

In this fourth episode, we speak with Nurse Sophie from Marie Curie. Over the last 10 years, Lions have helped raise close to £975,000 for the charity's Great Daffodil Appeal, and Sophie shares her experiences of providing care and support for people affected by terminal illness. We also hear all about the Pirbright Nurture Farm, a community project supported by Guildford Lions, with its member, Michael Eagle and teacher, Dan Smith telling the story – listen out for the animal 'guest stars' too.

Be uplifted, be inspired. This is Step Forward and Volunteer.

Hello everybody, welcome to the fourth episode of Step Forward and Volunteer, a brand new podcast brought to you by Lions Clubs British Isles.

My name is Ben Mouncer and I'd like to thank you for tuning in. If you haven't listened before, our aim is simple. We want to celebrate the positive difference volunteering makes to communities across the British Isles and beyond. To do that, we'll be speaking to those who give up their time to help others, inspiring more people to step forward and volunteer.

This month on the podcast I welcome Nurse Sophie from Marie Curie, the charity which provides care and support for people affected by terminal illness. Lions Clubs around the country help raise funds for Marie Curie; Sophie talks about how vital such support is, and she shares some of her experiences in the job.

We also have a feature on the Pirbright Nurture Farm, a community project at Pirbright Village Primary School supported by Guildford Lions. The farm provides valuable pastoral support for children of all ages in the local community - we will hear more from Guildford Lion Michael Eagle and teacher Dan Smith later in the podcast.

But first, I have a favour to ask. Because this is a new podcast, we want your help in getting the word out there. Tell your family, tell your friends - and if you're a Lions member, why not let other members of your club know about the podcast - and how easy it is to listen. All you need to do is either go on the website www.lionsclubs.co where you will see a link to

the podcast, or you can search for Step Forward and Volunteer on apps like Spotify, Podbean, Apple Podcasts and Google Podcasts.

You can listen on-demand or subscribe so that you never miss an episode. We publish a new programme on the second Wednesday of each month, and we're really keen to spread the positivity and get as many people listening as we can.

Now it's time to introduce our first guest. As I mentioned earlier, Nurse Sophie works for Marie Curie – and 2022 marks the 10th anniversary of Lions supporting the charity's Great Daffodil Appeal. Clubs work alongside their local communities to host collections for the Appeal, with funds raised going towards the cost of providing end-of-life care.

Over the last decade, Lions have collected close to £975,000 through the Appeal, which has funded 48,750 hours of care for patients and their families.

Here is the interview with Sophie where she talks about what it's like to be a nurse for Marie Curie, the importance of the Great Daffodil Appeal and the roll-out of a new 24-hour response service in collaboration with the NHS ...

Sophie, thank you so much for joining us. Maybe you could start by telling the listeners how Marie Curie supports patients and families affected by terminal illness?

Marie Curie is one of the UK's leading end of life charities. As healthcare providers, our nurses provide frontline care in both communities and the hospice. We also provide other services, not just in the community and hospices, we have free support lines and people can access them for information for anything really, in regards to dying, death, and bereavement of family and loved ones. Marie Curie has nine hospices around the country. It's around the clock care, that we provide for the patients that are either dying in a hospice, or at home. We have different holistic therapy facilities as well. So patients can come in for holistic therapy as an inpatient, or outpatient. If they're just kind of at home and then want to come in for a little bit of respite. I'm a community nurse and we have quite a large proportion of our staff that work in the community. They provide care and support for

people at home. And that's normally in the last weeks or days of their lives. We have a check in and chat service, which is a free telephone service for people to contact us and kind of go through how they're feeling, different emotions. They can speak to the same person every week. So you know the person we're speaking to, it's like that continuity of chatting to someone that you've spoken to previously.

Exactly, and you said it there. It's such amazing, vital work. And I'm sure the listeners are full of admiration for Marie Curie. And for you, Sophie as well as one of the nurses on the front line. Maybe you can talk a bit about kind of your personal experiences and doing a job like this, you know, what motivates you, what is it like?

