

# A new vision for day and outpatient end of life care services

*The Anniversary Centre at St Christopher's Hospice*  
 by Nigel Hartley, Director of Supportive Care



The Anniversary Centre at St Christopher's Hospice, London opened at the end of July 2009. It was made possible both by a £2.5 million capital appeal, and some detailed development work around the challenges facing specialist palliative day care and outpatient services.

Many of the problems and challenges facing hospice day care were emphasised during research studies carried out between 2000 and 2005 (Higginson et al 2000, 2003, 2005). Important issues were highlighted around equity of access, patients' preferences, costs of running services, and whether attendance at day care affected the use of other specialist palliative care services. The results were significant. The findings concluded that there was no evidence to justify day care on grounds of health economics, quality of life or symptom control. Most groups of day care users did not represent the cultural mix of the wider

community, and attendance at day care did not guarantee a more effective use of other health and social care services. It is worth mentioning that our own research at St Christopher's highlighted some of the more positive themes which Higginson had identified as part of her work, namely that people benefitted from meeting other 'in the same boat', and that nurses were important in order to make their visit to the hospice 'feel safe'.

## Focus groups

We held a number of focus planning groups held with users of our services to assist with project planning. The following core themes emerged:

### More flexible timing:

- Many patients did not want to restrict attendance to between 10am and 3pm. For example they might prefer to arrive at 1pm and stay until 6pm

### One-stop-shop:

- It was common that people wanted to sort out all their problems in one visit. For example, to have a series of

co-ordinated appointments to see the nurse, physiotherapist and social worker:

*It's very helpful to come in and get everything sorted in one go. See the nurse, physio etc. also to meet other people and have a lovely lunch!...*

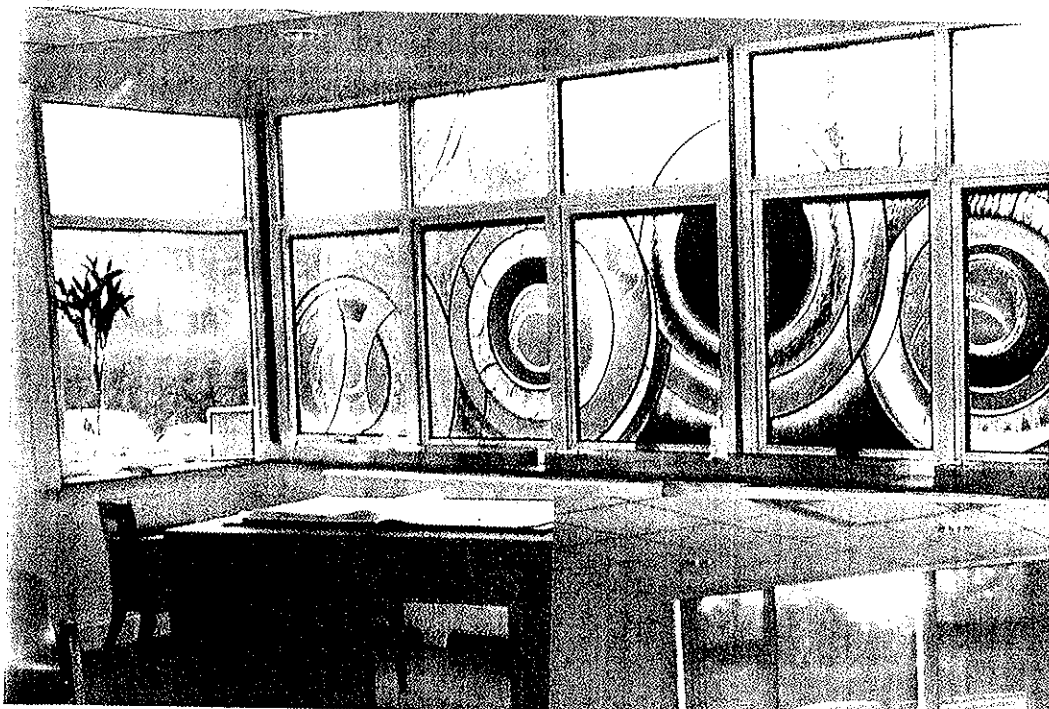
### Not always coming alone:

