365 Days of Care Appeal
FAQ's

What benefits will there be?

We believe that being able to care for our community patients every day of the week will bring many benefits:

- Better pain and symptom management for patients living at home
  If a patient's symptoms worsen during the weekend our specialist nurses will be able to make a face-to-face assessment of their condition and decide on appropriate changes to their medication or advise the out of hours GP rather than patients having to wait – sometimes in pain – until Monday morning.

- More patients being able to stay at home for as long as they want
  If a patient's health deteriorates at the weekend they can end up being admitted to hospital because the out of hours GP and district nurses may not have the specialised knowledge that is needed to meet all their needs to enable them to stay at home. This can mean people who are near the end of their life can spend their last few days in hospital rather than at home where they wanted to be. Our Community Nurse Specialists have the knowledge and expertise to help patients stay at home.

- The right care by the right person at the right time
  When your loved one is poorly and in pain you don't want to spend time explaining the history of their illness and treatment; you want the support of someone who can offer effective help immediately. Our community nurses are uniquely placed to do this. Even if a patient never needs to use the weekend service, the knowledge that it is available will bring peace of mind.

How much will extending the service cost?

St. Gemma's Hospice would like to raise enough money to ensure the new seven day service continued for a minimum of five years.

St. Gemma's Hospice budgeted for one Community Nurse Specialist to work each Saturday and Sunday from 8.30am – 5pm.

As the service becomes established the Hospice are predicting that after 2 ½ years, two Community Nurse Specialists will be required to work each weekend.

Initially the cost of introducing this service would be £36,018 for the first year. The Hospice has included a 2% increase in the costs each year.

To fund the seven day Community Specialist Palliative Nurse Service for 5 years, St. Gemma's Hospice needs to raise £283,385 from the 365 Days of Care Appeal.

Case study – Tom's story*

(*not his real name)

Tom was a community patient at St. Gemma's Hospice. He was 52 and had a brain tumour. Living at home, Tom, his wife and teenage daughters received regular visits from St. Gemma's community nursing team. He had made it clear that he wanted to be cared for a home where he was with his family.

During her Friday visit the St. Gemma's Nurse Specialist noted Tom was having more headaches and was getting weaker. She prescribed an increase in his medication for pain. On Saturday morning, Tom told his family he wasn't feeling as well and wanted to stay in bed. Shortly after he had a fit. The fit stopped in a few minutes but his wife was worried and so phoned the Hospice for advice. During the call it was clear that Tom needed someone to assess him and his wife and daughters needed information and support.

Unfortunately, no one from St. Gemma's was able to visit the family as we do not have a community service at the weekend. Instead, his wife was advised to phone their out of hours GP. Shortly after Tom had another fit, understandably Tom's wife panicked and phoned 999.

Tom was admitted via Accident and Emergency and sadly died on a busy ward the next day rather than at home as he had wanted.

If Tom's condition had deteriorated during the week instead of at the weekend, one of our Community Nurse Specialists would have made a personal visit to Tom. She would have assessed his changing needs, altered his care accordingly and supported his family.

It is a source of huge frustration to the nurses at St. Gemma's to know that the current weekend arrangements for our patients living at home are not adequate. By offering a service seven days a week our community patients will get the care they deserve and needs as they face the end of their lives.