

# News



For supporters of  
St Gemma's Hospice  
Autumn/Winter 2025



**Hospice care is more  
than you think**

**Read Jude's story inside**



**St.  
Gemma's  
Hospice**

[st-gemma.co.uk](http://st-gemma.co.uk)

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# Six Months in the Role – A Reflection from Our Chief Executive

**“This summer marks six months since I became Chief Executive of St Gemma’s Hospice. It has been a busy and inspiring time, filled with opportunities to meet staff, volunteers, patients, families, and supporters.**

I knew St Gemma’s by reputation before joining the team, but only when I arrived did I feel the warmth of the welcome and witness first-hand the dedication of everyone here. I’ve visited all 26 of our charity shops (bringing home a few treasures along the way!), spent time with care teams on the In-Patient Unit and in the community, and joined those supporting bereaved families.

Understanding our wider community has also been important. From supporter events to the annual volunteer thank you lunch, an Iftar gathering, and G-Fest, I’ve seen how deeply St Gemma’s is woven into the life of Leeds and beyond. Listening to people’s stories and seeing the many ways they support us has strengthened my appreciation for our community.

I know people valued the connection they had with Kerry, my predecessor, who many had known for over a decade. Building that trust again is important, and I am grateful to everyone who has enabled me to shadow their work and share their time and expertise.

As Chief Executive, I must focus on both today and the future. Demand for our services is growing, the NHS is changing, our buildings need modernising, and parliament is considering legislation on assisted dying, which is not compatible with our charitable objectives. Supporters often tell me how important it is to feel confident that St Gemma’s will still be here, providing outstanding care, for many years to come. That is a responsibility I hold close.

A quote I discovered in our history captures this beautifully:

**“May those who follow in this great work be of the same calibre as the valiant women... who had the faith and courage to plant the seed.”**

I return to these words often as we shape the St Gemma’s of tomorrow, while carrying forward the compassion and courage of those who came before us.

**Above all, we are here to care for those who need us. This is only possible because of you — our supporters. Your generosity of time, donations, and trust keeps our doors open and ensures every patient and family receives the care they deserve. I am deeply grateful. Together, with your support, we can secure St Gemma’s for generations to come.**

Leading St Gemma’s is a privilege, and I look forward to being part of this family for many years to come.”

**Laura Squire OBE**  
Chief Executive



# A Front-Row Seat to the Future of Care

**At St Gemma’s, we’re always looking for new ways to improve care — not just for today’s patients, but for the doctors and nurses of tomorrow. That’s why our own Academic Unit of Palliative Care is embracing innovation in medical education, giving students a front-row seat to the very best in compassionate care.**

Medical students have long learned from visiting the Hospice, seeing first-hand what compassionate palliative care looks like. But some experiences are rare or hard to access. To bridge that gap, the Academic Unit has introduced Virtual Clinical Experiences (VCE) — a pioneering platform that is likely a global first for a hospice.

Using smart glasses, cameras, and a digital stethoscope, students join consultations remotely. They see, hear, and interact in real time, then debrief with clinicians afterwards — all without disrupting the patient. Sessions are fully consented, and patients can pause at any time, keeping comfort front and centre.

Piloted with students from the University of Central Lancashire, feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. Patients found the technology non-intrusive, families appreciated the natural interaction, and students valued the opportunity to observe and engage from a distance. It also brings together doctors and nurses in training, fostering collaboration from the very start of their careers.

By removing geographical barriers, VCE allows more students — wherever they are — to gain vital palliative care experience, building the skills, confidence, and empathy they’ll need in the future.

Your support helps St Gemma’s lead the way, combining innovation with compassion so we can care for patients today and equip tomorrow’s healthcare professionals to do the same.

Students join Dr Jason Ward virtually during a patient consultation



## Powering care with sunshine

**This summer, eco-friendly improvements at St Gemma’s are making a real difference — for the Hospice, our gardens, and the planet. Our vegetable patch is thriving, supported by four new water butts collecting rainwater, while flowers, lavender, and colourful blooms boost biodiversity, attracting bees, hoverflies, and other pollinators.**

Indoors, our solar panels now frequently power the entire building. This spring, they generated enough electricity to run the whole Hospice for the first time, sometimes even sending extra back to the grid. That helps cut our energy bills meaning your donations go even further to support what matters most: patient care.

With energy-efficient LED lighting and other eco-friendly updates, these small steps are making a big difference — for the planet, our finances, and the people we care for every day.





