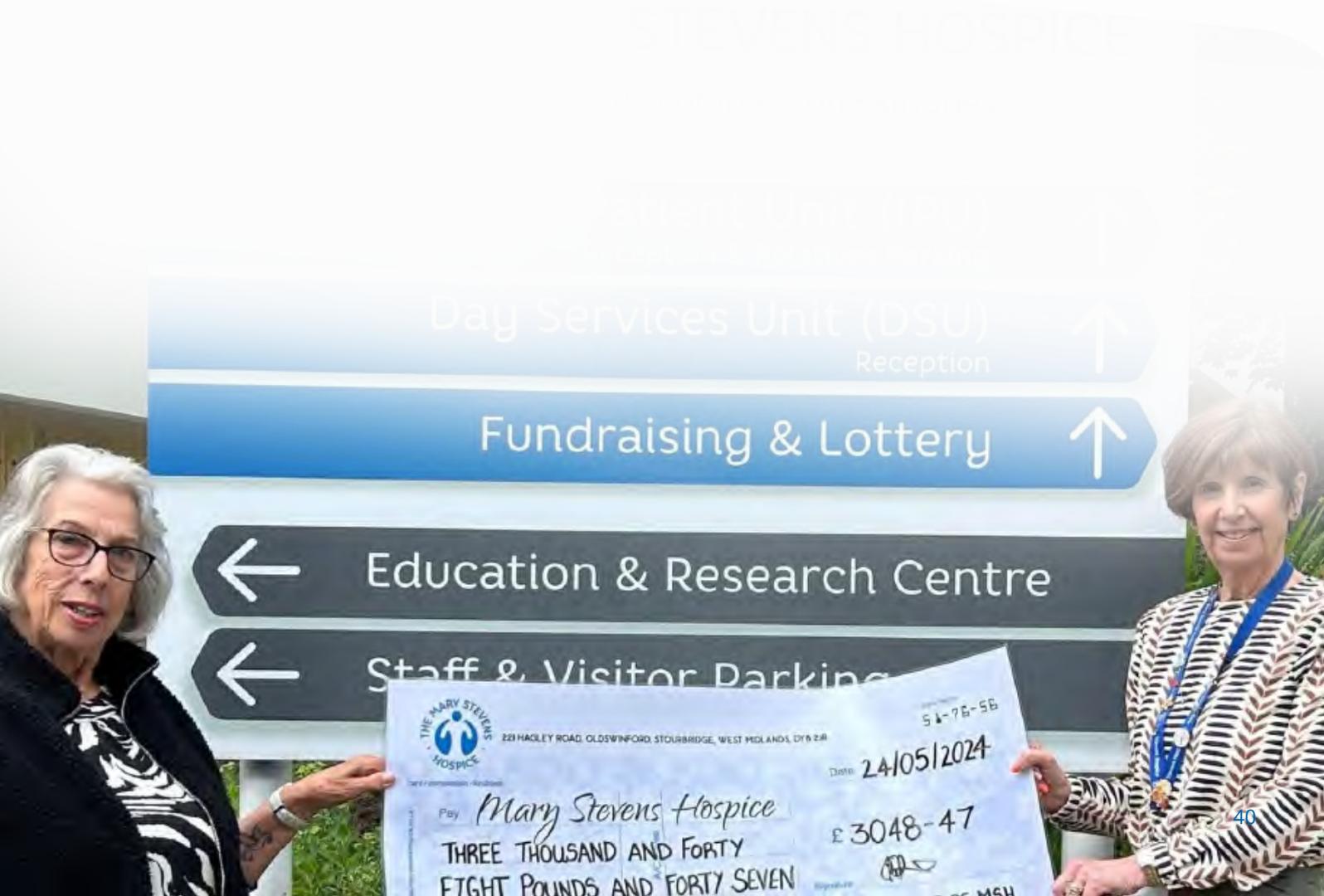
## Community fundraising and general donations

Third party fundraising: £116,384.59

Blue Box Collections: £16,623.39

General Donations: £205,133.79

In Memoriam Donations: £164,195.68



# Legacies

In the last 12 months, we have been extremely grateful to receive a generous £2,071,175 in legacies from our supporters. These gifts, left to us in Wills, are vital to sustaining our work and ensuring we can continue to care for our community now and in the future. Each legacy, regardless of its size makes a lasting difference. They allow us to respond to the ever-growing demands on our services by continuing to deliver the high-quality palliative and end of life care our local communities rely on.

