

Winter 2025

# The Raphaelite

All about St Raphael's Hospice

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Our four-legged volunteers leaving lasting connections

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An army in white in aid of the Hospice

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Transforming nights on the ward with our new Sleep Programme



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Your Local Hospice



# Welcome

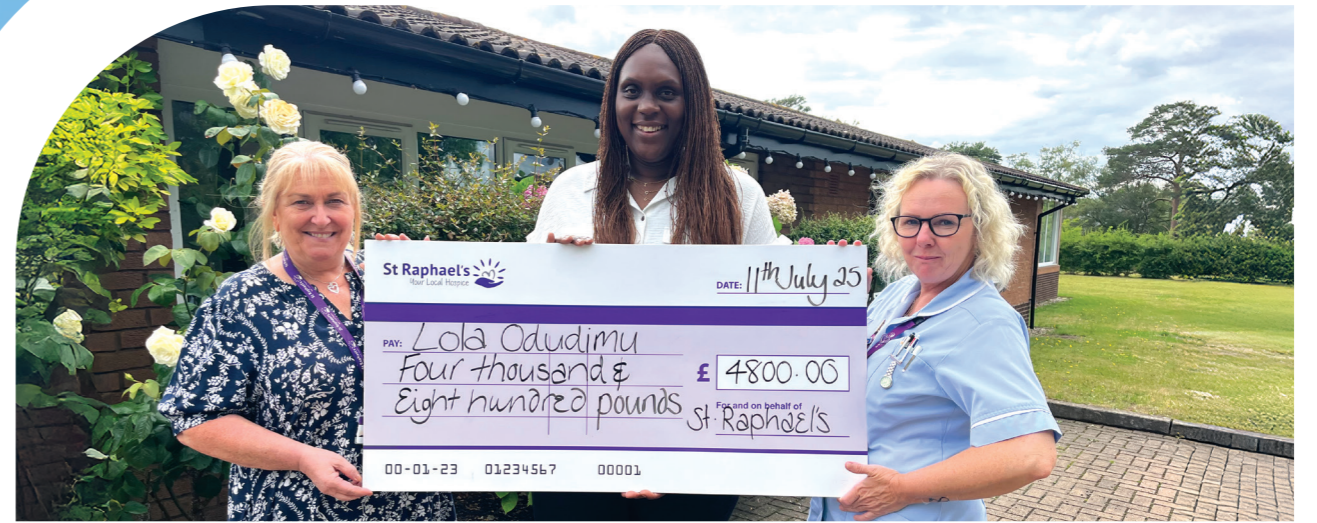
to the Winter issue of *The Raphaelite*, where we highlight the vital work of St Raphael's Hospice and the incredible support of our community.

In this issue, we take you inside our Wellbeing Centre to meet Lizzie, who helps people find comfort, connection, and inspiration. You'll discover our new Sleep Programme, to help patients rest more peacefully on the ward, and learn how our Complementary Therapists and Twilight Volunteers promote wellbeing through the evenings. We also introduce some of our Hospice Therapy Dogs and their owners, whose visits bring joy to patients, families, and staff. Peek into our monthly clearance sale and meet Lola, our lucky lottery winner! As ever, we celebrate the remarkable generosity of our volunteers, fundraisers, and corporate partners – from daring skydives and community runs to local businesses giving back.

Thank you for being part of our community. Your support helps us continue to make a difference every day.

We hope you enjoy this issue.

**Rebecca Trower**  
Clinical Director and Joint CEO,  
St Raphael's Hospice



## “I never win anything!” – but Lola won our Lottery Jackpot

When Lola opened the door to a St Raphael's Lottery canvasser last year, she didn't hesitate.

“He didn't even need to say much,” she remembers. “I was 100 per cent signing up.”

As a local Cheam resident and an Interventional Radiologist at St George's Hospital in Tooting, Lola knows just how vital hospice care is for patients facing life-limiting illnesses.

“A lot of medicine is about keeping people alive. But it's just as important to provide care that gives people a peaceful, dignified death,” she says.

Lola's connection to St Raphael's runs deep. Years ago, as a junior doctor interested in palliative care, she saw first-hand how the Hospice supported some of her patients. And having experienced cancer herself aged just 30, she understands what it means to face your own mortality.

“It's something you think about when you're in the patient's chair” she reflects.

