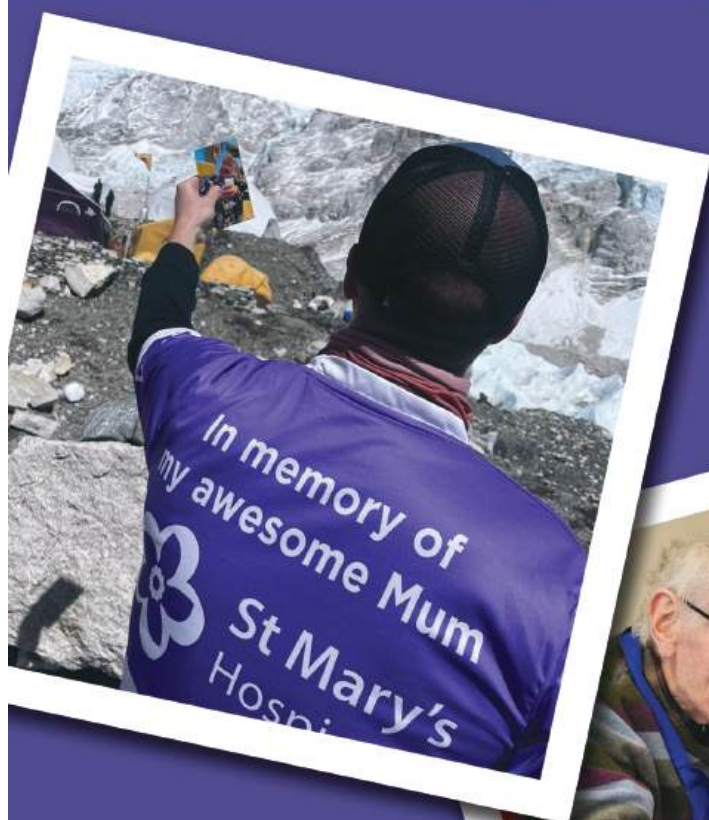


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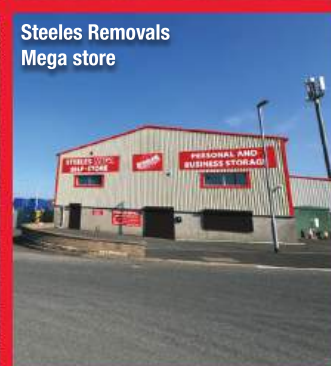
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Welcome from our Chief Executive – Catherine Burn



Hello, and thank you for taking the time to read this edition of our magazine.

I'm Catherine Burn, and I joined St Mary's as Chief Executive in October 2024. As I approach the end of my first year in post, I've been reflecting on what an incredible and rewarding time it's been so far. St Mary's is a place full of heart, passion, and purpose—and it's been a privilege to begin getting to know the people who make it what it is.

I've spent most of my career in the charity sector, and I've always been driven by a deep commitment to community. Before coming to St Mary's, I was CEO at Carlisle Mencap, a social care provider in the north of Cumbria, where I learned a great deal about resilience, local partnerships, and the everyday impact of compassionate care.

Originally from Nottinghamshire, I moved into the voluntary sector in 2008 after working in manufacturing in South Yorkshire. My first role was as a volunteer coordinator with Bassetlaw

CVS, where I later became CEO. That experience grounded me in the value of local infrastructure and taught me the importance of listening, collaboration, and long-term relationships—skills that continue to guide me today.

Over the years, I've worked closely with the NHS, chaired multi-agency partnerships, and served as a volunteer across a wide range of causes—from food banks and community centres to education and animal welfare. I currently volunteer at 4Eden an amazing charity supporting people with Learning Disabilities and Autism based in Penrith, and I'm proud to be a governor at Ullswater Community College.

Being awarded the British Empire Medal in 2020 for services to the community during the Covid-19 pandemic remains one of the proudest moments of my life—but it is in the everyday, often unseen work of local organisations like St Mary's where I believe the most meaningful change happens.

As I continue to settle into my role, I'm eager to listen, learn, and connect with as many of you as possible. My goal is to build on the incredible legacy of this organisation, ensuring we stay true to our values while embracing the opportunities ahead. I'm excited about what we can achieve together.

Thank you for your continued support and for being part of this journey.

Warm wishes,
Catherine Burn BEM

Making Memories Together at St Mary's Hospice

At St Mary's Hospice, we believe that the little moments are just as important as the big ones. That's why we've started a very special initiative—our Memory Making programme—designed to bring comfort, connection, and joy to the people we support, especially during those poignant times throughout the year.

Throughout 2025, we're creating meaningful ways to mark events such as Mother's Day, Easter, and more to come. These moments can be bittersweet, and our hope is that by offering small, thoughtful gestures, we can help families and individuals feel held, remembered, and connected to each other.



This Easter, we were delighted to share a little springtime cheer with those in our care. Each person received a beautiful bunch of daffodils brought specifically for patients—bright, hopeful signs of renewal—and a delicious Easter egg, kindly donated by a generous hotel in Windermere. It was a simple gift, but one that brought many smiles, sparked conversations, and reminded everyone that they are in our hearts.

For Mother's Day, we prepared thoughtful keepsakes for families—small gifts to honour mothers and the special place they hold in our lives, whether they are with us or remembered with love. The feedback we received was incredibly touching, and it's inspired us to continue growing this programme throughout the year.

These moments may seem small, but they are deeply felt. They help create new memories, honour old ones, and offer comfort during emotionally significant times.

One especially heartwarming example came when a member of staff took the time to learn a few phrases in Italian to help a patient feel more at home. It was a simple gesture, but it meant the world—a reminder of how powerful human connection can be.

We're excited to keep finding new ways to make memories together—whether it's through little gifts, heartfelt messages, or simply being there when it matters most.

Thank you to everyone—volunteers, donors, and staff—who help make these special touches possible. Your kindness is the heart of everything we do.





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Sarah's Story

Mine and my daughter's story is an extremely difficult one. My first daughter, Heather, sadly took her own life on the 30th of April 2022, at 22 years old.