When our supporters choose to support us with a gift in their Will, they show local people living with life limiting illness the care, compassion and kindness that is at the heart of everything we do here at The Mary Stevens Hospice.

The Mary Stevens Hospice was proud to participate in the National Hospice Legacy Campaign, joining 143 hospices across the UK in a united effort to raise the profile of hospice care and help secure its future. Launched on 17th February 2025, this campaign aimed to highlight the vital role hospices play within our communities and to inspire people to consider leaving a gift in their Will. By raising awareness of the impact these legacies have, we hope to ensure that compassionate hospice care remains available for generations to come.



# Trusts and Foundations

The support of Trusts and Foundations helps us to make a huge difference to the lives of so many people living with life limiting incurable illness and their loved ones. Thank you to the following Trusts and Foundations for their support during 2024/25:

Baron Davenports Charity

CRASH

DMF Ellis Charitable Trust

Garfield Weston Foundation

Heart of England Community Foundation

Lasletts Charities

M K Rose Charitable Trust

Orbis Investments Buchanan Programme

Rest Harrow Trust

Richardson Brothers Foundation

Tesco / Groundworks

The Albert Hunt Trust

The Anthony and Gwendoline Wylde  
Memorial Charity

The Ardwick Trust

The Arnold Clarke Community Trust

The Bernard Sunley Charitable Trust

The Birmingham District Nursing Charitable Trust

The Brian Shaw Memorial Trust

The Clive Richards Foundation The Dumbreck Charity

The Edgar E Lawley Foundation

The Edward Gostling Charitable Trust

The Eric W Vincent Trust Fund

The Eveson Trust

The February Foundation

The GJW Turner Trust

The Grace Trust

The Grimley Charity

The Grimmitt Trust

The Heathcock Charitable Trust

The Hilary Awdry Charitable Trust

The James Tudor Foundation

The Ken Wrigley Memorial Trust

The Michael & Anna Wix  
Charitable Trust

The Muntz Trust

The National Lottery - Awards for  
All

The Paget Trust

The Roger & Douglas Turner  
Charitable Trust

The Rowlands Trust

The W.E.D Charitable Trust

William Adlington Cadbury  
Charitable Trust



## The Mary Stevens Hospice: Lottery Company

The Mary Stevens Hospice Lottery has consistently performed well, generating a reliable and sustainable source of income that is essential to support the care of patients and their families.

### **Lottery retail sales**

Over the past year, retail sales across 12 shops generated an impressive £16,102. These vital funds directly support our patient care and the success of the retail sales reflect the dedication and hard work of hospice staff and volunteers. Their commitment ensures a steady and essential income stream for The Mary Stevens Hospice Lottery.

### **Weekly draw**

The average number of members participating in our weekly Tuesday draw was 6,870. During 2024/25, we celebrated a £10,000 rollover win by a long-standing lottery player and supporter.

The lottery team continued to focus on increasing weekly numbers and reduce attrition by strengthening stewardship and closer relationships with players. By building stronger, more personal relationships with our supporters, the team ensured greater engagement and sustained participation.

Examples of this include:

- Contacting supporters via letters and telephone calls to encourage subscription renewals.
- Reaching out to supporters who have missed a draw to check on their wellbeing.
- Thanking players for their payments, ensuring continued communication with the team and ongoing engagement.
- Sending birthday cards to players to celebrate their special day and strengthen engagement.
- Sending out a bi-annual newsletter and tickets for lottery Big Draw events.

### **Big Draw events**

In June 2024, the Summer Breeze Big Draw followed the distribution of the Hospice News spring/summer newsletter, raising an additional £16,710. The Jolly Holly Big Draw was promoted through our autumn/winter newsletter and raised a further £24,105, highlighting the support of our community and the continued success of the special event draws.

