

SPRING
SUMMER
2020
ISSUE 71



Spring & Summer Newsletter 2020

POSITIVE LIVING AND LEARNING FOR PEOPLE
WITH EPILEPSY AND OTHER COMPLEX NEEDS

Welcome from our Chief Executive, Adam Sampson



Right now, it is difficult to talk about anything but the pandemic. At the same time, life at St Elizabeth's seems much as before. Looking out of my window at residents walking or riding their bikes through the spring sunshine, it is hard to remember that the world beyond our gates is in crisis.

Some things are different, of course. The staff accompanying residents are wearing masks or, in some cases, full medical scrubs. While our learners are still in education, they are being taught in their homes rather than in the classrooms. And everyone is being very careful to keep social distance and be scrupulous about cleanliness.

The virus has touched us – of course. But St Elizabeth's has, yet again, risen magnificently to the challenge. We have not done so alone: many of the masks our staff are wearing were sewn by volunteers and many of the scrubs paid for by the generosity of friends and family.

The virus may have required us to close our site to visitors for a while. But we are feeling the support of the wider community now more than ever. 📧 - @StElizabetsCEO

Welcome to Marie Cooke, Lay Chaplain



I am delighted to be here at St Elizabeth's as the new Lay Chaplain, and to have this opportunity to introduce myself.

Firstly, my role is focused on pastoral support for all: staff, residents and their families. This is about listening and accompanying, being a catalyst for spiritual and emotional assistance amid all the daily joys and difficulties of human living. Journeying with others is always both a privilege and a collaboration, which enriches my own appreciation for all the wonderful diversity of human lives and experiences.

Secondly, my responsibility is to enhance the provision of spiritual support for residents, an important aspect of holistic care, finding new ways of outreach that are accessible, inspiring, and inclusive. Using music, art, video clips, PowerPoint etc., there are many contemporary ways of providing reflective short sessions which will appeal to everyone, regardless of whether they are formally religious or not.

Our chaplaincy transcends religious affiliation and is at the service of everyone, of all faiths and none.

Stories from Belinda, Tom and Kyle



Residents from our Supported Living site in Bishop's Stortford (Windhill) have been telling us how life has changed for them since COVID-19...

Belinda's Story

I really enjoy doing my paperwork and I have enjoyed sitting in the garden while practising social distancing. I have done a bit of arts and crafts. I've kept in contact with my family by phone and I enjoy telling them what I've been up to daily. I am also enjoying the weekly Thursday clap for the keyworkers. I'm enjoying waving at the neighbours opposite while they also clap for the keyworkers.

I go for walks up and down the road for my daily exercise to enjoy the sun and stretch my legs.

Tom's Story

I think I have a good understanding about the COVID-19 virus. I do have lots of questions about where it comes from and when it will go. I have been expressing my feelings by doing some artwork on my computer which I have been printing so I can send to my mum. I have enjoyed some daily walks and also doing my Lego building which keeps me busy. I'm upset my big family



holiday has been cancelled this year due to the virus but I understand we have to stay safe at home so we don't get unwell. Although anxious about lots of change at the beginning, (I am used to my daily activities at St Elizabeth's and don't enjoy many changes) I think I have adapted well to the new routine and my anxiety levels have lessened. Staff reassure me daily that things will go back to normal over time.

Kyle's Story

I understand about the COVID-19 virus. I use social media a lot so I think that helps me understand what is going on. I am sad I can't go to football practice to see my friends or be able to go to St Elizabeth's to see my friends but I understand from social media that everyone is the same at the moment, no one is doing the things they normally like doing and we all have to stay safe. I can't wait for it all to be over so the football comes back on TV again. Staff have been helping me a lot with my anxiety, and have encouraged me to talk about my day so I can express my emotions. I have enjoyed connecting with my family more and have spoken to my dad, brother and sister-in-law lots. I also connect with my friends via my Xbox. I have been for a few daily walks.



What COVID-19 means for us

As a centre for people with severe learning disabilities and complex health needs, our residents and learners are potentially very vulnerable to the virus and its effects.

With 170 residents living on site (plus 650+ staff), keeping everyone safe during this pandemic is our priority, and we have had to implement an extensive Pandemic Response Plan that has seen areas zoned off, bungalows under lockdown, barrier nursing and on-site isolation wards to treat those showing symptoms.

All of these changes have inevitably led to a vastly increased expenditure on PPE, increased staffing costs and the purchase of additional medical equipment.

