

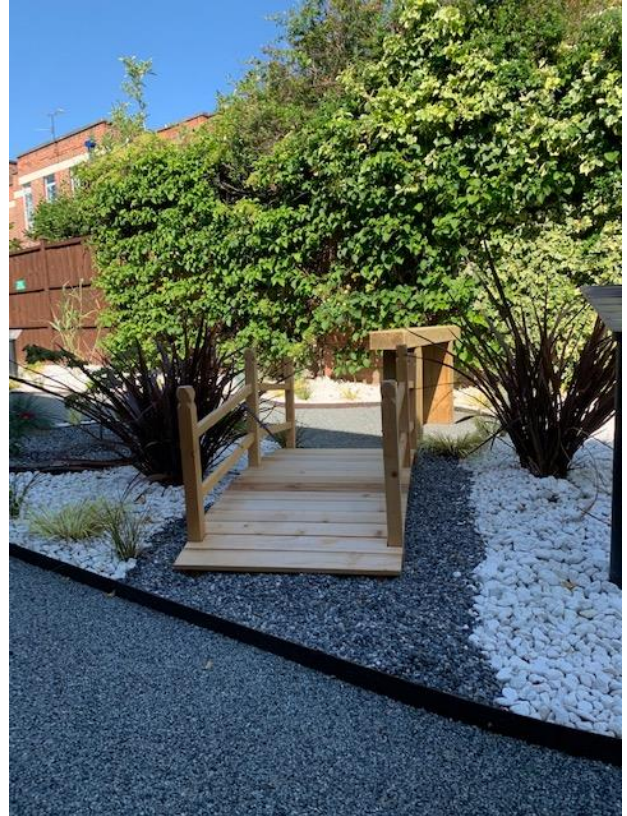
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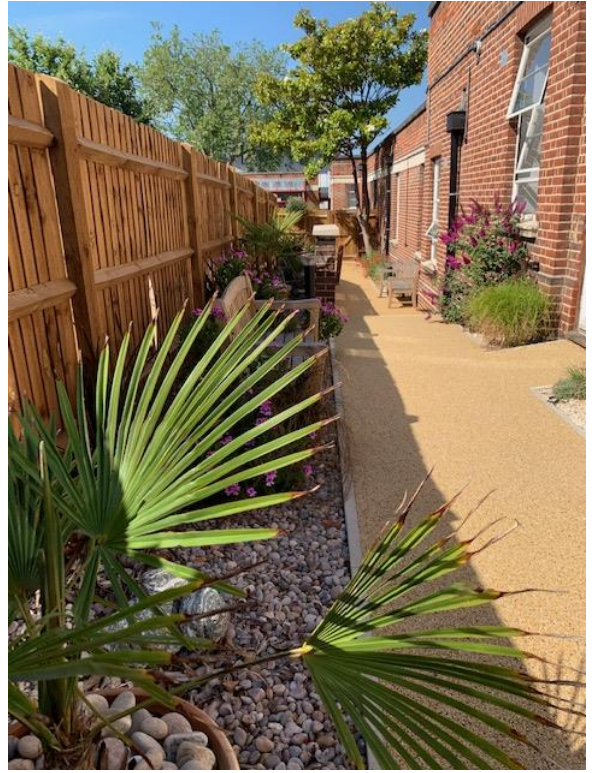
## Transformation of the Margaret Centre garden at Whipps Cross

