

## Marie Curie Emergency Appeal Your Impact – One Year On April 2021

### **Coronavirus tested all of us in the past year. During the pandemic terminal illness did not go away.**

The past year has been unimaginably difficult. From the first lockdown in March 2020, to facemasks and social distancing becoming the norm, it has been the most challenging year many of us have ever experienced. Marie Curie is proud that thanks to the dedication, support and partnership of individuals, companies, and organisations like you, we have been there in every region and nation, providing care, support and information to people and their loved ones.



On behalf of all of us at Marie Curie I want to thank you for your support and provide you with an update on the impact of gifts like yours.

### **We were there on the front line doing vital work. We brought comfort to people facing the hardest of times.**

Across the UK our services were there and continued to be there for people when they needed us. We adapted and innovated at speed and throughout it all our teams and services never stopped.

#### ***Launching our Bereavement Service***

In March 2020, we launched our bereavement service, available to anyone affected by the death of someone to an illness. Whether their loved one received care from Marie Curie or not, whether the bereavement was recent or many years ago, the service is there to support people who need it. A bereavement service was already in our plans for the future as part of our strategy to provide the best possible experience for all, however the needs and challenges shown through the first wave of the pandemic meant we accelerated its launch meeting an unprecedented need at a time of crisis.

Delivered by specially trained volunteers, the service provides a safe space for people to discuss the feelings and emotions they have surrounding their grief. A person is matched with a volunteer, who can provide support for up to six telephone sessions each lasting around 45 minutes. Our Support Line is also there to offer dedicated support to those who may need further assistance or signposting to professional counselling services in the future.

We are proud that we were able to launch the service at speed, and **in its first full year, we have supported over 220 individuals through 57 specially trained volunteers.**

We were there for people like Sofia, who contacted our bereavement service when she needed support:



*“Bereavement support gave me the opportunity to talk openly about how I feel, and how that’s affected me. And even during the first session, when chatting to my supporter, and she said, ‘wow that’s really heavy’ and I immediately felt bad and started to apologise for bringing her down and she just put me straight and said, ‘no, I’m here to listen to you, I’m here to help you and there’s no need to apologise for anything’. That was exactly what I needed because I’ve always heard the opposite, I*

*always heard, there’s no time for this right now, that’s too much, you’re talking too much and I felt really stifled. So in my sessions I managed not to feel that way and to break from the cycle.*

*The sessions gave me the opportunity to open up about these things and mainly to accept what has happened and I learnt a lot about myself as well. I now can freely talk about the loss that I’ve experienced and it doesn’t feel like I have a stone around my throat anytime I mention it, it just feels like a part of my life and I can focus on the good that I had with those people and I can focus on the good that happened afterwards, because I learned something after each death.”*

### **Marie Curie Nursing Service - everywhere, every day for anyone who needs us**

Everyday throughout the pandemic our nurses, teams and services have been there for people and families. Across Scotland, England, Northern Ireland and Wales we have continued to provide support throughout the past twelve months, adapting our services to the needs of local communities. Marie Curie has been on the frontline, delivering care and relieving pressure on the NHS. Our Nursing Service has continued delivering direct care into people’s homes; our 9 hospices have remained open providing both virtual and in person support throughout the pandemic.

### **PPE**

In Spring 2020, the challenges in the shortages of personal protective equipment including masks and gloves were widely reported, and we were able to make the most of our supply through our network of volunteers and supporters across the UK. Working at speed and packing up their vehicles with masks, gloves and aprons, our teams would drive across their local areas, collecting and redistributing PPE to Marie Curie hospices and nurses. With our West Midlands Hospice acting as our central hub we were able to ensure that our staff across the four nations had the equipment they needed to ensure they were protected, and our patients could be kept safe.

### ***Phillipa's Story***

For people like Phillipa, whose grandmother Brenda, received support from Marie Curie Nurses in Yorkshire during lockdown, the support of our Nursing Service can make the world of difference:



*“Marie Curie were just brilliant, not just for my grandmother but for us as a family, bringing re-assurance we could sleep the whole night through as it had been two weeks of broken sleep. No question about end of life was too silly and the nurses were very honest in their answers, which was reassuring and supportive.*

*We have such fond memories of my grandmother and all feel very fortunate for all the years we had her in our lives. She passed away at home, with her family around her, which is such a gift given how stressful and difficult lockdown has been for many people, so the fact we were able to do that is what we really have to take away from this.*

*Of course, we also remember the dedicated work of the Marie Curie night sitters who shared the final days of memories with us.”*

