

# Legionnaires' disease outbreak among staff closes Redhill mental health clinic

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(Image: SABP Trust)

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Gatton Place, in Redhill (Image: SABP Trust)

A mental health clinic had to be closed after an outbreak of Legionnaires' disease among the staff.

Three staff members at Gatton Place in Redhill are known to have been diagnosed with the bacterial illness.

The community mental health hub in St Matthew's Road was closed for five days from last Wednesday (February 5) while tests and a deep clean of the clinic were carried out.

Experts from Public Health England were brought in immediately.

All services and health visitor teams were sent to alternative locations in the county and made different arrangements to see patients and people using the services.

No source of the harmful bacteria was found and it was reopened on Tuesday (February 11).

Surrey and Borders NHS Foundation Trust (SABP) runs the community hub, which offers services for adults in the Reigate and Banstead area with severe and enduring mental health problems.

Fiona Edwards, chief executive, told a board meeting on Wednesday (February 12) that closing the site was a precautionary measure to check if the source of the disease was at the clinic.

She said they were not sure the building was the source until they carried out full tests and a deep clean, adding that they are "confident it's safe to use as a building now".

Legionnaires' disease is a lung infection caught by inhaling droplets of water from things like air conditioning and hot tubs. It can usually be caught in places like hotels, hospitals or offices, according to NHS guidance.

Treatment is usually antibiotics and some patients need oxygen tubes or machines to help them breathe if treated in hospital. Symptoms are similar to severe flu.

A statement from SABP Trust said it took the decision to close the clinic the same day it found out the staff were unwell.

Tests were carried out and precautionary measures were put in place in case the source of the disease was found to be in the clinic. All precautionary works are now complete and in place, the statement said, and no source of the harmful bacteria was found.

Dr Justin Wilson, SABP Trust chief medical officer, said: "Legionnaires' disease is caught by breathing in tiny droplets of water containing bacteria that cause the infection. It can't be passed from person to person so is not contagious."

A risk assessment of the building found water coolers are fed directly from the mains water, so are not stagnant and that the toilet water in the building was too cold for Legionella bacteria.

It also concluded the design of the heating and cooling system does not allow the bacteria to grow and the taps were too hot or too cold for it as well.

The risk assessment did find some places where Legionella could possibly grow in areas around the kitchen taps so precautionary steps have been taken.

And washroom taps have been fitted with microbiological filters to prevent bacteria passing through, the risk assessment said.

Anyone who is worried or would like to know more about the signs of Legionnaires' disease should call 111 or visit <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/legionnaires-disease/>

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