

December 2024

Dear Wes Streeting,

I am writing following my recent meeting with the Shakespeare Hospice in my constituency of Stratford-on-Avon to raise serious concerns about the funding challenges facing hospices.

The Shakespeare Hospice, like many others across the UK, provides outstanding care and invaluable support to patients and their families. However, it faces significant financial pressures due to inadequate and inconsistent funding models. This over-reliance on charitable donations places unsustainable strain on hospices, particularly as they are increasingly stepping in to alleviate pressure on overstretched NHS services.

Hospices such as the Shakespeare Hospice deliver essential services that not only improve quality of life for patients but also reduce demand on the NHS by:

- Providing complex care at home, preventing unnecessary hospital admissions.
- Supporting district nursing teams, especially during busy winter periods.
- Offering bereavement support and mental health services that would otherwise fall to already stretched NHS teams.

Despite their vital role, the fragmented system means hospices struggle to engage effectively with NHS Integrated Care Boards. They must match NHS salaries to retain skilled staff without the funding to do so, and they are often forced to redirect resources that should be focused on providing specialist care.

I urge you to act swiftly to address these challenges:

1. Ensure **fair and consistent funding** for hospices, reducing their over-reliance on charity.
2. Improve **coordination with the NHS**, particularly through Integrated Care Boards, to streamline communication and collaboration.
3. Increase investment in hospice services to reflect their critical role in reducing NHS pressures and improving patient outcomes.

The Shakespeare Hospice and other hospices across my constituency and the country offer a compassionate, community-based care that embody the values of our healthcare system. Their work is essential to helping people live well and die with dignity, but they cannot continue to operate effectively without the government's support.

Despite the vital role hospices like the Shakespeare Hospice play, their statutory funding is woefully inadequate. Currently, just 11% of the Shakespeare Hospice's £3 million operating costs come from government funding, equating to £330,000—a drop in the ocean compared to the value they deliver to the local health economy. This over-reliance on charitable donations is unsustainable, particularly as reserves are rapidly diminishing to cover operational costs rather than service improvements.

Hospices like the Shakespeare Hospice also face challenges engaging with NHS Integrated Care Boards (ICBs), navigating fragmented systems that hinder collaboration. They are forced to match NHS salaries to retain staff without the necessary funding to do so, all while absorbing rising costs, including energy, the national living wage, and nurse pay increases.

Hospices prevent hospital admissions, reduce bed-blocking, and provide services that relieve pressure on district nursing and mental health teams. Their value to the NHS and local communities cannot be overstated, yet their funding fails to reflect this contribution

I would be grateful if you could outline the actions your department is taking to address these pressing issues and ensure that hospices, such as the Shakespeare Hospice, receive the funding and recognition they so greatly deserve.

I look forward to your detailed response on how the government plans to tackle these challenges and provide the necessary support to secure the future of these vital services. I urge you to prioritise this matter and keep me informed of the specific measures being implemented to resolve these critical concerns.

Yours sincerely,

Manuela

Dr Manuela Perteghella MP

Member of Parliament for Stratford-on-Avon