



# Hospice News

Autumn/Winter 2026



## For Dad: A year to remember



Finding my way forward | Pg. 10-11



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# Welcome to Hospice News!

## About Hospice News

Welcome to our second issue of Hospice News this year - I hope you enjoy it. From the latest details on our Pembury refurbishment to updates from our services, and a look towards our winter events calendar, I'm pleased to write there's plenty for you to enjoy. As always, your continued support is hugely appreciated. Without you, Hospice in the Weald wouldn't be able to provide much-needed care and support to people in our community, now and into the future.

### Josh Puttock

Communications Manager



**Front Cover image:** Josh Llewellyn and his dad, Paul on Josh's wedding day

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[www.hospiceintheweald.org.uk](http://www.hospiceintheweald.org.uk)  
Registered Charity No. 280276

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## Welcome from our Chief Executive

Delivering excellent, compassionate care for everyone who needs us remains at the heart of Hospice in the Weald. In recent months, hospices across the country have faced significant challenges, and the national conversation about funding has rightly become more urgent. We support Hospice UK's calls for fair funding, and we continue to advocate for a sustainable solution that recognises the essential role hospices play in the health and care system.

Here, we have had to make difficult decisions of our own, including closing our Service for Children and Young People, which offered respite care to children and their families. This was an incredibly hard choice, and we know how deeply it has been felt. But I want to reassure you that we remain firmly committed to being here for patients and families now and in the future. As you will read on pages 4-5, we are transforming our ground floor as part of Shaping our Future. These improvements will help ensure that people can rely on modern, welcoming, and safe environments, and that we can adapt to meet the changing needs of our community.

Over the past 40 years, Hospice in the Weald has continually evolved in response to people's needs. That commitment remains unchanged. More people are living with life-limiting illness, and many need support earlier, closer to home, and alongside the care they receive from GPs, hospitals and community teams. We must continue to evolve with this changing world. In the months ahead, we will explore how we can reach more people, strengthen our partnerships, and make the best use of our resources across all our services, buildings, and teams.

Providing all of this costs £10 million each year, and more than 80% of that is generated by people like you. Volunteering, fundraising, supporting our shops, taking part in events, leaving a gift in your will, or making a regular donation - every action makes a meaningful difference. Your generosity ensures that no one faces a life-limiting illness alone.

If you already support us, thank you. If you are considering getting involved, our Fundraising Team would be very happy to help you take the first step on **01892 820 533** or at [fundraising@hospiceintheweald.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@hospiceintheweald.org.uk).

Together, we can ensure that Hospice in the Weald continues to provide care and support for many years to come.

*Nick*

## Behind the scenes: Pembury's transformation



Something extraordinary is taking shape at our Hospice in Pembury. We are excited to share that work on the refurbishment programme to transform the building is well underway!



Work includes fitting energy efficient windows, preparations for new electrical infrastructure, progressing structural improvements and painting inside and out, led by Heathfield-based contractor Coxdown, and specialist partners.

We are making much needed improvements to parts of the building that haven't been updated since it was built in 1998. Upgrades include a new-look inpatient ward, spiritual care and Living Well spaces and redesigned areas for visitors.

Staff from the inpatient team have been on site with contractors to ensure bedroom layouts, sockets and switches and improved TV systems all best meet patients' needs.



As part of the tender process, new opportunities were identified to future proof the building and avoid later disruption or costs, including replacing IT infrastructure and installing energy efficient windows.

While this focus on sustainability has long term benefits, it means we now expect the refurbishment work to be complete in early summer 2027.



In the meantime, inpatient care continues to be offered from our hospice in Five Ashes, while the Pembury hospice remains open for Living Well and spiritual support. Outreach support continues to be offered in people's homes and counselling services are based in nearby Hawkwell.

### Living Well artists' impression



### Living Well current progress

## A royal welcome at Hospice in the Weald

His Royal Highness The Duke of Gloucester received a warm welcome from patients, staff and volunteers during a recent visit to the Hospice in Pembury.

Accompanied by the Lord Lieutenant of Kent, Lady Colgrain, the Duke chatted to people who access the Living Well service, enjoying music at a sing-along session and hearing about the therapeutic benefits of arts and crafts.

During the tour, the Duke was delighted to hear about the inclusive approach taken to transform patient areas, involving patients, volunteers, and staff in the decision-making process alongside the professional design team.



