

Art therapy in hospices: examples in practice



There are approximately 2,800 registered art therapists in the UK. This is a small selection of examples of how art therapists are working in hospices, including:

1. supporting families
2. care in the community
3. improving access & tackling health inequalities
4. supporting staff
5. community building

Looking to find out more information about art therapy in hospices?

[Read our briefing](#)

**This
is art
therapy**

Supporting families

St Joseph's Hospice: The Elephant Kit

The Elephant Kit is a therapeutic resource for families navigating palliative and hospice care. Offered free to families of St Joseph's Hospice patients and to bereaved children and young people, it was originally developed with cancer education specialists *Fruitfly Collective*.

Grounded in art therapy principles, the kit supports earlier conversations about death and dying using tools that are creative, child-friendly and easy to engage with.

Art therapists have led the project from the start. Embedded in the psychological therapies service, they continue to shape the kit and deliver training across the multidisciplinary team—building confidence to support children and young people through grief.



The kit is also a community effort. Local sewing groups stitch the elephant mascot 'Snorky' and teens paint peg dolls for preschoolers.

"It really helped him understand what is happening to grandma. That she's going to die. He loved playing with the little peg people, and I thought the book on answering questions about death was very clear."

Service user

Keech Hospice

The group at Keech Hospice provides a safe, supportive, and confidential space for mothers who are caring for children with life-limiting conditions.

The group offers emotional relief, peer support, and a creative outlet, helping to reduce isolation and build resilience during an extremely challenging time.

'It has been great to meet other parents and talk about our feelings openly with no judgement, and to find common ground. Doing art at the same time makes it easier to speak honestly and feel relaxed.'

Service user

Create: East Anglia's Children's Hospices

Create is an online art group for parents and carers, run by East Anglia's Children's Hospices.

Parents and carers meet online with an art therapist. They are offered suggestions to make artwork, in a non-pressured and non-judgmental way.

'Create allows you to be confident and free, to be able to mention those things that, sometimes are really hard for other people outside of this, to understand.'

Service user





"Not sure that my artwork was up to much, but it really did help me to think about, recall and articulate my feelings"

Service user, Dads Cry Too

Left: artwork by service user from Keech Hospice

Care in the community

Keech Hospice

Keech Hospice Care has an ongoing commitment to supporting the wider community and addressing complex needs through creative, therapeutic approaches.

The projects at the hospice:

- respond to unmet emotional and psychosocial needs
- move care beyond the traditional clinical setting into the community and creative spaces.
- are rooted in co-production, relational care, and trauma-informed practice.

Examples from the programme include:

- **Wellbeing Programme** in the community for adult palliative patients, where professionals from across the hospice, including art therapists, support patients with symptom management and wellbeing activities.
- **Buddies' Carers Group** - monthly sessions for those providing long-term care to loved ones.
- **Dads Cry Too** - a bereavement support group specifically for fathers who have lost a child.

Royal Trinity Hospices

Royal Trinity Hospice offer art therapy group and open studio for community patients, as well as for their in-patients.

There are also individual art therapy sessions for both community and in-patients, and for bereaved families.

The hospice also runs drop-in art therapy sessions for inpatients, their family members, carers and health professionals.



Improving access & tackling health inequalities

No Barriers Here

No Barriers Here is a unique and innovative approach to advance care planning for people with learning disabilities.

No Barriers Here was co-produced by people with learning disabilities and explored the use of art-making to create and support conversations about death and dying, discovering what matters most to people at the end of life.

Gently guided through four distinctive workshops, participants shared their narratives using arts-based methods such as collage, textiles and weaving to shape creative, distinctive and truly personalised advance care plans.



"I'm happy that people know what I want to happen when I die"

Service user

"No Barriers Here unapologetically shines the light on the issue for those of us from minoritized groups. It is not us that are hard to reach, it is the barriers that need dismantling."

Dr Jamilla Hussain, Palliative Medicine Doctor and Research Fellow

Harlington Hospice: neurodiversity & grief

Harlington Hospice's Child and Adolescent Bereavement Service supports children and young people aged 4 to 17 and their families in the London Borough of Hillingdon. Its project, Neurodiversity and Grief, offers individual and family art psychotherapy, parent support groups, and service evaluation for neurodivergent children before and after bereavement.

The project is addressing gaps in bereavement services for neurodivergent children by adapting therapy environments and interventions to be neuroinclusive.

The team have developed neuro affirmative competencies and a whole family approach, with particular attention to families from diverse ethnic backgrounds.



'My son is more of himself, enjoying things and talking about his feelings. He understands things better now.'

