

## Complementary Therapy Service for Palliative Care Patients and Carers in East Lothian

### Background to the service

The East Lothian Palliative Care Team (ELPCT) focusses on enhancing the quality of life for patients and their families facing the problems associated with any life-limiting illness. It achieves this by preventing and alleviating suffering through early identification, thorough assessment, and careful management of pain and other physical, psychosocial, and spiritual issues.

NHS Lothian Charity funds a Complementary Therapy service (which is offered alongside clinical interventions) to broaden the options available to support patients and carers being supported by the ELPCT. The team identifies and refers suitable patients and carers into the service. The therapists are then guided by the individual needs and wishes of the patient or carer, mainly delivering gentle massage and mindfulness practices in patients' homes, with some sessions taking place in a therapy room in East Lothian.



From 2023 – 2024

- 150 Complementary Therapy appointments were delivered
- 41 treatments were repeat treatments, which were a mix of patients and carers
- 22 carers were treated



Therapist massaging a patient

### What's important about the service – care at home

Support at home plays a vital role in providing holistic and person-centred palliative care. It allows patients to remain in a comfortable and familiar environment, maintain their dignity and independence, and receive personalised care that meets their unique needs.

91% of patients and their families agreed that it was important that the appointments took place at home and 95% agreed they were easy to access.

One patient shared: "I wouldn't have been able to leave the house to get this treatment so was very much appreciated."

### What's important about the service – trust in the therapists providing the treatment

Trust is a cornerstone of the therapeutic relationship in palliative care. It creates a safe and supportive environment for patients to receive complementary therapies, promoting relaxation and open communication.

95% of patients and their families agreed that having trust in the therapist carrying out the therapy was important to them.

One family member shared: "The therapist was pleasant and the therapy was very calming. Her understanding was great about the different levels of care that she had to give to my mother."

## Impact on palliative care patients and carers in East Lothian referred into the service

# 100%

reported an improvement in feeling more relaxed and less stressed (73% reported this as a BIG improvement)



My mind is usually thinking about my illness. This massage eased that and helped me relax."

Patient

# 100%

reported an improvement in physical tenseness (67% reported this as a BIG improvement)



It helped disperse some of my tension in my body which the therapist could feel. It released a lot of emotion."

Patient

# 88%

reported an improvement in pain or discomfort (44% reported this as a BIG improvement)



The therapist massaged my neck, arms, head and feet, for the first time in a long time I felt less pain."

Patient

# 69%

reported an improvement in sleep quality (44% reported this as a BIG improvement)



I slept 9 hours straight through. Felt at peace, chilled. Enjoyed being pampered/spoiled."

Patient



Foot and leg massage



Hand and arm massage

Thanks to the patients, carers and family members who provided feedback on their experience of the service. This report outlines how funding from the Charity makes a difference. Lise from the ELPCT explains: "The Complimentary Therapy service is invaluable in helping improve the overall wellbeing of our patients and their loved ones, it can help support the management of symptoms (such as pain/distress/anxiety) with the aim being to have a positive impact on quality of life." Get more information on funding available at [NHS Lothian Charity](https://www.nhs.uk/lothian-charity).

Report compiled by Rebecca Caulfield, Evaluation Manager, NHS Lothian Charity