

Pilgrims matters

News for Pilgrims Hospices supporters

Spring 2025



Celebrating
15 years
of Pilgrims Hospices
Cycle Challenge
pg 8



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Chair's comment

Welcome to the Spring 2025 edition of our supporter magazine!

It is always a privilege to introduce you to a new edition of Pilgrims Matters.

Being Chair of the Board of Trustees is rewarding and, at times, challenging. We set the strategic framework for decision making, working with the Chief Executive Officer and Executive Management Team to ensure that Pilgrims Hospices is able to meet the growing need for end-of-life care services. To help us meet this need we are preparing to modernise our Canterbury hospice. You can read about our plans on page 5.

On page 10, you can read about Pauline's thoughtful donation, given in memory of her beloved husband, who was cared for at our Ashford hospice. On page 15, young supporter Alex shares his heartwarming story of fundraising in a truly unique way! These stories remind us all why Pilgrims Hospices is so much more than a place of care – it's a community of love, support, and generosity.

I am always touched and impressed by the creative ways that people, like you, in our community choose to support us. Some show their support by completing a personal challenge or taking part in one of our Pilgrims challenge events. A staple in our events calendar is the Pilgrims Cycle Challenge, which is now in its 15th year. To mark this milestone anniversary, we are introducing a shorter route of 15 miles which we hope will inspire new cyclists to join us on the day. Whether you're riding, sponsoring a friend, cheering from the sidelines, or lending a hand as a volunteer, we can't wait to see you on 4 May. It's always a day full of camaraderie, laughter and, for our cyclists, determination and a sense of achievement when they cross the finish line.

Hospices are very good at working collaboratively with other organisations to achieve shared outcomes. We are working with local charity, Umbrella, to reduce waste and lower the carbon footprint of both our organisations. This ongoing project is a great opportunity to make a meaningful impact on our environment. You can read more about this collaboration on page 11 of the magazine.

On behalf of everyone at Pilgrims Hospices, thank you.

Karen Warden

Karen Warden
Chair of Trustees, Pilgrims Hospices

Are you coping with an incurable illness? Find out more about Pilgrims support by calling our Advice Line on **01233 504 133**.

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Talk to our team

To contact our Chief Executive or one of our trustees please email eastkent@pilgrimshospices.org or write to our Canterbury address below.

56 London Road,
Canterbury
Kent CT2 8JA
t 01227 459 700/
812612

Hythe Road,
Willesborough
Ashford
Kent TN24 0NE
t 01233 504 100

Ramsgate Road,
Margate
Kent CT9 4AD
t 01843 233 920

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A message from our CEO

Welcome to the Spring 2025 edition of Pilgrims Matters

Dear Supporters,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to our latest edition of Pilgrims Matters.

Our mission is to make a difference to the lives of individuals in east Kent who are facing the last year of life. We are continually expanding the reach of our specialist end-of-life care services so that we can fulfil our ambition of caring for every patient and every family, every time they need us. Some of our patients are cared for in our hospice in-patient units and it is important that they receive care in a professional, comfortable and tranquil environment that boosts their well-being. I am delighted that our Board of Trustees have made the decision to modernise our hospice in Canterbury, securing the hospice's long-term presence in the heart of the City, providing quality end of life care as it has done for 43 years at a site that is much valued by the community.

We pride ourselves in putting the patient and the family at the centre of all we do, delivering the care when and where they need it. We work collaboratively across the health care sector, including the Ambulance Service. Paramedics are often important to patients in the last year of life. We know that 999 calls are increasing for individuals and their families at end-of-life. This may be because services in the community are under pressure for example those provided by family doctors and community

nurses. Pilgrims Hospices is collaborating with a research team at the University of Southampton, the University of the West of England and South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust. They are inviting people who have had experiences of ambulance callouts to learn about their views and help shape ambulance services in the future.

One of the most significant ways you can help safeguard hospice care for future generations is through the This is Hospice Care campaign. This initiative has inspired many to visit our website to learn more about the vital role of end-of-life care in the community and the importance of gifts-in-wills to Pilgrims Hospices.

As a charity, we rely on the kindness and generosity of our community to help us fund our services. Whether you have supported us through donations, fundraising, volunteering, or by remembering us in your Will, your contribution makes a huge difference. You are helping to ensure that hospice care is available for all, for now, for ever.

Thank you for being part of our story and for your support. Wishing you a wonderful spring and summer – enjoy the longer, brighter days ahead.

Best regards,

Helen Bennett

Helen Bennett, FCIPD
Chief Executive Officer



We care about your care

From 1st July to 31st December 2024 we received 492 reviews through I want Great Care, this is what **YOU** told us about **YOUR** experience with Pilgrims.

✓ **98.8%**
had a positive
experience with us.

On average we scored
4.92 out of five stars.
★★★★★

Helping to shape ambulance services for people in the last year of life



Pilgrims Hospices is collaborating with a research team at the University of Southampton, the University of the West of England and South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust to invite people who have had experiences of ambulance callouts to learn about their views and help shape ambulance services in the future.

The research, called the ParAid Study and funded by Marie Curie, is evaluating how different ways of delivering services influence paramedic practice and experiences of individuals at end-of-life.

Paramedics are often important to patients in the last year of life (end-of-life). We know that 999 calls are increasing for individuals and their families at end-of-life, which may be because services in the community are under pressure e.g. those provided by family doctors and community nurses.

Little wide-scale research has been carried out to understand the contribution played by paramedics in these situations and how this might be improved.

From practice, it is known that paramedics attending patients at end-of-life face complex issues, such as:

- Not knowing the patient or their family
- Lack of availability of patient history
- Fear of doing wrong
- Issues with family conflict
- A lack of healthcare professionals to handover to out-of-hours, if the patient is to remain at home.

These issues can mean people are admitted to hospital when circumstances mean they could be cared for at home.

