Autumn 2026 Newsletter Issue No. 165

Friends of Vellore UK

Registered with FUNDRAISING REGULATOR

Promoting health and welfare of the poor and marginalised

Bringing comfort and dignity into the home

Each year, Friends of Vellore UK has been supporting the running costs of the Palliative Home Care Team at Christian Medical College (CMC) Vellore. The team travels up to 50 kilometres from the hospital to visit people living with serious, incurable illnesses, bringing medical care and holistic support to patients and their families in their own homes.

Around 150 patients receive support through the programme each year. Many come from very poor backgrounds. The team provides pain relief and other medicines, helps families manage symptoms and teaches them how to care for their loved ones, aiming to ensure the best possible comfort, dignity and quality of life.

During my visit to Vellore in January, I had the privilege of accompanying the team on their home visits. It was a moving opportunity to see first-hand the challenges faced by patients and their families.

Our first visit was to a 76-year-old woman with advanced mouth cancer, living in a government-built housing area for Sri Lankan refugees. The tumour had visibly affected her face, and she had previously received palliative radiotherapy to reduce bleeding.

She lived with her three daughters, all of whom earned minimum wages. Their combined earnings, together with a small government pension and state benefit totalling around £20 a month, helped sustain the household. They also received basic food rations, including rice, sugar and lentils.

During the visit, the team showed the daughters how to change their mother's dressings and prepare liquid food that she could swallow comfortably. This practical guidance helped equip them with the skills and confidence to care for her at home.

It was clear that the team's role extended far beyond providing medication. They offered reassurance, shared knowledge and helped the family manage the difficult realities of their mother's illness.

At the end of the visit, the daughters asked the team to pray with them. It was a particularly poignant moment, highlighting the importance of spiritual support alongside medical care.

I was struck by the team's compassion and understanding of each family's circumstances. For patients facing serious illness alongside poverty and other difficulties, having skilled and caring professionals visit them at home can make an enormous difference.

Friends of Vellore UK's support helps sustain this valuable service, ensuring patients and their families are not left to face some of life's hardest moments alone.



The patient we visited with her daughters and neighbour

Friends of Vellore UK work in partnership with Christian Medical College Vellore, South India.

Dear Friends of Vellore,

We are so grateful for your faithful support, through both prayer and giving, for the work of Christian Medical College (CMC) Vellore and its network of mission hospitals. Every donation helps bring hope and healing to individuals and communities across India.

At our Annual Supporters' Meeting in October, we heard from CMC Vellore's Director, Dr Biju George, about the institution's continuing development, new initiatives and achievements. Rebekah Maclennan shared her experience of completing a nursing elective at CMC, while Chris Kennedy spoke about his first visit to Vellore. Anu Rose explained the need for a new hospital in the Jawadhi Hills. We also heard about projects supported by Friends of Vellore UK (FOV UK) over the past year, alongside updates on our finances and fundraising.

Changes to India's overseas funding regulations have created challenges for CMC and the work FOV UK has traditionally supported. CMC is currently unable to use overseas funding for activities that fall outside its registered category of education. As a result, some programmes have had to stop or be adapted while CMC works through the necessary processes and seeks registration under additional categories. Where possible, CMC is using its own domestic funds to maintain essential services.

We recognise that this is disappointing, particularly for those who have generously supported patient care and community programmes over many years. We would greatly appreciate your prayers for CMC's leadership and staff as they navigate these challenges.

Despite these difficulties, there is much to celebrate. In this issue, we share the impact of grants sent last year to strengthen smaller mission hospitals within CMC's network, alongside the latest developments at CMC Vellore and inspiring stories from projects you have helped support. (All personal stories are shared with consent, and patient names have been changed.)

Enclosed with this issue are details of our Christmas Appeal, raising funds towards the new CK Job Tribal Health and Development Centre in the Jawadhi Hills. This is an exciting opportunity to help CMC strengthen healthcare provision for remote and underserved communities. As Christmas approaches, we also invite you to explore our range of Christmas cards and gifts (see page 4).

We hope you enjoy reading this newsletter and are encouraged by the lives being transformed through your generosity, compassion and prayers.

Ruth Tuckwell
Charity Manager

A new centre for specialist paediatric care

CMC Vellore has reached an important milestone in its commitment to children's healthcare with the inauguration of the new 346-bed Fairfax–Quess Paediatric Specialty Centre at its Ranipet Campus on 1 October 2026.

The new centre brings together 12 paediatric specialities and super-specialities under one roof, creating an integrated centre of excellence for children with complex and serious medical conditions. Services include paediatric neurology, oncology, nephrology, cardiology, respiratory medicine, gastroenterology, rheumatology, infectious diseases, intensive care, emergency care, developmental paediatrics, endocrinology and special needs dentistry.

Bringing these services together will enable closer collaboration between specialist doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals, providing children with comprehensive and coordinated care. Families will have access to a wide range of specialist treatments and facilities in one location. Clinical services are expected to begin in early 2027.



Comprehensive and coordinated care

The project has been made possible through the generous support of Mr Prem Watsa, Mr Ajit Isaac and many other donors and well-wishers.

Friends of Vellore UK is delighted to have contributed £30,360 in 2025 and a further £108,367 in 2026. Most of this funding came from two very generous donations from friends in Argyll, Scotland.



Architect's impression of the new Paediatric Specialty Centre

As CMC celebrates 125 years of service, this new facility represents a significant investment in the future of children's healthcare. It will provide advanced treatment for children from across India and beyond, helping those with the most complex conditions access the specialist care they need.

We feel privileged to have played a part in making this vision a reality and helping CMC continue its mission of bringing hope and healing to children and their families.