So, when Lola joined the St Raphael's Lottery, it was to give back to her local community. What she didn't expect was to win the rollover prize of £4,800.

*“I honestly thought it was a hoax. Our washing machine had just died after I accidentally washed my son's swimming hat, so I was in a bad mood when the call came. I didn't believe it at first.”*

Even her husband thought there had been a mistake. “We thought it was £480, not £4,800!” It wasn't until Lola checked the Hospice website

and saw her name that she realised it was real.

The prize came at just the right time. “We're able to cover the cost of the washing machine, and now we can finally decorate our bedroom, it has six different types of wallpaper at the moment!”

For Lola, playing the St Raphael's Lottery is more than a chance to win. It's a way to support compassionate care at life's most difficult moments.

*“It's about demystifying death and making it part of the human experience. When the opportunity came to support the Hospice, I definitely wanted to do that.”*

### Why not follow Lola's lead?

Play St Raphael's Lottery today for your chance to win and make a difference in the local community when it matters most. Visit [lottery.straphaels.org.uk](http://lottery.straphaels.org.uk)



Introducing Lizzie

# Our Wellbeing Centre Facilitator



Lizzie joined St Raphael's in 2019 as a volunteer and never imagined it would become her life's calling. Now a Wellbeing Centre Facilitator, she brings warmth, empathy and laughter to everyone who walks through the doors.

### My Journey to St Raphael's

My connection to the Hospice began in 2015, when my mum was cared for on the ward. My sister-in-law worked here and helped care for her, which made it even more personal. After Mum died, I started joining Hospice events to give back and thank the team for their compassion.

### When Life Came Full Circle

In 2018, my husband Kevin became terminally ill.

He started attending the Wellbeing Centre for support – and he loved it. During his time there, he founded The Men's Den, which began with just him and has since grown into a thriving support group for others.

*After a year of laughter, care, and community at the Wellbeing Centre, Kevin spent his final two weeks on the ward. The Hospice cared for me too; their counselling and kindness held me together when I felt completely overwhelmed.*

To find out more about our sessions, visit [straphaels.org.uk/wellbeing](http://straphaels.org.uk/wellbeing)

### The Hospice Effect

There's a calm that greets you the moment you walk through the doors. For a while, you can stop being the carer and simply be a wife, daughter, or friend again. Some call it The Hospice Effect – a sense of peace and safety. Kevin died on Easter Sunday, surrounded by love and dignity. I remember sitting on a garden bench, hearing birdsong over the traffic – an oasis of peace.

*If I could, I'd give the Hospice millions. I know that funding continues to be so hard, and the services are so vital for those in need.*

### Becoming Part of the Team

After Kevin died, I wanted to be part of St Raphael's in a deeper way. I began volunteering in 2019 and became a Wellbeing Centre Facilitator in 2023. Each day, I help others find the same comfort and connection that once supported me and my family.

*St Raphael's isn't just where I work – it's where I healed and found joy again. It means a lot to be able to support others on their own journey.*

*I always say this will be the last job I ever have – and the best job I'll ever have.*

### Everyday Magic in the Wellbeing Centre

We call our attendees *friends* – “attendees” sounds far too formal. My day starts with checking emails and preparing for our sessions and organising the space. By ten o'clock, the kettle's on, the cake's cut, and laughter fills the room.

It's in these small, ordinary moments where the magic happens. The Wellbeing Centre is a sanctuary for people living with life-limiting illnesses, carers, and the recently bereaved. Each week brings something different: art, music, armchair yoga, quiz competitions or themed celebrations.

Watching someone pick up a paintbrush for the first time in years or sing when they never thought they would. Seeing someone rediscover their confidence. When our friends leave with smiles, I know we've done something worthwhile.

Men's Den sessions – founded by Lizzie's husband, Kevin



# Rest and Renewal

Transforming nights on the ward with our new Sleep Programme



At St Raphael's, we understand how pain, medication, emotional stress or worry can disrupt sleep. Sleep patterns often change significantly towards the end of life, creating unique challenges for both patients and carers.

For patients receiving palliative care, it can be common to rest more in the day and experience restlessness at night. For carers, who give so much of themselves, rest is essential to sustain patience, resilience and emotional wellbeing.

