

TALKING POINT

Summer 2020

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Trust launches **Attend Anywhere** video appointments

THE trust is offering video appointments to patients across an increasing number of services as part of its COVID-19 response.

The Attend Anywhere video appointments provide clinicians at James Cook, Friarage and the trust's community services with the ability to offer patient consultations that would have otherwise not have been possible due to the current lockdown situation.

Patients are allocated an appointment as usual. They then receive a letter or an email containing a link to enable them to access the secure online platform via their home computer or mobile device.

Fiona Fletcher, specialist occupational therapist, has used Attend Anywhere to contact patients following their discharge from James Cook and also to see community patients she would otherwise have been unable to visit.

"It has been so useful to see patients' faces," she said. "Communication is improved, we can get a much clearer picture of someone's cognitive ability and we can also actually observe what they are able to do."

"In these times of social distancing it's great to be able to have some positive contact with patients."

"I'm really hoping we can take this forward after COVID-19 as I can see the benefits for using video calling beyond the current situation."

Clinics can be hosted from trust offices or remotely if clinicians are working from home.

Chris Ward, nurse consultant for adult palliative care, has completed several video consultations with great success.

"I did an initial assessment with a patient who is being shielded," she said. "Without Attend Anywhere we would have been limited to a telephone consultation, but talking face to face made such a difference."

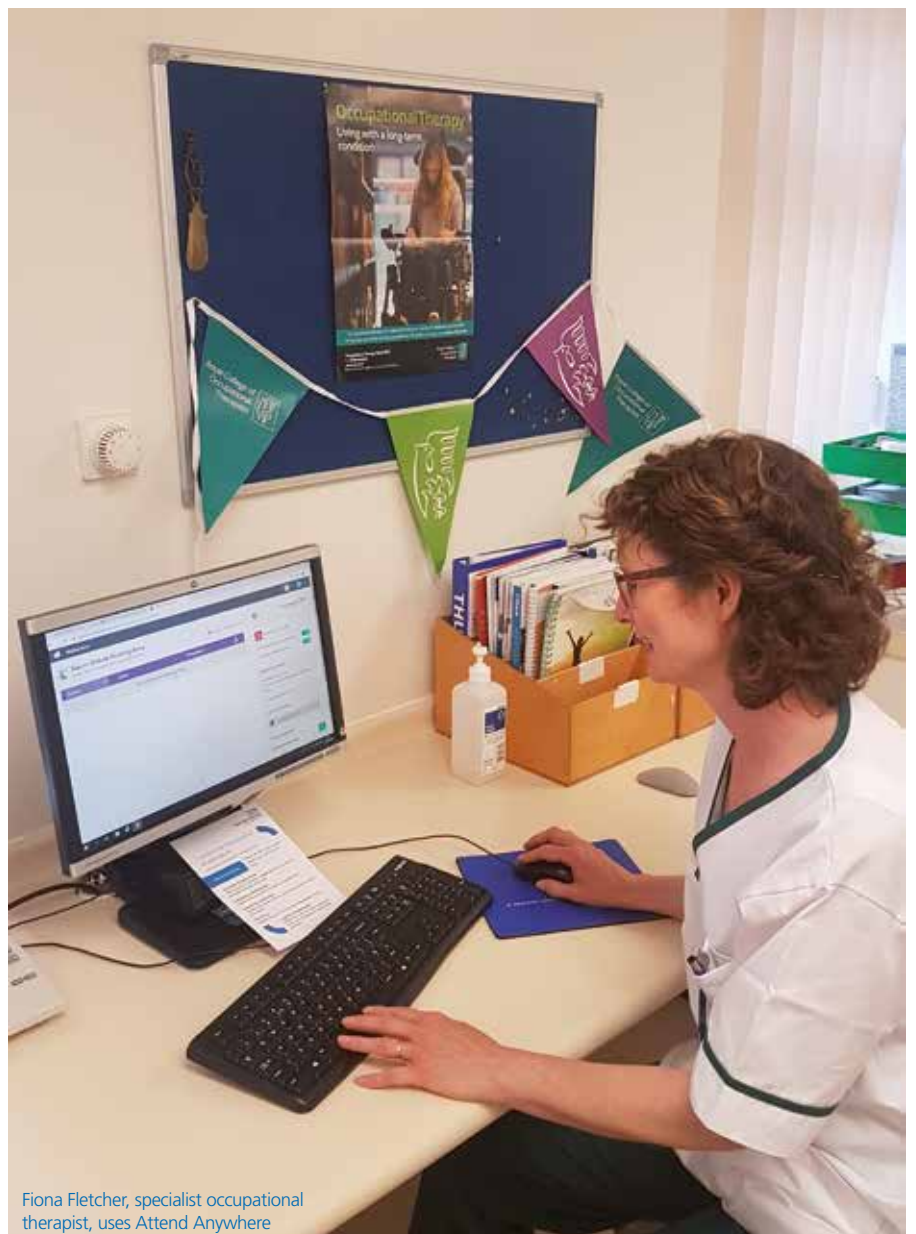
"I also was speaking to a patient on the phone about his pain but it was difficult for him to explain exactly where the pain was."

"When we did the Attend Anywhere video consultation he was able to show me exactly where the pain was and exactly what medication he was taking. It made such a difference."