At the same time, we have had to cancel fundraising events, have seen a reduction in grant-making activity and have had to close our 10 Charity Shops, which has obviously had a big effect on our fundraising income. We estimate that the impact on the charity could potentially be as high as £1.2million, and so have launched an Urgent Fundraising Appeal. To find out more, please visit www.stelizabeths.org.uk



On our website, you will also find our Covid-19 blog - The 'Tough Times Blog'. People with various connections to St Elizabeth's have contributed, based on what the current situation means for them.

How have we adapted?



♥ **School & College** - The major changes are all based around keeping our learners safe from infection, whilst trying to maintain the quality of education. Staff are wearing the appropriate masks and additional PPE, as well as increased cleaning, hand washing and general hygiene.

We have also used social stories to carefully prepare (and not scare) our learners. Our learners are taught in the groups in which they live rather than our normal classes, to reduce the risk of virus transmission. Our day pupils are also being taught in a discrete group.

In College we have successfully integrated the learning onto the bungalows in Centenary Close and staff from the college are working with domiciliary care staff to support our learners.

♥ **Children's Home** - All of the houses in the Children's Home have been on lockdown since early April. Children have been taking part in more in-house activities like arts and crafts, and more money has been spent on outdoor activities such as paddling pools and outdoor games. All of the children have been making video calls to families and

friends, including friends in other houses! The PPE worn by staff has been child friendly to make it a little less scary - including face masks featuring Snoopy!

♥ **Adult Home & Domiciliary Care** - All of our bungalows have been isolating, with staff introducing daily living skills and exercise routines into the day. Visits have been made temporarily 'virtual' so residents have been making regular video calls to their families. They have also been taking part in the "2.6 Challenge" and the 'Clap for Carers' every Thursday.

♥ **Health and Therapy** - Face-to-face therapy sessions have been limited, with the team adapting by uploading sessions to our YouTube channel so residents can join in. Our Nursing team continue to treat residents face-to-face, and have been the priority team to receive PPE daily. Full barrier nursing has been used on residents displaying symptoms.

♥ **Day Opportunities & Enterprise Projects** - All of our day programmes have been adapted and are being delivered in the Adult Home, with help from the Day Opportunities staff teams. Some have stayed back to sew face masks, and to look after our plants in Ashvale and the chickens, who have been providing lots of joy to our residents! Bus drivers have been busy collecting prescriptions and delivering supplies across the site.

♥ **Central Services & Chapel** - Where possible, staff within Central Services are working from home, and we remain fully operational despite skeleton staff onsite. The Chapel has been broadcasting a live stream of Mass to all the bungalows.



As a result of these changes, St Elizabeth's has largely escaped the infection problems that have hit so many of our fellow care providers. We are so grateful to our amazing staff for their hard work.

PPE Contributions

PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) has been a huge issue over the past few weeks, both for us and on a national scale. We have had our own issues trying to get hold of the right equipment, and to ensure we do not run out at any time. However, thanks to the incredible generosity of our supporters, we've made it through. There are simply too many people to thank - local community groups, schools and colleges, local businesses, friends and families and supporters. In total, we have received £7,000 worth of donated PPE and gifts to be used across the Centre, plus generous cash donations. A huge thank you to everyone involved!



Fundraising and Community Update

The first half of 2020 has certainly not worked out quite how we thought it might! The impact of the Coronavirus crisis has been felt across the Centre and the wider St Elizabeth's community - our priority has been to safeguard everyone's health, but of course the restrictions have had a huge impact on our income.

Presentations, networking-meetings, fundraising concerts and cheque-presentations have been postponed, and we have also had to temporarily close our 10 Charity Shops. Sadly, we have also had to cancel the Summer Fayre for 2020, due to the restrictions on large events. We've also postponed our Community and Corporate Volunteering Calendar, although we are hoping to re-start it in the late-summer.

However, as is so often the way at St Elizabeth's, we have been amazed by the incredible support and resilience of the local community and by the generosity of a huge number of individuals, companies and groups. We launched an Urgent Fundraising Appeal on Purple Day (26th March), a day to recognise those with epilepsy, and within hours we had raised over £1,500! By the start of May, that total had risen to £26,700. We've also had generous donations of hand sanitiser, food parcels, and PPE from local groups (see pages 4-5). We've been moving some of our Charity Shop items on to our **Ebay** page (search 'St Elizabeth's Centre' under sellers on **Ebay**) and encouraging people to use **AmazonSmile** and **The Giving Machine** when shopping online. We have been so encouraged by the support that so many have shown during such difficult circumstances, so a huge Thank You to each and every one of you.