Dr Natasha Campling (Associate Professor, School of Health Sciences, University of Southampton), who is leading the research, said:

“We have already carried out a large-scale survey of paramedics throughout England to understand their professional practice and what factors influence this, and are now conducting in-depth case studies (collecting information from patients, carers and healthcare professionals) to examine different ways of delivering services. It is important to evaluate ambulance service delivery and understand how the best parts of service provision can be incorporated into other services to improve the quality of care and support provided to patients and their families during this crucial period of time. This may prevent unnecessary hospital admissions at end-of-life, which often leads to people dying in hospital”

If you have had an ambulance callout in recent months, are aged 18+, living in your own home, in the last year of life, or a current or bereaved carer for someone in this situation, you may be eligible to take part in a one-off interview about your experience. A £25 voucher will be offered to those who take part.



If you are interested in taking part, please contact the Research team (and see the study poster for further information):

pilgrimshospices.org/paraaid

Email: paraaid@soton.ac.uk

Phone: 02380 599 231

Online form: forms.office.com/e/adbmHDSclb

Thank you,

ParAid study team



Scan the QR code to take part in the study

[Read the full article online](#)

The Future of Pilgrims in Canterbury

Pilgrims Hospices are delighted to announce that we are launching a project to modernise our Canterbury hospice located in London Road.



Modernising our hospice will secure Pilgrims Hospices' long-term presence in the heart of Canterbury providing quality end of life care as it has done for 43 years at a site that is much valued by the community.

This means that we will no longer be pursuing the option of a new build hospice at the Saxon Fields site in Thanington. Despite everyone's best efforts and intentions, external factors over a number of years, have meant that we have been unable to progress the build.

Modernising our Canterbury home will enhance facilities for patients, families, staff and volunteers, ensuring they meet the future needs of our community. These will be the first major works undertaken at our Canterbury hospice for some years.

Whilst this project is positive, nothing operationally is going to change in the next two years at London Road.

Our first step is to prepare detailed plans for the modernisation of London Road and submit a planning application to Canterbury

City Council. We are appointing a specialist team including architects with a proven track record in hospice design.

We will involve staff and volunteers in helping to design the modernised premises over the next few months. We hope to present our proposals to our valued staff, volunteers, supporters and to the wider public later in the year.

It will take at least two years to undertake detailed design work, obtain planning permission, and appoint a construction partner.

Throughout this time, our services will not be impacted at all.

Inpatient services will inevitably be affected during the construction period, but we will be developing plans to ensure that the impact on patients is minimised. It is important to remember that the vast majority of how we support patients takes place in the community and this will continue.

Our Canterbury Wellbeing and Community Services will operate from the Ann Robertson Centre in London Road during the modernisation to ensure there is

Updates

We will provide regular updates on the progress of this positive project on our website. In the meantime, we will aim to be here for every patient, every family, every time they need us.

minimal disruption for patients who use these services.

We will support patients and families throughout the modernisation project and provide regular updates on our progress.

This project has, in part, been made possible by an extremely generous donation from the Tory Family Foundation. The £4million donation is the largest single donation ever received by Pilgrims Hospices.

We will provide regular updates on the progress of this remarkable project on our new project website www.pmmmodernisation.org In the meantime, we will aim to be here for every patient, every family, every time they need us.

[Read the full article online](#)



Michelle - Finance Officer



Nicola - Occupational Therapist



Palak - Wellbeing Practitioner



Charlotte - Advanced Clinical Practitioner



Cat - Spiritual Care Chaplain



Gary - Maintenance Engineer

Part of the community, part of your story, part of us.

Gifts left in Wills to Pilgrims Hospices are incredibly important. Without the generosity of those who remembered Pilgrims in their Wills over the last 42 years, we wouldn't be here. It's people like you who are helping to ensure the future of our hospice care for all, for now, forever.

Hospice care is everything you'd expect and everything you wouldn't.

It's care at home, and care in our hospices, managing symptoms and giving practical advice. It's planning for their future, and being there for yours.

It's love and life and celebration. It's care for the carers, for those dying and for those left behind. It's going the extra mile, reminiscing on old memories, and creating new ones. It's the birthdays, the weddings, the new flavours and the old favourites. It's rediscovering creativity, exploring spirituality, and talking about what really matters.

It's Ann making visitors a cup of tea, Jill adding sparkle to the ward, and Lou fundraising in the community. It's Michelle making sure invoices are paid on time, Nicola helping patients stay active, and it's Gary keeping our buildings, warm and safe. It's all of us, and it's all of you.



Sarah - Deputy Head of Nursing



Siobhan - Volunteer



Polly - Health Care Assistant



Lou - Community Fundraising Manager



Jill - Domestic Assistant



Jenny - Retail Area Manager



Jacquie - Catering Assistant

THIS IS HOSPICE CARE

Together, we can make sure that hospice care lives on for every patient, every family, every time.

A gift in your Will helps ensure care at the end of life is here for everyone who needs it, both now and in the future. It's ours to protect.

To find out more, visit pilgrimshospices.org/giftsinwills, or contact the Gifts in Wills team on 01227 782 060 or via giftsinwills@pilgrimshospices.org.

Celebrating 15 years of Pilgrims Hospices Cycle Challenge



Back in 2010, Pilgrims Hospices launched a little bike ride across east Kent. Since then, Pilgrims Hospices Cycle Challenge has not only become a much-loved staple in the charity's annual events calendar, but it has also become one of the South East's largest cycle rides.

A staggering total of 14,475 riders have signed up over the years, cycling an incredible 1,024,327 miles for Pilgrims. A million miles equates to in excess of 40 trips around the equator.

The ride traditionally takes place on the Early May Bank Holiday weekend, to allow cyclists to enjoy a relaxing Monday after taking on such an impressive challenge. For 2025, the ride is taking place on **Sunday 4 May 2025**.

This year, the Fundraising team is aiming to cross the line with several remarkable milestones:

- Since 2010, the annual event has raised an incredible £1.4 million for local hospice care. In 2025, we are hoping to surpass the cumulative £1.5 million total over the years.
- Whilst contributing to £1.5 million in fundraising, the event has been exclusively opened to welcome 1,500 riders to the event this year, promising to make 2025 the most memorable year yet!
- To celebrate the event's 15th anniversary, a brand-new 15-mile route has been introduced to encourage even more participants to join in the fun. This route is open to individuals aged 12 and older, providing an exciting opportunity for families to cycle together, as well as catering to beginners or those seeking a shorter ride.
- A special anniversary medal – each rider will receive a brand-new commemorative medal to mark their fantastic achievements on the finish line.



