Making every difficult mile worthwhile for Francis House Children's Hospice

Wednesday 27 May, 2026

Runners in the prestigious TCS London Marathon and the fast and friendly Manchester Marathon have raised an incredible £60,000 for Francis House Children's Hospice.

Some ran the 26.2 mile challenge in memory of loved ones, but all were united in giving something back in support of a good cause.

Francis House supports more than 435 families from across Greater Manchester, providing holistic care in a home from home environment to the families of children and young adults who have a life-shortening or life-threatening condition.

Andrew "Barney" Barnard, chose to run for Francis House after learning of the support that family friends received from the hospice.

Barney, 56, from Reading, raised a staggering £31,500 after completing what he promised to be his third and final marathon.

Barney said: "Francis House is a charity incredibly close to the Thornton family having looked after their son Jason for so many years. They have experienced first-hand the support, care and compassion that Francis House gives to families going through the toughest times imaginable, this touched a nerve with me.

"When Jason sadly passed he was laid to rest at Francis House. Moments that his family feared would be unbearable were instead filled with peace, dignity and compassion. The care and kindness they received will stay with them forever."

Francis House provided respite care to Jason, his siblings Melissa and Simon, and parents Dawn and Russ for almost two decades until Jason's death in 2023. The hospice continues to support the family with bereavement support.

In 2024, Melissa ran the TCS London Marathon in memory of Jason and for Francis House, raising almost £12,000 in donations.

"This isn't just a hospice," said Barney, "It is a place that gives people support, dignity, laughter and precious memories when they need it most. That made the marathon feel much bigger than just a running challenge. It became about trying to give something back and helping Francis House continue the amazing work they do."

A network of family members, friends, clients and colleagues came together in a show of support that Barney described as 'beyond expectations' to smash his £15,000 fundraising target and to raise £27,150.00 plus £4,347.00 in Gift Aid.

"Taking part in the London Marathon you start off thinking it's about endurance and suffering, but actually it becomes about community, humour, support and perspective. You meet brilliant people during training and on race day, and you realise how generous people are when they rally around a good cause.

"Crossing Tower Bridge and then finishing on The Mall are moments you never forget. Combined with why you are running and to see the family members cheering you on, you realise your pain is temporary - the pain of the marathon is nothing. The biggest feeling is knowing that the run had helped raise a meaningful amount for Francis House. That made every difficult mile worthwhile," said Barney.

Kerry Laffey from Reddish, works at West Didsbury CE Primary School and ran her first ever marathon with colleague Ella Carter after seeing first hand the support the hospice provided to pupils at the school.

Kerry said: "Running the London Marathon has always been a dream of mine. Being able to run it in aid of Francis House was what made it so special. The atmosphere on the whole course was phenomenal and carried me a lot of the way, but remembering two very special little girls got me over the finish line. It was the hardest, yet most incredible, thing I have ever achieved!"

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Julie Williams, fundraising manager of Francis House expressed her gratitude to the runners, their sponsors and supporters. Julie said: “We are so proud of our runners, everyone has worked so hard to raise such a fantastic amount. If this has inspired you to get involved, we have lots of events on our website for you to choose from”.

To take part in a challenge event whilst raising vital funds, visit the Francis House website https://www.francishouse.org.uk/get-involved/events/?events-category=sports-and-challenges

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