Scan here to learn more about 'Shaping our Future'



## Regaining independence: Gina's story

**Although Gina was hesitant about coming to the Hospice, a gentle nudge from her family and encouragement from our therapies team enabled her to take that first step.** What followed was more than learning to manage her breathlessness; by receiving support, Gina has regained confidence and independence and is working towards doing more things that matter to her. Here, Gina, and Therapy Assistant Practitioner, Jo, share her story...

"I was sceptical and didn't know what to expect at all. I was a recluse; I didn't want to do anything because I didn't know what I could do myself and I was just watching TV at home. Having to go in a wheelchair because I was so breathless and to not know which way to turn was difficult.

"Then my family and the therapies team spoke to me, and I thought 'Come on Gina, give it a go.' I did do and haven't looked back," Gina shares.

Our Confidence with Breathlessness Management Workshop is the first activity that Gina tried, opening the door to improved wellbeing in daily life. "Attending gave Gina the tools to learn how to deal and cope with breathlessness, as well as having the confidence to try other groups offered by the physio team," Jo explains.

"Gina was very quiet to start with, but she realised there are other people in the Seated Exercise Group who are going through similar difficulties and it doesn't matter, everyone is accepted," she adds.



**"We haven't looked back; Gina has been here every week, and the change we've noticed is immense. We started with very small goals, and we are always setting new ones. - Jo**

Through weekly exercise classes, Gina has built up stamina, strength and her oxygen has been reduced. The support of the therapies team has also enabled Gina to stop using a wheelchair and walk independently using a walker, a huge milestone that she was thrilled to achieve.

Reflecting on Gina's progress, Jo says: "Now Gina has walked in from the car park, using her four-wheeled walker, coming in on her own, not needing any supervision. She sits down on her own, transfers to use the oxygen, she's so independent, she's so confident."



Gina participating in seated exercise at the Pembury Hospice

Gina shares: "I am less anxious now that I know how to control my breathlessness. The exercise classes have helped me to get stronger too. I am no longer reliant on my wheelchair and can now use the four wheeled walker. It's amazing really." Gina is determined to continue reaching new milestones, which she is confident she'll achieve with the support of the therapies team.

"I want to be able to get out on my own. I've got so many goals, and I'm just going to take them one at a time. I want to be able to visit my grandchildren, see my family, and just pop to the shop when I want to. Slowly but surely, I'll get there," she adds.

Alongside physical benefits, attending various activities also offers a way to connect with others, make friends, and have a laugh. "I love coming to the Seated Exercise Group, I love seeing everybody, the people we're exercising with."

Jo adds: "Most people come every week if they can, so everyone gets to know each other, and we exercise for an hour without realising it because we have fun. We work really hard, it's a social group, everyone picks good music, and people look forward to coming, which is why they come back."

**"Everybody is nice, and we sit, have lunch together and have a chat. It's lovely. - Gina**

Gina concludes, encouraging others to give the group, and other activities at the Hospice a go. "I hope people come and see for themselves, even if they just come and have a look and see what we're doing."

**Scan here to find out more about therapies at the Hospice.**



## The impact of Living Well

When Bruce was given a terminal diagnosis in 2024, he and his wife Margaret began preparing for an uncertain future. Today, Bruce is grateful for every extra day. They both look forward to their weekly visits to the Living Well service, where they've found support, friendship and a welcoming community.

**I thought a hospice was simply a place people went to die. I couldn't have been more wrong.**

"A wonderful GP introduced me to the Living Well service at Hospice in the Weald," says Bruce. Living Well offers more than many people realise. Through the programme, they've accessed counselling and relaxation classes. Bruce takes part in physiotherapy and seated exercise, while Margaret has found wonderful support through Create & Chat sessions.

Together, they've discovered a welcoming community where no one feels alone.

"We're a bit of a motley crew, with our oxygen cylinders, wheelchairs and all sorts, but we get on brilliantly because we're all in the same boat."

After facing cancer, surgery and months confined to bed, Bruce says the Hospice gave him friendship, encouragement and a reason to look beyond his illness.



Margaret and Bruce enjoying creative activities in Living Well

"We've been married for 51 years, and navigating illness together isn't easy, but the Hospice has been there for us both and we look forward to coming every week," says Bruce. "I didn't know all of this happened at a hospice. It was such an eye opener."