Heather's sudden passing was of course a huge devastation to our family and Heather's friends, and came as a massive shock. Leading up to Heather's funeral, a group chat was made, named TeamH's Angels. I wanted to do something to remember Heather by, which led to me and TeamH's Angels doing Walk to Remember in the following September 2022, raising nearly £2,500. We also did Walk to Remember the following years in 2023 and 2024.



I used to be a Brownie leader and Heather would help me, as well as helping at her old Rainbow unit. Heather and her sister, Emily, volunteered for girl

guiding in Romania. This led to my girl guiding friends asking me if I would like to create something in memory of Heather and we created a mental wellbeing pack. To make this we spoke to MIND, Every Life Matters (a suicide support service), SAFA (a self-harm support group based in Barrow), and Papyrus (a charity for suicide prevention).

We gathered all this information and from this created a Brownie Badge called Twinkle for Heather, because Twinkle was Heather's leader name when she went to Rainbows. For this, we held a prelaunch in High Newton, where we invited many guides and leaders to come along and try out the activities inside the pack. BBC Breakfast even came to film us, which aired around 2 weeks later. I felt so lucky and overwhelmed with support. The official launch was held at Kendal College, where we held a pamper evening for all the guides and leaders who attended. We did this pamper evening in memory of Heather as she loved makeup and spending her time watching hair and makeup tutorials. We held this event intentionally on the 10th October (2023), on World Mental Health Awareness Day.

From this event, so much awareness was spread, gaining enquiries from around 40 different countries, selling over 4,000 badges. Leading us to hold more events to spread our message even further. We also went to John Ruskin Primary School and used the pack we created which includes the five steps to mental wellbeing. The last step is to 'learn something new' so we had five different zones, where we taught them – drumming, archery, skipping, crafts, meditation and yoga. There was a turnout of 160 girls and I have had so much positive feedback since. We have another Pamper Night coming up at Barrow In Furness College.



Ultimately, we do Walk to Remember as a way for us all to remember Heather, together. It sounds clichéd, but suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem.

Light Up A Life – Dedicate a Light in Memory

Each December, our Light Up A Life ceremonies offer a meaningful way to remember loved ones. Dedicate a light on our Christmas tree in honour of someone special — a symbol of love, hope, and remembrance. Your dedication supports the compassionate care we provide at the hospice and will be included in our Book of Remembrance.

Join us for peaceful community ceremonies in Barrow, Ulverston, and Cartmel. All are welcome to come together, share memories, and light up the winter with kindness.

Make your dedication today on our website and help us light up this Christmas with love.



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Jo's Journey to St Mary's Hospice

Care work isn't for everyone. And everyone isn't up to doing care work. Though sometimes, just maybe, life might throw you into a situation that proves you were meant to work in care after-all.

"He said to me, 'you've messed up, you should have been a nurse.'

"Even now, I can still hear him saying it and looking at me with that big smile," recalls Jo Firth, who took inspiration from the care her brother received during his final weeks of life, at the Hospice.

Richard — or Fud as he was affectionately known in the local music scene and to his friends and family — spent his final weeks at St Mary's. It was a painful time for everyone — but one which would change things for Jo forever.

"Nursing wasn't something I'd ever really thought about to be honest, in fact when I first came into the Hospice with Fud, I said to the nurses that I couldn't understand how they could do what they do. Everyday they were there for him, no matter who was on shift the care was excellent.

"By the time he passed away, the impact they made, not just on him, but on the whole family, it was incredible."

Understandably, at first, Jo describes Fud as quite a difficult patient. "Right from the start the staff at St Mary's spoke to him on his level. Nobody minded that he was a bit grumpy, because they could see that he just hadn't come to terms with what was

happening."

In time the staff started to get through. Slowly making progress and helping Fud come to terms with the fact his death



"He just felt heard. Originally he couldn't accept it, but they'd watch a video with him, and have a craic with him, nothing to do with his cancer or his prognosis, just building rapport.

"Right from the start they were on his level. Really, by the time he died, he had accepted what was happening and he was in as good a place as someone going through that could be."

Immediately after Fud died, Jo started to do some fundraising for St Mary's. Death of a loved one is one of the few reasons we wouldn't take someone on in a paid or patient facing role at the hospice. She would join the care team a

year or so later.

Initially Jo and a gang of Fud's mate's launched Fudstock — capitalising on his love of music to provide an event in his name where everyone could party.

There have been four Fudstock events over the years, and they've raised more than £75k.

Much of that money was used to upgrade the outdoor space at the Hospice which patients use. And Jo has a first hand view on what happens there — because she's now a member of the care team.

Starting as a night-sitter, then becoming a health care assistant, Jo recently graduated as a Nursing Associate — which is one step removed from being a fully fledged nurse.

"When I'm in the courtyard and we're putting on an afternoon tea or a date night for a patient and their family, I look at that and I'm so proud that we've made that Fud's legacy — that space where people can enjoy the outside and still be cared for. I know he would have loved that.

And what about the career change?

"I think he'd be proud of that too," admits Jo, reluctantly. "I wasn't sure about coming here, leaving a full time job for a part time role, but my husband asked where I could see myself in five years' time and I thought of Fud, and of what this place had done for us. And it was an easy decision.

"It has paid off — and I think Fud would say I've done alright."

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Café Refurbishment

The Orangery was built in 2009 as a peaceful space for patients and visitors. Its warm, welcoming atmosphere quickly became a favourite, and soon after, The Orangery café and gift shop opened its doors to the local community.



Originally built in 1988, our kitchen was designed solely to serve patient needs. Fast forward to 2025, and it's clear the space can no longer keep up with the demands of both our growing customer base and our talented kitchen team. Despite years of patchwork improvements, the kitchen is no longer efficient or fit for purpose, as it has become a vital income stream for the hospice, we're committed to its continued success.

We're thrilled to announce a major refurbishment beginning in Autumn 2025, with most of the work taking place from January 2026. Thanks to generous support from a government capital grant for hospices, the David Snowdon Trust, and the Roselands Trust, our vision is becoming a reality.

What's changing?

Front of house, we're doubling customer toilets, including an accessible facility with baby changing, all directly accessible from the café. A redesigned counter will offer our café team a purpose-built, well-lit space to serve up their much-loved home-baked treats.

Behind the scenes, a brand-new, open-plan kitchen will feature dedicated zones for food prep, baking, and dishwashing, improving workflow and efficiency. We're also upgrading to a walk-in fridge and freezer, alongside a separate dry store—essential for keeping pace with demand.