The rapid pilot scheme was set up in

just three weeks to support the trust's response to COVID-19 and many more services are expected to get on board over the next few weeks.

"We already have 70 services live and have held more than 1,000 consultations," said Michelle Harrison, ICT business analyst. "We have had a lot of positive feedback from staff and patients about how easy it is to use."



Fiona Fletcher, specialist occupational therapist, uses Attend Anywhere

Staff in the virology lab at James Cook



Hospital laboratory teams lead the way

THE trust's laboratory teams were amongst the first in the country to develop round the clock on-site testing for COVID-19.

Dedicated clinicians from the trust's microbiology team volunteered to change their working hours to quickly set up a service to test patient and staff swabs 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

At one point the virology lab at James Cook was testing more than 300 samples a day, with the majority of results available in six hours.

Sandra Gittins, virology lead biomedical scientist, said: "Our 11 specially trained virology staff now work shifts from 6am until midnight. Biomedical scientists and healthcare science support workers within the bacteriology department then help us out overnight.

"I did not have to ask them to work the different shift patterns, they volunteered. It's been an amazing response."

Therapeutic care volunteers help transport samples from wards to the labs and university students have also been providing support, assisting with specimen preparation prior to the testing process.

"The teams have come together like one

big family. I'm extremely proud of them," added Sandra.

James Cook was among the first in the region, second only to the public health laboratories in Newcastle, to begin providing diagnostic testing for patients suspected of being infected with COVID-19.

Within just seven days the team had set up a fully operational 24/7 testing and reporting service.

Karl Hubbert, operations director, said: "The team regularly test for respiratory diseases and other outbreak scenarios which meant they were fully prepared for COVID-19.

"The laboratory initially started testing approximately 30 samples per day and soon expanded this from 400 samples in the first week to over 1,500 samples in subsequent weeks.

"The laboratory staff have worked continuously to improve turnaround times which have decreased from over 24 hours to less than six hours.

"This has only been possible due to the dedicated commitment of the biomedical

scientists and scientific laboratory support worker staff groups who, like other staff groups across the trust, have gone over and beyond their duties often staying late, working flexibly and undertaking additional shifts to ensure results are always turned around as quickly as possible.

"The ability to test for COVID-19 in-house with timely results has meant that our patients have been able to begin treatment more quickly; this is also really important for the safety of our nurses, doctors and other frontline staff in helping with infection prevention and control and reducing the spread of this disease.

"Every member of the team is sharing the load, and they are doing it with a smile on their face. I am incredibly proud and thankful to be part of this magnificent team."





Richard shaves off his beard for COVID-19

CONSULTANT radiologist Richard Hartley has helped raise more than £3,000 for South Tees Hospitals Charity by shaving off his beard for the first time in 40 years!

Richard, like many other health professionals, has removed his facial hair to support the fight against COVID-19 by ensuring his protective face mask fits as closely as possible.

Richard had resisted all previous charity requests to shave his beard off, but now says: "All of us in the NHS are committed to help protect the nation against COVID-19.

"I'll shave for as long as necessary so that I can treat every patient who needs my help."

Could you donate a £1 in recognition of all the amazing NHS staff who have had to get rid of their beards?

Donate online at: <https://tinyurl.com/ycrx9rtl>

Celebrations as Helen leaves critical care

STAFF broke into a spontaneous round of applause when nurse Helen Sharpe was discharged from James Cook's intensive care unit on Good Friday.

Helen, who was one of critical care's first COVID positive patients, spent 21 days on the unit.

As she left critical care the Friarage nurse received a huge applause from the nurses and doctors who supported her on her road to recovery.

Helen, 43, was transferred to the ward for ongoing care after successfully overcoming the virus.



Friarage nurse Helen Sharpe leaves intensive care

"I'm tired but really relieved to be home with the kids and my husband."



After being discharged home she told Talking Point: "I'm tired but really relieved to be home with the kids and my husband.

"It's been a long stay in hospital and I've just been raring to come home."

And she was full of praise for critical care staff: "The ITU staff are absolutely amazing. I would nominate them all for a Nightingale award because I received fabulous care.

"I didn't know they were all going to clap for me, so to see all these people in the corridor - I was quite taken aback.

"It was so lovely; I guess it's the next stage of my journey, knowing I'm on the mend, getting better. It really was emotional, I shed a few tears."

Watch the video of Helen leaving intensive care at southtees.nhs.uk/news/hospitals/celebrations-as-nurse-helen-leaves-intensive-care

"I didn't know they were all going to clap for me, so to see all these people in the corridor - I was quite taken aback."



The James Cook team celebrate International Day of the Midwife

Middlesbrough mum thanks midwives

A **MIDDLESBROUGH** mum, who gave birth during the coronavirus pandemic, thanked staff on International Day of the Midwife for going above and beyond for her and her daughter.

Sarah Eggleston, from Berwick Hills, gave birth to her baby Phoebe at James Cook on 3 May.

Due to visiting regulations during the pandemic women are only allowed one birthing partner while in labour.

Sarah said: "It was quite strange but the midwives were lovely and make you feel really special. I was allowed to use my phone to FaceTime my family so I didn't really feel isolated and the midwives check on you every two minutes to make sure you have everything you need.

