

News

For supporters of
St Gemma's Hospice
Spring/Summer 2026



Where Care Meets Community

How Our Shops Support Hospice Care



**St.
Gemma's
Hospice**

st-gemma.co.uk

0113 218 5500



Make a
donation



My First Year at St Gemma's

February marked the end of my first 12 months as Chief Executive at St Gemma's. In that time, I've learned that hospices are not just places or organisations — they are communities, even families. That includes not only our staff and volunteers, but people like you who support us. We never take that support for granted, and one of the pleasures of my role is having opportunities like this newsletter to say thank you.

Hospice funding is increasingly in the news, which I welcome. Demand for palliative care continues to rise, both in the number of people who need us and the complexity of their needs. Ministers and NHS leaders have been clear that funding for hospice care is not yet where it needs to be. While there have been some helpful one-off investments from government, uncertainty about long-term funding remains.

Even discussions about increased funding focus on the basics of medical and nursing care — and we are still some way from that being fully met. Importantly, even if statutory funding improved, hospices would always rely on donations to provide the enhanced care that makes such a difference to patients and families. Your support is vital now, and it will always be vital. **We saw that generosity so clearly in December, when supporters helped us raise over £300,000 in a single month. Thank you never feels quite enough.**

Another real pleasure of this role is working with such a dedicated team. It was tough to say goodbye to Heather McClelland at the end of 2025, after many years as our Chief Nurse. I was delighted to welcome Charlotte Rock, who joined us earlier this year to build on Heather's work with our outstanding nursing, therapy, family support and education teams.

Despite the challenges, St Gemma's continues to thrive and grow — because of you. Thank you for being part of our Hospice family and for helping us make a real difference to the people who need us most.

Laura Squire OBE
Chief Executive

A Warm Welcome for Our Supporters

We're excited to announce the opening of our Supporter Hub, a welcoming space in the Hospice's main Reception where visitors can connect with our Supporter Experience Team.

The Hub is open weekdays, 9 am–5 pm, so if you call into the Hospice, the team can greet you, answer questions, and share stories about the care we provide to patients and families.

The Hub was officially opened by long-standing supporter and volunteer Brita. It's a lovely new space for us to meet supporters and celebrate the people who help make St Gemma's such a special place.

Supporter Hub

Thank you for...
Skydiving
Climbing
Walking
Bike Riding



Leading with Compassionate Care

Charlotte spent time with patient Clive on her first day as Chief Nurse.

This spring, we said a fond farewell to Heather McClelland, who retired after almost ten years as our Chief Nurse. Heather guided St Gemma's through the challenges of COVID and two consecutive CQC Outstanding inspections, always keeping patient care and compassion at the heart of everything we do.

We're delighted to welcome Charlotte Rock, who joined us this spring. Charlotte brings decades of experience as a nurse leader in the NHS, including leading hospital and community palliative care teams, and is passionate about delivering outstanding, patient-centred palliative care.

On her very first day, Charlotte spent time on the In-Patient Unit meeting patients and colleagues. One of those patients was Clive from Cross Green,

who was preparing to return home after a six-day stay. "The team have been fantastic — they can't do enough for you here," said Clive. "It was lovely to meet Charlotte and tell her just how good the care has been."

"I'm thrilled to join the Outstanding team at St Gemma's," Charlotte said. "I've already seen what an ambitious and dedicated team this is, and I'm excited to be part of the Hospice's future."

Building a Buzz in Our Gardens

Something special is taking shape in the St Gemma's gardens this spring. Our award-winning gardens are already a peaceful, therapeutic space filled with areas for reflection and calm, and soon they'll be home to something new. The labyrinth area is being transformed into an apiary — a place where bees are kept and cared for — bringing nature, learning and wellbeing together in the Hospice grounds.

Work is already underway, made possible thanks to the generosity of supporters, S9 Communications, and the dedication of our estates team, gardeners and volunteers. Two members of our team are also completing a beekeeping course, learning how to care for the hives and nurture the bees as the apiary develops.

