

Monday 24 July - for immediate release

**Investigation into the two outbreaks of *Clostridium difficile* at Stoke Mandeville Hospital between October 2003 and June 2005**

The Healthcare Commission's report into two outbreaks of a virulent strain of *Clostridium difficile* at Stoke Mandeville Hospital, part of Buckinghamshire Hospitals NHS Trust, contains some difficult messages for the trust.

During the two outbreaks starting in October 2003 and October 2004, 334 patients contracted a new virulent strain of *C. difficile*. Thirty-three people died of hospital-acquired infection during the outbreaks.

Newly appointed acting Chief Executive Alan Bedford says: "The death of any patient from a hospital-acquired infection is a cause of deep concern and regret. We wish to express our sympathy to all those affected.

"We are determined to learn everything we can from the report, and fully accept the Healthcare Commission's recommendations that the outbreaks should have been handled better, and that there are organisational issues on which work is needed. Our priority is to work with staff on the issues raised by the report and to reassure patients that they are in safe hands. New infection control measures are already in place and have resulted in an 80 per cent reduction in hospital-acquired *C. difficile* at Stoke Mandeville Hospital this year compared with the same period last year.

“The trust will now work with the Healthcare Commission and the Health Protection Agency on a detailed action plan that will address the outstanding improvements needed. This plan will be overseen by the Board which is totally committed to responding quickly and thoroughly.

“The trust does not in any way wish to play down either its responsibility, or the seriousness of the outbreaks, but it is important to point out to local patients that the overall incidence of *C.difficile* identified in this trust over recent years has not been exceptional. The Healthcare Commission says that the trust’s figures were ‘in the middle of the range’ for NHS hospitals.”

A report to be released later today by the Health Protection Agency will give figures for the rate of *C. difficile* infection identified by Buckinghamshire Hospitals NHS Trust and other hospitals throughout the country. These figures show that between January and December 2005 (which includes the second outbreak of *C. difficile*) the trust was ranked as 106th out of 168 hospital trusts.

Since the two outbreaks between October 2003 and June 2005, standards of cleanliness have been dramatically improved, and a wide package of infection control measures introduced. These measures have reduced the rates of trust-acquired (and community-acquired *C. difficile* identified by the trust) from between January and June 2006 by 33 per cent against the rate identified for calendar year 2005.

There has been an 80 per cent reduction in cases of *C. difficile* acquired at Stoke Mandeville in the first six months of this year compared to the same period last year.

Figures are also released today on MRSA rates. These show the incidence in Buckinghamshire Hospitals Trust to be 26 per cent better than the national average in 2005. Despite this, the trust has asked Department of Health experts to visit soon to make absolutely sure our progress on MRSA is maintained.

Alan Bedford continued: “Reporting these improved rates of infection is not to minimise the terrible distress to patients and families caused by acquiring the infection, but to offer some reassurance that Stoke Mandeville Hospital continues to provide good quality and safe care.”

The Healthcare Commission’s report acknowledges that the ‘trust has learned significant lessons in the management of outbreaks’ and is pleased with the improvements that have already taken place. The report notes that recent changes in senior management will enable the trust to make a fresh start.

Improvements already in place include:

- the restricted use of broad spectrum antibiotics
- more frequent cleaning of wards to higher standards, including the introduction of rapid response cleaning teams and spot checks
- the use of advanced decontamination systems for cleaning whole wards

- ongoing awareness campaigns for staff and visitors on the importance of washing their hands with soap and hot water to combat the spread of *C. difficile* (and for using alcohol hand gels for preventing the spread of MRSA)
- the opening of 11 new wards at Stoke Mandeville with vastly improved facilities for isolating patients, including 60 single rooms with ensuite bathrooms
- new bathrooms, sluices and hand washing facilities that are easier to clean than those in the prefabricated wards.

*(See notes to editors for a more complete list of improvements.)*

Alan Bedford concluded: “The trust takes the criticisms in the report very seriously, expresses its regret to local people that two outbreaks were not handled well, and is committed to building on improvements made so far by meeting all the recommendations set out by the Healthcare Commission.”

The trust has set up a helpline for anyone affected by the outbreaks of *C.difficile*. The number is 01296 315 539.

Ends

For more information contact the press office on 01296 316 100.

## Notes to editors

### Full list of improvements

<b>New facilities at Stoke Mandeville Hospital</b>	233 beds replacing outdated accommodation 11 new wards including day surgery 60 single rooms
	Ensuite facilities in single rooms and each bay
	Clinical hand wash in all rooms
	All rooms capable of providing isolation for patients (single rooms and multi-bed rooms)
	Maximum number of patients in a room is six (in the Assessment Ward), most are for four people
	New sluices, waste holds and cleaners cupboards on all wards
	All Nightingale wards now closed (except MaCarthy which is the children's ward) and demolition is to start shortly
<b>Cleaning</b>	Chlor Clean (hypochlorite cleaner) – bleach
	Bioquell (hydrogen peroxide vapour) – for decontamination of wards (in conjunction with Chlor Clean)
	Rapid response cleaning teams at both Stoke Mandeville and Wycombe hospitals
	Increased cleaning as directed by Infection Control Teams
	More frequent collection of clinical waste
<b>Infection control</b>	Infection Control Link Nurses in place on every ward
	Infection control training now mandatory
	Alcohol gels in place at every bed and ward
	Lockable bins in designated areas for clinical waste plus spot checks
	Stricter antibiotic prescribing regimes in line with best practice
	Single use items such as blood pressure cuffs and drapes now in place
	Visit to Montreal and international learning