But it hasn't all been about cancelled events and meetings. In January, we collected a £25,000 cheque from Ordinary2extraordinary to fund outdoor sports equipment for the Centre. This is the 2nd year O2e have supported us, and they have already agreed to fund us for a 3rd year!

We have received several large grants which have supported the recent bungalow renovations in the Adult Home. We've also received over £10,000 of donations towards new equipment for our sensory rooms, including bubble tubes, beanbags and tactile wall panels.

Earlier in the year, we launched a fundraiser online to purchase a new EyeGaze machine to help some of our non-verbal residents to communicate more effectively and remove barriers to communicating. Thanks to all who supported our appeal.

We are also busy fundraising for support towards residents' holidays, music therapy sessions, for an Advice and Guidance Counsellor for College leavers looking at next steps, and new bed monitors and medical equipment. There is always so much that we need to fund here at St Elizabeth's that isn't covered

by any fees we might receive from local authorities, so now more than ever, we are busy trying to secure the funding to make them a reality.

With the cancellation of the Summer Fayre, we are putting our efforts in to making Apple Day bigger and better than ever before! Put Saturday 26th September in your diary and hopefully see you all there! If you can't make it, please consider buying a Raffle Ticket for our Autumn Draw, or support us by making a donation, sharing this newsletter or following us on social media - check our website for more details.

Community

Now more than ever, we have been overwhelmed by the support in our local community. While things are a little quieter than normal, we wish to give the following places a special mention for their support over the past year:

- ♥ We have a number of pubs that support us, including The White Horse in Ware who hosted a Christmas Party for our School children and raised a fantastic £400, and The Bull in Much Hadham, who raised £400 through a number of small fundraising events.

- ♥ We have over 50 collection pots in our local community including Harlow Leisure Zone, who have so far raised £1,809! Could you or your local business display a pot for us? We would love to hear from you!

- ♥ We attend a number of local networking groups, presenting to over 250 local businesses to update them on our latest news and explain ways in which they can engage with us. In January, we hosted the BEN (Business Exchange Networking) meeting at the Centre.



- ♥ Cannon Travel in Hoddesdon have been a great example of community engagement. We met them at a 'Love Hoddesdon' networking meeting, and since then they have raised £1,000!

- ♥ Back in October, we held a stand at Bishop's Stortford Means Business, where we were able to link with a number of local businesses. There, we met Lever & Co Solicitors, who have since held an event at their offices to raise £300, and also volunteered at our Christmas Bazaar.

- ♥ Lazy Salsa Sunday came to St Elizabeth's as part of our Volunteering Programme a few years ago, and were so impressed they decided to support us further. They donated £1,000 in March and have so far raised over £5,000 for us.

- ♥ We have been working with Rainbow Services (Harlow) to ensure people have access to essential clothing. Our Staple Tye Charity Shop branch has been supporting the project at Harlow Library.

From everyone at St Elizabeth's, we would like to thank you all for your supportive messages and donations over the past few months. 2020 might not have been the year we thought it would be, but the generosity and kindness of our supporters has been a complete ray of sunshine amongst the clouds. Stay safe and keep well.



Stephen & Joey's story



One of my happiest experiences of St Elizabeth's was a perfect summer's day a few years ago when Joey's uncle and I turned up with a large picnic which we spread out on a rug in the shade of the apple trees in the orchard. We'd smuggled in a couple of bottles of very nice beer under the watchful eyes of the nuns, and the inevitable happened. And as Adrian and I snored away blissfully for an hour or so, my intrepid, if profoundly disabled, second son, Joey (then a learner at the College) explored the orchard which he loves so much: independent, trusted and, above all, completely safe.

The current crisis has reminded me of that blissful day. For when I first heard of the current challenges, my first instinct, I'll admit, was to get in my car and bring Joey home where he could snuggle up on the sofa and watch endless repeats of *Monsters Inc.* until the terrors had passed. It was a classic left side / right side of the brain dilemma. For I soon realised that, actually, he was much safer staying where he was, in supported living in Windhill looked after by a group of highly conscientious and utterly

professional carers from St Elizabeth's, than he ever would be at home. After all, his sister was still going to school every day and God knows whether I or his step mum was asymptomatic.

In normal times ('peacetime' as I increasingly call it), we see Joey nearly every weekend, either at home in London or in Bishop's Stortford. And in the holidays we go to North Norfolk where Joey loves the beaches, the waves, the birds and the pine trees. Instead, we have funny, not always successful meandering chats on FaceTime or Skype, and try to keep him (and ourselves) cheerful. Nothing, of course, can replace the hugs and cuddles, which feel more necessary than ever, but we try.