"I would say to mums-to-be that it's not as bad as you think it's going to be. Please don't be frightened because all the midwives go above and beyond to make you feel as comfortable and relaxed as possible and if you need anything they'll be there in a flash.

"From day one of my pregnancy the midwives put me at ease. They are so lovely and I can't thank them enough."

Midwives at James Cook marked the International Day of the Midwife by enjoying a range of cakes baked by their colleagues and food donated by local businesses, such as Mike Hind Fitness and

Amigos Pizzas, while those at the Friarage had a social distanced picnic.

Kay Branch, acting head of midwifery, said: "I'm really proud of every single one of our midwives, especially during COVID-19. We've pulled out all the stops and worked together as really great team.

"If there are any mums-to-be out there who are a little worried about giving birth during the pandemic, please don't worry.

"The word midwife is 'with women' and we are very much here to support you throughout your pregnancy and we are always available to comfort you."

Midwife, Louise Hand, said: "I'm incredibly proud to be a midwife. For me it's an absolute privilege to be with women during this life changing event."

"...the midwives go above and beyond to make you feel as comfortable and relaxed as possible..."

Sarah Eggleston and Phoebe



Alan home days after major heart surgery as patients urged not to delay urgent treatment

WHEN Alan Brown suffered chest pain his family didn't delay in seeking medical help.

The 55-year-old had to undergo major heart surgery that same night but was home four days later thanks to his rapid diagnosis and treatment.

Alan was food shopping when he first noticed something was not right.

As soon as he got home, his daughter Sophie, 26, took one look at him and knew he was not well.

"I called 999 and they were fantastic," she said. "They got here so fast."

Alan of Bishop Auckland was taken to the accident and emergency department at Darlington Memorial Hospital where he had a CT scan which revealed he needed immediate specialist attention.

"We got him over here the moment we saw it," said Professor Andrew Owens, consultant cardiac surgeon at James Cook.

Alan had a tear in the inner lining of his

aorta - the main blood vessel coming out of the heart, which is also known as aortic dissection and could have been life threatening.

"He presented to hospital that afternoon, we had him in our theatre that evening and operated on him most of the night."

Alan was discharged home just four days later.

"His otherwise good health and rapid treatment has enabled him to make a spectacular recovery from this event and such major surgery," said Andrew.

Alan describes himself as "really lucky".

"The nurses put my mind at ease," he said. "They said not to worry about anything as I would be on the non-COVID unit."

His wife Paula added: "Under the current situation we could not go with him to hospital. Everything was

communicated to us by telephone. The staff were all amazing."

The trust is urging patients not to delay in seeking urgent medical advice.

"We are really worried that patients with heart disease, strokes and other conditions are not seeking help as rapidly as they would have in the past," said Andrew.

"There has been a worrying reduction in the number of patients coming in with these conditions where timely intervention is critical to getting a good outcome.

"It is really important that people don't feel reluctant to seek medical help, be it 111, 999 or A&E, if they are unwell.

"The hospital will of course feel very different due to COVID precautions, but it is these precautions that enable us to treat all patients safely."

"It is really important that people don't feel reluctant to seek medical help, be it 111, 999 or A&E, if they are unwell."



Alan Brown (centre) pictured with his family

NHS heroes in the community

COMMUNITY nursing teams have pulled out all the stops to ensure their most vulnerable patients get the care they need throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Teams have adapted their ways of working to keep patient visits to a minimum - whether it's carrying out telephone consultations or teaching families basic wound care.

But they are also continuing to visit a significant number of their most vulnerable patients to deliver vital care in their own homes, including those who have tested positive for coronavirus.

The community nurses must now put on personal protective equipment (PPE) every time they go into somebody's home, limit contact as much as possible, and then take it off again when they leave.

Sarah Mallett, clinical lead for East Cleveland community nursing, praised the hard work and dedication of all the community nursing teams at the trust.

"The vast majority of our patients are quite elderly which puts them in the vulnerable category and if they are not elderly they are in the at risk category," she said.

"We had to come up with lots of new ways of working so we are not exposing these patients to any potential dangers or harm.

"The staff have been absolutely fantastic; they have really stepped up to the mark."

Nicola McHugh, Marion Harris, Laura Ward and Mickayla Leonard from the out of hours community nursing team



The team have:

- Introduced telephone consultations for patients who are well enough
 - Promoted independence by showing patients how to do some basic dressing changes
 - Trained up family members to provide basic diabetes care and wound care
- Some community nurses with respiratory experience have also volunteered to temporarily swap roles to use their specialist skills to help the intensive care teams at James Cook. These include Kelly Kirtley, Jessica Anderson, Hannah King and Kirsty Ivison.

Likewise, other community teams such as community matrons, coronary heart

disease nurses and continence and stoma teams have provided support to community nursing to help fill any rota gaps while a number of nursing homes have also offered to help by taking over some aspects of care.

An additional team has had to be put in place overnight to meet the high demand

of palliative care patients. This has been staffed by colleagues who would usually work daytime shifts.

"It's very different to what we are used to," added Sarah.

"But patients have been quite accepting of seeing us in our PPE and everyone is working together to ensure patients get the care they need, although the way this is delivered may look slightly different to normal - we're all in this together!"