### **Sponsorship**

The Mary Stevens Hospice Lottery continued its partnership with Stourbridge Football Club throughout the 2024/25 football season, in collaboration with the hospice fundraising team. This joint sponsorship package, valued at £750 each, included social media promotion, website visibility, two large pitch-side advertising boards and a complimentary VIP Day at a home match, further boosting awareness and support for our work.

**The Mary Stevens Hospice Lottery Company Limited raised £230k net profit during this period, significant funds which contribute directly to delivering high-quality, specialist palliative care to local people living with life-limiting illnesses.**



# The Mary Stevens Hospice: Trading Company

The year to March 2025 saw a strong improvement and encouraging period in Trading operations, with a 5% sales increase compared to the previous year and with overheads well controlled our operating profit contribution to the Hospice increased by 20% reaching nearly £250,000. This achievement is especially significant given the investment required to open a new store and the several unexpected repair and maintenance costs we faced.

Donated goods rose by 10% on the previous year, demonstrating the ongoing generosity of our local community. However, a decline in the quality of donations led to higher levels of recycling and rags.

Our strategic decision to expand the eBay team by one additional staff member of staff delivered positive results, with online sales doubling. This underlines the importance of investing in digital channels to diversify income streams and reach wider audiences.

The opening of our new Kingswinford store on the 12<sup>th</sup> July 2024 was a resounding success. This store has two first floor rooms which have been allocated to the hospice bereavement and fundraising teams. The integration of different teams and services not only meets the needs of the community but also strengthens our local presence and impact.



Our investment in a new till system is also starting to pay dividends. We have seen a 12% increase in Gift Aid claims, improved accuracy in management information and greater ease in selling Lottery tickets.

Looking ahead, we remain focused on controlling overheads and improving sustainability and have started a programme replacing all lighting in the stores to LED, having initially completed our two larger stores in Stourbridge and Dudley.

To further enhance revenue we intend to pilot extended opening hours and Bank Holiday training in two of our flagship stores. Additionally, planned price adjustments in our clothing ranges are expected to generate over £60,000 in extra income if current sales volumes are maintained.

We continue to look for prime locations to expand our network of shops, with location being the key factor and have identified a site in Hagley which is planned to open in the first quarter of the new financial year.

We have a very dedicated team of staff and volunteers working within The Mary Stevens Hospice Trading Company who have all contributed to this strong performance for the year under review.



# Financial review

The financial results for the year ended 31 March 2025 are given in the audited Financial Statements attached to this report. Those accounts and the related notes have been prepared in accordance with the relevant law and the Charities SORP (FRS102).

The hospice generated a surplus for the year of £356,000 which, although lower than the surplus of £817,000 realised last year, is nevertheless an extremely welcome result. This resulted in a strengthening of the balance sheet with total liquid funds, which include the investment portfolio, increasing by £876,000 to £3,372,000.

The principal reason for the surplus was the level of legacy income, which, at £2,071,000, was similar to that of last year but well above historic levels. This does seem to reflect a trend towards higher levels of legacy income; the hospice is already aware of at least £1,600,000 of further legacies which will be received in due course.

All other significant sources of income showed an increase over last year. Fundraising income rose by £71,000 to £893,000, boosted by increased donations which exceeded a small reduction in income from fundraising events. Many fundraising events took place but the most successful **were the Hospice pantomime and the Treecycle which generated ... and ... respectively**. Income from charitable trusts was substantially higher than last year having grown from £279,000 to £378,000, the increase being partly due to the timing of capital expenditure to which some of the grant income relates.

The hospice's trading subsidiaries performed well against a difficult economic background. The Lottery company suffered a small reduction in profit to £213,000 while the retail shops continued to improve their performance and generated a profit of £237,000, an increase of £30,000 over last year. The reduced management team continues to search for opportunities for expansion. A new shop was opened in Kingswinford and, since the year end, a new shop has also been opened in Hagley.

The costs of running the hospice continue to rise inexorably despite the careful monitoring of all expenditure. The increase in costs is unfortunately largely driven by external factors, for example, the need for salaries to remain competitive with those offered by the NHS.