Service user

'My daughter is now more freely speaking about her Nan at home. Even on Mother's Day we spoke about her not being here. Earlier she was worried about upsetting me, but now having this space where we spoke and made artwork about her has helped her'

Service user

Supporting staff

Keech Hospice

An innovative internal programme at Keech Hospice supports staff wellbeing and team cohesion by offering a dedicated space to reflect on grief, loss, and emotional impact encountered in their roles.

Unlike traditional supervision models, the group brings both professional and client perspectives into the space using the bio psychosocial model, encouraging reflection on organisational dynamics, unconscious processes, and the importance of self-care and preventing burnout. Art materials are used to support non-verbal processing and deeper insight.

"It was very thought provoking but at the same time calming...I am not artistic/creative and I felt some nervousness however the art therapist created a safe space where I did not feel conspicuous, or open to ridicule for my art creation in reflective practice. It was a very therapeutic experience for me."

Lynne, staff member, Keech Hospice

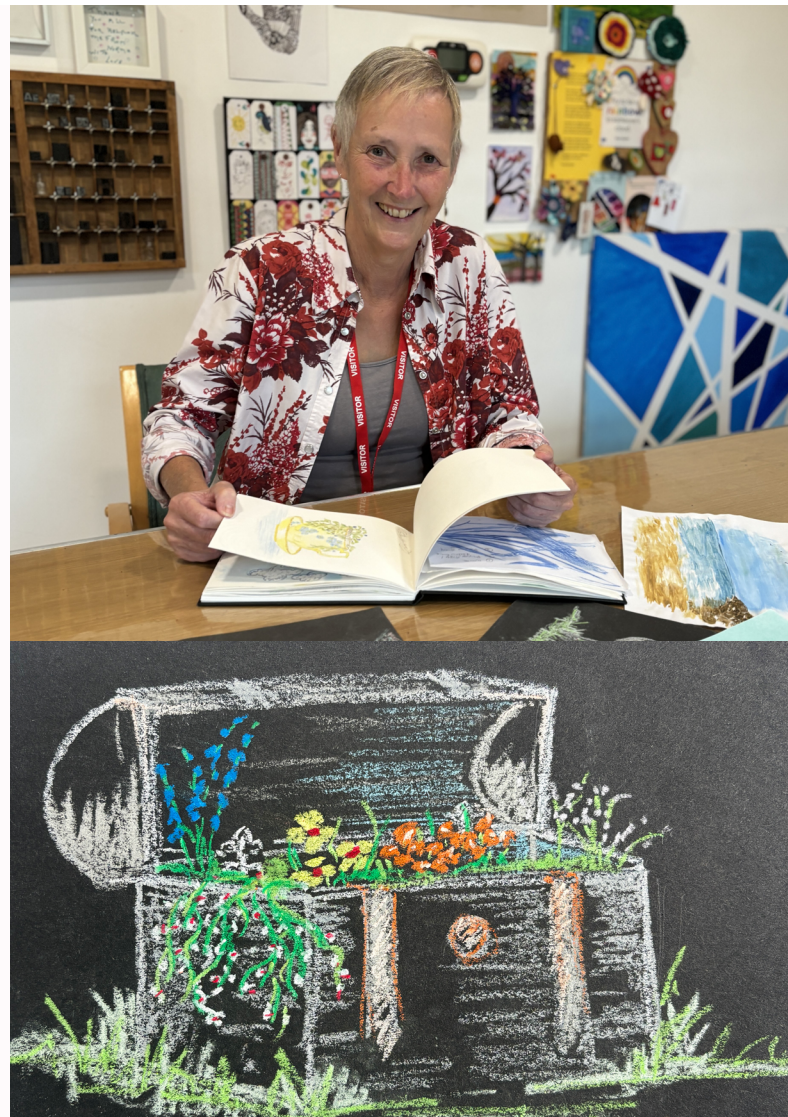
Community building

Severn Hospice

Severn Hospice celebrated the power and therapeutic benefits of art at its first ever public exhibition. Supporters and art-lovers were invited to Journeys Through Art, an exhibition inspired by how exploring emotions and expressing feelings through art media can be especially helpful after being diagnosed with a life-limiting illness.

"Inviting the community to this fantastic space is a great way for us to share this aspect of our caring services and help break down barriers about hospices and hospice buildings."

Becky Richardson, Director of Care, Severn Hospice



Top: Wendy Brookfield, service user & artist featured in Severn Hospice's exhibition;
Bottom: Treasure Chest, artwork by Wendy Brookfield