In time, we hope the hives will produce honey for patients and families to enjoy — a small but meaningful connection to the natural world during their time at the Hospice.

The apiary will be a welcome addition to our gardens, offering a place of calm, curiosity and connection. We'll share more updates as the project progresses.

You can visit our gardens at our annual Open Gardens event on 20 June 2026, from 11.00 am to 3.00 pm.

Visit our website for details:



Volunteers building the apiary



Congratulations to Nicky Hibbert - Queen's Nurse

We're delighted to share that our Nurse Consultant, Nicky Hibbert, has been awarded the prestigious title of Queen's Nurse by The Queen's Institute of Community Nursing (QICN). The Queen's Nurse title recognises excellence in patient care, leadership, and ongoing professional development.

Nicky leads our Inclusion Service, supporting vulnerably-housed people and those experiencing homelessness across Leeds, ensuring they can access compassionate, specialist care. Steph Lawrence MBE, Chief Executive of the QICN, said: "Queen's Nurses serve as leaders and role models in community nursing, delivering high-quality healthcare across the country. The application process is rigorous and reflects a clear commitment to improving care for patients, families and carers."

Nicky said: "I feel incredibly privileged to receive this recognition and to work alongside such a skilled and compassionate team. Everything we do is about providing the best possible care for patients and families, and I'm proud to be part of that."

This is a fantastic and well-deserved recognition — a real credit to Nicky and the whole St Gemma's team, reflecting the dedication and expertise that make our care so special.

You can read more about Nicky's achievement on our blog:



Country Style Foods bake up £22,000 for St Gemma's



At the start of 2025, the team at Country Style Foods' Leeds branch chose St Gemma's as their Charity of the Year — and what an impact they've made.

They launched their support with a Pancake Day bake sale, quickly raising over £500. With cake sales at Easter, Halloween and Christmas, the momentum continued, bringing in hundreds of pounds each time.

Their biggest challenge came in May, when colleagues took on the Leeds Country Way — a gruelling 100km walk around the city over two days, in extreme heat. Thanks to their determination and teamwork, the challenge raised more than £5,000.

The team didn't stop there, supporting the Hospice's Open Gardens with a popular artisan bread stall, the Sunset Walk and more.

In total, Country Style Foods raised an incredible £22,000 — and they're already going strong with their fundraising in 2026. Their story shows just how powerful workplace fundraising can be in helping St Gemma's care for patients and families across Leeds.

If you'd like to get your workplace involved, visit our website to find out more about corporate fundraising.



Welcoming Customers, Supporting Care

Two of our community nurses recently had a special role to play, helping open the doors to our new shop in Stanningley. Jen and Gemma took time out of their busy day visiting patients across the city to welcome the many customers who came along, giving the shop a warm and encouraging first day.

Our retail operation is a vital part of how we fund compassionate care. With 27 shops, around 80 staff and an incredible 500 volunteers, we welcomed over 770,000 customers last year and sold more than 1.6 million items — raising over £1 million to support our Hospice services across Leeds.

Behind the scenes, our large warehouse and retail hub in Bramley is a hive of activity, where staff and volunteers sort, process and prepare donations to keep our shops stocked and running smoothly.

This spring also sees the relocation of our Otley store to a bigger, brighter space, helping us maintain a strong high street presence and continue to inspire customers with unique finds.

You can find all our shop locations, or learn how to get involved, on our website — and be part of the incredible community that keeps St Gemma's shops supporting patients and families across Leeds.

Gemma finds herself a bargain coat!



Every purchase, donation and volunteer shift plays a part in helping us care for patients and families when they need us most.

Giving Back: Dave's Challenge in Memory of His Dad



Last year, Dave's father received care from St Gemma's Hospice, first with our Out-Patient team for eight months, then being admitted to our In-Patient Unit for his final ten days.

"Every person we encountered in my dad's last days took such amazing care of him and our family, making his time there as peaceful as possible," Dave says. "It was an emotional time, but we were blessed with incredible care and compassion from everyone at the Hospice."

