



[whipps.cross.campaign@gmail.com](mailto:whipps.cross.campaign@gmail.com)

Alwen Williams, Group Chief Executive Barts Health NHS Trust  
Ian Peters, Chair Barts Health NHS Trust  
Heather Noble, Medical Director Whipps Cross Hospital  
Alastair Finney, Director Whipps Cross Redevelopment  
Alan Gurney, Chief Executive Whipps Cross Hospital

19/12/2020

**Reproviding the Specialist Palliative Care Unit (the Margaret Centre) within the new  
Whipps Cross Hospital**

Dear Alwen, Ian, Heather, Alan and Alastair,

We are writing to ask that the Margaret Centre be reprovided in full as a Specialist Palliative Care Unit within the Whipps Cross Hospital Redevelopment. This call is coming from across our communities and as you will be aware has been raised from many quarters in the public consultations and engagement. A key response given at these meetings, that more people want to die at home, indicates that the service provided by the Unit is perhaps not fully understood by Barts Health Trust.

For 34 years The Margaret Centre has provided outstanding care for people who are dying and support for those close to them. From its inception\* the model of care has been designed to enable people to die at home, to stay at home for as long as possible, or to come into the centre for their last days where needed or it is the patients wish. Also to outreach across the hospital to provide palliative care support.

No comparable service exist for the populations of Waltham Forest and much of Redbridge.

The Margaret Centre provides holistic care with a multi-disciplinary team working across the community and inpatient setting. Care is therefore seamless. If someone does need admission to the unit for end of life care, they are amongst staff who know them and the family, in surroundings that are more calm and homely than clinical, but with the highest clinical expertise.

Community palliative care nurses, Occupational Therapy assessment and treatment, and provision of equipment and support, enable people both to die at home, and to remain independent and involved in their life for as long as possible. “ ..to live, for as long as they are alive”.

Admissions for symptom assessment and management, and planned respite admissions are also crucial in enabling people to continue being cared for at home. So sufficient beds within the unit have to be available to meet that need when it is needed. Timeliness is fundamental as time is something these patients do not have.

For some patients end of life care will not be appropriate or possible at home, either because the families cannot cope with this, the person is alone, or their clinical condition predicts a traumatic and difficult death.

The Margaret Centre functions through close multi-disciplinary team working, and decisions made in careful discussion with patients and their family.

Psychological Support Services are provided including specialist support through Zig Zag for children facing bereavement. The family and the patient are supported and helped to prepare before the death, and then supported following bereavement. Complementary therapies are part of the unit, provided in rooms with beautiful and calming décor, for patients, and also for their family carers suffering symptoms as a result of their care role such as sleeplessness, anxiety and muscle tension.

Six beds on a ward somewhere in the new hospital, earmarked for palliative care will not reprovide this Unit.

The Facilities: The Margaret Centre is an 11 bedded unit with rooms for therapies and counselling, a kitchen and day / rest room for families and patients' use, office base for unit and community specialist staff, education centre, and three garden spaces recently refurbished with charity money raised by the community.

Till a few years ago a Day Care service was provided, lost in a previous round of financial cuts and the purpose-built space used now as a Medical day unit for the Hospital.

Action4Whipps is calling for these services to be reprovided within the new hospital development. They need to be integrated in a specialist palliative care unit, with its own identity and ethos, distinct from the busy acute wards. It does not need to be in a separate building.

Discussion with the Margaret Centre staff would be needed to identify the details of the facility that would be required, but we are calling for this to include as a minimum sufficient beds to enable admissions at the time they are needed, sufficient rooms for therapies and counselling, a families' day room and kitchen, facilities for relatives to stay overnight with their loved ones, direct access to gardens, and offices for the unit and community based staff and meeting rooms.

Access to a patio from patient rooms so their bed can be taken outside has long been a dream of the staff, not possible in the current building. Ryder Architecture designed palliative care rooms with just such a facility in Dumfries and Galloway Hospital. We deserve this here for as many of the patient rooms as possible. The aspect (orientation) of the unit

should be given careful consideration, for example south west facing will have the benefit of more light, sun, and uplifting views.

Charity funding: The newer half of the Margaret Centre including the day and therapy rooms was built with £1.17 million raised by the people of Waltham Forest and Redbridge for that purpose. Donations to the centre continue to be significant, and funded the recent garden development. This places on the Trust, we believe, an additional obligation towards the community to reprovide this facility.

The service the Margaret Centre provides not only ensures that a patient at the end of their life receives the most dignified, skilled, human centred care, but also that those left behind are supported by the quality of their experience at that time, and by specialist psychological support provided. The positive impact on the health and wellbeing of countless people in our community, on-going through their life, therefore cannot be under estimated, and must be continued.

\*Dr Martyn Partridge, Whipps Cross Chest physician who led the setting up of the Margaret Centre said at the time of its opening “This will be a service based at the centre of our community”. “We will be acting as a support team for the GPs and District Nurses so that people will have to spend as little time as possible in hospital” “the vast majority of our patients will be where they want to be, at home with their families” Yellow Advertiser 24<sup>th</sup> April, 1987

We look forward to hearing from you and how this issue can be taken forward.

Action4Whipps

Cc

Deborah Madden, Strategy Whipps Cross Redevelopment  
MPs for Whipps Cross Hospital catchment area