So obviously, it doesn't come without its stresses and strains and kind of, you know, there are hard days and emotional days, but I think it is being a nurse for anyone really, it's kind of a vocation. Something you've got to be really passionate about, and, you know, kind of go the extra mile. I think the main thing that motivates me is, you know, your job satisfaction knowing that you're supporting patients and families, ensuring that their patients are comfortable, they're in, you know, they're in the preferred place of care that they want to be, whether it be home or hospice. Just ensuring basically that we're doing as much as we can to make that person's end of life experience is respectful and as comfortable as they possibly can be with Marie Curie. We can give a lot of time to patients and families, we can be with those patients as long as we need to be in the family. So that is just something that I think a lot of nurses and healthcare professionals don't really have.

Well Sophie you're clearly so passionate about it, and I'm sure your work and the work of Marie Curie has helped so many people, so well done, well done to you for that. Maybe let's now talk about the Great Daffodil Appeal, which is Marie Curie's largest fundraising initiative. How important is that?

Yeah, so obviously, the charity is very much dependent on public donations, and so a big campaign like the Great Daffodil Appeal to bring in revenue for our support and nursing staff. Last year, Marie Curie provided direct support for 69,000 people, which apparently was a 15% rise on the previous year, so very much depend on, you know, how charitable

people are with their donations to us. And it's just a great way for people to come with raising money to show their support.

Yeah, it's great. So you're supporting more people. And I know that Marie Curie has been commissioned to provide a rapid response service in partnership with the NHS, which is going to be an operation 24 hours a day, for 7 days a week in certain parts of the country. What difference do you think that will make?

I work for a rapid response team in Durham. So I see how invaluable our services, it's an absolutely amazing service. As you've said, it's 24 hours, 7 days a week, covering it, like you know, from seven in the morning till well, all day, all night. It's a brilliant. So the partnerships like the rapid response services, basically, what I can kind of explain it as is, it avoids unnecessary admission to hospital for patients. So you're able to look after patients at home that are living with a terminal illness and ensure that they're comfortable, around, you know, their loved ones, and can stay at home. So if they did have any symptoms of needing to go into hospital, we can manage those at home rather than sending them into hospital. So they obviously have their wishes at staying at home. So obviously, it's not just going out to homes, but we can also provide support over the phone as well. So patients and families can give us a call when we can support them that way. In order for us to be able to have these services, we really do rely on local volunteers to be able to raise funds and raise the profile of Marie Curie to be able to offer these services.

Yeah, and these partnerships are crucial on this so the one with Lions Clubs, I think they're supporting the Great Daffodil Appeal now for the 10th, the 10th year, do you want to talk a bit about that.

Yeah, so obviously volunteers like the lions help to drive donations, which allows the charity to continue caring for people with terminal illnesses. So yeah, it's absolutely invaluable that we have that support from, from volunteers like the lions, so that's amazing.

Yeah. Well, Sophie, it's been really brilliant having you on thank you so much for sharing your story. One final thing is, you know, we might have listeners you know, that have their

own families and be thinking about their own families when listening to this, what advice would you give them around how, you know, they can talk about any concerns they have, and how they can support Marie Curie and ultimately find out more about the work that you're doing?

If any of the listeners would like to find any information about Marie Curie and any services that we do provide, visit our internet page, which is a www.mariecurie.org.uk And that's if you or someone you know, is affected by a terminal illness or any bereavement concerns if you've lost a loved one. So we can provide a listening ear for anyone that does want any support. So we do have an information support line, which is 0800 090 2309.

Brilliant Sophie, thank you so much and the work you do is incredible. I'm sure the listeners will agree that you know we are just full of admiration for you and for the work Marie Curie is doing. So thank you so much for coming on the podcast.

I thank you very much. Thanks for everyone's support.

Thanks again to Sophie - she mentioned the phone number for Marie Curie there, there's also an email address if anybody wants to link up with their local community fundraising - it's cga@mariecurie.org.uk

It's time now for a short break - we'll be back, after this...

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Our next story is about Pirbright Nurture Farm and how the reputation of Lions was the key to unlocking funding to turn a vision into reality. First, I'll speak with Michael Eagle of Guildford Lions before we hear from Dan Smith, a teacher at Pirbright village primary school, who developed the community-based project.

