

Statement from Birmingham St Mary's Hospice re Norovirus

Trisha Castanheira, Head of Nursing Services, said: "Birmingham St Mary's Hospice currently has five patients and 12 staff affected by the winter vomiting bug known as Norovirus.

"The outbreak is currently affecting the in-patient unit only and we are taking every precaution possible to contain the virus, including temporarily suspending all admissions to this unit. The Hospice Clinical Nurse Specialist Team will continue to support patients in their own homes and liaise with the Primary Care Team should any patient require admission to an inpatient setting.

"The appearance of Norovirus is not unusual at this time of year and our staff have acted swiftly in response to the outbreak.

"Staff at the hospice take great care to ensure our very thorough infection prevention and control procedures are followed at all times.

"As soon as staff became aware of a suspected outbreak late on Wednesday afternoon, immediate actions were taken to contain and prevent the spread of the virus to patients, their families, other visitors to the site and to staff and volunteers.

"The actions we have taken include strict hand hygiene, prompt disinfection of equipment and all surfaces in high risk areas, providing patient information leaflets and the immediate isolation of infected patients. Staff who have the virus are being told not to return to work until 48 hours after their symptoms have ceased.

"We are mindful of the need to contain this infection as far as possible but also of the need not to cause undue distress to patients and their relatives. Accordingly, we have decided not to place any restrictions on families who wish to visit relatives.

"This decision has been taken because all our patients have life-limiting illnesses and the seriousness of their condition necessitates that we do not restrict regular visiting. Staff are, however, making visitors aware of the outbreak on entering the hospice and emphasising the need for good hygiene.

"As part of our robust infection control procedures we are asking that everyone entering and leaving the hospice takes sensible precautions when visiting. This includes thorough hand-washing and the use of anti-bacterial gel provided on entering and leaving the wards.

Staff are advising those who feel unwell or who have been unwell in the last 48 hours not to visit to help us prevent the spread of Norovirus.

“The Day Hospice and our Conference Centre are currently unaffected by this outbreak. Anyone wishing to confirm the current situation can contact the hospice on 0121 472 1191 prior to arriving.”

ENDS

Notes to editors

Norovirus is a highly contagious viral infection and although not normally serious, it can have a debilitating effect on people who are already poorly or recovering from illness.

Norovirus is a common infection, particularly in the winter months, and can cause outbreaks in hospitals, nursing and residential homes and schools.

The main symptoms are vomiting, with or without diarrhea.