

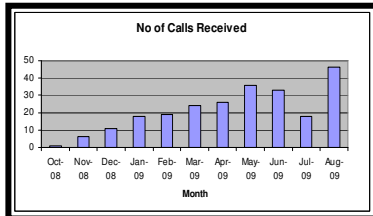
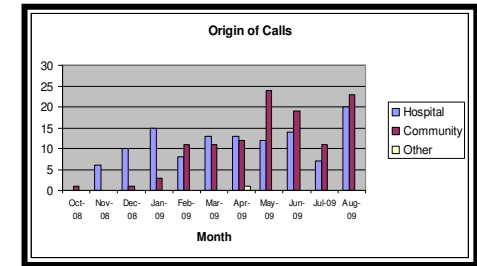
**SPECIALIST PALLIATIVE CARE OUT OF HOURS (OOH) TELEPHONE ADVICE SERVICE**

**WHY**

- \* Specialist Palliative Care within Gloucestershire is commissioned by NHS Gloucestershire.
- \* Traditionally within Gloucestershire Specialist Palliative Care advice has been available Mon to Fri 9.00 am to 5.00 pm.
- \* The publication, 'Guidance on Cancer Services. Improving Supportive and Palliative Care for Adults with Cancer', stated that 'the availability of a 24-hour telephone intervention...has been shown to reduce re-hospitalisation, to improve patients' quality of life and to enable more patients to die at home'.
- \* A review of specialist palliative care services had been undertaken in 2007; one of the outcomes of this review was the provision of 24-hour advice.
- \* As one of the providers we already provide specialist advice for complex problems therefore we are well placed to provide out of hours advice.

**WHAT**

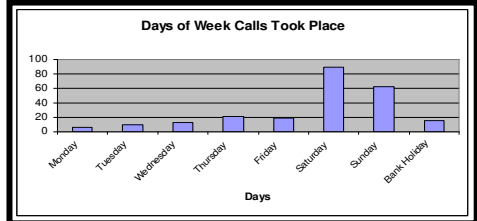
- \* A Specialist Palliative Care telephone advice line has been established to address the needs of healthcare professionals requiring advice out of hours.
- \* The advice is aimed primarily at symptom control and guidance for psychological distress that needs to be addressed urgently before the next working day.
- \* The advice line can be accessed by healthcare professionals working in primary and secondary care throughout Gloucestershire.
- \* This service contributes towards improving inpatient care and ensuring that patients who are in their preferred place of care remain there, helping to prevent unnecessary hospital admissions.



**HOW**

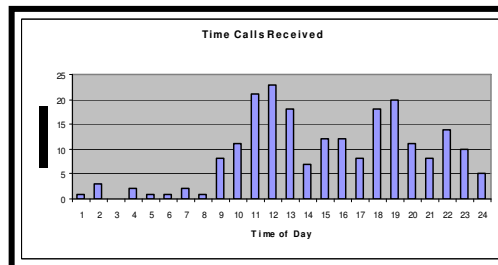
*Setting Up*

Following the review of palliative care services it was decided to move towards providing 24 hour advice. Information was requested from other teams providing a similar service, and a team member visited the Community Specialist Palliative Care Team in Cornwall which had been providing an 'out of hours' service for some years. When all the information had been gathered three work streams were set up to tackle the different issues involved in setting up and running the service. The work streams met three times during July and August 2008, and comprised Palliative Care Consultants and CNS's from the community and acute hospital teams; they fed back to the wider team in early September 2008. Although many of the nurses were uncertain about the change to their working practice, they wanted to improve patient care. In order to increase the CNS's confidence in their ability and to confirm that they were giving appropriate advice out of hours, they completed two study days which culminated in them taking part in a number of scenarios to assess their competence in giving safe and appropriate advice. A study day and a review meeting will take place annually.



*Getting Advice*

The contact number for the telephone advice service is a pager call centre. The call centre pages the Specialist Palliative Care Out of Hours Service and passes on the caller's message. The CNS will then contact the caller and deal with the query. A Specialist Palliative Care Consultant will act as second on-call for the service if needed. Any professional giving advice will be expected to record the details of the query and the advice given, on the specialist palliative care telephone advice form. The advice forms are filed for audit and monitoring purposes. Clinical responsibility for advice given by the Specialist Palliative Care Out of Hours Service is based on clinical information provided by the caller. Responsibility for following through the advice rests with the caller. The call response time is thirty minutes, however if there is no response within this time the caller should contact the call centre a second time. At weekends the CNS on-call contacts the 2nd on call at 12 midday and at 6 pm to verify calls received.



**WHEN**

- \* The service commenced at 5 pm on 1.10.08, covering Gloucestershire Royal Hospital, Cheltenham General Hospital and Cheltenham, Tewkesbury and the North Cotswolds locality for the following three months (the darker shaded area).
- \* The service was county wide from 1.1.09.
- \* The service operates between the hours of 5 pm and 9 am weeknights, with 24 hour cover at weekends and on Bank Holidays.

**REFERENCE**

1. National Institute for Clinical Excellence (2004) *Guidance on Cancer Services. Improving Supportive and Palliative Care for Adults with Cancer*. Available from: [www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)