### **We have adapted and continue to be there supporting people and families throughout the UK**

- **Managing breathlessness in Glasgow**, we have continued to utilise virtual technology to ensure that patients can still access the care they vitally need. Our Fatigue, Anxiety and Breathlessness Management Group allows people to come together, in a safe environment to discuss fatigue, anxiety and support on breathlessness management. The group also works as a forum allowing people to share their thoughts knowing there are others in a similar position.
- **Support at home in Bradford**, our Allied Health professional team including Occupational Therapists and Physiotherapists have been able to hold more visits to people's homes than ever before. Before the pandemic, many appointments would take place at our Bradford hospice, yet with people requiring support at home we have adapted to working much more within the local community. Our teams support people on how to use specific equipment, provide information they need and help to support people to live well at home.
- **Researching the needs of frontline staff in In Belfast**, our Practice Development Facilitator Kasia Patynowska is to begin a research study looking at the experiences and the needs of frontline healthcare assistants who work alone delivering care to people in their own homes. Prior to the pandemic we knew that demand for care was projected to rise but coronavirus has led to a rapid increase in demand for people to access care within the community. This study will look to understand the challenges

and rewards that newly appointed Marie Curie healthcare assistants experience when providing care.

- **Better access to care in Liverpool**, we have successfully recruited to our new Palliative Care and Homelessness Coordinator role. This new clinical role will work in collaboration with providers across Liverpool and aim to provide better access to care for the homeless community across the city driving forward our mission to provide better end of life care for all no matter their background. We aim to ensure that patients can access support sooner, communication across services is improved and support across the city is far more visible.
- **Virtual Day Therapies Service in Cardiff**, the hospice team have been busy throughout the past few months to launch a Virtual Day Therapies Service, available to people in the Vale of Glamorgan. Focusing on helping people who have a terminal diagnosis to live well with their illness, the service will aim to reach anyone who needs us. The service will enable people who cannot physically attend the Day Therapy Unit to still be able to access the service whilst also promoting self-management strategies for people to manage and live well for longer.
- **Rapid Response Nurses working with London Ambulance Service in London**, our Rapid Response Nurses in Newham, Hackney and City and Tower Hamlets have continued to support people in crisis situations throughout the pandemic. Working with St Joseph's Hospice our teams can respond quickly and react within minutes to be there for people. Our teams have also been working closely with the London Ambulance Service, diverting appropriate requests for support to our nursing teams instead of unnecessary ambulance call outs. Often people can call 999 as they don't know where to turn to for support in a crisis, yet by working together we can ensure patients can get the support they need and stay in the place of their choice.

### *From the frontline: Dr Nicky Baker*

For teams across the health and social care sector the pandemic has provided some of the toughest moments. The decisions and limitations on visitation, wearing PPE, going to work every day when the rest of the country were told to stay at home and the impact of providing care during a pandemic has placed an immense strain on the sector and the people who work within it .

Dr Nicky Baker, a specialist doctor at the Marie Curie Hospice, West Midlands says of the challenges;

*“Every week that passes, we learn more about the impact of this virus and the effects on people of lockdown and limited contact.*

*At the beginning, the most vulnerable were those who were likely to die from Covid. But now, we've now got a whole mix of different vulnerabilities to bear in mind: children who've had to re-learn who their parents are after they've been in hospital or at the hospice for a period of time, people suffering from mental health issues, people whose lives have been blighted by loneliness and isolation.*

*I remember a lady who came into the hospice only a couple of weeks ago. She sat in the bed and she said to me: “This virus is putting me in the most awful position because I have to*

*choose between being at home and suffering completely awful pain or being here and feeling so desperately frightened because I don't have all of my loved ones with me."*

*She saw that those were her only choices in life, and that they had been forced on her by the situation. These are the real-life situations we're dealing with."*

*"When you're having to make these kinds of decisions every day, it weighs very heavily on you. Being in the position of having to decide whether someone can or cannot visit and having to explain those decisions to anxious families isn't easy. It goes against everything we stand for as palliative care experts."*

### Research and Policy working together to campaign for change

Marie Curie is committed to funding research and exploring different ways to better support people and their carers at the end of life. Now more than ever it is critical to understand the ways in which care and support can be improved for people at the end of their life.

Our research focuses on understanding the different challenges that people face at the end of life:

- Dr Briony Hudson, Senior Research Manager will begin a project **to explore the challenges in accessing palliative care for people who are homeless** and are not entitled to benefits or free NHS care.
- In November 2020 we published a report on the links between fuel poverty and terminal illness. The report surveyed Marie Curie nurses **with 28% of responders saying they have cared for a dying patient who has struggled with their heating costs**<sup>1</sup>. The report highlights recommendations for the UK Government on how best to support people and reduce the number of people at the end of their life who cannot heat their homes.
- In April 2021 we launched the first report from the **Better End of Life Programme**. This annual programme will examine evidence on the current state of dying, death and bereavement across the four nations and propose a policy agenda to help ensure everyone has the best possible end of life experience. The launch report explored the ongoing impact that the pandemic has had on the end of life experience, with the report and details of the programme [available online](#).