Help keep Living Well services available for more local families. By setting up a regular gift today, you can help fund counselling, wellbeing activities, therapies and support groups for years to come.

Between April 2025 and March 2026, 561 people like Bruce and Margaret were supported by the Hospice's Living Well services. This was made possible by our incredibly generous community.

**It costs £460 to provide a full course of counselling. If 23 of you gave £20 a month, together you could fund this every month for someone who needs it.**



## Get to know our shops

Whether you're searching for hidden treasures, donating quality pre-loved items, or giving your time as a volunteer, every visit to one of our shops helps make hospice care possible.

Each shop plays a vital role in raising funds for families supported by the Hospice, and across Kent and East Sussex, we have 21 charity shops, two toy shops, three superstores and two furniture shops for you to explore!



**Together, our shops generate more income than we receive from government funding, enough to provide care and support for almost one in four of our patients.**

Over the past 12 months alone, we sold an incredible 1,867,933 items, with every purchase and donation helping us provide compassionate care and support to people in our community.

Our shops also make a positive difference to the environment by giving quality pre-loved items a new lease of life, helping to reduce waste whilst offering affordable finds for our supporters. If you want to be part of making an impact, there are lots of ways to get involved, from donating and shopping to volunteering in our warehouse or your local shop.

Sharon, Head of Retail, shares: "We're incredibly proud of our shops and the role they play in supporting the Hospice."



### Save the date!

**Love Your Labels Lock-in returns on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> September at our Sevenoaks High Street Shop.**



**Scan for more and to buy your Priority Entry Ticket**

"They're filled with fantastic items looking for a home, powered by dedicated volunteers and made possible by loyal customers and generous donors. Every time you shop with us, you're helping provide free hospice care for people facing terminal illnesses, and their loved ones."

## Finding my way forward: Erin's story



**In April, Erin's partner died from a brain tumour at their home in Frant. James was 53 and had received support from Hospice in the Weald's Outreach Service. Here, Erin shares her story, from their love of the Lake District to the realities of grief.**

"He was incredibly witty," Erin says. "I think that was one of the main things that drew me to him. He was also very handsome, too. And outside of work, his great passion was rugby."

Erin and James met at work, albeit different departments. Early on, they discovered a shared fondness of the same location. "Our happy place was the Lake District and just hiking and walking there. When we got together, we discovered the Lake District was special to each of us individually." At the point of diagnosis and in the following weeks, James reacted differently to Erin.

She remembers: "We both went off in completely opposite directions in our emotional response during those first few weeks. He was just 'it is what it is'. And I thought: 'oh my god no. This is a nightmare'. I was in complete shock, complete panic, so I was trying to cope by being ultra practical, ultra logistical."

"I remember when James and I came away from the neuro-oncology unit, which is where we got the diagnosis, and we came back home, we'd already been triaged and referred to the Hospice for palliative care," she continues. Hospice care was new territory for them both.

"I think I got a call saying that two people would come out together to visit us, to do a home visit. After the two lovely women left, James said, 'Well, I just don't feel I need the Hospice at the moment. You know, it's too early. We're doing fine. I don't think we need them.'"

**"I was feeling, 'Oh my goodness, I want a phone call from the Hospice every week'."**

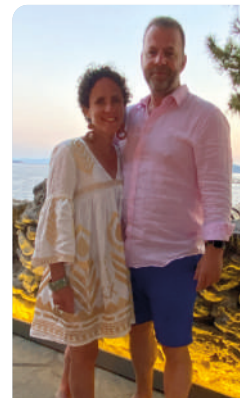
The hurdles that faced – and still face – Erin have been varied and persistent. "The utter grief you feel when that partnership is ripped apart, there's a particular kind of devastation because this love that you poured into this person who's not related to you suddenly has nowhere to go."

Support and structure have been important in the months following James's death. "My friends are the ones who have blown me away with their kindness," she says. The day after James died, Erin contacted a friend. "I made a list of 15 of my girlfriends and I said: 'can you put all these people on one WhatsApp... I don't want to be on my own.' And for four weeks, I was not on my own, day or night."

"My children have been wonderful," adds Erin. "They were brilliant on the day he died. A lot happened that day. Now they both need me to just be their mum. I have to get up and take them to school."