Arya with her family and the medical team

A new beginning for Arya

Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these. Matthew 19:14

A serious illness in a child places an enormous strain on a family, particularly when the cost of treatment is beyond their means. Since February 2022, Friends of Vellore UK has helped ease that burden through its Paediatric Subsidy Fund, supporting children admitted to CMC Vellore who need financial assistance for life-changing treatment.

Over four years, the fund has provided £40,000 of support, helping 45 children and their families. One of them was Arya, a 12-year-old girl whose story shows just how transformative timely specialist care can be.

Nearly a year earlier, Arya had accidentally swallowed a two-rupee coin. Frightened of being told off, she kept it a secret. Gradually, she found it increasingly difficult to swallow and began hiding her food rather than eating it. She lost a significant amount of weight, but the cause of her difficulties remained unknown.

The coin had become lodged in her oesophagus, eventually eroding through its wall and creating an abnormal connection, known as a fistula, with the left main bronchus (the airway leading to her left lung). Arya could no longer even swallow her saliva without choking.

When her uncle realised how unwell she had become, he took her to a local hospital. An X-ray revealed the coin, which was removed, but the fistula remained. Despite having a feeding tube fitted, Arya continued to struggle and was referred to CMC Vellore for specialist treatment.

Investigations revealed that the fistula lay deep within her chest, beneath the aortic arch and behind the heart, making it particularly difficult to reach. The surgical team recommended a robotic procedure, which would allow them to operate with greater precision in this delicate area.

Despite an unexpected complication shortly before surgery, Arya was stabilised and the operation went ahead. Over nearly seven hours, the surgeons used robotic assistance to carefully separate the oesophagus and bronchus and repair the fistula.

Arya made a good recovery and was discharged on the second day after surgery, initially continuing with tube feeds. Two weeks later, a contrast study confirmed that her oesophagus had healed completely. She was finally able to eat and drink normally again - a moment of immense relief and joy for her family.

The Paediatric Subsidy Fund helped make this life-changing treatment possible for Arya and 44 other children. Sadly, changes to India's overseas funding regulations mean that FOV UK is currently unable to continue this form of support at CMC Vellore.

We are deeply grateful to everyone whose generosity made the fund possible over the past four years. Your kindness has helped give children like Arya the chance of a healthier future, and we hope that we will be able to find new ways to support children needing specialist care in the future.

Friends of Vellore UK

Promoting health and welfare of the poor and marginalised

VISION

Friends of Vellore UK supports projects at Christian Medical College Vellore, and other mission hospitals working in partnership with CMC. The charity seeks to follow Christ's example in showing compassion towards those who are vulnerable and marginalised. We want to ensure that everyone can receive appropriate healthcare regardless of their ability to pay or their faith.



MISSION

We strive to fulfil our vision through the following activities:

- Raising funds to support healthcare, education and development projects at CMC that benefit the poorest and most excluded patients and communities
- Encouraging CMC in its partnership with smaller mission hospitals across India
- Promoting the work of CMC and sharing news and information for prayer

An update on the Person-to-Person scheme

Many of you have supported CMC Vellore's Person-to-Person (PTP) scheme over the years, helping patients whose stories we have shared in previous newsletters receive treatment they could not otherwise afford. We are writing to update you on a change affecting this important programme.

CMC Vellore is currently unable to use overseas funding for direct patient support through PTP. As a result, FOV UK cannot currently provide funding for this programme. CMC, however, remains fully committed to helping these patients through its own domestic resources while it works through the current restrictions.

We recognise that this will be disappointing news for many of you who have generously supported the scheme.

We have written individually to our regular PTP donors to ask how they would like their 2026 donations to be used. Options include holding the gift for PTP until the situation changes, redirecting it to support CMC's new hospital in the Jawadhi Hills, helping patients at other CMC-associated mission hospitals, or receiving a refund. If you support PTP and have not yet heard from us, or would like to discuss your options, please get in touch.

Other ways to help patients

Although CMC Vellore cannot currently use overseas funding for direct patient support, there are other ways to help people who would otherwise struggle to afford treatment.

One opportunity is to support CMC's new hospital in the Jawadhi Hills, the CK Job Tribal Health and Development Centre, which will provide healthcare for tribal communities in the region, many of whom face significant barriers to accessing affordable treatment. You can find out more about the project and how to donate on our website and in the enclosed Christmas appeal leaflet.



Danya was a beneficiary of the PTP scheme



A beneficiary of the PTP scheme

We have also established a **Mission Hospital Patient Support Fund** to help patients who cannot afford treatment at mission hospitals associated with CMC Vellore. Unlike CMC itself, some of these hospitals are able to receive overseas funding for direct patient care.

The Trustees have approved grants of £15,000 each in 2026 for patient treatment at Lakhnadon Christian Hospital in Madhya Pradesh and Karigiri Hospital in Tamil Nadu. These grants will help ensure that patients facing financial hardship can access the care they need.

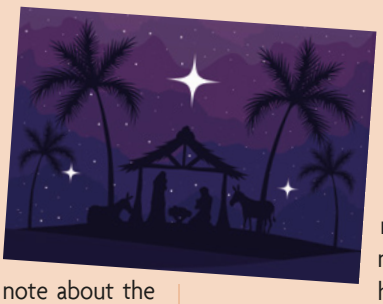
If you would like to support patients at these mission hospitals, please mark your donation "Mission Hospital Patient Support Fund".

We are deeply grateful for your generosity, prayers and patience as this situation develops. While the current restrictions have changed how we can provide support through CMC, its commitment to patients who cannot afford treatment remains unchanged. FOV UK remains determined to find ways to help these patients and ensure that the generosity of our donors continues to make a difference.

Christmas cards and gifts

This Christmas, you can send your greetings, give a gift and support healthcare in Vellore, all at the same time.

Christmas cards



Our Christmas cards are available to order now at £10 for a pack of five, including postage. They are blank inside for your own message, while the back of each card carries a short note about the work of Friends of Vellore UK, so everyone you send one to can share in the difference it makes.