While some disruption is expected during the works, we're taking every step to ensure daily home-cooked meals for patients continue uninterrupted. We'll also aim to keep the café open as much as possible so you can still enjoy coffee and cake with friends.

Follow us on social media for updates—or even better, pop in and see the transformation for yourself!



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A Fresh Start for Our Barrow Charity Shop

We're delighted to share some exciting news—our much-loved charity shop in Barrow has moved! After proudly serving the town for over 30 years, we've relocated to a new, more affordable premises right in the heart of the community.

The new shop will continue to offer the fantastic selection our customers know and love, including clothing, shoes, accessories, homeware, books, and (when the season comes around) our ever-popular Christmas cards. But more than just a shop, it remains a hub of local connection, sustainability, and support.

Long-time volunteer Debbie, who has given her time and heart to the shop for

over three decades, says: "I just enjoy it. I enjoy all aspects of volunteering here... meeting people, helping in a small part but being part of a bigger team too, and it does me good!"

We're incredibly proud to be part of Barrow's bright and growing future. The move allows us to keep providing great value for shoppers while helping to fund the vital services we deliver at St Mary's. Every purchase supports our work—so whether you're buying a pre-loved coat, a new handbag, or a book to curl up with, you're also giving back to your local community.

We're also continuing our partnership with the South Cumbria Multi-Academy

Trust and Tesco to make school uniforms more accessible. Together, we provide affordable preloved and new schoolwear to help local families get their children school-ready without the extra financial strain.

At a time when sustainability is more important than ever, charity shopping offers an easy way to shop with purpose. It's local, eco-friendly, and supports a cause that's firmly rooted in our community—for our community.

So, whether you're a regular or a first-time visitor, we can't wait to welcome you to our new home. Thank you for standing with us and helping to make a real difference.

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A Beautiful Gift with Deeper Meaning – Our 2025 Limited-Edition Bauble is Here

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presentation box, it makes an ideal gift for loved ones—or a thoughtful treat for yourself. Whether hanging on a tree or kept as a keepsake, it's a piece to treasure for years to come.

Priced at £8.50, the bauble is available now in all of our shops, in the gift shop, and online. But don't wait—numbers are limited, and once they're gone, they're gone!

Best of all, every penny of the proceeds goes directly to supporting **St Mary's Hospice**, helping us continue our vital care for local people and their families.

Give a gift that gives back this season—while stocks last.



ST MARY'S HOSPICE

YEAR IN REVIEW 24-25



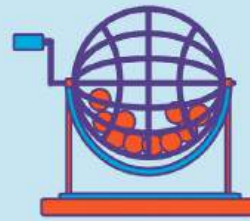
1,011

Day visits provided by our Hospice at Home team



551

Individuals remembered loved ones at Light Up A Life



5,704

Weekly supporters playing in our St Mary's Lottery



140

Night sits have been provided by our Hospice at Home team



£538k

259 volunteers bring skills saving St Mary's over £538k



62,669

Items of clothing sold at our St Mary's shops



£130,654

Raised by more than 1,000 supporters at our Walk to Remember



19,370

19,370 books sold at our St Mary's shops



127

Patients have been cared for on our In Patient Unit



417

Referrals received for our Family and Bereavement Support Services



33,818

Bric-a-brac items sold at our St Mary's Hospice shops



£42,615

Raised by supporters enjoying sweet treats in our cafe



£26,419

Raised by supporters who trekked Everest in aid of St Mary's Hospice



83%

Bed occupancy at St Mary's Hospice



29,018

Hot drinks sold in our Orangery Cafe



4,193

Attendances at Living Well Services

Why Your Support Matters More Than Ever

At St Mary's Hospice, we pride ourselves on providing compassionate, expert care completely free of charge to patients and their families. But what many people don't realise is just how much we rely on the kindness of our community to make that possible.

Despite the vital role hospices play in the healthcare system, only around **17% of our funding comes from the Government.**

To put it in perspective: if we started spending our Government funding on January 1st, it would run out by mid-March.

That means **eight out of every ten patients** cared for by St Mary's are supported thanks to **voluntary income**—the generosity of people who donate, eat at the Orangery, shop with us, play our lottery, support events, or leave us gifts in their wills. It's also thanks to local businesses who back our work, fundraise, or partner with us to make a lasting impact.

This community-driven funding model has kept us going for decades, but the financial outlook is becoming increasingly challenging.

For the current financial year (2025–2026), we are forecasting a **deficit of £560,000**—and that's just to maintain our current level of care. Over the next three years, we may need to draw almost **£2 million** from our reserves to continue serving those who rely on us.

At the same time, we serve a population that is older than the national average.



With a **'super-ageing' community**, demand for end-of-life and palliative care is only expected to grow. While we currently hold healthy reserves and remain in a stronger financial position than many other independent hospices in the UK, this level of loss is not sustainable in the long term.

That's why we're taking action on three fronts:

Boosting charitable income – by exploring new ways to raise funds and deepening our connection with loyal supporters like you.

Becoming more efficient – by continuously reviewing how we deliver our services to ensure maximum impact.

Advocating for change – by working with organisations like Hospice UK to call for a fairer funding model for hospice care at a national level.

Every single donation you make is spent with purpose. **Every penny goes directly into patient care or into activities that generate further income for the hospice.** And for every £1 we spend on fundraising, we raise at least **£4.50** in return.

So when you support St Mary's—whether by making a donation, attending an event, playing our lottery, or simply buying a cuppa at the Orangery—you are directly funding expert, life-changing care for people in our community.

We're here for local people thanks to local people. And with your continued



support, we'll be here for generations to come.



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How you can help

Keeping Compassionate Care Alive — Why Your Support Matters

At St Mary's Hospice, we believe everyone deserves comfort, dignity, and compassion at the end of life. But delivering this level of care takes more than dedication—it takes community support.

Hospice care goes far beyond what government funding provides. In fact, only one fifth of our funding comes from the government. That means 8 out of 10 patients we care for are supported through charitable donations. Every moment of comfort, every act of kindness, and every hour of specialist care we offer is made possible by people like you.

Your generosity truly keeps our doors open.

