



May 19, 2021 11:25 BST

Wellbeing at ellenor is a truly holistic experience

Having worked at **ellenor** as lead physiotherapist for three years before taking over recently as Operational Lead Wellbeing, Andrew Lowden has a hands-on approach to his role - literally. "Although it's my job to bring together all the teams that work under the Wellbeing umbrella - so that's physios, occupational therapists, complementary therapists, counsellors, family support workers, finance support workers, the Living Well team and our chaplaincy team - I still run a seated exercise class for patients myself. These days, the pandemic means it happens via Facebook Live, but that's ok: what's important is that it's still happening. Our attendees say they get so much out of it that I couldn't imagine ever giving it up - it's so rewarding.

And in fact, we've seen greater numbers of people utilise the class virtually than we did when we met physically. It's just one of the ways in which we're helping our patients and their families – and the **ellenor** team - rise to the additional challenges that Covid has thrown at them.”

Andrew says the ethos of **ellenor** Wellbeing has always been about being proactive rather than reactive: “We have an essential question we ask every patient: ‘What matters to you? What do you want to achieve?’ Sometimes the answer will be something physical – greater mobility, for instance – sometimes it's practical: to get their finances in order. And sometimes the goal is spiritual: to be more at peace with themselves as the end of their life approaches. In this case the support may come from our chaplaincy team, who handle spirituality in all its dimensions. In encouraging our patients to discuss their wants and needs, it's ultimately about helping them to take as much control of situations as they can.”

In his own work as a physio, Andrew knows just what a difference simple ‘tools’ can make in improving someone's quality of life. “For example, I do a lot of work with breathlessness,” he explains. “It's a vicious cycle for patients: breathing is hard, you panic, you can't breathe. Sometimes, the cycle will become so extreme that you end up in hospital. But there are techniques that I can share with patients and their carers so that they know how to break that cycle – and once they do, it's incredibly empowering. It makes a world of difference to how they're feeling physically, and to how they feel about their own sense of control.”

And it's not just patients and their families who benefit from **ellenor**'s empowering approach. Says Andrew, “We apply the same idea to our own working patterns. Though our roles within the Wellbeing team are different, we are all health-care professionals and we all know that our patients are at the heart of everything we do. This means that, when it comes to certain tasks, there really isn't much delineation between what we will and won't handle: “that's not my job” isn't something you'll hear said much around **ellenor**! What you might hear, though, is someone saying, ‘If I can't help you, there'll be someone on the team who can.”

Times have been especially challenging for everyone because of the pandemic – and the Wellbeing team have needed to find new ways of reaching out to patients, whether by visiting them at home, regular phone calls or Zoom sessions. “We've supported one-another, too, with Zoom

wellbeing and counselling sessions available and by taking time to ‘check in’ with each other and scheduling regular cuppas where we meet to find out how we’re doing away from work. Sometimes we’ll just chat about our kids or what we’ve been watching on TV, but it’s really important to have a bit of relaxed down-time together - especially when there’s so much going on.”

The team have also forged even stronger bonds with outside agencies, turning to them if required for additional patient support, and providing their own expertise to the wider community as necessary. Says Andrew, “The pandemic has only strengthened the sense of community that **ellenor** has always embodied. We’re there for each other, for those in the wider area who might need our insight and expertise but first, foremost and always for our patients and their families.”

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.

Contacts



Basia Wilson

Press Contact

PR Manager

basia.wilson@ellenor.org

01474320007

07932601517