Give a gift to the Jawadhi Hills

If you are looking for a present for someone who has everything, you could make a donation in their name towards the new hospital in the Jawadhi Hills.

Around 80,000 people live in these remote hills in northern Tamil Nadu, many hours from the nearest hospital along poor roads. CMC Vellore is building the CK Job Tribal Health and Development Centre, with 25 beds including a labour ward, nursery and operating theatre, helping families receive the care they need closer to home. You can read more about the hospital in our Christmas appeal enclosed with this newsletter.

For a donation of £10 or more, we will send you a free card to pass on to your loved one, telling them about the gift made in their name.


CMC Vellore

News from CMC Vellore

Since its foundation by Dr Ida Scudder in 1900, CMC has grown into a major healthcare institution with seven campuses and 3,700 beds, providing everything from primary and preventative care to highly specialised treatment and rehabilitation.

The Vellore town campus is undergoing a major period of redevelopment and reorganisation as several specialist departments move to Ranipet. Recent improvements include a new College of Pharmacy, a Mental Health Centre and refurbished operating theatres.

The Ranipet campus, which opened in 2022, continues to expand, combining advanced specialist facilities, including the new paediatric specialty block, with a commitment to affordable, effective healthcare. CMC is also investing in environmental sustainability through tree planting, ponds and gardens, and has received several awards recognising its work in this area.

The Chittoor campus is also growing, with plans for a 400-bed hospital by 2028 and a medical college by 2030.

Taking healthcare into the community

In April, CMC Chittoor opened a new community clinic in Mittoor in partnership with the district administration. The clinic is based in a government maternity health centre originally opened by Dr Ida Scudder in 1940, continuing her legacy of bringing healthcare closer to local communities.

Another innovative initiative is Project Anbu (meaning 'love' in Tamil), a partnership with the police to identify destitute people in Vellore who need medical care. Patients can receive free hospital treatment and support for three to six months while efforts are made to reunite them with their families or find appropriate long-term care. Of the first 12 patients, five have been reunited with their families and four referred to government homes, while three remain in CMC's care.

Medical advances and international recognition

In July, CMC performed its first successful heart transplant, led by the Departments of Cardiothoracic Surgery and Cardiology. Several members of the team had previously received specialist training at Papworth Hospital in the UK.

In October, senior transplant specialists from Birmingham and Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust visited the Department of Nephrology for lectures and clinical discussions, strengthening professional relationships and opportunities for collaboration.

CMC's documentary *Be Thou My Vision – Ida Scudder of Vellore (Part 1)* has also received international recognition, including the Silver Crown Award in the USA and the Jewel Award 2026 for Best Mid-Budget Documentary from the Christian European Visual Media



Association. The film tells the story of Dr Ida Scudder's early life and pioneering work, covering the period from 1849 to 1922. Work is now underway on a second documentary continuing her remarkable story.

These developments demonstrate how CMC continues to build on Dr Ida Scudder's legacy, combining medical excellence and innovation with a commitment to serving those most in need.



Dr Reena George accepting the Jewel award

Browse our online shop

Our online shop has more gift ideas, with all proceeds supporting our projects. Alongside the chapel greetings cards, featuring the chapel and gardens on CMC's



Bagayam campus, you will find books on the history of CMC, music CDs, cross stitch kits and commemorative stamps. UK postage is included in all prices.

How to order

Visit friendsofvellore.org/christmas for cards and gifts, or friendsofvellore.org/shop to browse the full range. You can also call the office on 03333 445245.

PLEASE ORDER BY TUESDAY 15 DECEMBER TO RECEIVE YOUR CARDS IN TIME FOR CHRISTMAS.



A remote hamlet in the Jawadhi Hills

Dr Anu checks in on a patient

CMC's continuing commitment to the Jawadhi Hills

For five decades, Christian Medical College (CMC) Vellore has worked alongside communities in the Jawadhi Hills, with support from Friends of Vellore organisations around the world. The work has developed through long-standing relationships with local people, built on trust, mutual respect and partnership.

The region presents considerable challenges. Remote villages can be difficult to reach, particularly during the rainy season, and the difficult terrain makes access to healthcare a continuing concern. Other social issues include migration for work, which disrupts children's education, a shortage of teachers and problems associated with substance abuse. Improving access to healthcare remains one of CMC's main priorities.

CMC's approach is based on working with communities rather than simply providing services to them. Local people are encouraged to take an active role in shaping and supporting the work, including learning the importance of accountability and good record-keeping when managing externally funded activities. CMC staff speak with admiration of the resilience of the people they serve and their determination to overcome difficulties.

Recent changes to India's regulations governing overseas funding have affected some of CMC's development activities in the Jawadhi Hills. CMC has temporarily modified or paused certain initiatives while it works through the implications. Direct medical services continue, however, and CMC is using domestic funds to maintain the employment of the 11 health workers and two vision workers previously supported by FOV UK.

These changes have created additional challenges, but CMC remains committed to its long-standing partnership with communities in the Jawadhi Hills.

Developing the hospital

An important priority is the development of the local hospital. Work has already begun to renovate the existing outpatient department, with services operating from temporary accommodation during the building work. Once this is complete, CMC plans to construct a new inpatient block with 25 beds, including emergency facilities, together with residential accommodation for staff.

CMC is now seeking to raise a further £420,000 towards this development. A better-equipped hospital and accommodation for staff will strengthen the provision of local healthcare and help ensure that people living in the Jawadhi Hills have better access to the care they need.

Our Christmas appeal this year is raising funds towards the new hospital, which will be called the CK Job Tribal Health and Development Centre. Please see the accompanying Christmas appeal leaflet to find out more about the project and how you can help support this important work.