Regular Giving

Regular giving—whether monthly or annually—provides a lifeline for our hospice. These consistent donations allow us to plan ahead, keep essential services running, and ensure we're always here when families need us most.

From paying for vital medical equipment to maintaining a calm, welcoming space for patients and their loved ones, regular donations help fund the everyday essentials of hospice care. Most importantly, they help ensure no one faces the end of life alone or unsupported.



Becoming a regular giver is one of the most meaningful ways you can help. More information is available on our website.

Gifts in Wills

Leaving a gift in your will is a powerful way to support future generations. Legacies help fund major projects, grow our services, and secure the future of St Mary's Hospice—ensuring that your values live on in the care we provide. In fact, legacy giving has helped pay for 39% of patient care over the last five years.

For many, it's also deeply personal—a way to honour a loved one or give back for the support they received. No matter the size, every legacy gift makes a difference, and every act of



kindness carries forward into the lives of others. You can leave just 1% in your will to St Mary's Hospice, so those closest to you are taken care of, and inherit 99%.

Fundraising Events

Whether it's taking part in a sponsored walk, hosting a bake sale, running a marathon, or organising a community event—fundraising is a hands-on way to help. Not only do these events raise much-needed funds, they also raise awareness, bring people together, and celebrate the spirit of our community.

If you're looking for a way to make a difference while doing something fun and fulfilling, getting involved in one of our fundraising events is a perfect place to start.

Every Penny Counts

At St Mary's, we rely on our community not just to support us—but to stand beside us in delivering the care that every person deserves. Whether through regular giving, a gift in your will, or fundraising with friends, your support ensures that we can continue to be here—for everyone who needs us.

Thank you for helping us provide care that goes beyond medicine. With your support, we can keep making every moment count.

Thank You for Standing With Us

Thank you to everyone who has supported St Mary's Hospice—through fundraising, donations, volunteering, or spreading the word. Your efforts truly make a difference.

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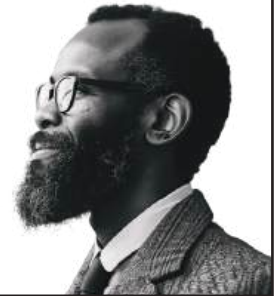
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Journal Club

St Mary's Hospice is proud to be taking part in a collaborative research project with Marie Curie and Lancaster University to support the development of a journal club toolkit. Using this toolkit, we have launched the St Mary's Journal Club—an educational initiative where staff come together to explore research and understand how it can enhance clinical practice.



Journal clubs are proven to support staff development, drive improvements in care, and highlight areas for further research. At St Mary's, our Journal Club meets monthly and welcomes participation from

across our multidisciplinary team. Each session includes the presentation of academic articles, research papers, media content, or relevant news stories, followed by open, respectful discussions in a safe space. All staff and volunteers are encouraged to attend, and in just our first seven sessions, over 100 team members have taken part—contributing ideas that have directly influenced positive change at the hospice.

Benefits include:

For Staff:

- Identifying learning needs
- Supporting professional development
- Enhancing compassionate, high-quality care
- Aiding revalidation and sparking quality improvement initiatives

For Patients:

- Improved care from better-trained staff
- More personalised, compassionate support
- Greater satisfaction through enhanced service delivery

For Partners:

- Strengthened professional relationships
 - Shared commitment to high standards in palliative care
 - A model for wider implementation across the sector
- Working alongside Marie Curie and Lancaster University has been a valuable and inspiring experience, helping us embed evidence-based improvements throughout the hospice for the benefit of all.

Supporting Our Healthcare Community Through Education

At St Mary's Hospice, our commitment to excellent end-of-life care goes beyond our own walls. We're proud to offer a range of education and training opportunities to external health and social care professionals, equipping them with the skills and confidence to support more people in their own homes.

Our current training programmes include:

- Care of the Dying Person
- Advance Care Planning
- Nurse Verification of Expected Death
- Syringe Pump Training (for qualified nurses)
- Advanced Communication Skills Training

In addition to our core sessions, we also deliver bespoke training packages tailored to specific needs. Recent bespoke topics have included male catheterisation, catheter care, and stoma care.

We understand that high-quality palliative care requires a confident, capable workforce across all settings. That's why we're passionate about sharing our knowledge and expertise with the wider healthcare community. Whether you're based in a care home, the community, or a hospital setting, our training aims to empower staff and improve outcomes for patients and families.

If you or your team would benefit from any of the training listed—or have specific topics you'd like us to cover—please get in touch. We're here to help you grow your skills, so together we can support more people to receive compassionate, dignified care in the place they call home.

Please contact our team on education@stmaryshospice.org.uk

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Upcoming Events

Adventure with Purpose: Join Us Overseas!

Are you looking for a challenge that will push your limits and leave a lasting legacy? Our overseas events are the perfect way to combine adventure with making a real difference—and we'd love for you to be part of it.

Over the coming years, we've got an incredible line-up of overseas treks that offer once-in-a-lifetime experiences in some of the world's most awe-inspiring locations. Whether you're dreaming of standing at the foot of the tallest mountain on Earth at Everest Base Camp, summiting the mighty Mount Kilimanjaro, or exploring the lesser-known but breathtaking Mount Meru, there's an adventure for everyone.

These challenges aren't just about ticking something off your bucket list—they're about raising vital funds to support the work we do at St Mary's. Every step you take will help us continue providing compassionate care and support for those who need it most.

We need people willing to train, get stuck in, and embrace the journey. We'll be with you every step of the way, offering expert advice, fundraising support, and team encouragement from start to summit.



