



Green Shoots gardening group: (from left to right) Chris Taylor, Dawn Bulpin, Carole Smith, volunteer Kate, Wendy Blackwell, Maureen Williamson

Oct 11, 2019 08:00 BST

Hospice Care Week: The benefits of gardening for health and wellbeing at ellenor...

It is hard to enter **ellenor** hospice in Gravesend without noticing the lovely garden, visible through the building and from many of the patient rooms and offices. What may be less obvious is the contribution the garden makes to the patients, families, visitors, staff and volunteers who make **ellenor** the place that it is.

Just ten minutes of quiet time sitting in a garden, park or woodland can help reduce general levels of stress and a recent UK study linked increased wellbeing and happiness to spending two hours a week outside in a green environment. Maintained by **ellenor**'s gardener and a team of dedicated volunteers, the hospice garden offers a space for reflection and contemplation, a play area for children, and tables and chairs for eating or meeting al fresco. For patients confined to a bed, this is not an obstacle – beds can be wheeled onto our patio area so that patients can immerse themselves and discover a range of contrasting colours, shapes and textures and maintain a connection to nature.

Dr Russ Hargreaves, **ellenor** Head of Wellbeing says: *“Gardens and therapeutic horticulture play an increasingly important role in hospice care. For people who live with the challenge of a life limiting condition, gardening can be especially beneficial, having a positive impact on the patient’s wellbeing. We encourage our patients to plant a legacy for their families, and there is nothing better than a garden to reflect on the passing of time and the seasons. This can in turn help patients to talk about their lives and reflect on the remaining time they have”.*

In 2017 the weekly Green Shoots gardening group was set up as part of **ellenor**'s Wellbeing Service to support people living with advanced illness. Gardening activities are chosen and adapted so that everyone can join in and either keep on with a hobby they thought they had lost or discover the joy of sowing and growing for the first time. Some of the best feedback is how much participants enjoy working together every week and the sense of fulfilment from still contributing to the joy of others, despite living with a life limiting or terminal condition.

The Green Shoots container garden provides a year round display of colour and plants and this year plants were grown from seed for this year's summer fair, of course raising money for the hospice. Typical of the group is when a member entered the hospice for the final weeks of life and others picked flowers from the garden for her room because she had always loved gardening. Volunteers and donations are key to the success of Green Shoots. Participants and hospice volunteers contribute seeds and plants, compost has to be bought and tools were purchased when the group was formed. Happily though gardening is a very cost effective therapy when you see how far the benefits spread.

The Green shoots group is facilitated by Alison Marsden, a gardening advisor

and tutor specialising in Social and Therapeutic Horticulture.

For more information on Wellbeing services at **ellenor** please visit: <https://ellenor.org/wellbeing-services> or if you would like to volunteer a few hours and help in the hospice garden please email: HR@ellenor.org

We are **ellenor**, a charity funded by the generosity of our local community, offering the best care and support to families facing terminal illness in Kent. We are the **only** charity in the county that provides hospice care for people of all ages – babies, children and adults - and their families. This includes pain and symptom relief, end of life care, respite, bereavement support and emotional and spiritual care.

Our Children's Hospice Care, formerly known as chYps, is provided in the comfort of the family home and spans across North and West Kent and the London Borough of Bexley. Adults living in Gravesham, Dartford and Swanley, receive care in their place of choice, including their own homes, at our Hospice in Gravesend and in local care homes.

Contacts



Basia Wilson

Press Contact

PR Manager

basia.wilson@ellenor.org

01474320007

07932601517