Supporting patients and families every step of the way

On the front cover, Ruth shared her experience of visiting a patient cared for by CMC Vellore's Palliative Home Care Team. Here, she continues the story, introducing another patient and reflecting on the vital support the team provides to families facing serious illness.



Members of CMC's Palliative Care team

Our second patient was another 76-year-old woman whose breast cancer had spread to her lungs. She also had longstanding diabetes and had lost five toes over the years because of complications. CMC Vellore had loaned her an oxygen concentrator to help her breathe.

Her family shared responsibility for her care. Her daughter-in-law looked after her during the day, while her daughter, who worked outside the home, cared for her at night. The


Manimaran speaks with a villager


Arun at work


Arun on a home visit

Bringing eye care closer

For people living in remote communities in the Jawadhi Hills, accessing specialist eye care can be difficult. Friends of Vellore UK has supported two ophthalmology field workers, Arun and Manimaran, who play a vital role in bringing eye care services closer to local communities and helping people receive the treatment they need.

Working across different areas of the hills, Arun and Manimaran visit villages and households to identify people with vision problems, raise awareness of eye health and encourage those needing further assessment to attend the vision centre or hospital.

During 2025, they carried out house-to-house surveys and screened 3,520 people, referring 1,364 for further vision assessment. They also helped organise eye camps in surrounding villages, distributing information and encouraging people identified during their visits to attend. For patients requiring cataract surgery, they helped arrange transport to the base hospital.

Their work can be life changing. Mrs K had become blind because of cataracts, severely affecting her ability to carry out everyday activities. With the help of one of the field workers, she was able to reach the base hospital and undergo surgery. Her sight was restored, and she has now returned to her regular work.

Prevention and early identification are also important parts of their role. Arun and Manimaran provide health education about common eye conditions, including cataracts, refractive errors and diabetic retinopathy. They also support school eye-screening programmes, working alongside optometrists. In 2025, six schools were visited and 850 children screened to identify problems with their vision. On World Sight Day, they joined an optometrist to raise awareness of eye health among agricultural workers in Saranangkuppam village.

The vision centre at Jammalamathur provides an important base for this work. Open five days a week, it sees around ten patients a day, rising to approximately 23 on busy market days. An optometrist and the two field workers provide services and support to people from across the surrounding area.

Arun and Manimaran are also an integral part of CMC's community ophthalmology team, attending weekly sessions at the vision centre and monthly team meetings, where they report on their activities and help plan ongoing work.

Through their dedication, Arun and Manimaran are doing much more than identifying eye problems. They are building awareness, encouraging people to seek help and making it easier for remote communities to access treatment. Their dedication has helped bring eye care closer to remote communities, enabling more people in the Jawadhi Hills to protect and regain their sight. FOV UK is pleased to have supported this valuable work.

family also ran a small takeaway food business from their house.

During the visit, the nurse showed the daughter how to monitor her mother's oxygen levels and discussed symptoms that required further investigation, as well as the importance of taking medication consistently. The team had previously recommended a short hospital admission, but the family had hesitated. Following this visit, the daughter agreed to take time off work to bring her mother to hospital the next day.

A service built around the whole family

Home visits take place twice a week. On Mondays, a nurse and social worker provide ongoing care and monitor patients' needs. Thursday visits involve a doctor, nurse, social worker and chaplain, with a psychologist sometimes joining them.

This multidisciplinary approach addresses not only physical symptoms but also emotional, social and spiritual needs. Social workers assess whether families need financial assistance or access to government concessions, recognising the additional pressures that serious illness can bring.

These visits highlighted a difference between palliative care in India and the UK. At CMC Vellore, patients may receive palliative care over several years while living with incurable illness, rather than only during the final months of life. Care is guided by need rather than diagnosis, and families play a central role in supporting their loved ones.

I was struck by how the team combines medical expertise with practical guidance, compassion and an understanding of each family's circumstances. For people facing serious illness alongside poverty and other challenges, knowing that help is available at home can make an enormous difference.

Through the dedication of the Palliative Home Care Team, patients and families facing some of life's hardest moments are not left to struggle alone.

Strengthening emergency care at Women's Hospital, Ambajipeta

New medical equipment is helping a rural hospital provide more timely and effective care for mothers, newborn babies and patients experiencing medical emergencies.

Women's Hospital Ambajipeta, is situated in Andhra Pradesh, south-east India. Serving the surrounding rural communities, the hospital provides essential healthcare, including maternity, newborn and general medical services. Previously, a lack of specialist equipment meant that patients experiencing serious complications, including cardiac emergencies and breathing difficulties, often had to be referred to hospitals further away, delaying access to treatment.

In May 2025, Friends of Vellore UK provided a grant of £9,458 to strengthen the hospital's emergency and diagnostic services. The funding enabled the purchase of an advanced ECG machine, a portable ECG machine, a defibrillator, a CPAP-HFNC machine to support patients with breathing difficulties, a handheld spirometer and a blood gas and electrolyte analyser. The hospital also used the grant to renew and upgrade three existing laboratory analysers.

Helping newborn babies breathe

One particularly encouraging example involved a baby girl born prematurely at 34 weeks by emergency Caesarean section. Shortly after birth, she developed severe respiratory distress, with difficulty breathing and signs of inadequate oxygenation.

The medical team was able to start CPAP respiratory support immediately using the new equipment funded by FOV UK. With this assistance and comprehensive neonatal care, the baby's condition improved significantly over the next 48 hours. She was gradually weaned off respiratory support and discharged in a stable condition. Both mother and baby are continuing to receive follow-up care.



Clinical team with the CPAP-HFNC machine

Responding to cardiac emergencies

The new equipment has also strengthened the hospital's ability to manage serious cardiac conditions. One night, a 75-year-old man arrived with sudden, severe breathlessness and signs of heart failure. Using the new advanced ECG machine, the team diagnosed a heart attack. With prompt medical treatment and access to the new emergency equipment, he was able to be admitted and treated at the hospital. He improved steadily and was discharged a week later.