That's why our Complementary Therapy Team is launching a new Sleep Programme – a combination of gentle tools, practical guidance, and trained support to help patients and carers find relief and calm while staying on the ward. Sleep isn't just rest – quality sleep can ease pain, lift mood and restore energy. Thanks to the support and funding of Viridor, the launch of this new programme has been made possible.

Paul, whose wife is supported by St Raphael's Complementary Therapy Team, shares:

*“Seeing my wife sleep through the night for the first time felt like a blessing. We had no idea the Complementary Therapy Team would be able to support her in this way. It's priceless.”*

Sam, who is supported by St Raphael's Complementary Therapy Team, shares:

*“I never thought complementary therapy could help me, until my first complementary therapy session with Dulcie. I've struggled with insomnia for years, but after one session I slept through the night for the first time!*

*“Words can't express my gratitude, and seeing my husband so relieved meant the world. The gentle tools and guidance the team have shared with me are invaluable.”*



## The Twilight Team

Our Twilight Volunteers are specially trained in the new Sleep Programme to support patients through the night. They help create calm, restorative evenings using relaxation and mindfulness techniques, with care and reassurance.

Open, compassionate conversations allow our team to tailor their advice to each person's needs. We can help create a soothing sleep environment and minimise disturbances with soft music or white noise.

**Would you like to find out more, or train as a Twilight Volunteer?**

Our Complementary Therapy Team would love to hear from you at [AnaAngarita@straphaels.org.uk](mailto:AnaAngarita@straphaels.org.uk)

# Our Four-Legged Friends

There's something uplifting about a wagging tail or a gentle nuzzle

Regular visits to the Hospice from Pets As Therapy (PAT) dogs and Therapy Dogs Nationwide (TDN) bring comfort and companionship to patients, families, and staff each week.

The visits offer patients and their loved ones a change of pace, often sparking conversation or a smile. The sense of warmth and normality the dogs bring to the ward and across the Hospice is

always appreciated. Each visit also highlights the important role of our volunteers, who give their time to support the Hospice and those we care for.

*“Seeing patients' faces light up when we arrive is wonderful. Luna loves the gentle interactions, and she loves being part of those special moments with people at the Hospice.”*

says Carol, who with her Bichon cross, Luna, make weekly rounds to the ward and the Wellbeing Centre.

Huw and his Wheaten Terrier, Maisie, have been visiting St Raphael's for over a year, after his wife, Kate, was under the care of the Hospice.

“My wife was the one who took Maisie for her PAT assessments and training, and together they would visit local schools in our area. Maisie was part of 'reading to dogs,' where children who needed support in reading would read aloud to her. Kate's illness was sudden for us – just five weeks from diagnosis before she died on the ward.

*“I wanted to give back after the special support we received, and it's a great pleasure to visit each week. In finding our feet again, I thought it would be fitting to start a new tradition with Maisie by volunteering at the Hospice.”*



Lovey Maisie visiting the Wellbeing Centre

## Our amazing supporters



### Cheers for Sutton United!

Sutton United kicked off the 2025/26 season by proudly featuring St Raphael's logo on their matchday bottles.

Their continued support helps us raise awareness of our compassionate care to those who need it most. **A huge thank you to Sutton United Team** – we wish you the very best for the season ahead!

Branded bottles for Sutton United

### Looking to make a difference?

Are you an individual or business looking to support St Raphael's? Get in touch with [samanthabourne@straphaels.org.uk](mailto:samanthabourne@straphaels.org.uk)



# Above and Beyond

## Honouring the incredible efforts of our fantastic supporters

### Jumping for Nanny Oh No

In memory of Ellen, lovingly known as 'Nanny Oh No', Nicole, her dad John, and close family friend Shane took on a skydive in Salisbury to raise funds for the Hospice.

*"We promised my nan we'd jump out of a plane to thank the Hospice for their incredible care. It was emotional, exhilarating, and a beautiful way to remember her – a truly unforgettable day."*

Nanny Oh No's tribute skydive has raised over £4,850!



Alison with her daughter Pippa

As a tribute to her mum, Alison launched PDR Bridal.

*"The Hospice helped care for my mum during the most difficult time in our lives, giving us precious extra time at home with her. It meant everything to us. To give back, we donate £20 from every PDR gown sold. It's grounded in love, remembrance, and deep gratitude for the care we received."*

### Gowns That Give Back

Alison, owner of Aurora Bride in Cheam, named her bridal boutique in honour of her mum, Dawn, who was in her 40s when she was cared for by St Raphael's Hospice during her final weeks.