"The staff have been absolutely fantastic; they have really stepped up to the mark."



Sarah Mallett, clinical lead for East Cleveland community nursing

Roseberry Topping heart attack survivor thanks services

"HE appeared next to us like an angel and started asking lots of questions..."

This is how clinical laboratory assistant in IVF, Nikki Wills, describes the moment an off duty mountain rescue officer helped save her partner's life while he was having a heart attack on one of North Yorkshire's most iconic landmarks, Roseberry Topping.

On 24 March last year Nikki and her partner, Morrison Spence, otherwise known as Mosh, were participating in a charity walk for their cousin Gemma Lee. They climbed the 320m high hill like they did on many other occasions but at the very top the couple's hike took a drastic U-turn as Mosh started to vomit and collapsed.

Nikki says that at the time Mosh was on

medication for pro-lapsed disks so she automatically assumed he was feeling unwell because of that.

But his cousin, Simon Mayes, soon spotted the signs that Mosh was in the early stages of a heart attack, thanks to a first aid course he had been on just days before.

With the help of another of Mosh's cousins they managed to carry him from where he was to the hill's shooting box and called 999.

Moments later an off duty mountain rescue volunteer, who was not from the area, was passing with his children and saw the commotion.

"He appeared next to us like an angel and started asking lots of questions," Nikki said.

"We had no idea who he was but he over-rode the 999 call and told them we needed the air ambulance.

"He then wished us good luck and disappeared without telling us his name.

"Thinking back, I do not think Mosh would have been here if it was not for him because the ambulance would have taken too long to get to us."

Shortly after the Cleveland Mountain Rescue Team arrived on scene along with the Great North Air Ambulance Service (GNAAS) and Mosh was carried by aircraft to James Cook within nine minutes.

It was found that he had one artery completely blocked, another partially blocked and a blood clot, meaning he required a coronary angioplasty, which is a procedure used to widen blocked arteries.

Three hours later he was out of surgery after having two stents fitted and he remained in hospital for two days. Nikki says the care they received from the coronary care unit was amazing.

In the months after Mosh completed his rehabilitation and in the May his family raised more than £1,200 for the GNAAS by doing the Gallon Walk, which involved walking from Egton to Goathland and stopping at all the pubs along the way.

In the September Mosh, Nikki and their family were invited to the GNAAS headquarters to hand over the cheque and meet the team.

"We had no idea who he was but he over-rode the 999 call and told them we needed the air ambulance."



Nikki and Morrison climbed the hill again with their family in December



The couple presented the GNAAS with a giant cheque as a thank you for saving Mosh's life



Nikki Wills and Morrison Spence at the top of Roseberry Topping

Nikki told Talking Point: "It was one of the best days of my life, it was very emotional. We felt honoured to have the opportunity to say thank you because without them Mosh would have died."

Since the incident Mosh has stopped smoking and has drastically changed his diet.

Nikki said: "It's over a year now since the heart attack and I am so proud of how far Mosh has come."

To this day the pair remain in contact with the off duty mountain rescue volunteer they met at the top of Roseberry Topping and plan on raising more money for the team at GNAAS in the future.

"Everyone has been amazing and I can't thank them enough," said Nikki.

Local MP discovers the science behind patient care

TO mark the start of Healthcare Science Week, Middlesbrough MP Andy McDonald went behind the scenes of James Cook to explore some of its scientific careers and technologies.

On a tour of the nuclear medicine radiopharmacy, clinical measurement workshop and the radiotherapy physics sections of the medical physics department the MP was introduced to staff and given first-hand demonstrations.

During the visit, Andrew Simpson, trainee clinical scientist in medical physics, showed Andy a number of devices and prototypes that have been developed and designed in house. This included an intracranial pressure monitoring system which is inserted into the patient's skull to help link their symptoms to physiological signals in order to assist with a high pressure diagnosis.

"To then to see the complexity of the radiotherapy was quite frankly phenomenal."

Andy said: "My visit to the physics department has been a complete eye opener for me.

"I had no idea that pieces of kits were built in this hospital.

"To then see the complexity of the radiotherapy was quite frankly phenomenal.

"They are incredible machines and I think that will give people an awful lot of assurance and confidence about the precision and expertise that is inherent in the

operations in this hospital."

He added: "We should be very proud and grateful that we have got such a facility here in Middlesbrough."

Dr Robert Farley, head of medical physics and lead healthcare scientist, who facilitated the visit, commented: "It's really important that MPs, such as Andy, come and see what we are doing because medical physics is one of those services that works behind the scenes but is essential to many clinical services.

"Therefore it is very important that the public understand how critical it is and the big part it plays in the patient's medical journey."



Andrew Simpson, trainee clinical scientist in medicine physics showing MP Andy McDonald a piece of kit



Student nurses opt to start work early

MORE than 90 student nurses have volunteered to start work on hospital wards before completing their studies to help the trust in its campaign against COVID-19.

The third year students, who are in their last six months of training, are to be known as aspirant nurses and are taking on extended placements at James Cook and the Friarage as paid members of staff.

Eighty aspirant nurses have been placed on adult wards, while a further 11 are specialising in children's services.