Spoke-worthy quotes from Pilgrims' riders:

"Pilgrims Cycle Challenge is my bike challenge of the Year – fantastically well organised and such an inclusive event for all!"

"Fantastic day on the bike with wonderful volunteers"

"Best bike challenge for miles! Simply the best"

"A very enjoyable experience from start to end with added bonus of knowing we're raising money for a truly worthwhile cause"

"It's 3 days after the cycle ride and I'm still euphoric about the whole day."

"Such a heart-warming, amazing event with awesome support"

"The 125 was deeply soul searching"

"A well organised event, which supports the cyclists, and all along knowing you are supporting the hospice."

"It was a brilliant day, superb roots and immaculate organisation. Bring on 2025!!"

Starting and finishing at the University of Kent in Canterbury, Pilgrims Cycle Challenge offers a range of distances, including 30, 50, 75, 100 and 125 miles for participants aged 14 and over, in addition there is a new 15-mile route for those aged 12+.

Each distance offers an opportunity to experience Kent's stunning countryside. Every year, more than 1,300 riders join the event to pedal for Pilgrims.

Together, the cyclists, their friends and family, the wonderful volunteers, bike marshals, mechanics and staff help to fund skilled and compassionate care for thousands of patients and their loved ones each year.

Mileage-worthy stats:

In excess of **£1.4 million** has been raised via Cycle Challenge since 2010.

More than **14,475** riders have taken part.

The total distance cycled by these riders equates to: **1,024,327 miles**

Last year, more than **3,725 pieces of cake** were consumed, and **4,300 cups of tea** were enjoyed.

Together with **950 bananas** and **1,550 rolls** – all made in-house by our dedicated catering team.



Join us and make 2025 extra special:

pilgrimscyclechallenge.org

Standard Entry closes
14 April 2025

On the day entry and prices will be subject to capacity. Register early to avoid disappointment.

pilgrimscyclechallenge.org

 **The 15th Anniversary Special – 15 miles (£30)**

 **The Circuit – 30 miles (£35)**

 **The Classic – 50 miles (£45)**

 **The Challenge – 75 miles (£45)**

 **The Century – 100 miles (£55)**

 **The Epic – 125 miles (£65)**

[Read the full article online](#)



Jim Jeffrey from Ashford received Pilgrims Hospices care in 2024. Jim had Progressive Supranuclear Palsy (PSP), which affected his body and mobility, and Motor Neurone Disease (MND); attending the Time to Create therapeutic art group at the Ashford hospice enabled him to make the most of the time he had.



Pauline thanks Pilgrims Hospices with kind donation in memory of husband, Jim

When Jim died, in lieu of flowers, his family and friends fundraised for Pilgrims. The money raised bought a projector, speaker and stand to enhance the charity's Wellbeing Programme so that others can continue to benefit from this vital care.

Jim's wife, Pauline, presented the donations to the Wellbeing team. She said:

"I want to express my deep gratitude for the care and support Jim received from Pilgrims, a charity that will forever hold a special place in my heart. Despite his health conditions and the challenges he faced, he fought with resilience. His battle was long and hard, but he showed incredible strength and courage throughout.

"Jim took part in Pilgrims Wellbeing groups for six months, and I can't tell you how much that experience meant to him and our family. The groups brought a light to Jim's life that I hadn't seen in a long time, giving him purpose and happiness during a period when those things felt out of reach. They gave us cherished memories that I will hold on to forever.

"The nurses and wider team were so attentive to his wellbeing, and the compassion and kindness

shown to us during that time was nothing short of amazing. I'd like to give a special mention to Jan Murphy, Pal Sharma, and the rest of the wonderful team who made such a positive impact on Jim's life. I will always be so thankful, and I can only hope that others who need Pilgrims care find the same support that we did.

"Sadly, we lost Jim on 6 June 2024, but felt it would be fitting to raise money for the Wellbeing services that brought him so much joy. When we asked the team what they would like to invest the money in, they chose a projector, speaker and stand to enhance the services they provide. It's comforting to know that these items will be used to continue bringing happiness and support to others."

Pal Sharma and Jan Murphy, Wellbeing Practitioners, said: "We're so grateful to Pauline and her family and friends for this kind and generous donation. The speaker and projector are fantastic additions to our Wellbeing sessions, especially for Living Well and Time to Create groups. The projector will allow guest speakers to display their presentations during Living Well, and it can also be used to play creative and artistic videos during Time to Create.

The speakers will enable group participants to play their preferred music during sessions. Music has a powerful effect on our patients and carers, helping them to relax and uplift their spirits."

Pauline added: "I sincerely hope that others who are able to contribute will do so, to help Pilgrims continue the amazing work they do."

[Read the full article online](#)

For more information on Pilgrims Hospices' Wellbeing Programme:

- Visit pilgrimshospices.org/wellbeing
- Email wellbeing.enquiries@pilgrimshospices.org
- Call the Pilgrims Hospices Advice Line on 01233 504 133

Pilgrims Hospices is a charity dedicated to providing expert care and support to patients with life-limiting illnesses in east Kent. Our services ensure comfort, dignity, and quality of life for patients and their families, offering compassionate care both in hospice settings and in the community.

Compassionate Communities continue to grow in east Kent

Compassionate Communities is part of a growing movement that aims to promote a public health approach to death, dying, loss and grief right at the heart of local communities. Since the launch of Pilgrims Compassionate Communities strategy in 2024, we have been working with groups and individuals in our local communities, inspiring, supporting and celebrating compassionate activities across east Kent.

Grief is a natural, normal and necessary emotional reaction when someone close to us dies, but when we are affected by grief, it can often leave us feeling overwhelmed, isolated and uncertain of the future. Most people find they are able to cope with their grief with the support they receive from family, friends and their local community. For some people, having the opportunity to meet with other bereaved people, to share their experiences and to make new connections through peer support, can be a helpful way to normalise their feelings and worries.