AURORA  
*bride*



Aurora Bride, Cheam

### Going the Distance

The fantastic members of Sutton Runners Club, the local running club that welcomes all ages and abilities, geared up for the 2025 Sutton 10K in support of St Raphael's. Their enthusiasm and community spirit helped to raise a fantastic £550 for the Hospice!



Sutton Runners Club

### Tribute on the Thames

In memory of their much-loved colleague, Rob, 12 colleagues from Omnyy LLP took on the Thames Path Ultra Challenge – a gruelling 100km over two days.

Rob was widely respected as a colleague and friend. Every step was taken in his honour, raising vital funds for St Raphael's, whose care meant so much to him and his loved ones.

The Omnyy Team went the extra mile, raising over £10,000 in Rob's memory.

*"Rob always made time for everyone. This challenge felt like a fitting tribute – challenging, meaningful, and shared together. We're so pleased to support the phenomenal work being done at the Hospice."*

## Thank you

# The Spirit of Carnival

Rhona shares how an army in white honoured her 'Mama Rocket' in aid of St Raphael's



**Mama Rocket with her beloved daughters**

Carnival has always been at the heart of my family's life – a celebration of freedom, joy, and unity. My mum, affectionately known as Mama Rocket, was the heartbeat of that celebration.

*She inspired not only my sister and me, but countless others in the carnival community, both in the UK and worldwide.*

In 2024, after a sudden diagnosis, my mum spent almost a year fighting with incredible strength. Sadly, on Carnival Sunday, she passed away, surrounded by love and compassion under the care of St Raphael's Hospice.

I'll forever be grateful for the care my mum received. The Hospice showed us that it's not just about end-of-life – it's about life itself, and the time we had left together. St Raphael's gave us strength, peace and understanding when we

needed it most. My mum always lived her life to the fullest, right until the end.

*To honour Mum's memory, I created The Fallen Fetters, an all-white Carnival Sunday army for Notting Hill Carnival 2025.*

In true community spirit, everyone came together to celebrate my mum's life, and our first carnival without her. Many supported with donations to the Hospice too.

I am so grateful that I have been able to give back to the Hospice for the incredible community care they gave my mum in her final weeks.

**Rhona and The Fallen Fetters proudly raised over £1,000 to help the Hospice provide care to more patients and families when they need it most.**



# Small Prices, Big Impact

Every month, our St Bede's Conference Centre opens its doors for our popular monthly Clearance Sale, where bargains meet a worthy cause.



**A volunteer helping to prepare for the Clearance Sale**

**For many shoppers, it's a date circled in the calendar – a chance to snap up incredible deals while making a real difference.**

What began as a trial in 2023 has become one of our calendar highlights – a day of bargains, buzz, and community spirit. Our monthly Clearance Sale started as a response to a national drop in rag prices, which made it harder for charities like ours to make the most of donated clothing.

By turning unsold stock into an affordable treasure trove, we're able to maximise the value of every donation, reduce waste, and raise vital funds for hospice care.

And it's working! Since January, our Clearance Sales have raised an incredible £40,000 to help our Hospice continue providing free specialist care to local patients and families.

We welcome 200–300 shoppers each month, with some signing up to volunteer themselves! Our team of around 40 amazing volunteers work tirelessly to prepare, sort, and display thousands of preloved items, creating a vibrant, welcoming space. Tables are brimming with something for everyone: menswear, kidswear, linens, and ladieswear which is always a bestseller.

One regular shopper, Mel, sums it up perfectly:

*"You come for the bargains, but you stay for the feeling – knowing every item you buy supports something that matters."*

Sara-Jane Harris, Commercial Director, says:

*"It's incredibly moving to see the energy and excitement our community brings to each clearance sale – whether they come for the bargains, the buzz, or the feel-good factor of supporting the Hospice. Every item sold directly contributes to the vital work of the Hospice on the ward and in the community. It's with thanks to our fantastic volunteers and shoppers who make it all possible."*

Come for the bargains, stay for the impact, and help support hospice care one treasure at a time. [straphaels.org.uk/retail](http://straphaels.org.uk/retail)

**Interested in volunteering?**

[Lorrainehunt@straphaels.org.uk](mailto:Lorrainehunt@straphaels.org.uk) would love to hear from you!

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