The students, predominantly from Teesside University, answered a national call to start work on the wards ahead of schedule, while still completing their university assignments.

Joanne Porritt, 30, of Normanby, was among those who volunteered.

She said: "I thought I needed to put the skills that I have already obtained to use and help the NHS in this time of crisis."

Aimie Newcombe, 24, of Peterlee, also put herself forward for the aspirant nurse role.



Aimie Newcombe (left) and Joanne Porritt outside the STRIVE Academic Centre

She said: "I feel that I'm ready to put myself out there. I'm really nervous, but I'm really excited."

Eileen Aylott, associate director of nursing for education and workforce at the trust, said: "Each university had to ask all their students if they wanted to opt in and I'm very proud of them for volunteering to

help us in these current times."

Dr Susy Cook, associate dean (learning and teaching), School of Health and Life Sciences, Teesside University, added:

"Our student nurses will be an amazing asset to the NHS as we continue to face challenging times ahead."

Second years sign up too!

MORE than 150 second year student nurses have also opted to start work early, while completing their studies.

The second year students have been employed by the trust as health care assistants (mid programme students) and will take on extended placements at James Cook, the Friarage, Redcar Hospital and East Cleveland Hospital as paid members of staff.

The Teesside University students will work 30 hours a week at the hospital and have one day a week for their studies.

Emma Stokes, who will be working in the cardiothoracic intensive care unit, said: "I wanted to help with the current COVID-19 outbreak and I felt that not opting in, in my current situation being

young and healthy wouldn't have sat well with me because I knew I wanted to help and had the clinical skills."

Eileen added: "The students will support our nursing staff and will interact with and support our patients when their families can't be here."

"I wanted to help with the current COVID-19 outbreak..."



The second year students enrolling

Volunteers help out during challenging times

MORE than 150 people have volunteered to help the trust during the coronavirus pandemic.

The volunteers, who signed up through the trust's therapeutic support programme, have been providing valuable support to patients and staff across the trust's sites as well as promoting positive engagement and contributing to a positive hospital experience for everyone.

Since the coronavirus outbreak 152 people have signed up and have been helping in a number of roles, including: administration, drivers and patient and staff support.

Rachel Gunnell, 23, of Middleton St. George, is among those who decided to volunteer. The fourth year medical student put herself forward after her face-to-face lectures were cancelled due to the virus. Since 14 April she has been volunteering as a runner at James Cook.

She said: "For me volunteering fulfils that sense of duty I have as a medical student who is going to be working in the NHS for the long hall. Volunteering as a runner is a very different experience to what I'm used to, because I'm used to being on the ward but I'm really enjoying learning more about how the portering side of things works. It's amazing to see everyone at James Cook pulling together and working as one big team."

Debi McKeown, lead nurse for therapeutic support, said: "We will forever be thankful to the volunteers for their support in these challenging times. Their commitment to supporting patients is commendable and we are very lucky to have them helping our therapeutic care."



Medical student, Rachel Gunnell, is one of the many volunteers helping during COVID-19



Eileen, Ian, Lorna and Grace (left to right)

'Grateful' family among hospital volunteers

THE family of a grandmother who was discharged from hospital after recovering from coronavirus are among the army of volunteers helping the trust during the pandemic.

Eileen Connor, of Redcar, was taken to James Cook after she fell ill while self-isolating and was diagnosed with COVID-19.

The mum-of-ten spent 13 days being treated for the virus before being discharged just in time for her 80th birthday.

As a thank you to those who cared for Eileen, her daughter, Lorna Goodchild, a physiotherapist and former employee at the trust, decided to look into how she could volunteer and help in her local NHS hospital.

She said: "The whole family were so grateful for every little thing that was done for my mum while she was in hospital; the care was second to none.

"We felt really reassured to know that

she was in safe hands and receiving the best possible care.

"Once mum was discharged we really wanted to give something back to those who had helped her and rather than just say thank you we decided to show our gratitude by volunteering."

After signing up as a volunteer for the hospital, Lorna's husband Ian, who usually works offshore and 24-year-old daughter Grace, decided to sign up as runners for the trust as well.

The trio now spend four days a week transporting samples from wards to the labs as well as supporting patients and staff.

Grace, who is a final year mechanical engineering student at Northumbria University, said: "I'm really enjoying volunteering as a runner. It's nice to speak to people outside of our household and offer support to those at the hospital.

"I'd like to say a massive thank you to all the NHS workers at James Cook not just on behalf of my Nan but on behalf of everyone else they've helped."

Fit testing challenge sees staff take on new roles

OPHTHALMOLOGY healthcare assistant Emma Allday tells Talking Point about the challenges of taking on a new role as a fit tester during COVID-19...

"Going somewhere new is always nerve wracking but I entered the STRIVE Academic Centre to become a fit tester and the team I was greeted with were amazing - they made me feel like I had worked with them from the start.

We are a mixed bunch from all different parts of the trust including infection control, epilepsy, ophthalmology, medical rostering, nuclear medicine and community just to name a few. Volunteers from external companies and some who have given up retirement to return to their former nursing roles are also in the team.

"If a staff member fails the test we try it once more then we put them on the portacount machine."