Later that year, Dave decided to complete a 50km bike ride before turning 50, while awaiting knee surgery, in memory of his father. He also wanted to raise awareness and funds for St Gemma's.

"I can think of no better way to show my gratitude than to support the incredible work the Hospice does, which relies on donations to continue," he says.

With Dave's incredible efforts, he's raised over £2,000 so far, directly supporting the care we provide to patients and families.

Like Dave, you can take on a challenge to support St Gemma's — whether you prefer running, cycling, walking, or creating your own personal goal. Check out our events calendar opposite or visit our website.

Every challenge you take on, big or small, makes a real difference to the care we can provide.



How You Can Support St Gemma's

Thanks to supporters like you, we can provide compassionate care to every patient and family who needs us. Here's how you can make a difference in 2026.



Give a Monthly Donation

By giving monthly, you help us plan ahead and ensure every patient receives the care they need.



Make a One-Off Donation

Every gift counts – from £5 to £500, your support makes a real difference.



Leave a Gift in Your Will

A gift in your Will can help future generations of patients and families access St Gemma's care.

Go Purple this May

Think purple. Wear purple. Fundraise purple.

Join our month-long campaign for St Gemma's. Bring colour to the office, get baking, host an event, and have fun while supporting vital patient care.



Go Purple this May



Golf Day



Sunset Walk

Share Your Story

Your story matters.

Sharing your personal experience of St Gemma's care can inspire others and will help support our work and the patients and families in our care.



Key Dates for Your Diary

May

Go Purple, support St Gemma's your way

10 May

Leeds Marathon

18 June

Golf Day, Oulton Hall

20 June

Inflatable 5k, Harewood House

20 June

Open Gardens at the Hospice

27 June

Yorkshire Three Peaks challenge

18 July

GFest Music Festival, Garforth

19 September

Sunset Walk, Roundhay Park

September and October

Make a Will Month

28 November

Winter Ball, Royal Armouries

6 December

Light Up a Life at the Hospice

Get in touch

Call us: 0113 218 5555

fundraising@st-gemma.co.uk
www.st-gemma.co.uk/support-us/



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



Growing in Spiritual Care

Nidhin, one of our Spiritual Care Workers, recently completed a Postgraduate Qualification in Chaplaincy – and it's already making a difference to patients and families.

"The course has deepened my understanding of spiritual care, helping me offer meaningful support during difficult times when emotional, spiritual, or religious needs arise," Nidhin explains. "I've grown in listening, being present, and understanding each person's unique needs."

For the past two years, Nidhin has been proud to be part of St Gemma's, supporting people to find peace, comfort and connection at some of life's most challenging moments. His additional training strengthens the care we're able to offer — ensuring patients and families receive sensitive, compassionate support that reflects what matters most to them.

Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, we can continue investing in our people and developing specialist services that make a real difference when it's needed most.

St Gemma's Tree of Life continues to grow and flourish

When Guy's mum, Chris, needed care in her final months, St Gemma's became a lifeline.

"Mum had been told the hospital couldn't provide any further help, so we were at a total loss. We had already heard positive stories about St Gemma's, but when we came into contact with the team directly, it felt like a true lifeline. The Hospice really was a home from home for us during those difficult weeks," he says. "The staff were amazing — kind, caring, and always there for her, whatever she needed. They made her comfortable and gave our family real peace of mind, which was priceless."

Wanting to give something back, Guy was inspired to help when he discovered the Tree of Life, a stunning copper sculpture that has been a place of remembrance at the heart of the Hospice for over 25 years. Families can honour loved ones with personalised, hand-engraved copper leaves, creating a lasting place of remembrance and reflection. When the leaves were running low, Guy and his family stepped in to supply 450 additional leaves, allowing the Tree to continue flourishing, giving future patients and families a lasting place of remembrance and hope.

"There is something about the Tree that is really special. Because we have a leaf in memory of Mum, we always have a connection to the Hospice," says Guy.



Find out more about our Tree of Life and dedicate a leaf: or call 0113 218 5555