Here we recognise some of the work Pilgrims Compassionate Communities has been doing to support local community groups.

Romney Marsh Community Hub Bereavement Support Group

Recognising the need for bereavement support in their local area, Romney Marsh Community Hub recently took the initiative to set up a peer-led support group for adults who are experiencing grief. As part of our Compassionate Communities work, Pilgrims were delighted to support this project by facilitating a grief awareness and compassionate conversation skills training session to staff and volunteers from the Hub. Those who attended found the session very useful – it helped them to understand how grief works, and how to use communication skills effectively to support adults who are grieving. Following the success of this first session, Pilgrims will be delivering a second session at the Hub in April.

Lympne Parish Council Bereavement Support Group

Councillor Anne Beales from Lympne Parish Council recently approached Pilgrims for advice and help in setting up a bereavement support group in their local community. As part of our Compassionate Communities work, we are excited to have this opportunity to collaborate with Anne and her team of volunteers, supporting them to develop and implement a pilot project for members of their local community, starting in April.

To find out more about Pilgrims Compassionate Communities work, or if you would like to become involved in creating a compassionate community across east Kent, please visit our website

pilgrimshospices.org/compassionate-communities

[Read the full article online](#)



Local charities unite for sustainability

Pilgrims Hospices and Canterbury Umbrella have joined forces to reduce waste and support their community. Led by Ian Ashton, Pilgrims' Catering Services Manager, surplus kitchen goods from the hospice now help Canterbury Umbrella provide nutritious meals to more people in need.

Robert, Canterbury Umbrella's chef with 45 years of experience, welcomes the initiative: "This partnership is a win-win. It helps those relying on our services while reducing waste and lowering our carbon footprint."

With both charities committed to sustainability, this collaboration strengthens community ties and ensures resources are used efficiently. Their efforts highlight how working together can create lasting positive change – benefitting people, the environment, and the local area.

Together, Pilgrims Hospices and Canterbury Umbrella are proving that small actions lead to a greener, more caring future.

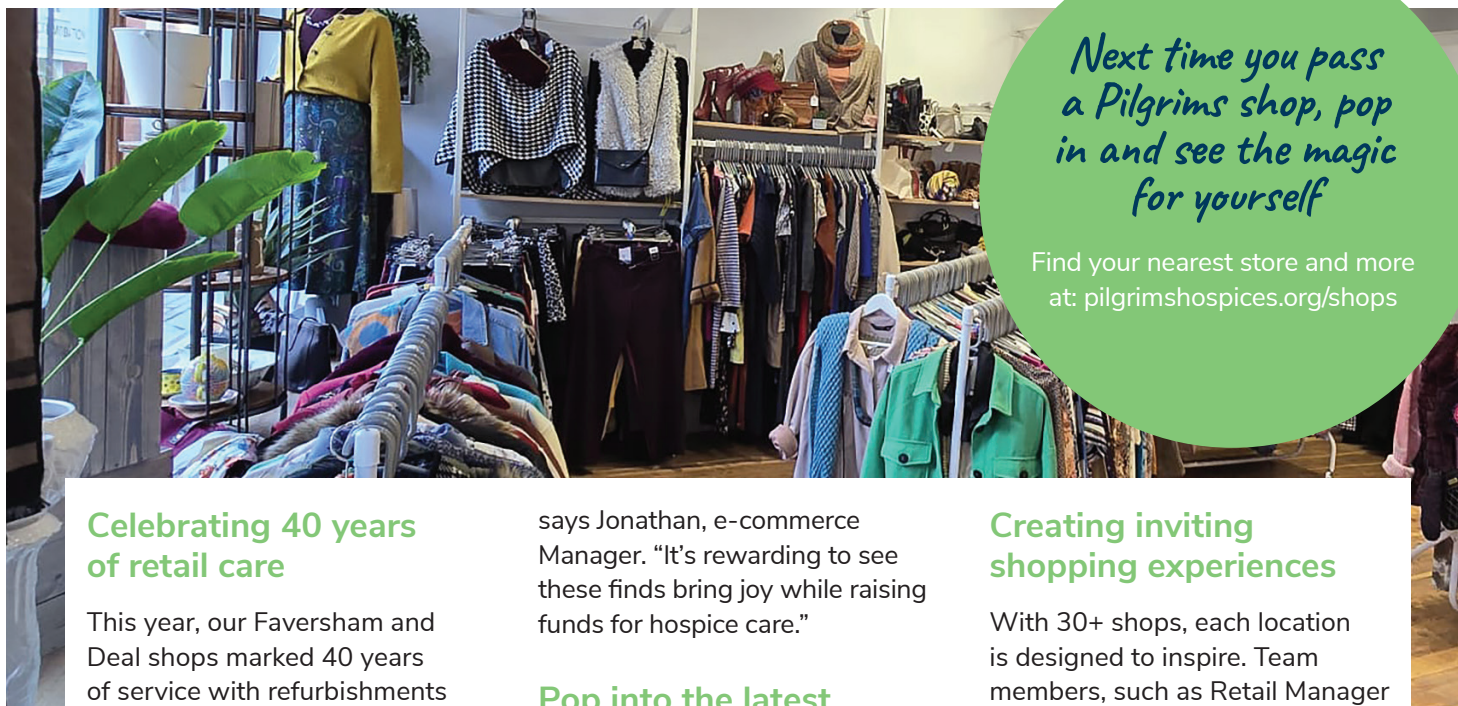
[Read this story in more detail at pilgrimshospices.org/news](https://pilgrimshospices.org/news)



[Read the full article online](#)

Pilgrims Retail team: Making every donation count

At Pilgrims Hospices, our Retail team turns donations into compassionate care for individuals and families across east Kent. Every sale in our charity shops helps fund end-of-life services, thanks to our loyal customers, dedicated Retail staff and volunteers.