In another case, a 74-year-old man arrived with dangerously high blood pressure, heart failure and fluid in his lungs. The team used the CPAP-HFNC machine, alongside the ECG and defibrillator, to provide respiratory support and appropriate treatment. He responded well and was able to return home within 48 hours.

Making a lasting difference

These cases illustrate how the grant is helping Women's Hospital Ambajipeta manage a wider range of medical emergencies and provide better care closer to home. The improved equipment has strengthened its general medicine, maternity and paediatric services, giving staff greater confidence to treat critically ill patients and reducing the need for some distant hospital referrals.

Dr Damerkola Pranuth Livingstone writes: *"We wish to express our heartfelt gratitude for the generous grant you provided. Your support has significantly strengthened our emergency and diagnostic services, enabling us to deliver better and timely care to our patients."*

Run for Friends of Vellore in 2027

After a brilliant turnout at this year's Cambridge Half Marathon, we're delighted that all five of our places for next March have now been taken. Thank you to everyone who signed up so quickly.

We do still have two places for the virtual London Marathon on Saturday 24 or Sunday 25 April 2027, which you can run on a route of your choice, wherever you live. CMC alumnus Abraham George is taking part again, this time aiming to raise £5,000 for CMC's work in the Jawadhi Hills.

If running isn't for you, we would be glad to hear your own fundraising ideas, whether a sponsored walk or a challenge of your own. Please get in touch and we will help you get started.

You can sponsor our runners through their JustGiving pages: https://www.justgiving.com/charity/friendsofvellore

RUHSA update: New audiology clinic

The Rural Unit for Health and Social Affairs (RUHSA) is preparing to celebrate its Golden Jubilee in 2027, marking 50 years of providing healthcare and community services to people in the K V Kuppam block. Plans are underway for a year of celebrations and improvements to the campus, including renovation of the operating theatres, a new hostel for female staff and students, road improvements and solar roofing.

One particularly welcome development is the establishment of a new audiology clinic, supported by a grant from Friends of Vellore UK. The clinic will provide hearing services closer to people living in rural and underserved communities, particularly vulnerable groups such as newborn babies, children and older people.

Bringing hearing care closer to home

Hearing loss is a significant but often overlooked health problem. Because it is not always visible, its effects can go unnoticed. Yet untreated hearing impairment can have a profound impact on communication, social interaction and mental wellbeing. This is particularly true for older people, who may become increasingly isolated as their hearing deteriorates.

RUHSA serves a population of approximately 138,000 people. During community assessments in six villages in 2024, around 62% of the older people screened were found to have some degree of hearing loss, with almost a quarter of those affected experiencing moderate to profound impairment.

Until now, many patients needing further assessment have had to travel at least 25–30 km, and sometimes further, to access audiology services at CMC Vellore or elsewhere. Distance, transport costs, mobility difficulties and loss of earnings can all make this difficult.

Thanks to the generous support of our donors, the new clinic was dedicated in July and is now providing hearing screening for all babies born at RUHSA. Eight RUHSA nurses have been trained to carry out the screening using a BERA instrument, with audiologists from CMC's ENT department supporting the service each Tuesday. This enables all babies born at RUHSA to be screened, with follow-up arranged where needed.

In the first 15 weeks, 129 newborn babies were screened. Fifteen were referred to CMC's ENT department for further assessment, while ten were referred to RUHSA's ENT unit for follow-up. Early identification of hearing difficulties is important in enabling timely support and intervention.

The service will be extended to provide hearing assessments for children, adults and older people. Mobile clinics, community camps, schools and elderly day centres will help increase access, with village health workers helping to identify people who might otherwise struggle to access specialist care.

FOV UK's funding of approximately £18,000 has supported the development of the clinic, including renovation, soundproofing and specialist equipment. This investment will help ensure that people across the region can access appropriate hearing care without the need for lengthy journeys.

Responding to the changing funding landscape

Recent changes to India's regulations governing overseas funding have affected a number of RUHSA's community projects. Following a review of the regulations, the four elderly welfare centres have sadly closed, while activities at Pachaikili Play Centre were suspended in April 2026. These changes reflect the challenges of supporting the projects within the new regulatory framework.

Over the years, the elderly centres provided food, healthcare-related support and companionship to older people, while the play centre promoted healthy development among underprivileged children. CMC is considering how best to take this work forward, and we hope to have a clearer update following our visit to Vellore in January. In the meantime, RUHSA hopes that the experience gained through these projects, together with established community relationships, can help inform future approaches to supporting vulnerable older people and children in rural communities.



A newborn being screened in the audiology clinic



The RUHSA campus



Dedication of the audiology clinic

LCECU Patient Support Fund: Transforming lives in Vellore

The Low-Cost Effective Care Unit (LCECU) serves some of the most underprivileged communities in Vellore, providing quality healthcare at minimal cost through its small base hospital and community outreach programmes. For patients requiring more specialised treatment, the LCECU Patient Support Fund helps them access advanced care at CMC Vellore's main hospital.

Last year, Friends of Vellore UK contributed £16,380 to this fund. Between April and September 2025, 73 patients received financial assistance through the patient support fund, including five patients undergoing treatment for cancer. Four of these patients are doing well and remain under follow-up. A further 13 patients received support for emergency treatment and planned surgery between October and December 2025.

One beneficiary was Suresh, a 21-year-old university student whose life changed dramatically following a road traffic accident.

Suresh's story: Restoring hope and independence

Suresh, a 21-year-old history student from Old Town, Vellore, comes from a financially vulnerable family. His father has a heart condition and is largely unable to work, while his mother sells vegetables by the roadside, earning around ₹300 (£2.50) a day. Suresh's younger brother helps with the family business, and his sister is still studying.