We will continue our research into these areas and to campaign for everyone to have access to the very best care at the end of their lives.

---

<sup>1</sup> P.6

## An Update: Sharing Knowledge across the sector

As we move into our new strategic period, Marie Curie is committed to supporting everyone to have the best end of life experience possible. As part of this, we want to ensure that those who often support people in the last phases of life, whether at home, hospital or in care homes, are able to access the knowledge and expertise they need to confidently provide palliative and end of life support.



- We have **extended our learning and development offering**, building on our established, and extensively used, Palliative Care Knowledge Zone – an online hub of information for health and social care professionals.
- We are launching **our first Marie Curie ECHO hub this Spring** in the West Midlands. ‘ECHO’ will enable Marie Curie’s expert staff to exchange knowledge and best practice with a network of organisations and individuals who provide care and support for people at the end of life.

Over the next two years Marie Curie will open more hubs, with our ambition by Spring 2023 to have 10 hubs in operation across the UK, each with their own networks addressing the needs of their communities.

- We are working towards **launching a virtual learning academy**, a platform for health and social care professionals from across the sectors, to access a range of learning resources including webinars, courses and modules.
- We are **working together with Hallmark Care Homes to provide support and training to their staff**, whilst Hallmark will support Marie Curie in the development of our care home resources. Together we have been developing tools virtually over the last nine months with the training and knowledge exchange to begin by the end of March.

## National Day of Reflection – remembering those who have died during the pandemic

Since the first lockdown began in 2020, millions of people have been bereaved. The National Day of Reflection took place on 23 March, the first anniversary of the first UK lockdown, to commemorate this tragic loss of life and show support for everyone who is grieving.

At 12 noon a minute’s silence was held across the nation, receiving extensive media coverage and observed by individuals, the emergency services, the Prime Minister and devolved governments. Throughout the day the message was for everyone to take a moment to reflect on the collective loss of the past year and to reach out and connect with someone who may be grieving.



Throughout the afternoon there were several free online talks, as well as an opportunity of reflection in evening. Over 100 building and landmarks, including the London Eye, Blackpool Tower, Cardiff Castle, Belfast City Hall pictured on the left and the Kelpies were lit up yellow in support of the Day.

Spearheaded by Marie Curie, over 300 organisations got behind the day including charities, businesses, membership organisations, emergency services, public sector bodies, community groups and individuals. The day has also gained support from Prime Minister Boris Johnson, Opposition Leader Keir Starmer, First Minister of Scotland Nicola Sturgeon and Professor Mark Drakeford, First Minister of Wales.

### **Our Finances and the Impact of the Emergency Appeal**

Coronavirus has presented Marie Curie with unique challenges over the past twelve months and will continue to do so in the near future. The way we fundraise has changed dramatically, March is home to our Great Daffodil Appeal with public collections and the beginning of our special events season. 2020 saw cancelled collections and special events and in 2021 we continue to adapt. Yet throughout the past year, due to the incredible partnership and generosity of the people who support us, we have continued to be there for people when they need us.

We were one of the first charities in the UK to launch an Emergency Appeal, which since its launch has raised over £7.1 million across all channels, as well as donated media space from our partners. We received UK government support through hospice grants, business rates relief and the coronavirus job retention scheme. Our strategic charity wide approach to halt expenditure where possible and mitigate loss of income, as well as the commitment and generosity of our supporters, volunteers and staff has enabled us to forecast ending the year with a surplus.

We are incredibly proud of our response to the pandemic and grateful to everyone who has stood by us throughout 2020 and into 2021.

The future still remains uncertain and whilst we have had to, and continue to make, some challenging decisions, we know that we can and will always be there to support the people who need us most.



### **There for people now and in the future – thanks to your support**

As we look forward, Marie Curie is committed to being there to support anyone now and in the months and years ahead, who needs us. To support the people whose diagnosis have been delayed as a result of the pandemic, to support those who have been unable to access treatment, to support those

in their final moments, and to campaign to ensure any one of us can access the vital care and support that we are entitled to.

We aspire to be a country where everyone can expect the best possible last chapter of life, and their loved ones are able to start the next chapter of their own lives as well as they can. We have been there throughout the pandemic and we will continue to be there now and into the future.

Thank you for your incredible generosity, support and partnership throughout the past year and beyond.

**Rebecca Crowther**  
**Philanthropy@mariecurie.org.uk**

We're here for people living with any terminal illness, and their families. We offer expert care, guidance and support to help them get the most from the time they have left.

**[mariecurie.org.uk](https://mariecurie.org.uk)**

Charity reg no. 207994 (England & Wales), SC038731 (Scotland) A003



---

Care and support  
through terminal illness