



Trustee Shaminder Singh Bedi

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Trustee Shaminder Singh Bedi embraces Kent's rich culture

Building relationships within his community has been part of everyday life for Shaminder Singh Bedi since the age of 11. Life's lessons and challenges coupled with his important work for Social Services make him perfect for his role as trustee for our charity..

Arriving in Gravesend from India in 1965, knowing only a few words of English, Shammi was quick to pick up the language and to forge friendships with families from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. His main aim as trustee is to build links between these groups, and to encourage younger people to get

involved.

The married father and grandfather's gift for interacting with people of all social and cultural backgrounds and ages was inherited from his father.

He says: "India has a strong caste system, but he believed in equality. Of course, we all have different behaviours and opinions, but we are all one as human beings."

Shammi's community work brought him into contact with the charity over many years, so he was delighted to be invited to become a trustee just over a year ago.

He says: "It is a charity that is definitely part of the community. **ellenor** makes life manageable for people from all walks of life. Everyone is so kind and gentle, and no one is opinionated. I have learned that you don't go there to die, you go there to live."

"The charity cares and supports patients and their families facing life limiting illness across Kent and the London Borough of Bexley. It has inpatient and outpatient and Living Well services at Northfleet, a comprehensive Hospice at Home services and a range of outpatient and community services, all supported and delivered through a multi-disciplinary team".

Shammi, a respected drummer and member of the Jugnu Bhangra group in his younger days, is keen to spearhead some multi-cultural music and dance events in aid of the charity.

He says: "I've always been impressed by the quality time **ellenor** gives to its patients and their families, and the devotion of everyone involved. Once Covid restrictions are relaxed, I'd also like to spend some time in each area of the charity -- on the ward, in the hospice, in the shops -- to really get to know the people who work and volunteer there."

Shammi enjoyed a long career as a community development officer with Kent Social Services. His ability to relate to people from his own Sikh community as well as a huge variety of other faiths and backgrounds made him the ideal ambassador for community relations.

He says: “My job was to get different minority groups to socialise. We set up numerous projects including day centres and music therapy -- involving about 20 nationalities, including people from Afro Caribbean, Chinese and Muslim backgrounds.”

A member of the police liaison committee and mental health charity Mind, Shammi was so successful in his role that in 2005 he was awarded an MBE by the Queen.

He says: “Community is in my blood. It all started when I first arrived here when I was nearly 11. I learned to speak the language within about three weeks, all credit to some friendly children in our street. From 1965 more families were arriving from India and other nations. I soon started translating for people and helping them.”

Shammi joined the Gurdwara in Gravesend 56 years ago, when it was a two-up, two-down meeting place for the Sikh community. Now a large, magnificent temple, it is a place of worship and learning, and its members are well known for their good deeds in the community.

They regularly produce 500 or more meals each day, delivered to hospitals, vaccination centres, care homes and individuals. Recently they delivered warm, homemade samosas to our staff in memory of Shammi’s friend Slim Mijjer, who lost his life to Covid. More than £5,000 has already been raised in Slim’s memory, which will be donated to the charity.

Shammi says: “I am trying to make sure **ellenor** is at the forefront of everyone’s minds, for people to think of **ellenor** when they are fundraising or collecting donations in someone’s memory. And I want to include all of the community.”

Shammi and his Hindu wife Pinki understand the challenges of caring for a family member with a serious illness. He took early retirement after eldest daughter Anita, who has suffered from mild learning difficulties all her life, developed more complex problems and needed extra care.

“It is true that there is still sometimes stigma attached to asking other people to help. I always remember feeling so guilty when we eventually said yes to some respite care, because we felt looking after Anita was our job. In fact, she

enjoyed the experience so much that afterwards we felt guilty that we hadn't involved other people sooner!

“Everyone wants to be independent, but sometimes you do have to accept help from others. You shouldn't feel guilty about reaching out. Just letting another carer in doesn't mean that you can't care for your loved one or that you don't love them enough.”

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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