Lobbying of the Government by Hospice UK did however produce some valuable support. The hospice received £83,000 and is due to receive a further £249,000 in Government support towards capital expenditure. While support for running costs would have been more valuable it is enabling capital improvements to be made at no cost to the Hospice.

The local NHS Commissioners have at last converted their supportive words into the improvement in the level of their annual support by more than £150,000. This result is the fruit of many years of hard work by the Hospice CEO in forging mutually supportive relations with the local healthcare community.

The hospice continues to search for additional funding sources to make more resilient the Hospice's finances and to make them less reliant on legacy income.

The measures taken by the Government in last Budget were however particularly disappointing and for the coming year will add more than £250,000 to the total running costs of the Hospice and its subsidiaries

# Structure, governance and management

## **Governing Document**

The Mary Stevens Hospice Limited is a registered charity (number 517656) and is a company limited by guarantee governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association dated 4 March 1986, as amended up to 2018. As outlined in our Articles of Incorporation, the hospice exists to promote welfare and relief of suffering so far as such purpose is charitable.

## **Recruitment and Appointment of New Trustees**

Both the chair and chief executive officer may be approached to discuss the role and responsibilities, with an induction programme provided following interview.

## **Organisational Structure**

The hospice is governed by the directors who form the Board of Trustees. The directors are volunteers who have or have had careers in a wide variety of business and professional activities. They are usually from the Dudley Metropolitan Borough and surrounding districts. All elected directors are also trustees. Two councillors are nominated by Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council to serve as directors/trustees. All nominees are subject to ratification by the Board of Trustees. The Board of Directors meet regularly with governance subcommittees reporting to it. Individual directors liaise with members of the Senior Leadership Team on a regular basis. The chief executive officer and Senior Leadership Team are responsible to the Board of Directors for the day-to-day running of the hospice and the implementation of policies and strategies decided by the board.

## **Statement of Public Benefit**

Trustees aim to observe the 2020 4th edition Charity Governance Code to support continuous improvement in purpose, leadership, integrity, decision making and risk control systems, board effectiveness, board diversity and transparent accountability. The charity operates a system of subcommittees, each focused on an aspect of the charity operations. That system is reviewed frequently and changes introduced to improve effectiveness. The charity's objective and principal activity is that of providing palliative and end-of-life care for those with progressive, incurable, life shortening illness. The activities of The Mary Stevens Hospice are of benefit to the public and the trustees encourage equity of access to everyone, irrespective of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex or any other discriminatory factor. The system is frequently reviewed and changes have been made to the style of board meetings, independent chairpersons of Lottery and Trading Boards established, and all governance committees.

The trustees confirm that they have complied with the duty in section 7 of the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard to public benefit guidance.

# Reference and Administrative Details

**Registered Company Number: 1963989 (England and Wales)**

**Registered Charity Number: 517656**

**Charity's Principle Address and Registered Office: 221 Hagley Road, Oldswinford, Stourbridge, DY8 2JR.**

## **Trustees (2024/25)**

P Marsh, J Turner, B Blakemore, S Hodgson, A Lees, S Waltho, B Coles, J Graham, S Clark, A Baker, G Love, V Smart, D Martin, T Creed, T Westley.

## **Chair of Lottery Board**

A Baker

## **Chair of Trading Board**

B Blakemore

**There are no corporate Trustees and no Trustees hold title to any property belonging to the charity**

## **Group Chief Executive**

C Towns BSc (Hons) Palliative Care

## **Matron and Registered Manager**

C Towns BSc (Hons) Palliative Care

## **Our Advisors**

- Auditors: Crowe U.K. LLP, Black Country House, Rounds Green Road, Oldbury, B69 2DG.
- Solicitors: Higgs & Sons, 3 Waterfront Business Park, Brierley Hill, DY5 1LX.
- Wall, James Chappell, 15-23 Hagley Road, Stourbridge, DY8 1QW.

## **Banks:**

- Natwest Bank PLC, 141 High Street, Stourbridge, DY8 1BF.
- Barclays, 1 Snowhill, Queensway, Birmingham, B4 6GN.
- Metro Bank, 50 Two Woods Lane, Brierley Hill, DY5 1TA.
- Co-op Bank, PO Box 250, Skelmersdale, WN8 6WT.