Next time you pass a Pilgrims shop, pop in and see the magic for yourself

Find your nearest store and more at: pilgrimshospices.org/shops

Celebrating 40 years of retail care

This year, our Faversham and Deal shops marked 40 years of service with refurbishments and grand reopening events. "Our shops are integral to the community," says Rob, manager in Faversham. Bex, Deal shop manager, agrees: "It's wonderful to celebrate 40 years as part of the Pilgrims family."

Innovative new ventures

Pilgrims recently opened the country's first 'all new with tags' store in Tankerton. Managed by Karen, the shop has been a huge success. "The response has been amazing," says Tim Stewart, Head of Retail. "We encourage everyone to visit for fantastic bargains."

Incredible media sales

Our shops have seen remarkable success with media sales, featuring movie memorabilia, vinyl, books, tour t-shirts, and more, both in-store and online. "There's something for every collector,"

says Jonathan, e-commerce Manager. "It's rewarding to see these finds bring joy while raising funds for hospice care."

Pop into the latest pop-up shop

Pilgrims' newest retail venture at County Square Shopping Centre, Ashford, opened in January and has already received fantastic feedback. The pop-up offers a treasure trove of pre-loved items at bargain prices, supporting hospice care with every sale.

Eco-friendly shopping

Pilgrims shops champion sustainability by giving second-hand items a new lease of life. From kilo sales to school uniform collaborations, we help reduce waste and promote cost-effective shopping. "Every item we sell has a story," says Ian, Tivoli Store Supervisor.

Creating inviting shopping experiences

With 30+ shops, each location is designed to inspire. Team members, such as Retail Manager Adele from the Herne Bay shop, help to create beautiful window displays, fostering community connections. "Every donation helps support those who need us most," she says.

How you can help

Whether donating goods, shopping, or volunteering, every contribution supports our vital services. "Every purchase, no matter how small, makes a difference," says a volunteer in Canterbury.

[Read the full article online](#)



Find your stride for Pilgrims

Every year, hundreds of supporters, from all different walks of life, lace up their walking boots and enjoy the beautiful Kent countryside in support of Pilgrims Hospices. Last year alone, more than 36,000 kilometres were hiked for hospice care; the equivalent of walking from Land's End to John O'Groats more than 27 times!



Follow in the footsteps of medieval pilgrims

Now in its 8th year, the popular Pilgrims Way Challenge returns on Saturday, 21 June 2025. Walkers and runners alike can enjoy the rural beauty of one of England's oldest and least-trodden national trails as they journey along ancient footpaths used by pilgrims since the Middle Ages.

Starting beneath the iconic walls of Dover Castle in Connaught Park, this unique challenge follows the North Downs Way through idyllic rolling fields, ancient woodlands, and quaint villages, leading to the historic cathedral city of Canterbury. But it doesn't

stop there! Continue along the picturesque Pilgrims Way and the serene Stour Valley to the charming village of Wye, nestled in the heart of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

With 25km, 35km, or 55km distances to choose from, it's perfect for people of varying fitness levels, and whether walking or running, the Pilgrims Way Challenge between Dover to Wye really has it all.

Last year, the Pilgrims Way Challenge raised more than **£140,000** for Pilgrims. You could be part of something special this year by joining us.

Find out more at pilgrimswaychallenge.org

A pilgrimage beyond borders: Take on a bucket list challenge

Pilgrims Hospices will be taking our first group of keen adventurers to reach the base camp of the greatest mountain on earth, Mount Everest. Follow the path of many pilgrims before us. This is a pilgrimage to top all others, quite literally.

This incredible 16-day adventure and 11-day trek will take you to some of the highest villages in the world, where you will witness spectacular sunrises over the snow-capped Himalayan peaks, and follow in the footsteps of great mountaineers and pilgrims. From the peak of Kala Patthar, you'll be beneath the mighty Everest summit, an incredible achievement and a sight you'll be sure to never forget.

This bespoke adventure package is led by a UK mountain leader and supported by a UK-registered medic and expert local guides. You'll be in very safe hands and have support every step of the way.



Included in the package is a 25km or 35km place on the Pilgrims Way Challenge, and you will also receive a 50km place on the Kent Downs Challenge in October, where our Everest team members will come together to take on the distance.

Join us!
Everest Base Camp 2026
Saturday 7 March 2026 – Sunday 22 March 2026.

For more information and package prices, please visit pilgrimshospices.org/everest

Thanet refurbishment



Exciting changes at Pilgrims Hospice Thanet: A two-year transformation

Over the past two years, Pilgrims Hospice Thanet has undergone an extensive refurbishment project, improving accessibility, comfort, and facilities for patients, families, and staff. These changes have been carefully planned and executed, with input from various teams, to create a welcoming and supportive environment for all who visit the hospice.

Enhanced Wellbeing facilities

One of the most notable upgrades is the installation of large folding doors in the Therapy Centre, opening directly into the hospice gardens. This improvement allows wheelchair users to enjoy the outdoor spaces with greater ease, embracing the therapeutic benefits of nature.

The Therapy Centre, where patients take part in a wide range of therapy sessions, has undergone a major refurbishment. Once dated and tired, it has been transformed into an elegant and relaxing space. New furniture, fresh paint, and carefully chosen colours create a serene and comfortable atmosphere. The Wellbeing reception area has also been revitalised with comfortable seating and a bright, welcoming look.



New kitchenette and facilities

A brand-new kitchenette has been installed in the Therapy Centre, for visitors and relatives, providing a warm and practical space that replaces outdated tea urns and water heaters. This upgrade ensures that visitors

can prepare refreshments in a more homely setting while spending time with loved ones.

Ward enhancements

Significant work has also been undertaken on the wards, further enhancing the efficiency and functionality of the hospice's facilities. These improvements have freshened the appearance of the space, creating a more peaceful and uplifting environment for patients and staff alike. New flooring and an integrated plumbing system (IPS unit) have been installed, modernising the space, improving hygiene standards, and ensuring greater comfort. Across the hospice, new bathrooms, including state-of-the-art wet rooms, have been introduced. These modernised facilities enable patients to refresh themselves with dignity and ease, significantly improving their experience.