**"I have to not cry all the time in front of them and just get on and make sure this house has singing in it. And the radio and cooking and laughter."**

Journalism is Erin's craft but writing now holds a deeper meaning. "The one thing that has kept me peaceful, grounded and feeling safe is writing. And I think it's just because I'm a journalist so it's what I've always done; it's what I've always been good at, so it's what I come back to for solid ground."



Joyful moments for Erin and James

Hospice in the Weald provided support and care for James, Erin and her boys; something Erin takes great comfort from. She questions: "Why on earth do we have the hospice movement as a charity and not part of the emergency services, or as part of the healthcare network in this country, as a state-funded healthcare provision?"



Erin is sharing her experiences via her Substack, Postcards From Grief

"Because to me, that support that we received from the Hospice from the word go was vital...to know that when we came out of the hospital with a terminal diagnosis, we would literally come back into our house, and already be plugged in to the hospice support system was so reassuring."

Erin wants to continue sharing her experiences so that more people can learn from what her family went through, and her own journey now, which includes receiving counselling through the Hospice. "My one bit of advice is; sit with the loved one who's dying. Be quiet. Ask them what they need from you, what they want from you. And be with them on the same page. Try to be with them where they are emotionally, rather than where you are."

## Coping with grief and bereavement

Grief can feel like it arrives in waves. Some days may feel manageable, others may feel overwhelming. There is no right way to grieve and no expected timeline. Every person responds differently to loss, shaped by their relationship with the person who has died, their life experiences and the circumstances around the death. What matters most is recognising that your feelings are valid and that support is available.



### If someone you care about is grieving

It can be hard to know how to support someone who is grieving. Their needs may change from day to day. Some people want to talk about their loved one and others don't. A simple check-in or giving them space when they ask for it can make a real difference. Let them set the pace. Steady kindness often helps more than any advice.



### What can help

When you are grieving, small things can make a real difference. Try to spend time with people who help you feel safe or talk with someone you trust if that feels right. You might find comfort in familiar routines or in creating quiet moments for yourself during the day. Some people feel steadier when they are outdoors or when they express themselves through writing or art. Others need rest. There is no single approach that works for everyone. Pay attention to what feels manageable for you and let that guide the support you choose.



### Support from Hospice in the Weald

Many people tell us that having a calm and confidential place to talk can make a real difference when they are grieving. Our Counselling and Support Service offers exactly that. Counselling gives you time to explore your feelings, understand what grief is bringing up for you and think about ways to cope.

For some, a quieter and more reflective approach feels more comfortable. Time to Be offers this space, with gentle relaxation and breathing techniques that can help you slow down and create moments of calm. Both options are there to support you in whatever way feels right.

Scan me!



Find out more about our Counselling & Support Services



## Why volunteer with us?

**Volunteering with Hospice in the Weald is an opportunity to make a real difference while gaining new experiences, meeting people and becoming part of a supportive community.**

For more than 40 years, the Hospice has provided free care for people with life-limiting and life-threatening conditions across Kent and East Sussex. Every day, more than 1,000 volunteers help make that care possible, supporting patients and families both within the hospice and out in the community.

Some volunteers support the Hospice Outreach Team, which provides practical and emotional support to people living at home, in care homes or with family members. Their contribution helps patients maintain independence, stay connected to their communities and enjoy the things that matter most to them.

One of those volunteers is Steve, who joined the Hospice after receiving grief counselling following the death of his father. Wanting to give something back, he began volunteering with the Hospice Outreach Team and accompanied patient Alan on walks around his local area and to the shops.

"It's just about giving back and it's enjoyable," said Steve. "Sometimes you sit with patients and their families and have a cup of tea, sometimes you do some chores for them, and sometimes you go out for a walk like I do with Alan."



For Alan, those walks provide much more than fresh air. "It's the capability of being able to get out and buy things, look at things, and just generally appreciate what's going around me," he said. "Not only will they take me, they actually look after me and I know I'm safe in their hands too."

Denise O'Malley, Head of Hospice Outreach, said: "Sometimes it's the smallest things, like supporting someone on a walk or popping in for a tea and a chat, that make the biggest difference."