But what I know for certain is that Joey is safe. I know that he's surrounded by professionalism and kindness, good spirits and brilliant care. I saw this when I spoke to the care manager at Windhill the other day: "Yeah, we're alright, we're always alright, Joey's laughing, so we must be alright," was the wonderful, indomitable, reassuring answer. It's the ethos that shines through: the good humour, the positive spirit, the love that conquers all.

And just as I know that Joey's in the best place in these dark days, so I know that we will see better times and that St Elizabeth's beautiful, inspirational comforting apple orchard will echo again with Joey's joyous laughter – as well, no doubt, as his delinquent father's contented snores.

Joey, like all the other people who live and work at St Elizabeth's, is showing the rest of us the way.

We are still recruiting!

Here at St Elizabeth's, the people we care for and support are at the heart of everything we do. Our multi-disciplinary teams work holistically across the Centre to give our residents, learners and students the chance to live life to the fullest. As a result, we are always looking for enthusiastic, compassionate people to join our care team!

These are difficult times right now and we want to help. We are currently advertising direct care and support employment opportunities to the local community and beyond.

Perhaps you have been affected financially by Covid-19? Or just fancy a career change? With full-time, part-time and casual roles available across early and late day and night shifts, there is a flexible role to suit everyone.

You don't need any experience in care, just a passion for people and caring for the most vulnerable in our community.

Full, fast-tracked training is provided free of charge, with the potential to be working across our residential setting within weeks.

For more information, please visit www.stelizabeths.org.uk or call 01279 844409.



What do our staff say?

'A really good place to work. Supportive and friendly management. Excellent training team. Everybody cares about everyone. I really enjoy working here.'

'Having now worked at the St Elizabeth Centre for the last 4 months, I can honestly say in my opinion it is a great company to work for, with a lovely team.'

'It's a good place to work and you will make lots of friends. Work and home life is a good balance and they are as flexible as you are for them. It is set in the countryside with lots of space to roam.'



#TwoPointSixChallenge

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a catastrophic effect for charities with the cancellation of thousands of events and the loss of billions in income from fundraising events

The Virgin Money London Marathon alone, which should have taken place on Sunday 26 April, is the world's biggest one-day fundraising event, raising more

than £66.4 million for thousands of charities in 2019.

As the nation took on the 2.6 Challenge – the lockdown alternative – St Elizabeth's joined in and took part in many different activities – everything from cake baking to walking, running and making flags! Thanks to your generosity, we raised a total of £1,700 – exceeding our original target of £260! A huge thank you to everyone who donated.



Lockdown Fun & Games!

It's fun, it's challenging, it's addictive – can you solve our puzzles?

The goal of a word wheel puzzle is to create as many words possible with the letters in the word wheel. You can only use each letter once, and every word must have the letter in the centre of the wheel. Can you find the 9 letter word?



The 9 letter word is:

Find the words in the grid!

ASHVALE CONVENT EPILEPSY COLLEGE DRAWING PAINTING THERAPY
 DISABILITY COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER STUDENTS VEGETABLES JEWELLERY
 EXCEPTIONAL COUNTRYSIDE FUNDRAISING OPPORTUNITIES INDEPENDENCE
 POSITIVE NURSING ADULTS HADHAM APPLES SCHOOL SISTERS PEOPLE
 SERVICES FLOWERS CHILDREN ORCHARD CHICKENS RESIDENT LEARNING
 CARE GIVING PLAY LIVING HOME AUTISM RETAIL RAFFLE



Please Support St Elizabeth's

Thank You!

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We hope you have enjoyed reading our newsletter and will feel inspired to support St Elizabeth's. There are many ways to help, for example by making a donation, supporting one of our fundraising events, volunteering or by sharing this Newsletter with someone you know.

If you would like to make a donation, please complete the enclosed form and return to the Freepost address below. Alternatively, you can use the Donate button on our website to give via credit card.

Please note our Raffle will be drawn on Apple Day this year.

If you would like further information on the Centre or how to support us, please contact our Fundraising Team at fundraising@stelizabeths.org.uk or on 01279 844355.

2020 dates for your Diary

St Elizabeth's Summer Fayre	CANCELLED
St Elizabeth's Apple Day	Saturday 26th September 2020
St Elizabeth's Christmas Bazaar	Saturday 28th November 2020

Please send to:

FREEPOST, St Elizabeth's, Much Hadham, Herts SG10 6BR

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