- Some felt it was important for them to bring family members and friends

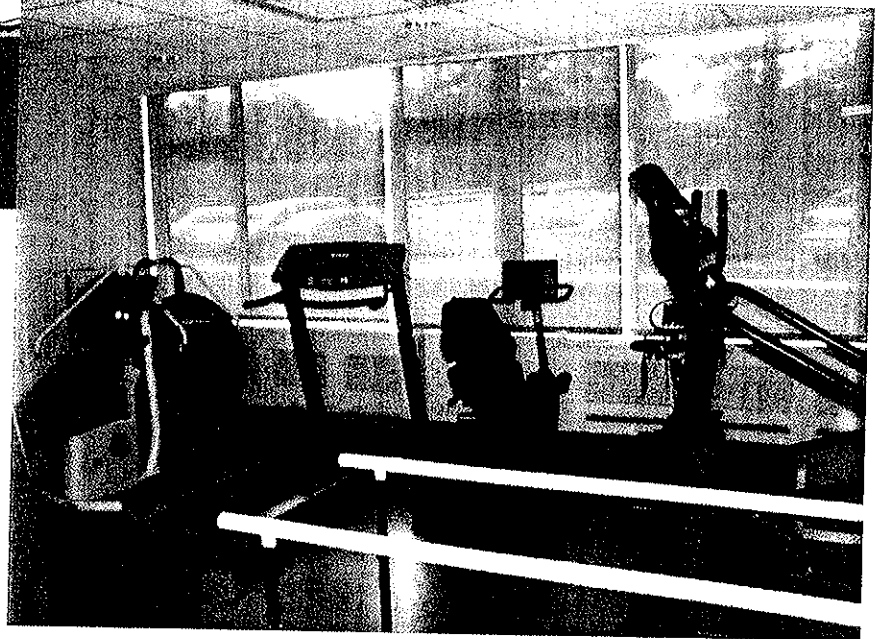
### Bathing service:

- Many patients wanted to be able to book a bath, in order to bathe themselves with help at hand if needed as they were too anxious to bathe at home in case something went wrong

Our vision was and is to address the common themes raised in the focus groups, whilst also



*The Pilgrim Room and rehabilitation gym*



concentrating on the challenges highlighted as part of the research studies. We were also clear that the new centre should only require minimal additional resource in terms of staffing, hence the development of the new volunteer training programme highlighted below.

## The Anniversary Centre

The Anniversary Centre offers planned day care, drop-in, group work, clinics and therapies

The centre is open seven days a week between 8am and 9pm and provides:

- A large social space for all St Christopher's users (including those attending for planned day care)
- An information area with internet access
- A café with a 'healthy food' menu
- A bathing suite
- A rehabilitation gym

- Areas for relaxation and spiritual contemplation
- Access to a range of group work possibilities
- Access to a range of clinic and therapy appointments