Refurbished family lounge

A newly refurbished family lounge has been created, offering a comfortable, modern, and welcoming space for visitors and patients. This inviting area allows families to relax together, share a beverage, and enjoy precious moments in a homely environment. It also serves as a quiet retreat for visitors seeking a peaceful space during their time at the hospice.

Accessibility and outdoor improvements



Practical upgrades have been made to outdoor spaces, including replacing old paving slabs with tarmac, ensuring that wheelchairs can safely manoeuvre through the gardens. Additionally, electric canopies have been installed on the

balcony from the wards, offering shade and shelter for patients who wish to enjoy fresh air and the beauty of the hospice gardens.

The team has also introduced new flooring throughout the hospice corridors, moving away from old-style carpeting to more hygienic and modern materials. Dark wooden features have been replaced with bright, contemporary finishes that adhere to the highest standards of health and safety.

Looking ahead

Hospice Services Manager, Jon May, who has been with Pilgrims Hospices for almost 10 years, shared his pride in this transformational project:

"I've had the privilege of updating a 30-year-old building, adding value for our patients, their families, and our staff. The refreshment project is ongoing, with further plans to renovate the reception area and other key spaces throughout the hospice."

Jon also highlighted the collaborative effort involved, working with teams across the estate to enhance the experience for everyone who relies on Pilgrims' services. The hospice is deeply grateful to its contractors, including J Rospo Building Contractors and Bauvill, who have shown great understanding and sensitivity in working within the hospice environment.

With the addition of solar panels and a new car park barrier, which was kindly funded by the Frank Brake Charitable Trust, Pilgrims Hospice Thanet continues its journey towards a more sustainable and accessible future. The improvements made over the past two years have already had a profound impact, ensuring that patients and their families receive the highest level of care and comfort in their time of need.

[Read the full article online](#)

Alexa raises £100s for Pilgrims Hospices with beautiful bracelets



8-year-old Alexa Bolger from Westgate-on-Sea was inspired to support Pilgrims Hospices after loved ones and family friends received the charity's care.

In the school summer holidays, Alexa's grandma, Betty (Gan Gan) gave her £10 pocket money, which she used to buy clay beads to make bracelets. Alexa set up a stall outside her house and sold the bracelets, raising £218 for Pilgrims in just five days, thanks to the kind support and donations of passersby.

Alexa also attended the Thanet 5k Colour Run in Palm Bay, Cliftonville on 6 October 2024, where she sold more bracelets and raised another £150. Laurel House Dentist in Margate are supporting Alexa to raise even more for Pilgrims by selling her bracelets in memory of their colleague, Sharron. In total, Alexa and her family have contributed £100 to purchase the beads, and to date, she has raised an incredible £573.90 for local hospice care.

Alexa said: "I want to help people who are poorly and need Pilgrims care, so they can be a little bit happier in the time they have left. I hope my fundraising helps to buy medicine for them and the care they need."



Karen Kenward, Community Fundraising Manager, added:

"Alexa came to see us in August 2024 with a donation of £218 from bracelet sales that she had made by asking family and friends for a small donation, to help raise awareness and support for our hospice services. Since then, she has taken the idea to her school and raised further funds, including supporting our Thanet 5k Colour Run, where she raised another £150 with her bracelets on the day! Today, her funding is sitting at £573.90.

"Alexa is a real superstar! Aged just 8 years old, and to be so very committed to our charity's cause, is so wonderful to see. We at Pilgrims, her mum Clare, and her family and friends, are so very proud of her commitment. Thank you so very much, Alexa, you really bring a smile to my face every time I see you."

If you've been inspired by Alexa and would like to fundraise for Pilgrims in the Thanet area, we'd love to hear your story. Please contact Karen Kenward:

Telephone: **01843 233 934**

Email: karen.kenward@pilgrimshospices.org

[Read the full article online](#)

Nourishing body and soul: Pilgrims Hospices catering team

At Pilgrims Hospices, our catering team is more than just a group of staff – we're a family. Every day, we work tirelessly to provide delicious, nutritious meals to patients, families, staff, volunteers, and visitors. Our goal is to create comforting, high-quality food that brings warmth and a sense of normality to everyone who walks through our doors.



throughout the day. Patient meals are carefully tailored, and my team regularly visits the wards to ensure we're meeting each patient's needs."

Ian adds, "We're immensely grateful to local producers and supermarkets for their support with free goods when available. This helps us stretch our budget and create a wider variety of meals. Thanks to our freezer capacity, nothing goes to waste."

and parsley are already being used in dishes such as leek and parmesan risotto and homemade fish cakes.

We also involve patients in the process, offering a mindful, reflective experience as they pick fresh ingredients for their meals.

Join our Catering team

We're looking for passionate individuals to join us, including a Head Chef at Canterbury. This is an excellent opportunity for an experienced chef seeking a rewarding role with no split shifts or late nights.

As Head Chef, you will:

- Design and prepare nutritious, varied menus.
- Cater for corporate and fundraising events.
- Work with healthcare colleagues to meet dietary needs.
- Lead and support a dedicated team.
- Maintain high standards of food safety and cleanliness.

This is more than just a job – it's a chance to make a difference every day. Learn more about vacancies at: pilgrimshospices.org/jobs

Supporting our work

Through the dedication of our catering teams, volunteers, and supporters, we ensure every patient receives the nourishment – both physical and emotional – that they deserve.

[Read the full article online](#)

Our teams at Ashford, Canterbury, and Thanet work closely with trusted suppliers to ensure fresh, wholesome meals for all tastes and dietary needs while carefully managing budgets. As one team member puts it, "There's never a dull moment! We're always looking for innovative recipes to offer something special."

We also provide catering services for the Ann Robertson Centre in Canterbury, which offers meeting and training spaces. Our food ensures visitors are well-fed while they work in a welcoming environment.

A passion for food and care

Head of Catering, Ian Ashton, highlights the significance of our work:

"My team feed staff and volunteers alongside our patients. We offer subsidised lunchtime meals and a variety of items available for purchase

Nutrition plays a crucial role in holistic care, especially for those in the final stages of life. Our teams go the extra mile to meet each patient's wishes. At Thanet, a patient once requested lobster – and we made it happen. Head Chef Georgie at Thanet explains, "Providing comforting, tasty food is just as important as caring for our patients on the ward." Bobby, Head Chef at Ashford, agrees: "It's about more than food; it's about moments of connection and care."