Here's Michael explaining how this innovative project got off the ground?

I just picked this up in a monthly publication and I spoke to the teacher. I took this to my club, they were enthused. So, I went back to Dan and had a meeting with him and his headmaster. I suggested that they put a process together a programme, a budget estimate and a schedule when they wanted to go forward. They did a presentation to our club. It was a superb presentation. So, I put to the club that if we could put some money together and underwrite the project it would help them go out and get funds from somewhere else. So, we offered them an underwriting. Well, soon after this, it didn't take them very long to go out and look at other areas. In fact, one of our local Lions Clubs Working they decided to put a bit of money in as well.

Let's here from Dan what happened next.

Guildford lions they were the first people to back this, we can see there's going to be a real use for this. And a real benefit to people in the community. And that initial funding was absolutely pivotal, because it meant that we could go on to other potential donors. And they nearly always ask who else is backing your project, you know, who else is willing to take a risk on this. And having the backing of the lions was really important for that.

So then, after gaining some more funding from the military covenant fund, because we have a lot of military children, we took off and we raised enough money to begin building it. And also, to support it for the whole first year. The idea was always that we'd have before we began anything with make sure that the people contributing to it knew that we could sustain it and get it going for a whole year before we then had to sort of carry on the funding ourselves. And now we're in a position pretty much two years on from running where we've run hundreds of sessions for children across the community. We've got children coming in from lots of other schools on a weekly basis, making use of the farm.

What makes it unique?

As a school, we kind of rolled out the care farm nurture farm idea. So, we've got the professionals here, and the knowledge that we need to work with children. Let's flip it on its head and take from school point of view and create the farm here at a school. And of course, with the passion of the animals that the people working there have as well. It's a

perfect mixture of both of the professionals and working with children and the knowledge that we have there as a school, and then also being able to incorporate the animals into that learning those learning experiences for the children. So, in terms of uniqueness, we're not a school farm as such, it's about a core set of volunteers who support the projects on a daily basis on a weekly basis. And it's about those children coming into work on the farm. We don't want to do all the jobs for them. We want them to do the job. So as part of the whole nurturing experience, those children coming in are feeding the rabbits they are cleaning up the goats. They're understanding what it's like to care for our animals. We're reliant on bringing in money from the sessions that we run, and also getting supporting donors to contribute towards their sessions and to pay for people to have those sessions.

So, you might have one child coming into access session, or sometimes pairs of children. Occasionally, there might be three or four coming in. But normally, then we split between two adults to make it really personalized. So, the children come in, and they will have an initial session just to see how they settle in at the farm, and whether they're comfortable here and happy. And then once they've had that session, and they go ahead to commit to half a dozen or so sessions, sometimes 12 sessions over the course of a term, we will then put together a personalized package for those children depending on what their specific needs are. By the end of those sessions, their target might be to be able to independently come in, get on with it without any support whatsoever, and developing the sort of sequencing skills that they might have. For another child, it might purely be the fact that they're new to the area, particularly through the school here, we have lots of military children starting new. And part of what we do would be to those transition sessions, where we put them together with other children who are more established in the school, and it's like a bonding session, and it gets them to grow into the community. And it creates that lovely sort of atmosphere for, for developing their social relationships.

I think that we've been lucky because we've had some fantastic support, financially to get it all up and going. We raised in total about 30,000 pounds in the first place. That would be for building the farm and then for running for a year. We've that's now gone. And now we're relying on the regular money that we bring in through sessions and through additional donors. It's not just looking at the farm isn't lovely, got some ducks, it's got to be, you know, these animals need caring for they're going to last for years.

