

Spotlight on St Bede's



St Bede's is our palliative care unit at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. This is where we care for patients at various stages of an illness, helping to relieve symptoms and providing respite and end of life care.

The unit has been operational since May, but was officially opened in September by the Rt Revd Mark Bryant Bishop of Jarrow.

Manager of the unit Liz Lough said: "Although death is never an easy topic to discuss, at QE Gateshead we wanted to create an environment for patients coming to the end of their lives, where they and their families could feel comfortable and well looked after.

"Far from being a sad place, St Bede's has a warm, homely atmosphere, with a beautiful green space that all patients have access to. As nurses it's important that at the end of someone's life, you get it right, first time. The job satisfaction working here is immense, everything you do, is the last thing that you will ever do for your patient."

"Patients are mainly referred here from the main hospital, Macmillan cancer nurses or from their GP. It's not only cancer patients we see but patients with any terminal illness which could be things like COPD (Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) MS (Multiple sclerosis) heart failure or dementia."

Here, Liz, gives us a tour of the unit and talks about the work that goes on there...



Quiet Rooms – There's three quiet spaces for relatives, to speak to nurses or even to their loved ones if they need it. It was really important for us that relatives had somewhere to take a minute for themselves.



Kitchen – Every morning we serve a full English breakfast if patients want it, a privilege that the rest of the hospital isn't privy to! Patients always get a choice of food and we have snacks on the unit if patients want them. Unfortunately a lot of our patients aren't good eaters, but we do encourage families and friends to bring in patients favourite food if they want it.



Drugs cupboard – Our patients often have very complex needs, so we keep lots of different medication on the ward. Patients can come here for a week or two just for some symptom relief.

"I wish to express my sincere thanks to the staff on St Bede's unit for the care given to my husband. Words almost fail me at the amazing level of care the staff provided, not only to my husband, but to our family and visitors. The atmosphere was full of love and hope, and the surroundings add to this by not feeling clinical, but homely and comforting. It was a great comfort after his death to know that he passed away in beautiful surroundings, alongside staff who are fantastic"

- wife of a patient

Ward store – This where we keep all the supplies from bandages and dressings to observation equipment and cleaning materials.



Ward store

Shower bed – It's really important for us that patients keep their dignity, being able to wear their own clothes on the ward is just one way of helping them to keep their individuality. Helping patients wash is also a big part of their dignity, we have a shower bed for people who are too ill to have a normal bath or shower, and we also have a similar shower chair which is fully adjustable and reclines which is good for things like if a lady would like her hair washed.



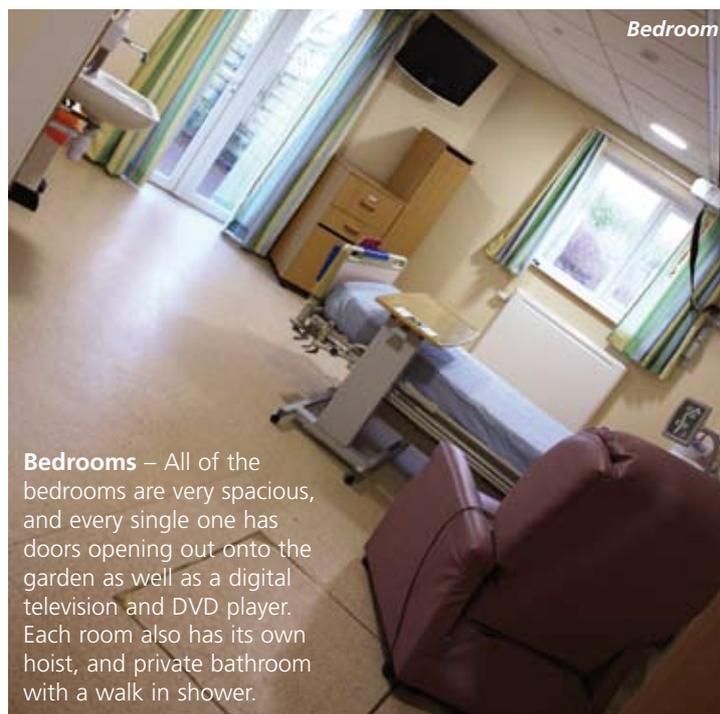
Shower bed drain

Shower bed



Day room

Day room – All the rooms have their own televisions, but the day room has a large telly, DVD player and Wii as well , which is entertainment for patients and also relatives.



Bedroom

Bedrooms – All of the bedrooms are very spacious, and every single one has doors opening out onto the garden as well as a digital television and DVD player. Each room also has its own hoist, and private bathroom with a walk in shower.



St Bede's garden

Garden – Our beautiful garden is one of the best features of the unit and all of the rooms back on to it with their own private piece of garden. The stones were transferred from the grounds of the old unit at Dunston Hill.

Dame Cicely Saunders, founder of the modern palliative care movement – "You matter because you are you. You matter to the last moment of your life, and we will do all we can not only the help you die peacefully, but to live until you die."