In December 2024, Suresh was involved in a motorbike accident and sustained a serious head injury. He was initially taken to Vellore Government Hospital, and then subsequently transferred to CMC for specialist treatment. He was diagnosed with a fracture of the odontoid bone in his neck and had surgery to stabilise his spine. He then spent 15 days in intensive care with a tracheostomy and a further month in a step-down intensive care unit. He remained unconscious for approximately a month before being transferred to the main hospital ward.



Suresh learning to walk again

Throughout this prolonged treatment, LCECU advocated for Suresh and his family, helping them access substantial financial assistance towards his hospital bills. The costs of scans, medicines and investigations were supported through LCECU funds, helping to ease the financial burden.

After regaining consciousness, Suresh developed severe stiffness and restricted movement in his left elbow, eventually resulting in a deformity. He was diagnosed with heterotopic ossification, a condition in which bone forms abnormally in soft tissue around a joint. Before the accident, Suresh had been independent; now he relied on his family for everyday activities such as washing and using the toilet.

However, the cost of further treatment was a considerable worry for his family, whose finances had already been stretched by his lengthy hospital stay. LCECU once again stepped in, contributing ₹20,000 towards his hospital bill and helping with the cost of medicines. This enabled Suresh to proceed with a second surgery and rehabilitation without placing an overwhelming additional burden on his family.



CMC's Low Cost Effective Care Unit

In January 2026, he had surgery to remove the abnormal bone. Physiotherapy followed, and his elbow movement improved significantly, offering the prospect of greater independence.

Suresh's journey demonstrates how financial assistance, compassionate care and persistent advocacy can make a life-changing difference. The LCECU Patient Support Fund plays an important role in helping patients from economically disadvantaged families access essential treatment and rehabilitation that might otherwise be beyond their reach. By easing the financial burden on families, it gives patients like Suresh the opportunity to continue their recovery, regain their independence and look towards the future with hope.


A ward in LCECU



The LCECU Team with their vehicle

Bringing care closer to home

Palliative care and cancer screening in Vellore's most vulnerable communities.

2026 marks the final year of Friends of Vellore UK's three-year funding for a project bringing palliative care and cervical cancer screening to some of the most deprived communities in Vellore.

Delivered by a multidisciplinary team from the Low-Cost Effective Care Unit (LCECU) at CMC Vellore, the programme brings together a doctor, nurse, clinical psychologist, occupational therapist, project coordinator and driver. Working alongside local volunteers and community health workers, the team identifies people in need, provides support in their homes and helps them access hospital services.

The importance of this work is illustrated by the story of Radha.

Radha's journey from despair to hope



Radha

Radha, aged 44, lives with her family in a small, single room home in Vellore. She has faced numerous health challenges, including HIV and chronic kidney disease, both diagnosed in 2006, followed by cervical cancer in 2023, which required a hysterectomy. More recently, she suffered a serious hip fracture.

When the palliative care team first visited, Radha was severely underweight, immobile and in considerable pain. She was dependent on others for even the simplest daily activities and had lost the will to live.

The team discovered that Radha had stopped taking her medication for HIV. She was deeply distressed by her illnesses and feared that her 12-year-old daughter would discover her HIV diagnosis. The stigma surrounding the condition weighed heavily on her, and she worried that revealing the truth would further damage an already strained relationship with her daughter, who was struggling with the demands of caring for her.

Recognising that Radha needed more than medical treatment, the team's psychologist began working with her to address her fears, depression and feelings of hopelessness. Through repeated visits and sensitive conversations, they helped her understand the importance of continuing her medication and gave her the confidence to restart her treatment.

The team also worked to rebuild the relationship between Radha and her daughter, helping the family understand the emotional and physical pressures they were experiencing.

With renewed motivation, Radha began engaging with the wider team's support. Carefully managed pain relief, physiotherapy and rehabilitation helped her regain strength and mobility. Gradually, she progressed from being completely immobile to sitting up, standing and eventually walking with support.

Today, Radha has regained weight, her confidence has grown and she is looking towards the future with a more positive outlook. She told the psychologist:

"I don't know when the end will come, but I want to spend whatever time I have left being happy with my husband and children. I've stopped worrying about the things I can't change."

Radha's resilience and perseverance are a great encouragement to the team and her community. She now shares her experiences and coping strategies with others, offering encouragement to people facing similar challenges.

Looking Ahead

As the three-year project draws to a close, LCECU is exploring ways to continue community-based home visits through a broader service supporting patients who need both palliative and curative care.

We are grateful to CMC's team for their dedication and to everyone who has supported this work through Friends of Vellore UK. The project has demonstrated the importance of reaching people in their own communities, addressing not only their medical needs but also the emotional and social challenges that can make living with serious illness so difficult.

Scholarships at CMC Vellore

CMC Vellore has always aimed to open its doors to the most able students, whatever their background. Its doctors, nurses and allied health professionals go on to serve patients across India, often in mission and rural hospitals. Today, some students come from villages and small towns, from families where a parent earns a daily wage as a mason, farmer or shop worker. Even with CMC's subsidised fees, the cost of tuition, accommodation and books can make an education at CMC out of reach.

Scholarships can make the difference. They are awarded according to family income, and students reapply every year. Applications are reviewed by the student's head of department or course coordinator and hostel warden, before the final decision is made by CMC's scholarship committee.

Last year, CMC awarded 119 scholarships to medical and allied health students; including nursing, the need is around 200 students a year. Yet the true need is greater. With limited funds, CMC has had to set the eligibility threshold very low: a family must earn less than ₹2,40,000 a year, about £1,900, to qualify. Students whose families are struggling but earn just above this threshold miss out.

