



THIS IS...

AMY, Health Care Assistant at **ellenor**.
Caring for patients living with life-limiting illnesses and their families.

CHILDREN'S HOSPICE WEEK 2020

Amy Bentley, Health Care Assistant

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Health Care Assistants play a vital role within the ellenor team

Essential to the exceptional standard of holistic care offered by ellenor, the charity that provides support for those with life-limiting illnesses and their families, are its Health Care Assistants. Without them – quite simply - the charity couldn't function.

As we begin to evaluate the lasting implications of Covid-19, there is much talk about the vital role health care assistants (HCAs) play within our society – how they've been undervalued in the past and how the work they do needs to be recognised and valued as we move forward. At ellenor, however, we

have always recognised the unparalleled professionalism and insights our health care assistants bring to our team. Their unique role is every bit as important to our patients as that of the doctors and nurses who they work alongside with.

On a practical level, our HCAs help patients based in their own homes with non-medical, daily tasks that are essential in maintaining their quality of life - everything from bathing, toileting and ensuring they've taken their medication to helping them get dressed in the morning. Moreover, through their regular contact with patients, HCAs are the 'eyes and ears' of the wider ellenor team. Says Amy Bentley, who began working as an ellenor HCA at the end of 2019, "Often, it won't be about what our patients say to us, but about what they *don't* say – that's how we can try to gauge what's concerning them and encourage them to tell us more. And, because our services are so wide-ranging here at ellenor, we can work within our teams to point patients in the right direction for all sorts of support, from financial advice to complementary therapies."

But Amy points out that ellenor never deals only with the patient's needs – the team always thinks about the needs of the patient's family, too: "We know that our ongoing support is vital to them, so that they can continue to have the strength - physically and emotionally - to support their loved ones and to come to terms with whatever comes their way."

Amy – who has National Vocational Qualifications in Health & Social Care - works within a team of three other HCAs, led by Anke Bohn, ellenor Interim Head of Adult Services. Together their case load covers about 140 patients in the North Kent area at any one time, with Amy usually visiting around five a day in their own homes. "We are a very tight team," says Anke. "We all understand that the support and expertise of every one of us equally important if we're to support our patients effectively. Patients tell me regularly that they simply couldn't cope were it not for the outstanding care that they get from our HCAs."

The current Covid-19 crisis means that of course the usual level of visiting simply isn't possible if we're to continue protecting our patients' health – something that's an absolute priority. It's at times such as these that the HCAs communication skills come into their own: "Each member of our team is regularly phoning those patients to check that they're coping and to see if there's anything they need," says Amy. "Looking after relatives at home

without support can be very, very challenging – so if we do hear that families need our hands-on back-up, of course we'll go into their homes for as often as we're needed. We're constantly evaluating situations on a patient-by-patient basis. We know that everyone's needs are unique to them."

For Amy and other HCAs like her, the satisfaction she gets from knowing that every day she's making a real difference to patients' lives is immeasurable.

"I know that I'm an essential cog in the ellenor wheel – that's how we all see ourselves. None of us could do what we're doing without one another, and always with our patients' needs at the heart of everything we do. I know I'm a truly valued and essential part of the ellenor team. The sense of achievement I take home at the end of each working day is something that makes me feel on top of the world".

Our Health Care Assistants are working hard to ensure that we are still able to make essential home visits to help patients and their families with personal care and support.

£34 could help us one of our Health Care Assistants to make an essential home visit to a family in need.

Support our first-ever Online Auction fundraiser, so we can continue providing care to patients and families now and in the future. Go to <http://tinyurl.com/ycemoy2z> and you can start bidding on exclusive prizes and experiences.

100% of the money you spend will go directly to supporting patients and families facing terminal illness.

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.

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