

Autumn 2025

# We are Demelza

All the latest news from Demelza





# Welcome to We are Demelza

Demelza provides extraordinary care to extraordinary children.

This year, we introduced a new model of care, created a new distribution hub for our charity shops, launched a magical art and story trail across Tunbridge Wells and had some of our most successful fundraising campaigns and events ever.

We supported 842 children with serious or life-limiting conditions and their families, delivering 570 day care sessions, 1,521 care at home short breaks, 642 counselling sessions and over 700 creative therapy sessions.

As a charity, we rely on our local communities, receiving 84% of our funding from our supporters, therefore none of this would have been possible without you. But we still need your help to keep on providing support to children with serious or life-limiting conditions now and in the future.

**Read on to find out more.**

## Our new Circles of Care

Earlier this year we carried out a full review of Demelza's services and how we deliver them.

Over the last 27 years, the number of families needing our support has increased, with the clinical and social needs of these families changing significantly.

Following a detailed clinical and social review, we introduced Circles of Care, a new model of care based on individual need, ensuring the services we offer are equitable, meaningful, reliable, safe and well-resourced.

Demelza is continuing to work closely with all families following the announcement in March and the implementation of the new service model in August.

**Family  
Services**

**Specialist  
Short Breaks**

**Specialist  
Nursing Care**



## Charity shops

The donations we receive through our network of charity shops help to ensure that we can continue to provide support to families when they need us most.

### Distribution centre opens in Larkfield

Demelza has opened a new distribution centre and one of its largest shops in Larkfield.

Open seven days a week, visitors will find a treasure trove of goods on offer, including furniture, homeware, clothing, toys, media and more.

### Rochester shop links with MidKent College on unique upcycling project

Demelza's Rochester shop teamed up with MidKent College students on a unique upcycling project for donated denim clothing.

Students at the college's Medway campus created their own bespoke designs on denim clothes which had been donated to the shop. These were then resold to raise funds.

Rochester Shop Manager Rachel O'Neill said: "This project takes sustainable charity shopping to a whole new level, raising even more money than we would from selling a plain piece of clothing and customers get a one-of-a-kind piece."

### Did you know?

**You can Gift Aid your donations to our shops!**  
Last year Demelza received over £280,000 thanks to people allowing us to claim Gift Aid on their donations. Find out how you can do this next time you visit one of our shops.

Customers:  
**644,310**

Total retail  
income:  
**£4,493,081**

Items sold:  
**1,185,148**





# Fundraising

Your support makes everything we do possible. This year our fundraising and events have been some of our most successful ever and it's all thanks to you.

## 'This Christmas has to be extraordinary'

In our 2024 Christmas campaign, Jude's family shared the importance of making every moment of every day matter. Throughout the campaign, 945 of you donated a fantastic £62,206! We cannot thank you enough for your generosity, helping hundreds of families make memories that will last forever.

We're launching our Christmas 2025 campaign very soon – watch this space!

## You doubled your impact

The kindness of the Freddie Green and Family Charitable Foundation and the Kenora Charitable Foundation meant every donation we received in our Spring Appeal was doubled.

The campaign featured Daisy and her family and raised more than £181,500 from almost 700 donations.

**We would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who supported us.**

**945**

of you donated a fantastic **£62,206** making it one of our most successful appeals to date.



You can meet Daisy and her family here



## Some of our 2025 events in numbers...

**Paris Marathon:**  
13 runners raised  
**£19.3k**

**Bubble Rush Maidstone:**  
2,050 people raised  
**£63.9k**

**Bubble Rush Birchington:**  
650 people raised  
**£19.2k**

**Bubble Rush Eltham:**  
1,050 people raised  
**£32k**

**London Marathon:**  
48 runners raised  
**£126k**

**Skydive Day in May:**  
5 skydivers raised  
**£10.7k**

# A magical art and story trail

**Trail with a Tale, launched in partnership with Wild in Art, was an enchanting addition to Tunbridge Wells this summer.**

Over 35 hares, snails, owls, tortoises and benches were painted by artists, local schools and community groups, and dotted around town for families to find and enjoy. Each large sculpture also had an original tale specially written by local author Alex Brooks.