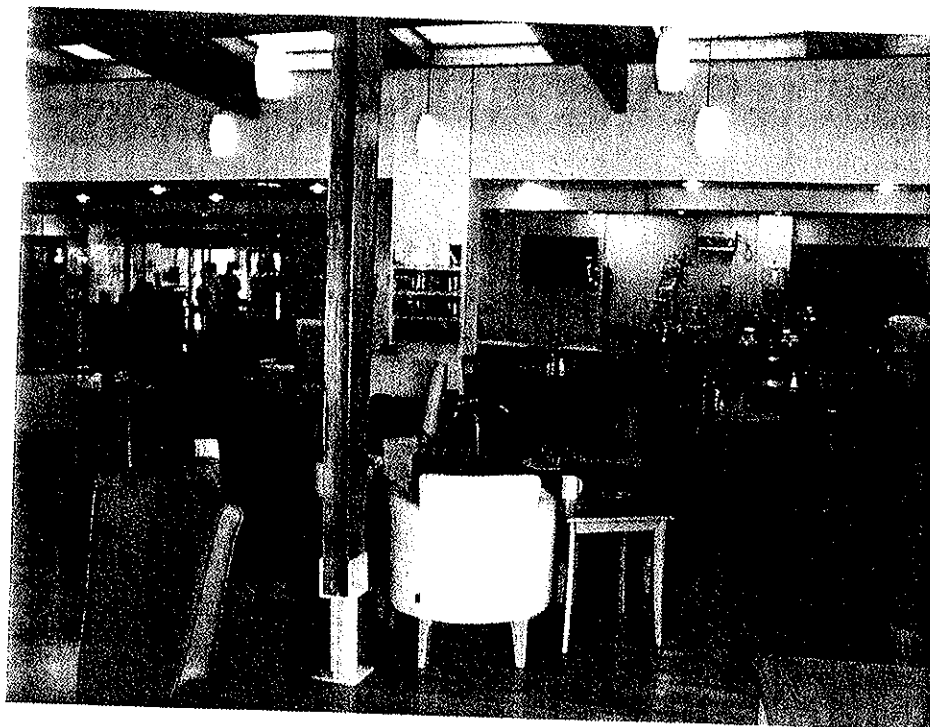
Planned day care, which is run by a small nursing team, takes place between 9am and 5.30pm, currently Monday to Friday, with plans to offer new possibilities at the weekend in the near future. People can come and go as they please, as long as they catch up with their key nurse.

The social space also offers the option for users to 'drop-in' at any time in order to search for information or enjoy some refreshments in the café.

Patients attending a planned group activity, such as circuit training, pilates and fatigue and breathlessness management in the rehabilitation gym, or creative arts programmes and finance management groups, together with those waiting for a range of clinic appointments, for example with the doctor, community nurse specialist or complementary therapist, also use the space. It is also available for families and inpatients, bereaved people, or those coming to view a body in our viewing rooms. It has been surprising how this eclectic mix of people collectively affected by a range of end of life issues instinctively come together to offer each other mutual, healthy support.

• *'You come to us when you are able, and we'll come to you when you're not'*

The above strap line is a drive to encourage those patients and families who are able, to come and see their community nurse specialist in a clinic setting. We all know, that for some, attending the hospice day centre is the last thing they can imagine. We believe that for some of these people, following an initial CNS assessment in the home, this opportunity will enable them to see what else is available in the centre as listed above. Following their clinic appointment, they may decide to attend a group, use the gym or information facilities, or just stay for lunch.



*The new social space*

## Volunteers

Volunteers are key to the success of the new Anniversary Centre. A new twelve week training programme furnishes them with the skills needed

“ *This place is a haven for the family. Dad is dying upstairs, and to have somewhere to escape to and be treated so well helps.* ”

to provide hospitality and a 'listening ear' as well as to signpost users to the most appropriate information they need. They are also given a working knowledge of the multi-disciplinary team as well as mandatory training such as moving and handling and food handling. Their commitment enables us to keep the centre open later into the evening and over the weekend.

## The Pilgrim Room:

The 'Pilgrim Room' offers a place for quiet contemplation for users from all faith backgrounds and none. During the focus groups, patients and families told us about two things that were important for them with regard to spiritual care:

- To have a place to light candles
- To be able to record messages and memories in a permanent place

Users are able to use the room at any time to light candles, and to write in a large book which is kept permanently in the Pilgrim Room

## Transport

We believe it is important to keep our users motivated and independent as long as possible. Therefore, all patients and carers attending the centre are asked to make their own way in. As a back up to this, we employ a full-time minibus driver, who will pick people up when they are not able to get themselves

in. At present, 44% of people make their own way into planned day care, as opposed to 9% before the centre opened.

## Conclusion:

During the last six months, the number of people attending for planned day care has risen by 30%. In addition to this, the number of users coming through the centre on a daily basis has averaged between 100 and 150. Although there is still a lot more work to be done with regard to achieving our vision and aims, we believe that the Anniversary Centre at St Christopher's begins to offer a more useful and cost-effective range of services to our users in a more appropriate and flexible way.

## Further information

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