The day begins at 8am, usually with a corridor full of staff all waiting to be fitted with a FFP3 mask to offer them protection from the virus in high risk areas.

There's a few questions first as staff have to be nil by mouth and no smoking or vaping for 30 minutes beforehand and they must be clean shaven - this has posed a few funny looks but we are armed with razors and shaving foam!

Next is the sensitivity test where staff put their head in a cleaned plastic hood to see if they can taste a foul bitter spray. The hood is actually a rubble sack with a window kindly made by our medical physics team but they cost pennies and are much better than the bought ones.

Donned with their FFP3 masks and hoods six staff at a time perform a few



exercises in which a bitter spray, 20 times stronger, is gently sprayed in. If you can't taste the bitter spray until the last minute when you take your mask down inside the hood you have passed and off you go with a certificate in hand – and desperate for a drink. But at least we know you are tested and safe.

If a staff member fails the test we try it once more then we put them on the portacount machine. This doesn't rely on taste, but counts the particles in the room and in the mask giving us a fit factor; anything over 100 is a pass.

At the peak of fit testing we were seeing over 240 people a day in STRIVE alone – other teams were also fit testing in theatres and the wards. Managing safe distancing and still offering reassurance to hundreds of staff new to masks has been a huge task but one of the most rewarding times of my career."

"At the peak of fit testing we were seeing over 240 people a day in STRIVE alone..."

Kindness calls provide a listening ear

A NEW telephone service, which has been launched by the Trinity Holistic Centre, offers regular 30 minute phone calls from an experienced team of therapists to provide a listening ear, practical advice and information on local services during the coronavirus pandemic.

Lauren Farrow, Macmillan information and support centres business manager, said: "As the crisis unfolded we decided to start a new a telephone service using the 11 therapists in our team to help people who need information and support at this difficult time.

"The original aim was to offer this to the cancer patients on our active waiting lists but this has been extended to the wider community.

"We are supporting the elderly, vulnerable, those living with cancer and other health conditions, those who are isolated, experiencing anxiety or just need to talk.

"As well as the kindness calls, we can also



Maxine Nicholson, kindness call volunteer

refer to our counsellor, provide slots for telephone mindfulness sessions or refer to our benefits advisors for financial support.

"We've been overwhelmed with the positive feedback that we have received from those using the service about how it has helped them in their hour of need.

"I'm so proud of the way that the team have rallied to support people during this crisis. They have talked to people who are dealing with cancer, many people who are anxious about the situation and they have even supported patients on the wards who are battling the virus.

"Like many charities we have lost our

usual fundraising income so we are grateful of any donations to keep us going."

June Clarke, a patient who has signed up to the service, said: "During the lockdown I have had kindness calls from staff asking how I am coping and just general chats about my wellbeing. These calls are so helpful and uplifting. They are also doing online videos with exercise and mindfulness. Thank you all so much."

Deborah Reay has also registered for weekly calls. She said: "I'm so pleased and feel so lucky to have this support. Trinity Holistic Centre has supported me in my health and wellbeing since February 2019 after radical treatment for breast cancer and the work that they do is priceless."

The Trinity Holistic Centre is a charitable organisation supporting patients, carers and staff at James Cook and at the Friarage. Holistic services are provided from the Trinity Holistic Centre in Middlesbrough, the Sir Robert Ogden Macmillan Centre in Northallerton and across hospital wards within the trust.

The service is dependent on the generosity of its volunteers, supporters and fundraisers.

Surgeon swaps scrubs for nurse's uniform

A THORACIC surgeon has swapped his scrubs for a nurse's uniform to help in the intensive care unit during the coronavirus pandemic.

Joel Dunning usually spends his days working in the cardiothoracic surgery at



Joel Dunning

James Cook, but after a lot of his surgery had been delayed or diverted due to the virus he decided to step out of the theatre and onto the cardiothoracic intensive care unit.

Following some training by the senior sisters, Mr Dunning worked shifts as part of the nurses' team and is encouraging others to do the same.

He said: "The nurses are doing a great job but I could not stand by while they were completely rushed off their feet.

"I have some experience of intensive care and therefore due to the great need for nursing care I thought this is where I could help.

"They are a fantastic group of staff and very dedicated but they are all also very



Drawing of Joel by Victoria Davidson.

concerned about how busy they are going to be and how much they are going to be asked to do over the next few months.

"I would encourage anybody who is working less in their usual department or job, due to the virus, to ask their line manager what they can do to help and get stuck in."

Christina returns home just five days after having tumour removed

“TO GET that call was a relief like no other...”

This is how Christina Selmi, 65, of Middlesbrough describes the moment she found out that her procedure to remove her tumour had been a success during the coronavirus pandemic.

After a series of scans the retired teaching assistant coordinator was diagnosed with lung cancer in April.

Christina first started to have recurrent chest infections around two years ago and although she used to be a keen walker she noticed an increased shortness of breath, but put it down to her age.

“You’re on a rollercoaster of emotion when you’re told it’s cancer,” she said. “It’s the most terrifying thing that could happen to you. The hospital asked me to go see Joel Dunning, thoracic surgeon, and I went thinking I’d have to argue with him because I wanted to have the operation despite COVID, but he said straightaway he’d do it.”

