



Transformation of the Complementary Therapy Service at St Richard's Hospice

The Covid-19 pandemic meant the Complementary Therapy services offered to patients and carers by St Richard's Hospice could no longer safely continue face-to-face.

However, the Complementary Therapy Team devised a variety of creative ways to continue providing its services virtually through the pandemic. This helped ensure patients and their loved ones remained supported at what was often a very difficult, and challenging time.

What were our challenges and solutions?

"The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new" – Socrates

Before the pandemic, aromatherapy massage and reflexology treatments were the most popular therapies.

During the pandemic, there was a positive shift away from hands-on to talking therapies.

We could reach out to patients who ordinarily may not come into the hospice, perhaps due to transport issues, poor mobility, or even the stigma attached to the word 'hospice'.

We encountered some challenges when moving from in-person support to virtual therapies. However, for every problem there was always a solution.

- Volunteer therapists could not come into the hospice, so we set up online access for them to provide virtual treatments from home.
- If patients did not have internet access for video calling, we ensured they received a relaxation therapy treatment by telephone, an essential oil aroma stick, and a relaxation CD was posted to them.
- If patients were unable to do self-massage, we enlisted the help of their carer or family member to provide the hands-on massage under the direction of a qualified complementary therapist with great effect.

Our statistics show a drop in the number of treatments in 2020, compared to 2019, due to challenges posed by the pandemic. However, the number of treatments delivered in the same period this year has risen dramatically. This is due to the innovation and creativity of our team. We are very proud of what we have achieved during a difficult time.



- January 2019 to May 2019 – 321 treatments
- January 2020 to May 2020 – 139 treatments
- January 2021 to May 2021 – 243 treatments

What changed, and how did it make a difference?

- Face-to-face changed to virtual therapies
- High quality treatments continued
- Service was popular during lockdown
- Adapted to hybrid model of care: a mix of in-person and virtual therapies
- The team is supporting more people
- Therapeutic support is ongoing



What virtual services do the Complementary Therapy Team offer?



What feedback did we receive?

"Thank you to all the staff from the Complementary Therapy Team... the treatments helped me to relax and soothe me... I would recommend it to everyone"

"The offer of HEARTS therapy was an oasis of peace"

"They have helped me greatly in dealing with my anxiety and muscle tension. I will be forever grateful for the support; help and care I was given"

"I have learnt a number of strategies and techniques to help me relax"

Conclusion

The Complementary Therapy Team intend to provide a hybrid model of care in the future with virtual therapy treatments alongside face to face support for patients, carers and bereaved people.

This will enable us to support a wider spectrum of people in south Worcestershire.

Poster author

Liesl Hopkins
Complementary Therapist
lhopkins@strichards.org.uk

