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HOSPICE NEIGHBOURSEmma Page *St Nicholas Hospice, Suffolk, UK*

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Everyone needs good neighbours – developing a Hospice Neighbours Scheme

Introduction This is an innovative, volunteer-led scheme created to help people (and their families) who are coming to the end of their lives with practical everyday tasks as well as support in the last days of life.

Aims To provide practical support to these people, this can include collecting prescriptions, taking the dog for a walk or simply providing companionship.

Hospice Neighbours will enable support earlier in diagnosis, no matter what this is. It will be more proactive way of working, relieving pressure in the earlier stages of illness which will help make later stages easier. This will ease demands on both hospice services and other care agencies.

Methods employed so far have been to:

- ▶ Recruit, train and develop teams of neighbours
- ▶ Recruit a volunteer coordinator responsible for assessing patient's needs and matching them to a neighbour.
- ▶ Record all neighbour activity and obtain feedback from the service users.

Results so far Some requests for someone to help with:

Walking, to help regain their confidence post chemotherapy treatment. A Hospice Neighbour now visits fortnightly to provide companionship.

Gardening, which due to illness he is no longer able to tend. A Hospice Neighbour visited regularly to help with shopping and to keep the garden tidy.

Daily tasks as cancer affected his right arm. A Hospice Neighbour visited weekly to help with cleaning and writing letters.

Discussion and conclusion Early indication from the pilot areas is that the scheme has potential to make a significant difference to patients and families in local communities. As it became an integral part of hospice community service it will helped to extend choice for those who would prefer to stay at home.