During the assessment Joel explained to Christina that patients undergoing operations during COVID-19 must self-isolate for 14 days before their procedure.

“I was already self-isolating before Joel said to, but my partner, Alan, was still going to work so we both started shielding.”

When Christina returned to James Cook two weeks later she continued to shield and take precautions.

“When I arrived at James Cook I was taken straight to a side room so I was still isolated and the staff would regularly check in on me to make sure I wasn’t lonely and that I had everything I needed.”

Under normal circumstances Joel and his colleagues would have done an open operation which would have taken a couple of hours to remove Christina’s tumour, but due to the pandemic they decided to do it via

“The hospital staff do everything they can to make you safe. I never felt vulnerable to COVID.”



Christina with her partner Alan

keyhole surgery instead.

The six hour procedure was less invasive which meant that Christina was able to return home sooner.

“After the operation the staff were always making sure I was ok. I never actually felt lonely.”

The surgery was a huge success and Christina was discharged home five days later.

“I would without a

doubt encourage people to still come in for their treatment,” she said.

“The hospital staff do everything they can to make you safe. I never felt vulnerable to COVID.”

Joel Dunning, thoracic surgeon, said: “All aspects of Christina’s care were tailored to promote rapid recovery and isolation from COVID risk. Christina’s tumour was successfully removed and I now wish her all the very best with her recovery.

“We are all trying to go the extra mile to make sure that all patients can get through the system as safely as possible.”

iPad appeal

helps patients keep in touch with their families

THANKS to the kind generosity of the local community, donated iPads are being used in hospitals within the trust to enable patients to keep in touch with their loved ones.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, it sadly became necessary to suspend almost all visiting across the trust's hospital sites in March to protect patients, visitors and staff.

The restricted visiting meant that those patients on end of life care could only have one visitor each day.

But, following an appeal for iPads by the trust's specialist team's Dragonfly Scheme, relatives can now keep in touch with patients during these unusual times.

The Dragonfly Scheme, launched in 2016, aims to improve end of life



Pamela Saunders and Leanne Petch (left to right)

care for both patients and relatives in hospital.

'Virtual visiting'

After the team came up with the idea to use 'virtual visiting', Macmillan palliative and end of life support sister, Laura Graham, approached Russell Jameson from the Teesside Help Facebook page for support. Russell then set up a Just Giving page to enable them to buy iPads for patients to use.

The trust also received kind donations

from Derek Layland, Parkend and Beckfield Community Forum and Middlesbrough Philanthropic Foundation.

Laura said the team had been overwhelmed with the support of the local community with this project.

She added: "Ordinarily, being with a loved one that is dying for many is a basic need, but at this very difficult time many people cannot be there as they are at risk themselves, so to offer the option of a virtual visit is amazing.

"It cannot replace contact but we hope it will bring some comfort to both parties and stop the feeling of isolation.

"As nurses we always would strive to convey the love of family they long to share in person, this is another way we can do this and it may help to relieve some of the distress."

Due to infection control the iPads need to be new and unused.

School makes visors for frontline workers

STAFF and students at a local school have designed, created and donated visors to help protect frontline workers.

Sedgefield Community College manufactured the face protection masks out of materials students would have otherwise used for their summer term projects.

In total they donated more than 1,000 visors to the trust, other local and regional hospitals, GPs, critical care units, community care departments and care homes.

Mr Huw Gullett, head of technology and engineering

at the school, said the team wanted to do something for the community during the coronavirus pandemic.

He added: "The materials came from the material students would have used for their summer term projects. I hate to see materials sitting doing nothing or going to waste."

A trust spokesperson, said: "We would like to say a massive thank you to all involved at Sedgefield Community College in producing and providing the face protection masks delivered to our trust. They will give us an extra layer of confidence while looking after our poorly patients."



Sedgefield Community College student, Lochlan Allan, wearing one of the visors they've made



Colleagues say final farewell to Mark Lowe

COLLEAGUES lined the perimeter road at James Cook to say their final farewell to 'one of their own', Mark Lowe.

Mark, a porter with the radiology team, sadly passed away on Thursday 28 May after testing positive for COVID-19.

Staff took time out to pay their respects and clapped as the funeral cortege made its emotional journey through the hospital site, with the cortege pausing briefly outside of the main entrances.

Speaking on behalf of Mark's colleagues, Kelly Smith, radiology service manager, said: "Mark was a kind man with a genuine heart and a wicked sense of humour, always standing for what he believed was fair, right and justified.

"His death has been a loss felt across all wards and departments at South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

"His South Tees friends and colleagues wanted to come together today to say one final farewell, remembering Mark as one of the best.

"Mark left us far too soon. His death is a massive loss felt by all who knew him and he will be hugely missed.

"We pass on our deepest condolences to his family, in particular Amanda and his two boys."

"His death has been a loss felt across all wards and departments at the trust."

Thousands of colleagues lined the hospital perimeter



High tech Clarity for prostate cancer patients

THE radiotherapy team at James Cook has introduced a new high tech solution to further increase the accuracy of prostate cancer treatment.

Clarity is a non-invasive ultrasound based guidance system which monitors the prostate throughout radiotherapy treatment.

