

Commercial Director's Report July 2025

Aim

To update the Trustee Board on Commercial activity at St Raphael's Hospice.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Trustees note the activity and developments since the last meeting.

RETAIL

It has been a difficult start to the financial year and at the end of the first quarter we are 2% behind our budget (£11,835). This is due to several factors:

- Our Transport Manager left eight weeks ago, and we have struggled to collect and deliver furniture to the Donation Centre. They are 8% below budget (£5,694). Our new Transport Manager started this week, and we will fully reinstate collections and deliveries in the next two to three weeks once he has completed the first part of his induction.
- The heat has undoubtedly been a contributing factor. Heat warnings are not just difficult for staff and volunteers, but people tend not to go to the high street. We have seen a fall in customers for the same period year on year – last year we had 65,833 customers, compared to 65,111 in 2025.
- Staffing has also been difficult with sickness and several Bank staff working through an induction, and not being able to react to the trading environment in the way that an experienced staff member would. We also have a member of staff who was in the Donation Centre and has been very ill during the early stages of her pregnancy. She was therefore, unable to support the manager and following a risk assessment we decided that we should move her to less physical role. Two Assistant Managers agreed to swap, one had only been with us for seven weeks and both have struggled to get to grips with the complexities of the role.

There are some positive examples in performance. Rosehill is 8% above last year and Wimbledon Village is 23% above. Collectively all shops are 1% up on last year. Wimbledon has most recently opened some of the evenings during Wimbledon Fortnight which have proved very successful.

The number of donors has continued to rise year on year 8,015 in 2024 and 8,342 in 2025.

Collectively all shops are up on Gift Aid year on year by 1% but there are some great examples of improvement.

Shop	Gift Aid Conversion 2024	Gift Aid Conversion 2025
Banstead	25%	36%
Carshalton	27%	32%
Cheam	23%	27%
New Malden	12%	14%
Stonecot	18%	26%
Sutton	8%	16%
Wimbledon Village	23%	25%
Morden	11%	13%

The Donation Centre is 10% down on last year, which is due to low furniture sales.

Wimbledon Park

There are still the legal hurdles to complete but we are quietly confident we have found a new tenant for the Wimbledon Park shop. There have been a few prospective tenants who have made offers but the one that we and our landlord prefers is a new dentist business. Our landlord is prepared to offer them a new lease provided that should they leave before our lease expires (October 27) we would be responsible for the tenancy.

BANK staff moving to contracted hours

We have been working with HR and our Bank team to offer contracts to those that do regular hours and are therefore not Bank in the true meaning of the word. The new contracts will start from 1st August. There are some who preferred to remain on Bank as it provides a flexibility that works for them.

New Stores

I have been lucky to work with a volunteer Alison Lawrence to help find new shops. She has come up with some and so far, we have not gone through to a viewing as it was clear that the footfall would not be enough. She found some possible locations for Superstores, which was our priority. I have begun a paper on the proposal as the rent for a super store is very significant. I have reached out to colleagues from other Hospices to provide me with comparable information.

- Rent
- Size
- Profit
- Viability

A superstore was a recommendation in the Charity Retail review that was undertaken last year with the caveat that in London it may be difficult to afford a large enough space.

PCI-DSS and Gift Aid Training

We have audited our gift aid and required all our shop staff to undertake Gift Aid Training. We are now working with Richard Carmen on creating a GA module for volunteers. We hope to roll this out with PCI-DSS training in August to staff and volunteers after which we hope to be PCI - DSS accredited and can make the Gift Aid claim for retail.

eBay & Events

Clearance sales continue to go well averaging around £4,000 over a weekend from the sale of rag. We have created a dedicated volunteer events team keeping paid staff to a minimum. We use staff from the existing team only bringing in bank if there is no other option. We were recently asked to present, about our sales, at the Charity Retail Association national conference as a part of their selling low value stock initiative. One of the challenges of the sales is that we do not have a till meaning we have to manually process all the Gift Aid. Our till provider has been working on a standalone till solution and they are going to allow us to trial it at our Wedding Fair on the 19th of July.