it's important to us and the children, when they come for activities, they're not just working with the animals, they're also thinking ahead. And so, a child that sort of comes during the spring and starts to sow the seeds for the different crops we want to grow. And all the raised beds and so on the animals will feel the benefit in summer, and they will come up to sort of like harvest. And so, the children constantly think about how they're contributing later on, not just what they're doing at the time to feed those animals and care for them. It's much more of a nurturing approach, rather than a farming approach, the animals don't come in and then go out again after a while and get more ones in. It's a case of these are our animals. We keep them, you know, we look after them, and we care for them very much like pets. We've had fantastic volunteers right from the start, when we lay the first bit of foundation for the cabins and the stables. We had members of school or community coming in parents, children, members of school staff, and we had those lovely volunteers right from the start. And that was absolutely, like pivotal during the build. And now we've settled in, we've got it going, we've got a core group of volunteers and supporters that on a regular basis will be coming in and supporting and caring for the animals. We have Duke of Edinburgh students coming in on regular basis, volunteering, which is fantastic. So, it sort of helps to fulfil their volunteer necessities. And also, it helps us a lot because you know, they're teenagers, they're reliable. They're really passionate about the animals. So that's another set of volunteers that we make the most of as well gateway to careers for them/ We've got the school next door Knowl Hill School, a special school and they do have children with a variety different needs many sort dyslexic needs and so on and they are down here a couple of times weekly giving them a real idea of how to manage animals work with animals, the health of animals, very much a kind of a sort of stepping stone it gives them a whole new opportunity that they maybe hadn't thought of before, on their doorstep. And that right from the start, when I spoke to Michael and the lions, of Guildford, we were talking about our neighbours.

Dan was also kind enough to walk us around the nurture farm, starting with the pygmy goats.

So, we've got this is Rita. And that's Remedy. This is Ray. Oh, there's Rosie, and this is Rhubarb down here. And they're fabulous. All the lot of equipment built by secondary

school children actually during the build, they came a few of the secondary school sensitive children, they built all the stuff for us.

Some children, they'll come in and just make a beeline for certain animals. Some hold the hens for a little while and others often want to see the reptiles it really depends, everybody has preferences.

You have to really kind of like give them that time to nurture one of them. The black one Oreo. She's actually a lot older than the other one. She was a school guinea pig used to live in the entrance hall with her little buddy for years, but her little buddy passed away last year, and we took her on out here with the other four. And she settled in really well now. Yeah, she's like the matriarch. But no, they're good. They'll eat out your hand. And good to have a community of yeah, it is, and they go up and down wanted to make sure that every living quarters that we built for the animals gave them a huge amount of opportunity to be able to run around and exercise and stimulate. You don't want to have a little tiny cages. We want to make sure that their social needs are being met as part of the policies that those five needs of all animals and freedom to roam and so on.

And then in here we've got Beardy, this is Betty the bearded dragon. And she's fabulous. Very popular with the children. She'll quite happily run around the cabin and climb all over them.

Now for some children, they probably never touch animals. A fair bit, we got a couple of boys that are in at the moment on a Thursday, brothers one comes for one hour, and another for an hour. And the difference between the boys is amazing because one of them won't touch any animals in the first few weeks. The other one was completely hands on. It took about three or four weeks for the first one to then begin to start sitting there with a rabbit or, or even like touching a goat. And that's okay, you know, don't have to, you know, be hands on with the animals or they do it in their own time.

That's really what we're doing all the time. We're thinking of what project is doing next. Okay, which children can do that? How can we facilitate that? What resources do we need? So, they're not just coming to spend time cleaning up after the animals, they're also coming here to do something. When they walk away. Again, they've done something they've created something they feel as if they've had a bit of a legacy a bit of a lasting impact.

Finally, here is Michael again talking about how proud he is of the role lions has played in making this happen.

We're there to do, we're there to help. So, any Lions Club can help, and feed in and as I say, Woking came in and said, you know, here's some money. I'm very proud. The fact that we underwrote the project, and that other people put money in simply because it was underwritten by Lions Clubs. That's the pride I take.

A big thanks to Michael and Dan for telling the story of Pirbright Nurture Farm, and to Heather Yaxley as well for helping with the conversation.

That is all we have time for on this month's podcast, everyone. If you've enjoyed this episode, do check out the LION magazine which can be read online or downloaded from www.lionclubs.co

Don't forget you can also listen to past editions of the Step Forward and Volunteer podcast any time via www.lionsclubs.co or on Spotify, Podbean, Apple podcasts or Google podcasts.

Thanks once again to our guests, Sophie, Michael and Dan, and a big thank you to you our listeners as well. Take care and goodbye.