UPCOMING EVENTS

October 3rd - Trial and Denial
 Places available

October 8th to 15th - Mount Toubkal
 Limited places available

November to December 2025 - Elf Dash
 Places available

December - Light Up a Life
Barrow St Paul's Church - December 4th; Ulverston Parish Church - December 6th; Cartmel Priory - December 7th

January 9th and 10th 2026 - Christmas Tree Recycling
 Places available

January 11th to 22nd 2026 - Kilimanjaro and Mount Meru
 Sold out

February 26th to March 5th 2026 - Winter Mount Toubkal
 Limited places available

April 12th to 27th 2026 - Everest Base Camp
 Limited places available

May 9th 2026 Keswick to Barrow, Coniston to Barrow
 Places available from 2026

May 31st 2026 - Manchester Half Marathon
 Places available from 2026

June 2026 - Tour De Furness
 Date and places available from 2026

June 3rd to 10th 2026 - Mount Toubkal
 Limited places available

2026 - Sky dive
 Places available throughout the year

September 4th 2026 - Walk to Remember
 Places available from 2026

September 13th 2026 - Great North Run
 Places available from 2026

January 11th to 22nd 2027 - Kilimanjaro and Mount Meru
 Limited places available

April 11th to 26th 2027, Everest Base Camp
 Limited places available

Scan the QR code for more information about our events

Many of our past participants say these treks have been truly life-changing, not just for the sense of achievement but for the incredible friendships and memories made along the way.

So if you're ready for a new adventure—and want to do something amazing for a cause that matters—why not make this the year you go further than you thought possible?

Visit our website to see all upcoming trips and find out how to get involved. We can't wait to take on the world with you.



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At St Mary's Hospice, everything we do is made possible by the passion and generosity of local people and businesses. From playful fundraisers to powerful tributes, your support brings expert care and comfort to those who need it most. Here's a look at how our business community is making a difference.

Trial & Denial: Laughter in the Dock

This autumn saw the launch of our first-ever "Lock-Up Your Boss" event—turning everyday office gripes into courtroom comedy. Held at Barrow Town Hall, local leaders stood trial for tongue-in-cheek "crimes" like flamboyant sock choices or untidy desks.



Among those "sentenced" were staff from MKM Barrow, Westmorland & Furness Council, MSH Healthcare, and Stollers, with Mayor Judith McEwan delivering the verdicts. Together, participants raised over £5,000—led by Lee Stoller, who raised a brilliant £1,840. The event returns this October as Trial & Denial, and this time,

anyone can be nominated! Don't miss your chance to get involved—scan the QR code to find out more.



Compassionate Companies on the Rise

Our Compassionate Companies Network is now 45 members strong. By pledging £35 a month for 35 months, local businesses help secure the future of hospice care—and enjoy benefits like networking events, press coverage, and branding opportunities.

Our latest event, hosted by McDonald's on Dalton Road and supported by Blundell's of Liverpool, offered great food and great conversation. If your business wants to give back in a meaningful way, we'd love to welcome you.

Invisible Fries: Zero Calories, Big Heart

Introducing Invisible Fries—a new, fun way for hospitality venues to support St Mary's. Diners can "order" invisible fries (they won't appear!) and the full donation goes to the hospice. It's a simple way to raise funds while showing social responsibility, and more restaurants are

joining every week. Scan the QR code to get your business involved.

In Memory of Kathryn

Home & Finance are honouring their colleague Kathryn Singleton by aiming to raise £15,200—the cost of running the hospice for 24 hours. Kathryn, who passed away earlier this year, was a beloved team member and supporter of our work.



To reach their goal, the team is holding two charity golf days (2nd July & 26th September) and joining our Walk to Remember. You can support them at: justgiving.com/page/homeandfinancecharity

You Make This Possible

These stories are just a glimpse of how the support of businesses and their staff help to sustain our care. From joining our network to hosting an event or even serving Invisible Fries, every act of kindness matters.



Your generosity helps us deliver expert care with compassion and dignity—thank you.

If anyone is interested in knowing more please contact our Corporate Partnership Manager on annabelle.holloway@stmaryshospice.org.uk

“When the Smile Disappears”:

Phil's Story of Love, Loss, and Finding Strength at St Mary's

There are moments in life that knock the wind out of you — times when the world shifts so suddenly, so deeply, that you're left trying to breathe through the ache. For Phil, that moment didn't happen just once.



He lost his son, Aaron, and his wife, Michelle, in a heartbreakingly short space of time. The grief was unimaginable. “Loss, lonely, and don't know where to turn to — don't know who to turn to,” Phil says quietly.

Aaron couldn't speak, but his smile could fill a room. He had a way of connecting with people that didn't require words. His mischievous spirit showed through in the little things — that pouty bottom lip he'd stick out just to get a reaction. When Michelle walked in and said, “Hello sweet pea,” it was gone in an instant, replaced by the brightest grin. That was Aaron — full of charm, full of love.

Music was their bond. Phil would bounce Aaron on his knee to the rhythm of Sophie Ellis-Bextor, Kylie Minogue, Girls Aloud — “All the female ones,” he laughs. It wasn't just music — it was joy, shared between father and son.

Michelle, too, had her own kind of magic. A lover of books with shelves stacked three deep, she had a sense of

humour that made life lighter. Phil remembers coming home to her “decorating” — not by taking the pictures off the wall, but by painting around them. “I've left that bit for you,” she'd say. That was her.

Then came the silence. They were both gone. And Phil was left trying to figure out how to live in a world that had gone quiet. That's when he found St Mary's.

“St Mary's really helped me,” Phil says. “Kelsey with the massaging — that helped me feel human again. And she put me onto an art class with Lex. That helped me get out and meet people going through the same things I was. That really helped.”



At first, Phil was unsure. “I thought, is this going to be heavy? Like — boom — do I have to say what happened?” But it wasn't like that. “You just relax. Sometimes people open up, and sometimes they don't. And that's okay.”

He found peace in the gardening group, too. “I love the gardening group,” he smiles. “We meet up, we have a brew, we talk. You don't even have to talk if you don't want to. You're just around people who get it.”

Tuesdays became a lifeline — packed with purpose and connection.

“Tuesday's a big day for me,” Phil explains. “Gardening group from 10 to 12. Then I've got to rush to Barrow, do a bit of shopping, then 1 to 3 is the art group. Then straight after that, I'm making brews for the chair-based exercise group, chin-wagging with everyone. I'm talking to loads of people. It's great stuff.”

It's not just activity — it's reconnection. It's finding laughter again in the middle of sorrow. It's being seen, understood, and supported — not just as someone who's lost so much, but as someone who still has so much to give.

“I'd come out of myself recently,” he reflects. “And people noticed. It's because I had that space. I had people around me. St Mary's gave me that.”

Phil didn't go to St Mary's because he was ill. He went because his heart was broken.



What he found there was more than therapy or scheduled sessions. He found community, dignity, and new reasons to smile.