# Hospice Care: It's More Than You Think

**Every autumn, hospices across the UK celebrate Hospice Care Week. At St Gemma's, we use the week to shine a spotlight on some of the remarkable ways we support patients and their families — and to challenge myths about what hospice care really is.**

Our team works tirelessly to provide care tailored to each patient. But hospice care isn't just about managing pain or symptoms on the ward — it's often about the little things that make life meaningful. It could be enjoying a morning coffee at a favourite café, cheering at a sports match, taking a day trip to the beach, or simply spending time in their own garden. Hospice care is about living well, as much as preparing for the end.

This year's theme, "It's More Than You Think," captures that perfectly. Hospices aren't just places people go at the very end of life — they are hubs of support, innovation, and hope, offering practical help, emotional guidance, and compassionate care for patients and families.

These stories show just how transformative hospice care can be.

## Jude said:

"St Gemma's has been a lifeline for me. I'm too poorly to go to a beauty salon, but Helen does my nails, and it makes such a difference — I feel like a different person. She knows exactly how to care for someone in my situation and always makes me comfortable. I've tried Zumba and other activities in Out-Patients, but it's these little touches — Reiki, hand massages, just talking — that really help. Knowing they check in when I'm unwell makes all the difference. I wouldn't go anywhere else."



## David said:

"I was given just two days to live in hospital, and my family was preparing for the worst. When I arrived at St Gemma's, I knew it was a special place. It didn't feel clinical at all — more like a hotel, and the team helped me feel better each day. Paul, my St Gemma's community specialist nurse, was like a guardian angel, giving me hope when my GP said there was none. Once my symptoms were under control, I realised I didn't need end-of-life care. I've now been fully discharged and can get my life back, knowing I can always return if needed. The care, compassion, and even the food — it's all amazing."



## Vicky said:

"A year ago, my life was in chaos — I was seriously ill, struggling with alcohol, had experienced domestic violence and was living in supported accommodation for alcohol-dependent women. St Gemma's truly helped turn my life around. Not just through nursing care — but making me safe and helping with the things that were important to me, like making memories with my children and reconnecting with my adopted son. The whole team gave me the care I didn't even know I needed — they literally gave me my life back. Hospices aren't just about end-of-life care; they give hope. They've helped me to find peace with everything before I die. Angels exist — and they're at St Gemma's."



## Max and Tom's commitment ceremony:

Earlier this year we had the privilege of hosting a heartfelt commitment ceremony for Tom and his partner, Max. Surrounded by loved ones, they exchanged vows and enjoyed an afternoon tea with fizz and cake, lovingly prepared by our Bistro team. Sadly, Tom passed away a few days later, surrounded by those who loved him. Max shared, "Tom received the best possible care from the team at St Gemma's. I will be forever grateful to everyone who helped him and me in his final days." His mum added, "It is a very special place where kindness and expertise meet."



**These stories are just a glimpse of the extraordinary work happening every day at St Gemma's Hospice — work made possible by amazing supporters like you. During Hospice Care Week, we'll be sharing more stories like these and showing how supporters like you make it all possible. Because hospice care isn't just what you think — it's so much more.**



# How will you remember your loved ones with St Gemma's this festive season?

## Laura's story

**We spoke to Laura, whose 4-year-old daughter took part in last year's Santa Dash.**

"St Gemma's Hospice means so very much to me as they cared for my grandma and my mum. I was just 26 and my mum was 53; losing the best person in my whole world at the time was beyond heart-breaking — but St Gemma's made the saddest of times that little bit easier with their outstanding care and support.

My mum loved Christmas, and now I follow in her footsteps to sprinkle magic for my daughter — keeping my mum's spirit in everything I do.

My husband Jon is a keen runner — me not so much. But luckily our little girl, Georgina, has inherited his sporting ability. So, we felt joining the Santa Dash to dress up and raise money in my mum's memory was a fun, festive thing to do.

5k is a long way to run for little legs and as Georgina was only four at the time, it was a big challenge for her. It was incredible to see so many Santas running together and I almost burst with pride when my little Santa made it across the finish line. She was so happy and proud to receive her medal and raise money for other families who need the support of St Gemma's. 16 years after losing her, it was incredibly heart-warming to know that in some way, my mum is still spreading Christmas magic."



## Buy your Christmas cards

**Our beautiful and exclusive range of cards are now on sale.**

Buy your cards from St Gemma's this year and unlike many of the charity cards you'll find on sale in supermarkets, 100% of the profits from our cards directly support the work of the Hospice.