Recent recipients include a medical student whose father works in a vegetable shop and whose sister is also at college. He hopes to become a surgeon, inspired by CMC's commitment to caring for poor patients. Another, an occupational therapy student, lost his father last year, leaving his mother to support the family and his grandmother. He dreams of using music as therapy for people with mental illness.



A group of CMC Allied Health Students

Sponsors receive a short profile of their student when the scholarship is awarded, followed by a testimonial in the student's own words when they complete their course. These personal messages give sponsors the opportunity to hear directly from the student whose education they have helped to support.

In February, CMC will make its scholarship offers to this year's new students and would like to support as many as possible. Please consider sponsoring a student. If you, your church or your group would like to help, please contact Georgina at georgina@friendsofvellore.org

- **Around £200** covers a year's scholarship for an allied health student living at home
- **Around £440** covers a year's scholarship for an allied health student living in hostel
- **Around £600** covers a year's scholarship for a medical student

Bringing specialist skills back to CMC Vellore

Through CMC's Senior Training Fellowship programme, Friends of Vellore UK supports CMC clinicians to gain specialist experience overseas and bring new knowledge and skills back to India.

In 2025, Arun Kumar from CMC's Department of Paediatric Surgery undertook a six-week fellowship in the UK, spending four weeks at Leeds Children's Hospital and two weeks at Birmingham Children's Hospital. His aim was to develop his expertise in paediatric surgical oncology, particularly the treatment of complex childhood tumours, while learning how specialist teams work together to provide the best possible care.

During the fellowship, Arun took part in ward rounds, teaching sessions and multidisciplinary team meetings. He gained valuable experience in the operating theatre, observing and participating in a range of procedures, including the removal of complex tumours, minimally invasive surgery and the insertion of devices used to deliver chemotherapy and other treatments.



Leeds Children's Hospital

An important area of learning was how care is coordinated across specialist teams. Arun saw how treatment decisions are discussed collectively, with careful consideration of each child's individual circumstances and long-term wellbeing. This included planning for children who may have a good chance of recovery, as well as those whose illness cannot be cured.

He was particularly impressed by the attention given to young patients' lives beyond treatment. Adolescents were routinely offered discussions about fertility preservation, while children diagnosed with cancer were assigned a key worker to help coordinate their care. He also observed

Bringing palliative care to remote communities

A new vehicle is helping Herbertpur Christian Hospital reach patients in some of the most remote parts of northern India, bringing vital care and support directly to their homes.



The palliative care team

Herbertpur Christian Hospital is situated in the Dehradun district of Uttarakhand, northern India. Established to serve communities with limited access to healthcare, the hospital provides a range of medical services to people across the surrounding rural areas. Its palliative care team plays a particularly important role in supporting patients with serious or life-limiting conditions, many of whom are unable to travel to hospital and need care in their own homes.

In November 2025, Friends of Vellore UK sent £11,207 towards a new vehicle for the hospital's palliative care service. This vehicle has transformed the team's ability to reach patients in distant villages, make regular home visits and respond more quickly to their needs.



Palliative Care team on the way to Sameer's house

During 2025–26, the team made an impressive 1,786 home visits, supported 180 patients through its home-care programme and provided 83 family training sessions. The new vehicle has also enabled the team to offer bereavement support to families and build stronger links with local health workers and community leaders.

Bringing hope to Sameer

One young patient whose life has been touched by this service is 22-year-old Sameer. After developing transverse myelitis, an inflammatory condition affecting the spinal cord, he lost the ability to walk and control his bladder and bowels. He also developed severe pressure ulcers and became confined to his bed.

As his condition worsened, the ulcers became increasingly difficult to manage. Friends stopped visiting, and Sameer became withdrawn and hopeless. His family lived deep inside a forest, making access to their home extremely difficult. Although he received initial treatment at the hospital, he needed ongoing care and support at home.

The new vehicle enabled the palliative care team to make regular visits to Sameer. They dressed his wounds, taught his family how to care for him, advised on nutrition and weight management, and offered encouragement and emotional support.

Gradually, his wounds began to improve, and his family grew more confident in caring for him. Sameer started smiling again, and friends began visiting. The team's regular presence helped restore a sense of hope and dignity to his life.

Reaching further

The vehicle is also helping the hospital develop relationships with nearby medical colleges and cancer institutes, some around two and a half hours away. By introducing oncologists to the hospital's home-based palliative care service, the team is creating opportunities for patients to be referred for continued support after specialist treatment.

Herbertpur Christian Hospital is deeply grateful to Friends of Vellore UK and its supporters. As Sameer's story shows, the vehicle is much more than a means of transport: it is helping carry compassionate care, dignity and hope to patients and families who might otherwise be beyond reach.

palliative care arrangements, including individual care plans, advance care directives, emergency medication kept at home and scheduled home visits.

The fellowship reinforced the importance of combining surgical expertise with a coordinated approach to treatment, from accurate diagnosis and genetic testing through to long-term follow-up and palliative support. Arun hopes to apply these lessons at CMC, helping to strengthen multidisciplinary