Growing our own

Our commitment to fresh, high-quality ingredients is reflected in our kitchen gardens, lovingly tended by volunteers. These gardens supply seasonal produce, which our chefs incorporate into daily menus. Thanks to funding from the Environment Fund, administered by the Kent Community Foundation, we have established a new kitchen garden at our Canterbury hospice. Fresh ingredients like leeks

From small beginnings to over 21,000 entries

1996 saw the beginnings of Pilgrims Hospices Lottery, with an army of volunteers stomping the streets to gain supporters and willing participants to our first ever draw in April 1996.

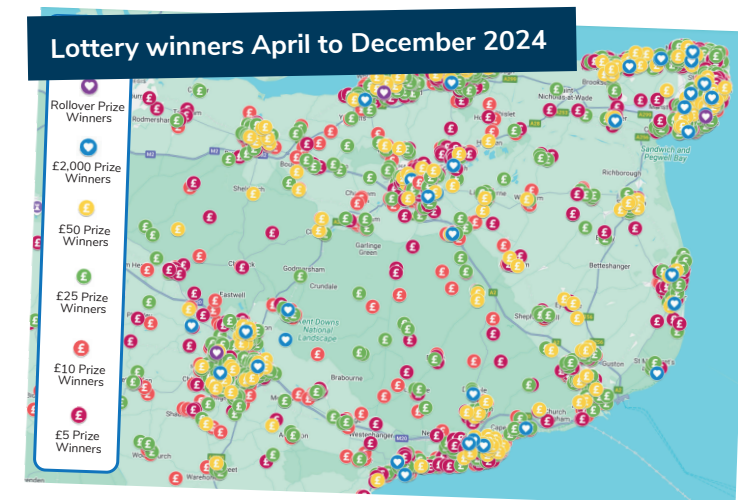
Nearly 30 years on, and thanks to many of the same early collectors and members, we go from strength to strength. Our draw now has over 21,000 entries every week and continues to grow. It's a fun and easy way to give and be part of the Pilgrims community, providing regular, sustainable funds to go towards Pilgrims very special services. Did you know that more than 5,500 winners cheques worth over £200k are sent out every year?!

Following the success of the weekly draw, we're delighted to say that we've also been able to add several associated products to our portfolio over the years, which have proven to be very popular. We now offer scratch cards, wedding favours and gift vouchers for any event – including Christmas, birthdays and anniversaries.

Plus, our ever-popular Christmas superdraw; 2024 was a bumper year, with £75,000 brought in. This was our most successful superdraw in over a decade. Thank you to the thousands of you who took part and made such a difference to so many. It really does mean a lot to us all at Pilgrims, particularly special and appreciated in these challenging times.

As a weekly lottery, we contribute to good news and happy memories. We like to tell and be told good news stories, the joys of winning, the difference a win can make; going towards holidays, celebrations, treats for children and grandchildren alike, creating blissful flashbacks and treasured moments.

Our very kind and generous supporters have donated thousands of pounds worth of winnings to Pilgrims Hospices in this last year alone.



Fun facts.

In 2024 our dedicated team of Lottery Collectors walked over 3,000 miles, the Lottery Team signed up over 4,000 new entries and we congratulated more than 5,500 lucky winners.



Thank you so very much, it really does make such a big difference and helps us continue to provide our compassionate care to those who need it the most.

We are still fantastic value at just £1 a week per entry!

Join today! Call us on **01227 379 741**, visit us pilgrimshospices.org/lottery, scan the QR code or complete the form enclosed and return in the envelope provided.

We would love you to join us!

With best wishes

Shiralee

Lottery Manager

[Read the full article online](#)



Pilgrims Hospices Events 2025-26

● Cycling ● Running ● Walking/Trekking ● Challenges ● In Memory ● Community

Pilgrims Hospices Cycle Challenge

Sunday 4 May



Celebrating the 15th Anniversary year. Get on your bike to explore the beautiful and varied countryside of east Kent alongside 1,500 cyclists of all abilities. Help Pilgrims to surpass the cumulative £1.5million raised from Cycle Challenge.

Ride it your way by choosing one of six ride distances, then celebrate crossing the finish line in our cycling event village.

Location: All routes start and finish at our event village at the University of Kent, Canterbury CT2 7SR

Registration: Standard entry closes 14 April 2025 (entry will close as soon as capacity is reached).

The 15th Anniversary Special – 15 miles (£30)
The Circuit – 30 miles (£35)
The Classic – 50 miles (£45)
The Challenge – 75 miles (£45)
The Century – 100 miles (£55)
The Epic – 125 miles (£65)

Sponsorship: As much as you can! Help us surpass £1.5 million in total

Website:
pilgrimscyclechallenge.org

London 2 Brighton Ultra Challenge

Saturday 24 May

Location: London to Brighton

Registration: Variable depending on chosen distance and funding option

Sponsorship: Various sponsorship options available

Contact: Events team

Pilgrims Way Challenge

Saturday 21 June

Enjoy the rural beauty of one of England's oldest and least-trodden national trails. Lace up your walking boots or running shoes for a 25km, 35km or 55km route along the Pilgrims Way from Dover to the historic cathedral city of Canterbury and onward to a coastal finish in Wye. It's the perfect challenge for varying fitness levels, with full event support and a t-shirt included with your entry.

Location: Dover to Wye

Registration:
Standard entry closes 2 June 2025 (entry will close as soon as capacity is reached).

25km – £50
35km – £55
55km – £60

On the day entry is subject to event capacity, so early registration is advised to avoid disappointment.

25km – £55
35km – £60
55km – £65

Sponsorship: A pledge to raise at least £100 in sponsorship

Website:
pilgrimswaychallenge.org



100 Pieces of Art

Saturday 28 June



100 Pieces of Art will be auctioned at Anthony Giles Studio in Margate, with all proceeds raising vital funds for Pilgrims Hospices.