We have 22 cards in the range including this stunner of the bandstand in Roundhay Park by our wonderful supporter and local artist John Edwards.



## Buy your Christmas tree from St Gemma's

Buy your festive spruce while supporting hospice care.

"Buying my Christmas tree at St Gemma's is an annual event I really look forward to. The trees are beautiful, well priced, and the service I get from the team every year is superb. I'm a fussy customer and nothing is too much trouble for them! It's a fantastic experience from start to finish."



## Donate in memory of your loved one or sponsor a Day of Care

Your gift could help a family have Christmas dinner at the Hospice, fund care in the community, or help a child remember a loved one.



## Dates for your diary

**September-October**

Make a Will Month, solicitors across Leeds

**29 November**

Winter Ball, New Dock Hall

**30 November & 4-6 December**

Christmas Tree Sales, St Gemma's Hospice

**7 December**

Light Up a Life, St Gemma's Hospice

**11 December**

Light Up a Life, Immaculate Heart of Mary Church

**December**

Santa Dash, across Leeds

**Early January**

Treecycling

**Light  
UP A  
Life  
2025**

**Dedicate a light on our beautiful Hospice trees.** Toni will be dedicating a light in memory of her dad, Kevin, who died peacefully at the Hospice in January.



## Get in touch

Donate: 0113 218 5555  
[fundraising@st-gemma.co.uk](mailto:fundraising@st-gemma.co.uk)

To find out more visit  
[www.st-gemma.co.uk/support-us](http://www.st-gemma.co.uk/support-us)



**Thank you for supporting St Gemma's care and making a difference**



# Giving the Gift of Care to Future Patients

Did you spot our legacy campaign on the back of a bus in Leeds earlier this year, or catch the *This is Hospice Care* advert on TV?

We've been thrilled by the response to the national Hospice UK *This is Hospice Care* campaign, which shows that hospice care is often more than people expect, and that gifts left in Wills play a vital role in making that care possible. If you missed it, don't worry — the campaign returns to screens this autumn!

Gifts in Wills help provide compassionate care not just today, but for generations to come. They ensure local families facing the hardest times receive the support they need — from pain relief to emotional support, or simply a listening ear.

Our wonderful volunteer, Stewart, shares why he has chosen to leave a gift to St Gemma's:

**"The Hospice today offers so much more than end-of-life care. Most patients now choose to spend their final days at home, something my father was one of the first able to do in 1999 thanks to the Hospice's community care team. St Gemma's care continues to evolve, with bereavement counselling, specialist support for children coping with the loss of a parent or loved one, and outreach to vulnerably housed people in Leeds. All this vital work comes at a significant cost – which is why I've decided to leave a gift to St Gemma's in my Will."**

Gifts in Wills form a crucial part of the funding the Hospice relies on every year. By choosing to leave a gift, you too can help ensure these life-changing services continue for others in the future.

**Every gift, no matter the size, helps us to be here for more people when they need us most.**

To find out more about leaving a gift in your Will, or to request our free Gifts in Wills guide, please visit [www.st-gemma.co.uk/yourlegacy](http://www.st-gemma.co.uk/yourlegacy) or contact Katy on 0113 306 9165 or at [KatyLee@st-gemma.co.uk](mailto:KatyLee@st-gemma.co.uk).

Together, we can ensure that hospice care lives on for all, for now, forever.



## A Change of Leadership on Our Board of Trustees

After five years of dedicated service, our Chair of Trustees, Phil Corrigan, has stepped down. Phil joined St Gemma's in 2020 and became Chair in 2022, guiding us with wisdom and compassion through a period of growth. She now looks forward to more time with her family, especially her granddaughter. We are grateful for her leadership and wish her every happiness.

Reflecting on her role, Phil said: "I have loved being part of St Gemma's. It has been a huge privilege to support such a special organisation, and I'm confident the Hospice will continue to flourish."

We are pleased to welcome Lisa Hollidge as our new Chair. Lisa joined the Board in 2023 and brings 25 years' experience in retail, including senior roles at Sainsbury's and Marks & Spencer. She is also a qualified leadership coach with a passion for values-led leadership.

Please join us in thanking Phil and welcoming Lisa. Our Trustees govern St Gemma's, ensuring we operate effectively, safely, and legally — all as volunteers giving their time and expertise.

Learn more:  
[www.st-gemma.co.uk/about-us/trustees-patrons](http://www.st-gemma.co.uk/about-us/trustees-patrons)