If you or someone you know is navigating loss, or even just struggling to find your footing again, St Mary's isn't just a place — it's a lifeline.

If you or someone you know is suffering from a **bereavement** please contact our team on 01229 580305 option 6

Nurturing the Next Generation of Hospice Care: The St Mary's Preceptorship Programme

At St Mary's Hospice, we know that compassionate, high-quality care begins with well-supported, confident professionals. That's why we've recently developed a new Preceptorship Programme—a structured initiative designed to welcome and empower newly registered healthcare staff as they take their first steps into professional practice.

The programme focuses on helping new team members consolidate their learning, grow in confidence, and embed the values of person-centred, dignified care that define our hospice. With guidance from our experienced nursing and education teams, participants receive support in translating theory into practice—while learning to navigate the professional codes of conduct with integrity and compassion.

We were proud to welcome three newly qualified Registered Nurses in September, all of whom have now completed the programme and become valued members of our clinical team. Currently, two newly registered Nursing Associates are actively engaged in the programme, continuing their journey with the same dedication and heart.

Our investment in initiatives like this reflects a wider commitment—not just to excellent care today, but to building a strong, skilled workforce for the future. It's another example of how St Mary's Hospice continues to grow and evolve, ensuring that we can be there for every patient, every family, every time.

"I feel extremely well supported in my new role and was reassured by how well structured and thorough the preceptorship programme has been

designed. It is also very adaptable and tailored to suit my individual learning needs."

— Jo Firth, who has recently qualified



"Joining St Mary's has been one of the best decisions I've made. The preceptorship programme has really helped me grow in confidence and develop the skills needed in what is such a specialised area of nursing."

At first, I did find the transition challenging — something I believe was partly influenced by my ADHD — but what stood out to me was how this was embraced as a strength rather than a barrier. Katie supported me in turning that experience into a learning opportunity, even encouraging me to lead a journal club on neurodivergence in healthcare workers."

My colleagues have been incredibly supportive and patient as I found my place here, and I genuinely wouldn't want to be anywhere else."

— Jody McDonald, Nursing Team, St Mary's Hospice



Dementia Unmuted:

Celebrating Life, Creativity, and Connection in the Heart of Barrow

This February, Barrow came alive with music, theatre, dance, and heartfelt storytelling as St Mary's Hospice proudly hosted the Dementia Unmuted Festival—a bold, uplifting celebration of life, creativity, and community for people living with dementia and those who support them. Born from the heart of the Furness Dementia Partnership, this vibrant, co-produced festival brought together individuals, families, artists, and organisations to challenge stigma, inspire connection, and celebrate voices too often overlooked.

We are now proud to share that Dementia Unmuted has been named a finalist in the Dementia Care Awards 2025. This national recognition reflects not only the strength of our collaboration across health, social care, and the voluntary sector, but also the joy, bravery, and shared purpose of everyone who took part. From the first beat of music to the last standing ovation, this festival was powered by a collective belief: that dementia does not silence creativity, nor should it isolate those who live with it.

A Joyful Opening: Music and Shared Expression

The festival launched with an open mic afternoon at Barrow Cricket Club, where service users, families, and local performers filled the room with music, dance, poetry, and laughter. The atmosphere was electric, alive with movement and mutual support. For many living with dementia, music awakens memory and ignites joy—and this event was living proof.

“It was inspiring to see participants engage with and become enraptured by the singing and movement,” said Sophie Murphy-Ayeche, Admiral Dementia Nurse at St Mary's Hospice. “These shared experiences reminded us all of the healing, connecting power of creativity.”



Theatre That Speaks: Pluto Productions at The Forum

Midway through the festival, The Forum became a stage for deeper reflection. St Mary's Hospice was proud to host Pluto Productions in presenting their moving play *Where or When*, an exploration of the dementia journey through powerful scenes of love, loss, and resilience.

Audience members were visibly moved, and the performance sparked meaningful conversation. Following the play, a panel of experts, carers, and community voices opened a dialogue around dementia care, lived experience, and the need for empathetic, inclusive support. Alongside, booths from local organisations offered information, storytelling, and moments of connection.

"We are so grateful to Pluto Productions, our panel members, and all the organisations that helped make this such a meaningful event," said Sophie. "The arts and shared dialogue have the power to change perceptions and bring people together in understanding."



Dancing into Belonging: Strictly St Mary's

The festival reached a joyful finale with Strictly St Mary's, a glittering afternoon of music and movement, again held at Barrow Cricket Club. Taking inspiration from the beloved TV show, and supported by Margaret Hetherington's School of Dancing, the event welcomed people of all ages and abilities to laugh, move, and dance together.

"To watch people set their worries aside for a few hours and let the music and movement take over was enchanting," Sophie reflected. "The smiles, the laughter—it was just magic."

Research consistently shows that dance and music can boost mood, cognitive function, and social interaction for people with dementia. Strictly St Mary's brought that research to life in the most joyous way.



A Festival Film and a Lasting Message

A particular highlight of the festival was the Dementia Unmuted film, featuring two inspirational gentlemen living with dementia. Their honest, moving reflections on identity, resilience, and finding purpose captured the heart of what the festival aimed to share: that life with dementia can still be rich with meaning, laughter, and love.

This festival was more than a series of events—it was a message. A celebration of ability over limitation, of expression over silence. It showed what's possible when we listen deeply, create together, and stand united in our commitment to a more compassionate, inclusive world.



As finalists in the Dementia Care Awards, we carry forward this recognition not just as an honour, but as a promise—to keep raising voices, building connections, and nurturing joy wherever we can.

"We can't wait to build on this momentum," said Sophie. "These moments of connection are what truly matter."

We would like to thank the Power of Music fund for supporting the hospice.

Welcome to Our New Trustees:

Strengthening the Future of St Mary's Hospice

At St Mary's Hospice, we are fortunate to be supported by a dedicated Board of Trustees who bring their expertise, compassion, and time to guide our strategic direction. We are delighted to welcome four new trustees—Joel Bland, Hilary Crowe, Diane Hartley, and Nicola Wood—each of whom brings a unique background and heartfelt commitment to our mission.