The ultrasound probe acquires images of the prostate gland to ensure the radiation only targets the intended area, minimising any damage to



The radiotherapy team at James Cook treat their first patient using the Clarity ultrasound system (picture taken prior to social distancing rules being introduced)

surrounding organs such as the patient's bowel and bladder.

Images are closely monitored throughout treatment in 4D

real time and the radiation beam automatically cuts out if the prostate moves outside of the target at any time during the treatment.

The James Cook radiotherapy team treated their first patient using the Clarity ultrasound system in February.

Superintendent radiographer Alison Blower said: "We are proud to introduce Clarity as part of our high tech solution in treating our prostate cancer patients.

"The radiographers, physicists and clinicians were excited to use this ground breaking equipment to enable prostate radiotherapy to enter a more hypofractionated approach and develop the treatment further without introducing a higher radiation dose to our patients."

Radiotherapy introduces trust's **first outpatient self check in system**

THE radiotherapy and oncology team have introduced a self check in system for patients to reduce time spent waiting in reception queues when attending appointments.

Around 40,000 treatments are delivered by the radiotherapy team each year on the James Cook site and the team has a strong national and international reputation as a leading centre in delivery of cutting-edge radiotherapy to provide the best treatments and results for patients.

The new system was developed internally to enable patients to register their arrival to help relieve pressure on reception areas and to improve patient experience.

Claire Huntley, radiotherapy clinical lead said: "For cancer patients this can be a very anxious time so our team always strive to make sure that the experience is as positive as possible.

"We're always looking at ways we can



Jenny Lamming, Christina Pattinson, Claire Huntley and Austin Huang with the self check in system in the Endeavour Unit

improve the department from a patient experience point of view and from a service efficiency perspective.

"The self check in facility seemed a practical solution which we thought we would trial first, but it has been a great success and very much welcomed by all of our patients - it's now integral to our service."

Patients have to check in with reception for their first appointment where

they are given all of their treatment dates and times along with a barcode that they use to check in for future appointments. Around 80% of patients now use the self check in facility.

Radiotherapy is the first outpatient department across the trust to introduce this facility and the team is now exploring how this can be expanded further.

Children's anaesthetic room given a make-over thanks to patient

THE second children's anaesthetic room in the operating theatres at James Cook has been decorated thanks to the generosity of a patient and his family.

Joseph Kemp, 17, from Stockton, wanted help create a more comforting environment for children and young people who have to undergo surgery.

After raising more than £1,000, Joseph and his mum Lesley worked with artist Lindsey Coxon of Custom Murals to come up with a design that would distract and relax children who may be scared about their treatment.

Children passing through its doors will now be greeted by a mural of brightly coloured friendly dinosaur paintings.

The mural also spreads across the ceiling

and features different coloured stars for the children to count or spot.

When returning to the hospital for the first time since the mural was painted, Joseph said the room had "definitely changed for the better".

His mum, Lesley, said: "When Joe was here there was nothing but white walls and he was frightened.

"The room looks really good now and I hope it settles the children."

Paediatric anaesthetic consultant, Amy Norrington, said the new mural will benefit the 3,500 children that use the

unit every year.

"Children that come for surgery can be intimidated by the medical environment and to be able to take them into another bright and friendly space to have their anaesthetic is absolutely wonderful."

Plastic surgeon, Tobian Muir, said: "It is an amazing thing to do and we are very grateful to Joseph and his family. All we do is for our patients. It is excellent that someone who understands what it means had a choice and decision in how to improve the hospital environment for patients."

Joseph and Lesley have decided to spend the remaining money they raised on items that will help develop an area in the children's surgical day unit for teenagers and those with other particular needs.



Dr Amy Norrington, Mr Tobian Muir, Joseph Kemp and Lesley Kemp (left to right)

Matron creates painting to mark community spirit

A PAINTING marking the community spirit during the coronavirus pandemic has been unveiled at James Cook.

The painting, titled 'Sending Hope', depicts a young girl, standing next to her teddy bear, painting a brightly coloured rainbow.

The piece, created by matron Vicki Davidson, will permanently be on display in the hospital's main atrium near the south entrance.

Vicki, who has worked for the trust for 11 years and is also an artist, said: "I wanted to create something to mark the pandemic and I hope this painting will provide a focal point for staff, patients and visitors to pause and reflect.

"The wonderful artwork, created by local

children, has truly brightened the hospital corridors and wards during a challenging time, lifting spirits of staff and patients; this is our way of saying thank you for this generosity."

The Art Shops, who have branches in Ikley and Northallerton, kindly donated the canvas and paint for Vicki's piece while Wensleydale Galleries and Framing in Leyburn framed the artwork free of charge.

Lead therapeutic nurse, Debi McKeown, was among the staff who watched the piece being unveiled.

She said: "The thing that has kept us

all going throughout this pandemic is knowing that the community has been right behind us.

"This painting is a symbol of hope and a fantastic permanent reminder of how we've been supported by the local community, especially all the children who have sent us drawings of hope for our staff and patients."

Prints of the artwork and greetings cards can now be purchased from the therapeutic care team hub at James Cook.

A4 prints are £39 and A3 are £75. Prints come signed by the trust's artist, mounted and cellophane wrapped. All proceeds will go to South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust's therapeutic care team.



Vicki Davidson with her painting

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