## **Investment Advisors**

- Canaccord Genuity Wealth, Slip House, Princess Drive, Worcester, WR1 2AB.

# Reserves Policy

The total funds of the group at the year end were £6,... (2024 £6,509,000) of which £...,000 were restricted (2024 £356,000). Funds of £3,522,000 (2022 £3 712,000) were designated for the specific purposes; £200,000 for a possible Hospice at Home service (as last year) and fixed assets £4,...,000 (2024 £4,158,000), the latter being capable of being realised only by a disposal of fixed assets. Unrestricted free reserves of the group at the year-end were £1,...,000 (2024 £1,795,000).

Reserves, being unspent, unrestricted income held to assist in the management of the Hospice's cash requirements, are important as approximately 85% of the Hospice's income is from volatile sources such as donations, legacies and fundraising events.

The reserves are held only to assist the hospice to continue to provide its charitable services. The hospice seeks to have reserves equivalent to 6 months' running costs and last did so on 31 March 2019. The current level of reserves is insufficient to attain that target, representing only about 5 months' running costs, but represents an improvement over last year.

## Investments

The value of the hospice's investments, the discretionary management of which is delegated to professional investment advisers, fell by 1.21% to end the year at £1,543,706. The income yield from the portfolio at that date was 4.37%.

The risk profile selected by the trustees to which the advisers adhere is 5, on a scale that extends from 1 to 9. This was chosen to maintain a balanced approach to between income and capital growth. The income is withdrawn to support the running costs of the hospice.

The asset allocation at the year-end saw 28% invested in debt and fixed interest investments, 59% in equities, of which 33% were UK, 12% in alternatives and 1% in cash.

## Going Concern

We, the trustees, set out in this report a review of the financial performance, risk management policies, the reserves position and other factors likely to affect the future development of the hospice. We have concluded that there is no material uncertainty that calls into doubt the charity's ability to continue. The financial statements have therefore been prepared on a going concern basis. More information is included in the accounting policies.

# Trustees/ Directors Indemnity Policy

Insurance arrangements are in place to indemnify trustees and directors. The Insurer is Q Underwriting (policy number DR32172A) and the indemnity limit is £3,000,000. The premium paid was £1,527.77

## Pay and Remuneration

Remuneration of personnel and senior management is approved by the remuneration committee constituted on page. Whilst we are aware of NHS pay scales, we do not at this time offer matched salaries, but a comparable system which is governed by our financial constraints as an independent hospice. A 5% general pay rise was awarded across the organisation in April 2024.

### **Membership of the Remuneration Committee**

The following trustees are members of the Remuneration Committee:

John Turner (Chair)

Peter Marsh ( Vice Chair)

Meetings are attended by:

Claire Towns (Chief Executive Officer)

Simon Henwood (Director of Finance)

### **Quorum of Pay and Remuneration Meeting**

All present for annual meeting to make above decisions and any exceptional individual awards.

### **Accountability**

To Finance and Resources Committee, Governance Committee and Main Board.

# Statement of Trustee Responsibilities

The trustees (who are also the Directors of The Mary Stevens Hospice Limited for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Report of the Trustees and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which gives a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that period. In preparing those financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- Select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently
- Observe the methods and principles in the charity SORP
- Make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in business

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

In so far as the trustees are aware:

- There is no relevant audit information of which the charitable company auditors are unaware
- The trustees have taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish the auditors are aware of that information

Exemptions from disclose: Nil

The Board of Trustees declare that they have approved the Trustees Annual Report incorporating the Directors Report and Strategic Report.

Signed on behalf of The Mary Stevens Hospice Trustees:

Signature:

Full name:

Position:

Date:





Care - Compassion - Kindness

Main reception / Day Services:

01384 443010

Bereavement Services:

01384 445423

Fundraising:

01384 377778

Lottery:

01384 860011

Trading (shops):

01384 671149

Visit our website



@marystevenshospice



[marystevenshospice.co.uk](http://marystevenshospice.co.uk)

Charity Reg No. 517656