Joel Bland



Joel Bland is a Product Manager at ClearBank, one of the UK's leading financial technology companies. With a background in designing and delivering innovative financial services, Joel brings a strong understanding of technology and strategy. His earlier role as a management consultant at Accenture saw him lead technology transformation projects across the financial services sector, making him a valuable asset to the hospice as we continue to innovate and adapt.

Joel grew up in Barrow-in-Furness and now lives in Ulverston with his partner and two dogs. A keen explorer of Cumbria's fells and food scene, Joel has a personal connection to St Mary's. The hospice has supported his own family and friends over the years, and becoming a trustee is his way of giving back. "St Mary's has always been a vital part of the local community," he says, "and I'm proud to play a role in helping it thrive for future generations."

Hilary Crowe



Hilary Crowe's professional journey has taken her from accounting to academia, where she served as a Director at the University of Cumbria. Since retiring from full-time work in 2015, she has remained deeply engaged in healthcare ethics and governance. She now chairs the Health Research Authority Research Ethics Committee in the North West, contributing to vital conversations around clinical and ethical decision-making.

Caring for her husband Brian through his long illness with Fabry disease and seeing the wonderful care provided by a hospice for both him and her mother a year later confirmed Hilary's belief in high quality and accessible palliative care. She said: "Hospices offer not only sensitive medical care but provide comfort and support to both patients, family and friends. Being a trustee at St Mary's Hospice allows me to say thank you for all the help I received and continue to receive."

Diane Hartley



Diane Hartley brings more than two decades of experience in Human Resources, with a particular focus on compliance and ethics. Since moving to Cumbria in 2009, Diane has embraced the region's natural beauty, spending her leisure time swimming in the lakes and hiking with her husband and dogs.

Diane's connection to St Mary's began as

a volunteer. Inspired by the hospice's dedicated staff and the depth of support offered to families, she decided to take a more active role. As a trustee, she brings her professional HR knowledge and a deep understanding of organisational culture and values. "The hospice is a cornerstone of compassion in our community," she says. "I'm proud to help shape its future."

Nicola Wood



Nicola Wood is a solicitor and partner at a national law firm, with wide-ranging experience advising clients in both the public and private sectors. Her legal acumen, strategic insight, and collaborative approach make her a strong addition to the Board.

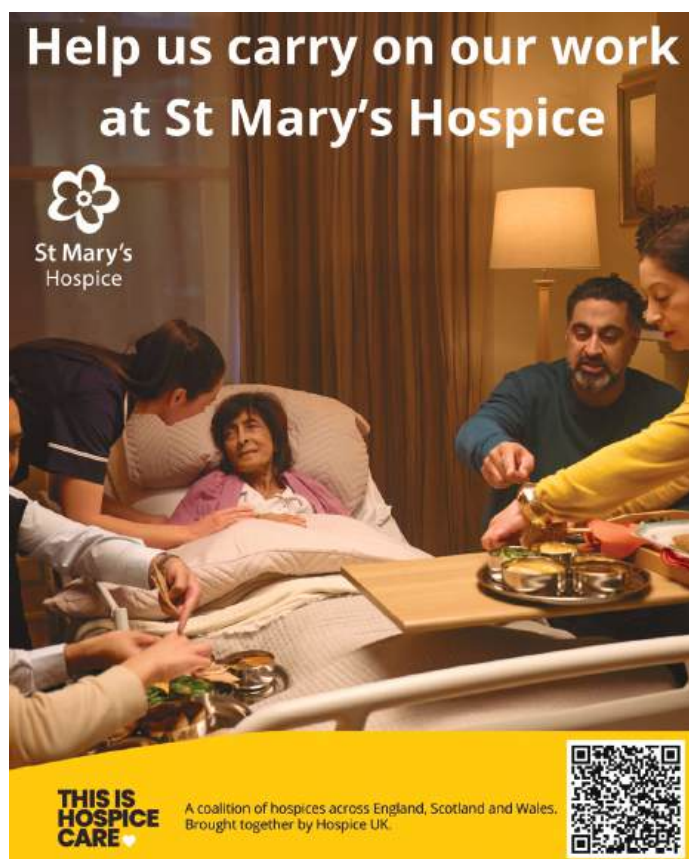
Drawn to the hospice's holistic model of care and the impact it has on individuals and families, Nicola felt compelled to get involved. "I wanted to contribute to something that truly matters," she shares. Nicola hopes her skills will support the hospice in meeting future challenges and expanding its reach. When she's not working, she enjoys walking in the countryside with her dogs.

Each of our new trustees brings more than just professional experience—they bring empathy, lived experience, and a shared passion for supporting our community through compassionate end-of-life care. We're thrilled to welcome them to the St Mary's family and look forward to the wisdom and energy they bring as we continue our work together.

Legacy campaign

Earlier this year, you might have seen a big push from us about the This is Hospice Care campaign and we want to share why this matters so much.

St Mary's Hospice proudly joined forces with Hospice UK and 143 other hospices from across the country to shine a light on something many people don't realise - just how vital gifts in wills are to keeping hospice care going. Legacy gifts fund the care of one in five of our patients. That's 20% of the compassion, dignity, and support we provide—made possible entirely by the kindness of those who have chosen to remember us in their will.



We simply wouldn't be here without them. And the idea of a future without St Mary's? It doesn't bear to think about it.

Hospice care is often misunderstood. People hear "hospice" and think only of endings. But here, it's about life—living well, being seen, being cared for, being remembered. Whether it's

a simple moment of peace, a chance to express yourself through art, or the comfort of someone learning Italian just to make you feel more at home—we're here to make every moment count.

But we cannot do that without your help.

Leaving a gift in your will—no matter how large or small—is one of the most powerful and personal ways to make a difference. It ensures that future generations can rely on the same kind, expert care that so many in our community have already received.

That's why we're part of this nationwide legacy campaign. While smaller charities like ours may struggle to raise awareness on our own, together, we are stronger. Thanks to the collective power of this campaign, we delivered a local version that we hope speaks directly to the hearts of our supporters:

We're proud of what we've done, and hopeful for what it might mean. Experts tell us the true impact of legacy campaigns may take years to see—but what we do know is this:

Every single gift matters.

Every single person who chooses to leave one is helping keep hospice care alive in our community.

Did you know that you can leave just 1% of your estate to St Mary's Hospice in your will, and still ensure your loved ones are well looked after? A gift in your will, no matter the size, can help future families receive the same compassionate care when they need it most.