Scan the QR code to find out more about volunteering with Hospice in the Weald





## Mark your calendar! Join in this Christmas



### Wreath Making Workshops

Create a beautifully handcrafted wreath to decorate your door this Christmas. Join us at **beginning of December** at the Hospice in Pembury for a festive workshop, guided by an expert florist. With spaces limited, be sure to book early to avoid missing out.

### Carols at Christmas

Our much-loved Carols at Christmas returns on **Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> December 2026 at Tonbridge School**. Gather with friends, family and the local community for a magical evening of festive performances and traditional carols in the beautiful candlelit chapel. Afterwards, enjoy a glass of mulled wine and a mince pie as we celebrate the season together. Christmas simply isn't complete without carols!



### Christmas Tree Recycling

To wrap up the festive season, our Christmas Tree Recycling Scheme returns for its seventh year. With convenient doorstep collection, it's an easy way to recycle your tree while supporting vital Hospice services. Collections will take place in **early January 2027**.



### Light Up a Life

Christmas is often a time for reflection, when we find ourselves thinking of those who should be by our side. Light Up a Life is an opportunity to pause and celebrate the cherished memory of someone special.

Join us for Light Up a Life on **Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> December** at the **Hospice in Pembury** or **Five Ashes** for a special evening of remembrance, reflection and connection.

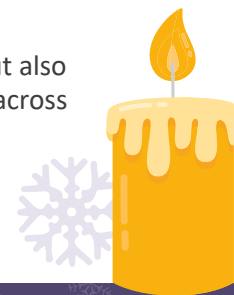


Through music, readings and the lighting of a lantern, we'll come together to honour those we miss and celebrate the lasting impact they have on our lives.

You're warmly invited to dedicate a star and leave a handwritten message in memory of a loved one. Each star will be displayed at the Hospice of your choice, creating a beautiful tribute to those who hold a place in our hearts.

By taking part, you'll not only celebrate your loved one, but also help us continue providing compassionate care to people across our community who need it most.

You can also take part in one of our community remembrance events taking place across the area.



To find out more or volunteer at our events, scan the QR code or contact the fundraising team on 01892 820 533 or [fundraising@hospiceintheweald.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@hospiceintheweald.org.uk)



## Doing it for Dad: Ironman Josh's inspirational year

After losing his father, Paul to cancer in 2024, Josh channelled grief into determination. To mark what would have been his dad's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday year, he set himself an extraordinary challenge in 2025: a series of marathons, triathlons and endurance cycling events, all building towards the ultimate test, the Leeds Ironman.

A place in an Ironman challenge is not top of everyone's birthday list, but for 34-year-old Josh, the gift from wife Lucy became one of many extreme fitness challenges he undertook to raise funds for the Hospice where his father Paul received care.

"The Hospice not only gave Dad the best care but also cared for me and my family," said Josh. "It's one of the most calm, reassuring places I've ever been."

His challenge began with the Isenhurst Indoor Olympic Triathlon in January. Training was fitted around his demanding job as a reinsurance underwriter, and family life.

"I'd be up at 5am for a 10-mile run while everyone was asleep," said the father of two. "I had an indoor bike trainer for bad weather. It took a lot of determination."



Completing the Brighton Marathon in April that year brought back memories of his father.

"Dad came to watch me do Brighton in 2013. Before the start he joked, 'How long do you think you'll be? I need to know how much money to put in the car park.'"

After many events and training, Josh lined up for the Leeds Ironman in July, with Lucy and his children cheering him on.

### Josh's stats



Ran 1,166km (27.6 marathons)



Cycled 2,976km



Swam 50 hours 22 minutes



“It's easy to get into a dark hole but I'd written 'For Dad' on my hand. Every time I was struggling, I looked down at those words.”

"It's tough when you hear the professional athletes are finishing, and you've still got a marathon to run! But the crowds were amazing, and my family kept me going."

After 15 hours and three minutes, Josh crossed the finish line.

"The atmosphere was electric; then you hear those words, 'You are an Ironman!' I know Dad would be proud."

"Doing the challenge helped me emotionally," said Josh, who raised more than £16,000 for the Hospice. "Dad was an amazing dad and grandad. I miss him every day. Everyone saw a better person in me from doing it."



### Why not sign up for your own challenge?

"I'd encourage everyone to sign up for a challenge to raise funds," said Josh. "The support you get from the fundraising team is amazing." If you are feeling inspired, check out our events – some examples below - or find one of your own and nominate the Hospice as your chosen charity. Scan here or contact our friendly Fundraising Team for more.



