

The Practice Manager  
«GP\_Surgery»  
«Road»  
«District»  
«County»  
«Post\_Code»

FAX: «Fax»

July 2008

Dear Colleague

**Important information on forthcoming developments at St Catherine's**

We are pleased to share with you our plan to embark on a significant change to our community care provision. In particular, at this early stage, we would like to describe the implications for you and your patients over the next six months of our transitional phase.

**From January 2009 we are planning to enhance the quality care we provide in partnership with you, to patients and their families at home. This will incorporate:**

- seven days a week community visiting and telephone service (8am-8pm) and enhanced on-call arrangements (8pm-8am)
- a component of practical 'hands-on' care, to complement our current advisory service
- early-intervention programmes, run by St Catherine's Day Services at the hospice.

**The benefits we envisage for patients are:**

- more of those who wish to receive care and to die at home, will be able to do so
- fewer unplanned admissions to hospice or hospital for pain and symptom management
- more opportunities for patients to attend a variety of short-term support programmes through our day service, focused on improving quality of life.

We will continue to provide in-patient care for those in need of symptom control, respite care and end of life care.

**Next steps**

In autumn 2008 we will be hosting a number of information events to discuss with you, our key partners, the service you can expect when you refer a patient. In the meantime, we will continue our active discussions with PCT and healthcare colleagues to ensure we develop this service in partnership.

**Transition arrangements June 2008 - January 2009**

Between now and January 2009, the St Catherine's community care team will be in transition.

We are currently recruiting additional nurses to provide the enhanced community service, however some of existing community nurse specialists are leaving St Catherine's and therefore we will be relatively under-staffed until recruitment and orientation is completed.

We will continue to provide a service to you and your patients during this time. Following referral, this service may be different to your current expectation. Support for your patients will be shared across our team of staff, rather than the same hospice community

nurse all the time. New members of staff joining us will introduce themselves to you as they settle into their roles.

**During this period, please continue to refer patients as usual. On receipt of your referral:**

- one of the clinical team will phone the patient to identify their current needs; and arrange for them to meet the appropriate member of the hospice team
- following this telephone assessment, most patients will continue to have a home visit. For others we will offer an outpatient visit, or a direct referral to day services or to the appropriate member of the MDT (eg counselling)
- we will keep you informed of our plan for your patient's care following initial assessment and regular case review meetings
- by assessing patients in this way we aim to focus our care on those patients with the highest level of need related to their illness - this will mean that patients with less active needs will be followed up by telephone.

**From now on, if you would like to talk to us about an individual patient you are planning to refer, please contact: Sally Hill, Clinical Admin Co-ordinator  
Tel: 01293 447340**

**Sally will direct your call to the most appropriate person.**

Between September and December we also have hospice building work planned which will reduce our in-patient capacity by six beds. We aim to keep disruption to in-patient services to a minimum, but there may be delay in meeting some admission requests during this period.

**Plans for current patients**

We will, of course, continue to provide advice and support for patients you have already referred. Where transitional arrangements may affect their care, we will explain this, but will try to ensure the best support is available throughout the next few months. We will continue to attend your GSF or Practice meetings and you will start to see some new faces at these meetings.

**Keeping you informed**

We look forward to keeping you and our patients informed about our new developments as they are established. In the meantime, we will be providing regular updates on our website at [www.stch.org.uk/healthcareprofessionals/serviceupdate](http://www.stch.org.uk/healthcareprofessionals/serviceupdate), or simply follow the link from our home page. If you have any specific queries you'd like to discuss, please email us at [serviceupdate@stch.org.uk](mailto:serviceupdate@stch.org.uk). We will write with an invitation to the information events planned for the autumn and will continue to share details of the new community care arrangements going forward.

With very best wishes,

**Dr Patricia Brayden  
Consultant in Palliative Medicine**

**Sarah Pearce  
Lead Nurse, Community Services**