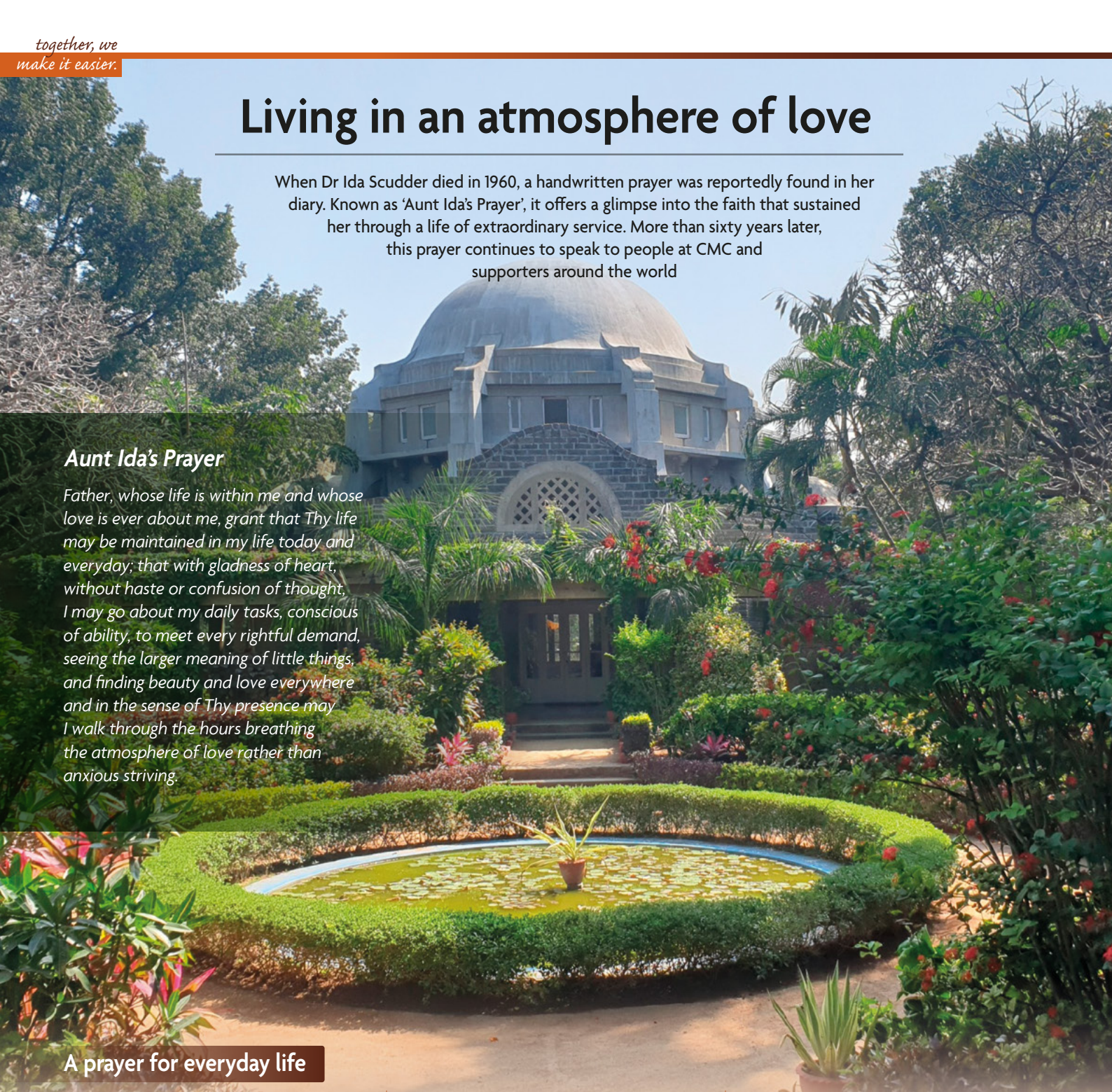
Arun with NHS colleages

paediatric oncology services, improve surgical practice and develop more joined-up care for children with cancer.

The Senior Training Fellowship programme enables CMC clinicians to learn from specialist centres around the world and use that experience to improve care for patients in India. Arun's fellowship is one example of how this support can have a lasting impact, benefiting children and families who need highly specialised treatment.

Living in an atmosphere of love

When Dr Ida Scudder died in 1960, a handwritten prayer was reportedly found in her diary. Known as 'Aunt Ida's Prayer', it offers a glimpse into the faith that sustained her through a life of extraordinary service. More than sixty years later, this prayer continues to speak to people at CMC and supporters around the world



Aunt Ida's Prayer

Father, whose life is within me and whose love is ever about me, grant that Thy life may be maintained in my life today and everyday; that with gladness of heart, without haste or confusion of thought, I may go about my daily tasks, conscious of ability, to meet every rightful demand, seeing the larger meaning of little things, and finding beauty and love everywhere and in the sense of Thy presence may I walk through the hours breathing the atmosphere of love rather than anxious striving.

A prayer for everyday life

The prayer begins with a reminder of God's constant presence: His Spirit within us and His love surrounding us. This awareness should shape not just occasional moments of worship, but our whole lives, including everyday tasks. We are invited to live with faith at the centre, drawing strength and reassurance from God as we face each day.

With gladness of heart, without haste or confusion of thought: How easily we become caught up in responsibilities, deadlines and worries, always thinking about what comes next. We can become so focused on completing tasks that we forget to notice those around us or appreciate God's goodness and grace. Ida reminds us to approach our work with calmness, purpose and gratitude.

There is beauty and love to be found everywhere, if we only take time to look for it. We see God's goodness in creation, both in the natural world and in His image reflected in the people he has made.

Conscious of ability, to meet every rightful demand: In a world of competing demands, we need wisdom to discern which deserve our attention. We can ask our Heavenly Father for confidence to meet our responsibilities using the gifts He has given us and relying on His strength.

Seeing the larger meaning of little things: Do we take joy in and recognise the impact of a kind word, a patient response, a helping hand or time spent listening? Ida's own life of service began with a response to the needs of individuals. The remarkable institution that grew from her work was built through countless small acts of care, compassion and dedication.

Finally, she asks to walk through life *"breathing the atmosphere of love rather than anxious striving"*. This does not mean avoiding effort or responsibility, but allowing love, rather than fear or pride, to guide our actions.

As you read Aunt Ida's prayer, consider how it speaks to you in your busyness. Can you slow down, notice the beauty around you, find meaning in small acts and meet others with patience and love? A life of purpose is not measured only by what we achieve, but by the spirit in which we live it.

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