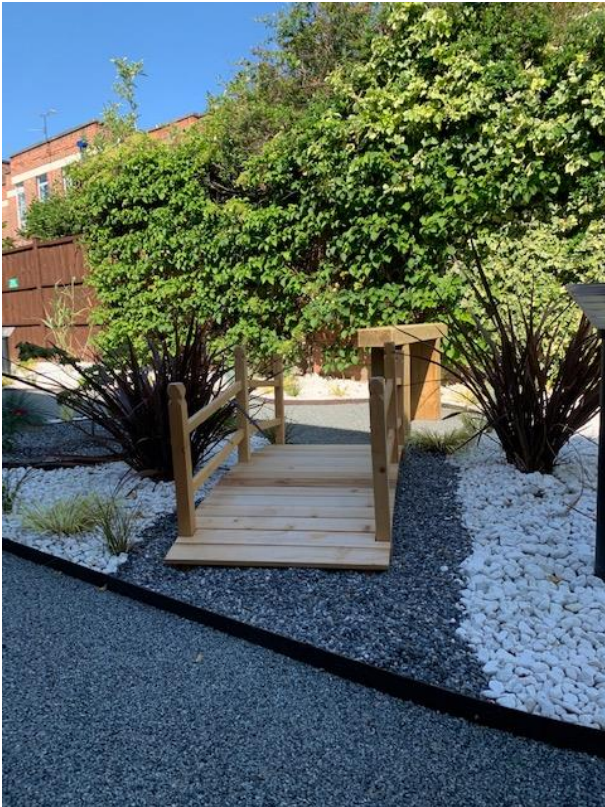
Posted Friday, 21 August 2020 by Ashley Bridge

**The Margaret Centre is a specialist palliative care unit at Whipps Cross Hospital for patients who are coming to the end of their life or have a life-limiting disease.**

**Thanks to donations from Barts Charity, the Margaret Centre garden has undergone a huge transformation in order to improve the wellbeing of its patients, their families and the staff. Once a car park overlooked by the patients' rooms, it's now a space to be enjoyed by everyone. We spoke to Lizi Oni, Community Palliative Care Nurse to find out about her experience working with the community team based at the Centre.**







The staff at the Margaret Centre recognised the value of having a beautiful garden and wanted to renovate the surrounding space for everyone who visits. Research shows that those with access to beautiful green spaces are less likely to experience physical pain, and there are hopes that the garden renovation will improve staff experience working at the Centre.

The garden at the Margaret Centre has been developed with the patients in mind, including putting ramps in place, and even the smells have been considered, with lavender planted throughout. There are different areas of the garden, including a Japanese area and a woodland area, all with different plants, colours and smells.

Now that the garden has been renovated, it also allows for complementary therapies to take place outside, when the weather permits, including massages.

Not only are the patients able to use the space, but the renovated garden has given a place for the staff to spend time as well, allowing them to reflect on their work and take time away if they need it.

Now that the garden renovation is complete, it will be maintained by volunteers to ensure that it remains the beautiful oasis that it's become. Watch the [Barts Charity video](#) where ward manager, Knut Sanghajt talks about what the garden will mean for patients.

### ***What does a usual day look like at the Centre?***

The 12-bedded inpatient unit provides 24 hour specialised palliative and end of life care. It's also where we, the community palliative care team for Waltham Forest, and the Whipps Cross Hospital palliative team offices are based. Also in the building are

the palliative education and practice development team - with purpose built teaching/meeting rooms, and the complementary therapy service office. Palliative care services here are led by consultants Dr Elisabeth Bjorndal and Dr Chris Farham.

***How does the Centre contribute to patient care?***

Having a specialist unit means palliative needs can be prioritised in a more efficient and sensitive way. It is the only end-of-life care facility for the residents of Waltham Forest. In my experience, it's great at providing patients and their families with additional support when things get too complex to manage at home for whatever reason.

***What is unique about the Margaret Centre?***

Here since 1987 at the start of the modern hospice movement – the Margaret Centre offers the unique combination of having the caring environment of a hospice, with access to specialist hospital facilities where appropriate.

***What lessons did you learn through the Covid-19 peak about the priorities and value of palliative care and the way its delivered?***

The importance of individualised care, personal touches and human connection. With families being unable to be with each other during the lockdown, staff have had to be inventive about how to provide patients with that sense of connection. A holistic approach has always been a big factor of palliative care, but its importance has been highlighted all the more.

***What education programmes are run at the Centre?***

The education team provide teaching basic palliative symptom control to health care professionals from across different specialities, as well as care after death and breaking bad news. There have also been teaching events for health professionals from other trusts and services involved in end of life care.

***What's next for the Margaret Centre?***

I imagine we'll all continue to provide specialist inpatient, community and hospital palliative care and be ready to adapt and develop with the changing shape and needs of the hospital and community.

***Anything else you would like to mention?***

We'd like to record some of the stories and memories of the Margaret Centre from the past 33 years, if anyone has anything to contribute, please [email Lizi](#).