

# CHRISTIANS, JEWS, MUSLIMS AND SIKHS WORKING TOGETHER IN ESSEX AND EAST LONDON

Press Release 12 April 2006

## Faith leaders unite to champion supportive care for terminally ill

Faith leaders in Essex and East London have joined together today to champion the benefits of supportive (or "palliative") care for people living with terminal illness and their families.

Terminal illnesses are widespread. One person in every three will develop some form of cancer in their lifetime, and for those under the age of 65, one in three will not survive.

Supportive care helps people to make the most of every moment they have and achieve their personal goals. Each person has unique physical, emotional and spiritual needs and every person is treated as a whole person. The highest value is placed on respect, choice and empowerment. Supportive care includes hospice care and community care.

Supportive care means pain control, symptom relief and skilled nursing, together with a full range of additional services – counselling, complementary therapies, spiritual care, creative activities, physiotherapy and bereavement support. A team of professionals works together to help the patient and the family.

The Roman Catholic Bishop of Brentwood, The Rt Revd Thomas McMahon, said, "It is vitally important to act now to safeguard, develop and fund supportive care services for people living with terminal illness and their families."

The Anglican Bishop of Chelmsford, The Rt Revd John Gladwin, added: "It's not just about buildings but the care provided by hospices, Macmillan nurses and district nurses in people's homes and day care facilities. In addition we want to encourage policy makers to bring the valuable experience of supportive care into mainstream healthcare provision."

Representatives of the Muslim, Jewish and Sikh faiths have commented:

"We must be compassionate and caring to the old, the ill and the infirm; mindful of their contribution to society. After all, nothing is more precious than life itself."

- Dr Ghayasuddin Siddiqui, Head of the Muslim Parliament of Great Britain

"As a mediaeval Jewish poem says, 'With God's hand I lay my soul/ Both when I sleep and when I wake/ And with my soul my body too/ My God is close, I shall not fear.' "

- Rabbi David Hulbert, Bet Tikvah Synagogue, Newbury Park, and the Sukkat Shalom Synagogue, Wanstead

"In the present day climate of rationing resources, more effort could be made in reducing hospital administration to a minimum. Life is precious and beyond monetary value."

- Mr Harmander Singh. Principal Advisor to Sikhs in England

The faith leaders have launched their positive campaign for supportive care against the background of doctor-assisted suicide promoted by the Assisted Dying Bill which is before Parliament. They are opposed to the Bill.

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Cont'd/2

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## Notes to Editor

1. The faith leaders are:

The Rt Revd Thomas McMahon, The Roman Catholic Bishop of Brentwood  
The Rt Revd John Gladwin, The Anglican Bishop of Chelmsford  
Dr Ghayasuddin Siddiqui, Head of the Muslim Parliament of Great Britain  
Rabbi David Hulbert of Bet Tikvah & Sukkat Shalom Synagogues  
Mr Harmander Singh, Principal Advisor to Sikhs in England.

2. The Revd Charles Mashedor, a Trustee and former Chaplain of St Clare Hospice, was also present at the media conference.
3. Briefing Notes from Help the Hospices and case studies illustrating the work of St Clare Hospice, Hastingwood, and the Macmillan nurses are included in this pack.
4. For details about local hospices and palliative care services visit [www.hospiceinformation.info](http://www.hospiceinformation.info) People who wish to volunteer are encouraged to contact their local hospice.
5. Most hospice services are run by local charities and two-thirds of the running costs of hospices are contributed by dedicated community volunteers and fund raisers. Around a quarter of a million people have access to hospice care, either in a hospice or in their own home, but NHS funding of hospices and access to hospice care varies widely.

A commitment is needed from the government that funding frameworks will be put in place to support hospice home care, bereavement and NHS commissioned services.

6. The Assisted Dying Bill raises fundamental questions about the value of life, the future of supportive care, the role of healthcare professionals and organisations, and the position of family members. The Bill is scheduled to be debated in the House of Lords on 12 May 2006.