### Challenge yourself



#### Abseil Spinnaker Tower, Portsmouth, 26<sup>th</sup> September 26

Spinnaker Tower is Portsmouth's iconic waterfront landmark, offering breath-taking 23-mile views across the city and the Solent.



#### Three Peaks challenge, 3<sup>rd</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> October 26

A tick-list classic. Head to Fort William as part of #TeamWeald before trekking the highest peak, Ben Nevis, then conquer Scafell Pike in the Lake District by night. Final ascent is the mighty Snowdon.



#### Firewalk and Legowalk, Pembury, 6<sup>th</sup> February 27

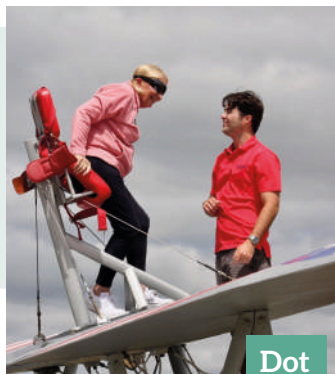
Step barefoot across red hot embers, or 20,000 Lego pieces, and prove to yourself that you are capable of more than you ever imagined.

## Inspirational support

Whether big or small, your support touches the lives of those living with terminal illness and their loved ones at Hospice in the Weald. A heartfelt thank you to everyone who has chosen to fundraise or volunteer, including the amazing people mentioned below.



A huge thank you to **Dot**, who bravely took to the skies on a Wing Walk in memory of her husband, Ray, who was cared for by Hospice in the Weald. Wanting to celebrate life as she approaches her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, Dot raised an incredible **£2,575.25** through the support of family and friends. What an inspiring achievement.



Dot

### Duane & the Brecknock Arms

Congratulations and thank you to **Duane** and everyone at the Brecknock Arms for putting on a fantastic music festival in May. The event raised an amazing **£1,585.97** for Hospice in the Weald in memory of Spike.



Congratulations to **Luke and his friends**, who completed the Three Peaks Challenge in under 24 hours and raised an incredible **£3,000**. They took on the challenge in honour of Rosemary, a loving Nan, and Debbie, a much-loved mum of three, raising vital funds while celebrating two very special people. An outstanding success, thank you.

### Luke & friends



**Ellie and the team at Brown & Brown Insurance Brokers** served up an incredible **£5,000** for Hospice in the Weald with their Charity Padel Tournament. Bringing together colleagues, friends and family, alongside a fantastic raffle, they created a fun and memorable event with a lasting impact. Thank you for your generosity, creativity and passion for supporting our hospice.



Brown &amp; Brown

### Canham Homes



**Jamie, Charlie Dean and Charlie Hill** brought over 70 people together for a special football match in memory of Alan and Denis, family who were both cared for by Hospice in the Weald. Inspired by the compassion they received, the event raised an incredible **£4,197.22**. A fantastic day that gave players and supporters a match day experience to remember. Thank you to everyone involved.

A huge and heartfelt thank you to **Canham Homes**, our incredible Moonlight Walk sponsor and officially our top fundraisers of 2026's event. Not only did they generously sponsor this year's event, but they also raised an amazing **£21,809.37** which will be match funded, making their impact even greater. Another special mention to **Nick Varley**, our highest individual fundraiser, raising over **£3,000**. Thank you for your outstanding support. This year was our most successful Moonlight Walk yet, raising more money than ever before!



Jamie, Charlie Dean &amp; Charlie Hill

**Margaret** transformed her passion for cooking into a brilliant fundraising idea, hosting three Sunday lunches for friends. Complete with welcome drinks, a delicious roast and sweet treats, the events raised an incredible **£1,141.25**. The biggest compliment? Guests are already asking when they can book for next year. Thank you for your wonderful support.



Margaret

Scan me!



# Carols at *Christmas*

Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> December  
St Augustine's Chapel  
at Tonbridge School

Enjoy an evening of festive performances in the beautiful, candlelit chapel followed by mulled wine and a mince pie.

Buy your tickets online or contact our fundraising team on  
01892 820 533 or [fundraising@hospiceintheweald.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@hospiceintheweald.org.uk)