**PRESS RELEASE**
**Embargoed until 7am, Monday 16th June 2025 (Launch Day)**

**South West hospice charity launches**
**emergency appeal amid sector funding crisis.**

 

**Jessie May launches urgent “Your Community Needs You” appeal to protect hospice care for children at home.**

Jessie May, the children’s hospice at home charity that has been supporting families across Swindon, Wiltshire and surrounding areas for nearly 30 years, has today launched an urgent appeal to protect the future of its care for seriously ill children and their families.

**The “Your Community Needs You” campaign is a call to action for everyone in Swindon & Wiltshire and the surrounding areas.** Currently caring for 26 seriously ill children in Swindon & Wiltshire - and 196 across the South West - Jessie May provides specialist nursing care, as well as practical and emotional support, from the point of diagnosis. Through life and death, bereavement and grief, Jessie May is there for families for as long as they need - supporting them for weeks, months, and even years.

But now, in common with many other charities in the hospice sector, the rising cost of care, lack of government subsidy and legislative changes, like the employer National Insurance contribution, have placed this unique service at risk. Jessie May is facing a funding gap of **£300,000** this year to continue caring for seriously ill children at home.A shortfall that, if not met, could lead to the charity having to make difficult decisions with fewer families being supported at the time they need it most.

Behind every one of those 26 children in Swindon & Wiltshire is a story like Paolo’s.

Paolo was born at just 25 weeks and five days, weighing only 1lb 12oz. His earliest months were spent in the neonatal intensive care unit at Bristol Children’s Hospital, where he faced a number of serious complications - including bleeds on the brain and the loss of much of his intestine. He is now 12 years old and lives with autism, cerebral palsy and other complex medical needs, which means he is entirely tube-fed.

Jessie May first came into Paolo’s life around five years ago, when his mum was his full-time carer. Their support offered a vital lifeline during an already challenging time. Tragically, Paolo’s mum later died, and he now lives with his dad, Jamie, who continues to receive Jessie May’s support as he navigates the care on his own.

“It was the same team that supported Paolo when his mum cared for him,” Jamie explains. “There was already trust so that made a huge difference.”

Now 12, Paolo receives visits from his Jessie May nurses during school holidays. They take him on little trips - to the library, to the shops - Paolo loves the interaction with them, and it gives Jamie a rare and vital break.

“You don’t realise how much just four hours can mean,” Jamie says. “It gives me time to rest, or to get one on one time with my daughter. It might not sound like much, but it makes a huge difference to our us.”

Paolo is always supported by the same two Jessie May nurses, which has helped build trust and familiarity - not only for Paolo, but for Jamie too.

“The consistency of having the same two nurses is really reassuring. It helps to build that bond with Paolo and I know I can trust them. It’s such a relief knowing they’re fully trained,” Jamie explains. “You don’t have to worry. You can truly switch off for a bit, and that’s something you can’t do with just anyone.”

As care costs rise and Jessie May faces a growing funding crisis, families like Paolo’s are urging the community to act.

“Jessie May’s support is something you can’t put a price on,” Jamie says. “Without them, we’d be in a very different place.”

**Why your community needs you**

* **82%** of Jessie May’s funding comes from the local community – individuals, businesses, schools and community groups.
* Only 18**%** is received from government sources, and that funding is at risk.
* **Care costs have risen sharply** – last year it cost £1.7m to run the service, this year it’s projected to be nearly **£2m**.
* **Referrals are rising fast** – up by **53% this year alone** – showing that demand for hospice care at home is higher than ever.

*“Hospices play a vital role in the healthcare system, but the entire sector is facing the biggest crisis it has ever faced. It’s not limited to Jessie May,”* says CEO Daniel Cheesman. *“The rising cost of delivering care over recent years has had a big impact on our running costs, as have the changes in factors like employers’ National Insurance contributions. We’ve made every effort to make savings where we can, but we do not want to cut services to the families who desperately need us.”*

Daniel urges, *“We know times are hard and there are lots of good causes out there, but we are providing vital support to families in your community. We work with 26 families in Swindon & Wiltshire, so the chances are there is a Jessie May family near you, and we need your help so we can continue to support them.* ***If everyone in Wiltshire donated just £1, we’d meet our target.****”*

**How to get involved**

* **Donate**: Visit <https://we-need-you.jessiemay.org.uk/> and click “Donate Now”
* **Become a Champion**: Be a digital champion as part of our matched campaign; get involved and share our story with your family, friends and colleagues. All funds raised will be matched funded. Email us via appeal@jessiemay.org.uk
* **Fundraise**: Host an event, take on a challenge, or rally your school, business or community group
* **Give regularly**: Set up a monthly donation to provide reliable ongoing support
* **Raise your voice**: Write to your MP and share Jessie May’s story on social media

*“This is about keeping children at home with the people they love. About siblings spending time together. About giving exhausted parents a break. About giving families a choice – and the dignity of being supported when it matters most,” says Daniel.*

**Your community needs you.** Please donate today. It’s more than a donation, and Jessie May is more than a hospice at home.

**ENDS.**

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**About Jessie May:**

The charity’s roots go back to one family – Chris and Philippa Purrington, whose daughter Jessica May died at four months old and wanted other families to be able to care for their child at home in their final days. That same spirit drives the charity today – and now, Jessie May is asking the community to stand by them in return.

At Jessie May, we provide specialist nursing care, at home, for children with life-limiting and life-threatening conditions. We support parents, siblings and wider family members in Bristol, South Gloucestershire, North Somerset, Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon, and Wiltshire.

Through life and death, bereavement, and grief, we are here for families for as long as they need us - support for weeks, months, and years.

With us, seriously ill children can still be children, and their families can make memories to look back on when they need them most.