## Still time to join in

If you missed out on the trail or you don't want the magic to end – there's still a chance to get involved! We are auctioning off the sculptures to raise vital funds for Demelza – place your pre-bid online by Monday 29 September and book your tickets to join us for a live auction on Tuesday 30 September.

## Win the unique Gold-Hearted Hare

You can enter our prize draw to win a beautiful hare sculpture designed by artist Kerrie Kent! It's just £2 a ticket, but be quick – the prize draw closes on Tuesday 30 September.



Read the tales from the Trail



Attend the auction



**WIN!**

this Gold-Hearted Hare





# Specialist care

Our specialist nursing and care teams provide expert care to children facing serious or life-limiting conditions, and are here every day and every night, all year round.

## Meet Amelia, who shares what it's like to provide care at Demelza.

"I manage the care at home service – we provide short breaks for children in their homes, and we also provide end of life and post-death care for families whose preference is to be at home at that time. One day is never the same as the next at Demelza – that's what keeps it interesting.

The obvious challenge is that our job can be quite emotionally challenging at times, but that's also the part of the job that can be the most rewarding. You're working really closely with families during this really difficult time, and you feel privileged to be able to support them. But then you get those moments where we're making memories and the really joyful things that we get to do – that balances it all out."



Amelia

## Introducing Sara Forsyth, Lead Nurse at Demelza Kent.

Sara took up the role of Lead Nurse this summer, bringing 19 years of paediatric nursing experience. We asked Sara some questions to get to know her...

### *What inspired you to work in the children's palliative care sector?*

I was inspired to work in palliative care as it is a unique type of care and very rewarding to be able to make a difference in someone's life.

### *What do you love most about working at Demelza?*

The care Demelza provides is truly amazing. Being able to give this type of support to children and their families when they need it most is a privilege.

*How do you tackle misconceptions around hospices and hospice care?* This can be a difficult area for people to discuss and understand. I find being open, honest and educating others on the work we do and the care we provide is the best way.

### *What's the best advice you've ever received?*

Be present and visible for others – whether that's the children and families we support or the colleagues we work with.



Sara

# Creative therapies

Our team of creative therapists support families to explore their emotions in ways that don't require words.

Children with complex conditions often have their own unique ways of experiencing the world, so creativity gives them the opportunity to express themselves. We also support siblings, who find that creative activities help them communicate when they don't have the words for what they are going through.

"Even as adults, to talk about our feelings is hard, and so to expect children to be able to do something that adults struggle with, it's a lot.

We encounter children experiencing loss in many ways, it's not just death. The children we support, a lot of them have lost their cognitive skills, their health, their social circle, their school – there are many different forms of loss.

**It's an honour to be able to help children to explore their feelings and it's a privilege to support them through these massive life challenges."**

Victoria Swan, Creative Therapies Lead



Victoria



## Jemima's journey

Music therapy can be a light in the dark for many families.

**"For my husband and I, music therapy was the only time in the week when we could spend time with our daughter doing something just for our enjoyment and we were protected from interruption for procedures or medical updates."**

Find out how music gave Jemima and her parents hope after Jemima was born prematurely





# Volunteers

We couldn't be there for families without the extraordinary hard work of our volunteers, whether they are running our shops, supporting families or taking care of our hospices.

Some of our volunteers have been with us from the very beginning, and this Volunteers' Week, two of our longest serving volunteers were recognised for their service.

Gina Medlen and Lesley Steer have been supporting Demelza for over 30 years. After seeing a leaflet about the need to raise funds for a hospice to be built in Sittingbourne back in 1994, the pair formed the Erith Friends Group to fundraise for the charity.

Lesley, 73, said: "Seeing what Demelza has done for children and families does make me feel proud to be part of it. It doesn't seem like it's been 30 years."

Gina, 69, said: "We watched the first bricks being laid in Sittingbourne which felt amazing and to then see it actually open to the children was fantastic and well worth all our efforts. I do feel proud to have been involved in such an amazing cause."

## Could you help us raise vital funds for extraordinary children?

We are recruiting for fundraising volunteers! Fundraising is crucial for us, and our charity fundraising volunteers help us boost donations. From helping with collection pots or supporting our events - if you enjoy working with the public and have a passion for our cause, we'd love you to volunteer for Demelza.

