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Music therapy in hospice and palliative care

“As part of the activities programme provided at Emerson Grange and our constant commitment of making links with the community, our residents were visited by the ellenor Choir. We all had a wonderful afternoon singing along and, as Activities Manager, I would like to say a big thank you from all here at Emerson for making the life of our residents a bit better.” – Raul Iglesias

For the last 30 years, music therapy has been used successfully as part of palliative and end of life care programs. With far-reaching benefits and working within a variety of settings, music therapy can have a profound

impact and help people at every age cope with serious illness and disability, improving mental and physical wellbeing and quality of life.

Participants are encouraged to take part in a music session and sing or play instruments – from piano, guitar and Ukulele to tambourine, electronic drum kit, kazoos and melodica. Through joining in a musical relationship with a professional musical therapist, participants experience the satisfaction of creating music - a thoroughly absorbing activity affording the patient a rare opportunity to express difficult life experiences without words, or to escape and remove the focus from their pain and suffering by providing a vital period of relaxation and enjoyment. Music therapy is tailored to each individual's needs so no two sessions are the same.

Petra Stoffel leads music therapy at ellenor. Seeing how patients benefit from music therapy as a channel for expression and communication, Petra set up the ellenor choir - a wonderful relaxation activity bringing staff, volunteers, patients and members of the local community together which has engendered friendship and a strong sense of community spirit. Musicals to pop songs to Christmas carols, they regularly perform at ellenor events and have recently started to take their program into local care homes to connect with the community and share the enjoyment that music can bring into people's lives.

“Music is a powerful companion that helps us establish our identity; it brings us enjoyment or consolation and celebrates life's greatest and most painful moments with us. We have started singing in local care homes as we wanted to reach out to vulnerable people in the local community and bring the benefits of music to those who can't come to ellenor. Our music brings connection with loved ones, joyful interactions between residents and staff who have a little dance and a moment of relaxation for care home staff who work so hard to support their residents” says Petra.

Music therapy has shown to have a positive impact on older patients, in particular those with dementia and is becoming increasingly included in the activity calendar in care homes. ellenor works with 19 nursing homes in the local area as well as Residential Homes; the ability for ellenor to offer this type of interaction to homes further expands the therapeutic work ellenor provides with the potential to extend this further in the future.

Have you always wanted to join a choir? The ellenor hospice choir is always

looking for new members and welcomes all abilities and ages. For more information, please contact Petra Stoffel on petra.stoffel@ellenor.org or Dawn Miller on 01474 320007

We are **ellenor**, a charity funded by the generosity of our local community, offering the best care and support to families facing terminal illness in Kent. We are the **only** charity in the county that provides hospice care for people of all ages – babies, children and adults - and their families. This includes pain and symptom relief, end of life care, respite, bereavement support and emotional and spiritual care.

Our Children's Hospice Care, formerly known as chYps, is provided in the comfort of the family home and spans across North and West Kent and the London Borough of Bexley. Adults living in Gravesham, Dartford and Swanley, receive care in their place of choice, including their own homes, at our Hospice in Gravesend and in local care homes.

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