The Wedding Fair is all prepared and ready to go. Again, we have recruited volunteers to help us. Staff, families and friends have come forward to be models for our fashion shows. We have done a radio Jackie advert, rail banners, posters and flyers in all our shops. We have been contacted by a lot of wedding suppliers asking to attend now we have to hope that it has had the same reach to potential brides.

We are planning an open evening for an exclusive winter shopping event in Wimbledon Village on the 26th of September. We will sell tickets to join us in the evening, for a glass of wine and an opportunity to be the first to shop our winter stock.

We have identified several items that could raise more income on eBay than in a shop. We are now in the process of creating listings to get them up in the next month. We are looking to recruit some new eBay volunteers to support the four hours of paid staff but if needs be we will use a bank member of staff to get these items up.

We are also going to do mystery bags filled with end of line stock i.e. Rag. We will use the same model as other Hospices selling an 8kg bag for £16 (we currently get 13p a kilo from the rag man).

We are also looking for pop up shops but as, yet the only option had very high rent. Another option is to try and find a community centre or similar, in Wimbledon, to hold a clearance event which would also give us profile in the area.

DATIX

During the last three months we have had the following incidents in shops:

- Continued closure of the Debra shop in Raynes Park due to water ingress. Our shop has water under the floor, but it doesn't force us to close or impact our team.
- Shop manager at Cheam twisted her leg, which had a previous weakness, while bending down to look at the CCTV. This caused her to attend A&E and take time off.
- Police attended the donation centre to return a stolen amplifier.
- A shop lifter in Wimbledon Village used her small child as a distraction while she stole high value items. The manager checked the CCTV and confronted her before she could leave.
- A customer had her purse stolen from her handbag in the Morden shop. IT was reported and we saved the CCTV which was not requested by the police.
- The police were called to one of our shops as the manager had suffered domestic violence from her husband. When he turned up, he was arrested, and we band him from coming to any of our shops in future.
- On two days in the same week, the manager on duty arrived at the Sutton shop to find evidence of rough sleeping in the doorway which had also been used as a public toilet.

LOTTERY

We have been looking at the best ways to meet the Lottery objectives of cutting attrition, growing player numbers and reducing costs. The marketing of Lottery fits most naturally with Individual Giving and therefore we are looking to move the responsibility for Lottery over to Kate. Plans are now in place to have an effective and smooth handover. This is made easier as the admin for Lottery already sits with Supporter Care.

RETAIL VOLUNTEERING

We have 271 retail volunteers currently active on our database, 198 in 10 shops, 57 in the Donation centre, 5 Drivers, 3 Co-pilots, 1 eBay, 1 Pat tester, 1 Admin, 5 Events.

We have a team of 32 volunteers who support the clearance sale events on an ad hoc basis (5 are event only).

An email has been sent out for help with the wedding fair and 10+ existing volunteers have offered to help so far.

We have recruited 51 volunteers this year to date which is 26 less than 2024. Further to the Campaign launch on 2nd June some additional social media ads have been posted with a focus on Retail, which has generated 3 enquiries so far. There are 18 potential volunteers in the recruitment pipeline.

Month	New Starters 2025	Leavers 2025	Actual Hours 2025	Actual Hours 2024	Variance	Variance %
January	13	12	4,084	3,641	443	+11%
February	10	0	3,595	3,211	384	+11%
March	11	5	3,593	3,155	438	+12%
April	4	7	3,386	3,265	121	+ 4%
May	7	5	4,020	3,885	135	+3%
June	6	19	3,392	3,449	-57	-2%
Total	51	48	22,070	20,606	1,464	+7%

An update details form has been sent to all current retail volunteers via the shops to ensure we have the correct emergency contact details, home address, and contact number.

Lorraine Hunt