Leaving a gift is simple. Just contact your solicitor, quote our registered charity number, and include the amount or percentage you wish to leave. If you'd like to talk about this in confidence, we're here to help.

To find out more, contact our fundraising team. We'd love to talk to you about how your legacy can live on through hospice care.

If you'd like to speak to someone about **leaving a legacy** please contact our Individual Giving Fundraiser on christine.linton@stmaryshospice.org.uk

Breaking Down Barriers:

Compassionate Communities Bring Inclusive End-of-Life Conversations to Life

We're proud to share that members of the Compassionate Communities team at St Mary's Hospice are now trained facilitators of the innovative No Barriers Here programme—an arts-based, inclusive approach to advance care planning that centres the voices of those often excluded from traditional palliative care conversations.

No Barriers Here uses creative tools such as collage, textiles, and storytelling to help individuals express their end-of-life wishes in ways that feel accessible, safe, and meaningful. Whether participants face learning disabilities, cultural barriers, or communication challenges, this approach opens powerful conversations about what truly matters.

We are absolutely delighted to now be delivering No Barriers Here workshops within our local community. This work builds on our wider aim of ensuring that everyone—regardless of background or ability—has the opportunity to be heard and respected in decisions about their care.

If you'd like to learn more about No Barriers Here or get involved in a future workshop, please do get in touch with our Compassionate Communities team.



Building Compassion: Our Bereavement Champion Initiative

In January 2025, we proudly launched our Bereavement Champion initiative—a community-led programme created to strengthen grief support and understanding across our local area. Grief touches all of us in some way, and through this initiative, we're equipping people with the knowledge, confidence, and compassion needed to support others through loss—because grief is everyone's business.

The response so far has been incredible. Over 120 individuals have already completed our training, becoming Bereavement Champions who are now helping to foster greater empathy, awareness, and connection in their communities. Whether through quiet conversations, gentle guidance, or simply being there when it matters most, these champions are making a real difference.

This important work has been made possible thanks to the generous support of the Walney Extension Community Fund, whose funding has enabled us to deliver high-quality, accessible workshops to a wide and diverse audience.

Participant feedback has been deeply encouraging: "I enjoyed the workshop today. It helped me gain a better understanding of bereavement and gave me more confidence in having those conversations with people. I also gained a better understanding of available services."

Looking ahead, we're thrilled to be

hosting our first Grief Festival at Barrow Town Hall on Thursday 4th December—a special event to bring our Bereavement Champions together to share stories, reconnect, and celebrate the impact they're having.



We're also preparing to launch our Train the Trainer programme, which will extend the reach of bereavement education even further by empowering a new generation of facilitators to deliver this essential training across the region.

This work is about more than just education—it's about building a compassionate community where no one has to face grief alone. With your continued support, we can keep growing this movement and ensure that kindness, understanding, and human connection remain at the heart of how we respond to loss.

Pop-Up Creative Expression Workshops: Inspiring Creativity and Connection

Every month at St Mary's Hospice, we host Pop-Up Creative Expression

Workshops—joyful, hands-on sessions that invite our service users to explore new artistic experiences in a welcoming, supportive space.

These workshops offer so much more than just a chance to get creative. They open up fresh ways to express emotion, build confidence, and connect with others—reminding us all of the power of creativity to heal, uplift, and inspire.

In our most recent session, participants took part in a beautiful nature printing workshop, using foraged natural materials to create unique, textured artworks. It was a calming and mindful experience that brought a sense of wonder and connection to the natural world—and to each other.



Thanks to the generous support of the Creative Health Trust, we're able to continue offering these meaningful sessions. Their backing helps us bring colour, expression, and community into the lives of those we support—one brushstroke, print, or creative moment at a time.

These workshops are a testament to the small, powerful ways we can nurture

well-being and connection. With continued support, we look forward to bringing even more moments of creativity and joy to our community.

St Mary's Hospice Community Hub – A Place for Community, Connection, and Support

The St Mary's Hospice Community Hub in Barrow is more than just a building – it's a vibrant, welcoming space designed to sit at the very heart of our local community. It's a place where individuals and families affected by long-term or life-limiting conditions can come not only for support, but to find connection, comfort, and companionship. Whether you're living with illness, caring for a loved one, or navigating grief, the Hub offers a safe and inclusive environment where you don't have to face things alone.

What truly sets the Hub apart is its deep commitment to collaboration and community spirit. While it serves as a base for St Mary's Hospice teams to run a variety of wellbeing activities, support sessions, and therapy groups, it's also a shared space for local organisations, charities, and grassroots initiatives. This spirit of partnership means we can bring together a wider range of services and create a more joined-up, person-centred approach to care and support.

Within the Community Hub, you'll find a rich calendar of events and sessions – from bereavement support groups, mindfulness workshops, and drop-in cafes, to educational talks, creative activities, and social meet-ups that aim to reduce isolation and build resilience. It's not just about providing care – it's

about creating a space where people can focus on living well, whatever challenges they may be facing.



Visitors often tell us that what makes the Hub special is the atmosphere – warm, friendly, and full of life. People feel not only heard, but truly seen and valued. They make new friends, share stories, learn from each other, and often find strength and hope in unexpected places. At its core, the St Mary's Hospice Community Hub reflects the values that guide everything we do: compassion, collaboration, dignity, and community. It's a place where everyone is welcome, where every story matters, and where together, we're building a stronger, more connected community – one conversation, one cup of tea, one shared moment at a time.

We would like to thank The Creative Health Trust, Dignity in Dementia, Walney Community Extension Fund and Co-Op Community Fund for supporting the hospice.

VOLUNTEER VACANCIES

We're always looking for more volunteers to join our team. We have a wide range of opportunities that would suit you. All roles are based around your skills, experience, interest and availability



Current vacancies



- In patient unit meals and reception
- Bank reception
- Vehicle maintenance
- Gardeners
- Family and bereavement support volunteers
- Orangery café
- Patient drivers
- Retail shop volunteers
- Compassionate community activities volunteer
- Fundraising

Volunteering transforms lives,
including your own. Some of
these roles are patient facing and
others aren't.



volunteers@stmaryshospice.org.uk





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