Location: Anthony Giles Studio, 3 Lombard Street, Margate CT9 1EJ

Contact: Thanet Fundraising team

Tandem Skydive / Wing Walking

Sunday 6 July and Sunday 17 August



Location: Headcorn Airfield, Shenley Road, Headcorn, TN27 9HX

Registration: £40 per person for either the Skydive or Wing Walk

Sponsorship: Minimum sponsorship of £395 for the Skydive and £650 for the Wing Walk.

Contact: Events team

Sunflower Memories

Saturday 12 July

Dedicate a sunflower to someone you love and join us to celebrate their life at our Sunflower Day on Saturday 12 July. Enjoy refreshments and live music in our hospice gardens, and find your dedicated sunflower memory marker.

Location: Pilgrims Hospice sites

Contact: Individual Giving team



Summer Fair, Ashford

Sunday 27 July

Find a wide range of stalls, games and activities for the whole family. From luxury crafts and hot food, to tombolas and children's games. Not to be missed!

Location: Sandyacres, Sandyhurst Lane, Ashford, TN25 4PE

Registration: Entry is free, donations welcome

Contact: Ashford Fundraising team



Pilgrims Golf Day, Canterbury

Friday 12 September

Tee off for Pilgrims this September at one of Kent's top golf courses. Join us for a day on the fairway as you take on this 18-hole course, including breakfast and two-course dinner.

Location: Canterbury Golf Club, CT1 1TW

Contact: Corporate Fundraising team

Thanet Colour Run

Sunday 5 October



This family friendly 5k event is an explosion of colourful fun. Take in amazing coastal views as you run, jog or walk through clouds of brightly coloured powder paint around the route. Gather friends and family to join the energetic atmosphere along Thanet's spectacular seafront.

Location: Palm Bay Green, Cliftonville, CT9 3NR

Sponsorship: As much as you can!

Contact: Thanet Fundraising team

Everest Base Camp Challenge

Saturday 7 March – Sunday 22 March 2026

NEW – A bucket list challenge beyond borders. Pilgrims Hospices will be taking a group of keen adventurers to reach the base camp of the greatest mountain on earth, Mount Everest. Follow the path of many pilgrims before us. This is a pilgrimage to top all others!

Location: Nepal

Registration: £395 registration fee, with a final balance of £3,495 for a twin room adventure package (other limited options available).

Sponsorship: You must pledge to fundraise a minimum of £750

Website:
pilgrimshospices.org/everest



Future dates for your diary:

Ashford Christmas Fair

Saturday 22 November

Location: Ashford

Trees of Love

Saturday 6 December

Location: Hospice sites

Santas on the Run!

Sunday 14 December

Location: Herne Bay

Christmas Tree Recycling 2026

9-12 January 2026

Location: Canterbury, Thanet & Ashford

Cycle Challenge 2026

Sunday 3 May 2026

Location: East Kent

Pilgrims Way Challenge 2026

Saturday 20 June 2026

Location: East Kent

Your support helps us to make a difference

Want to register?

If you would like to register your interest in an event, fundraise or help in another way, visit pilgrimshospices.org/fundraise or email fundraising@pilgrimshospices.org

Got a question? Don't hesitate to contact our friendly team! 01227 812 609

Please note: All events will launch on the website closer to the time of the event. Please visit: pilgrimshospices.org/events

Read the full article online

Kevin and Dympna's Story of Hope

Kevin:

"My wife, Gill, received Pilgrims care and passed at home, aged 62. We met as teenagers in 1972 and were married for 42 years, and had three daughters: Emma, Jennifer and Laura.

At first, I thought a hospice was where you go to die, but it's so much more than that. Pilgrims were as much interested in me as they were in Gill. I remember one hospice doctor who made a special trip to see Gill at home during their already busy day. That extra level of care is very special.

When the time came, Gill was able to die at home with our family beside her. I held her hand, told her I love her, she smiled at me and took her last breath. Pilgrims were with us every step of the way, ensuring that everything was our decision.

Dympna and I met after being invited by Pilgrims to attend a bereavement support group. We were both reluctant to attend at first, but decided to give it a try. We kept in touch after the sessions had completed and began meeting for a weekly lunch.

As we began to spend more time together, COVID hit. My daughters suggested Dympna and I form a support bubble to avoid isolation, and see one another as if we were members of the same household. Dympna and I have continued to live happily together ever since."

Dympna:

"My husband, Colin, died at the Canterbury hospice, aged 70. Colin was frightened of the hospice when it was first mentioned, but Pilgrims doctors put his mind at rest about

the end of life, and that made it much easier to have acceptance. The care was marvellous, just brilliant. Pilgrims is always in your corner.

Some months after Kevin and I finished the bereavement support sessions, he invited me to lunch as a friend. Initially I was hesitant and turned him down. It felt too early to be socialising with another man. But I thought about it some more, and changed my mind. After navigating the treacherous time of the pandemic, there was no looking back.

Kevin and I have continued to support Pilgrims through the Lottery, and at their events, after receiving their care. Last year, we dedicated beautiful sunflower markers to Colin and Gill, and celebrated their lives at the Canterbury Sunflower Day."



Kevin and Dympna with their sunflower dedications to Gill and Colin at the Canterbury Sunflower Day in 2024.

"We have Pilgrims to thank for us getting together. You can't see it at first, but there has to be hope; that's why we started going to the counselling groups. Now we have a future. It will be lovely if our story can help others who are worried it's going to be the end of the world – you come pretty close, but there is hope."



Who will you remember this summer?

Dedicate a sunflower to someone you love and let your treasured memories shine brightly in our gardens at **Canterbury, Thanet and Ashford**.

Join us for a special celebration with live music and refreshments on **Saturday 12 July from 1-4pm**

To dedicate a sunflower, visit pilgrimshospices.org/sunflowers, email sunflowers@pilgrimshospices.org or call our friendly Supporter Relations team on **01227 782 062**. We will write the name of your loved one on your sunflower memory marker, ready to decorate the beautiful hospice gardens at our Sunflower Days.

[Read the full article online](#)