Join our team here



# Demelza Lottery

Play the Demelza Lottery for your chance to win prizes while supporting children and families in your local community.

Win up to  
£25,000!

**"When you give to an organisation like Demelza you do it because you want to make a difference, you don't expect to have a massive difference made to you!"**

*Mrs F, Lottery Superdraw winner*

Join our lottery here



# Leave a gift in your will

Making a will is one of the most important ways you can provide for your family and loved ones after you die. It is also an opportunity to leave a donation that has an extraordinary impact for generations to come.

No matter how big or small, your gift could help Demelza provide high quality care and support that wraps around every family, wherever and whenever it is needed.

We've teamed up with a free will-writing service, which takes around 15 minutes to complete online. There is no obligation to leave a gift, but we hope you choose to.

If you have already included Demelza in your will or plan to do so, we would love to hear from you and have the chance to say thank you.

Contact Sarah Springett, Legacy Assistant, at [sarah.springett@demelza.org.uk](mailto:sarah.springett@demelza.org.uk) or call 01622 232055.

**"I decided to leave a gift to Demelza in my will because I am simply amazed at the wide range of support they provide to ensure children and families live as full a life as possible in difficult circumstances. I know my gift will be well spent and enjoyed by those who need it."**

*Rebecca, Demelza supporter*

Find out more here





# Spotlight on... transition

**Our transition team support young people aged 14– 24 and their families. With medical advancement meaning more children with complex conditions are living longer, we are evolving to meet the needs of this growing group of young people.**

"Our team offer support for young people and their families with the transition from child and adult services – there's so much involved in navigating it all, so much knowledge required that nobody tells you – that's why we're here."

**Paul Packman, Transition Navigator**



Paul

## Hear from two families who have found support and friendship through our transition service.

"I appreciate that numerically, maybe, Fenton is nearly an adult now, but actually nothing has changed. If anything, as he's got older, his needs have got more profound."

Through the group hydro sessions he's met one particular young lady, Ivy. When they got into the pool it was like a switch had been flicked. They realised they could be near each other; there was no wheelchair in the way. That was just beautiful to see. Because they weren't Fenton and Ivy, two disabled young people – they were just Fenton and Ivy.

Fenton's not even 18 yet, and the work they've put in to make sure everything's in place for that is incredible. I can only speak for myself, but most of us wouldn't know what to do without Paul and Claire. They'll show you the roads you can take,

and when you've chosen one, they'll walk down that road with you and make sure you have everything you need along the way."

**Sharon, Fenton's mum**



"Once a child reaches 18, everything just sort of falls off a cliff, there's nothing there. With Demelza, the support didn't totally end at 18, it's carrying on. We attend the transition days – it's a chance for us as parents to all get together, have a laugh, have a moan! And a great chance for Ivy to get together with her mates! Ivy has a friend called Fenton there. When they get in the pool, floating, their little faces just light up."

For me, the transition team is there on-call and they will drop everything to help and I'm really thankful because they have given me the support I need to get things moving for Ivy and her future."

**Ruth, Ivy's mum**

### Did you know?



Both Ivy and Fenton were part of the What Matters to Me project, aiming to give a voice to young people with complex needs. The project launched at the House of Commons in March.



# Coming soon...

Make special family moments at our events  
or take on one of our epic challenges!

## October

18 October 2025  
**Firewalk**



## November

22 and 23 November 2025  
**Elf Trail and Festive Market**



## December

9 December 2025  
**Celebration of Christmas Greenwich**

16 December 2025  
**Celebration of Christmas Canterbury**



## 2026

12 April 2026  
**Brighton Marathon**  
**Paris Half Marathon**  
**London Landmarks Half Marathon**

26 April 2026  
**London Marathon**

10 September 2026  
**Brussels to Demelza Bike Ride**

26 September 2026  
**Everest Base Camp trek**

3 October 2026  
**Indian Himalayan Trek**



**Sign up!**



To find out more and sign up visit:  
**[demelza.org.uk/events](https://demelza.org.uk/events)**

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