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Queen's Nurses, Hayley Hadfield, Kelly Kirtley and Emma Docherty (left to right)

Trio of nurses win prestigious Queen's Nurse Award

A TRIO of nurses from South Tees have won the prestigious Queen's Nurse Award.

Head of nursing Kelly Kirtley and matron Emma Docherty from community services were both honoured to receive the national accolade from The Queen's Nursing Institute.

Palliative care clinical nurse specialist Hayley Hadfield was also the recipient of the prestigious award. Starting her career in the NHS as a healthcare assistant in 2009, Hayley was determined to gain further qualifications to serve her local community.

Queen's Nurse (QN) is recognised as a continued commitment to improving standards of care in the community, learning and leadership.

The title recognises exceptional contributions to nursing practice, patient care and leadership. The Queen's Nurse programme brings together community nurses to develop their professional skills and deliver outstanding patient care in the community. Nurses, health visitors and midwives with five years' experience working in the

community, primary care and or social care are eligible to apply.

Emma has worked in community nursing for 14 years. Kelly and Emma worked together in community nursing for 12 years and Kelly as head of nursing for 18 months and have been driving nursing excellence across the Tees community.

Hayley qualified as a nurse in 2013 and has never looked back. Hayley said: "I feel extremely humbled to have been awarded a Queen's Nurse Award. It demonstrates my commitment to maintaining high standards of patient care, learning and leadership within my role now and going forward throughout my career."

Kelly said: "This is a huge achievement and is an esteemed award recognising being part of a professional network of nurses committed to delivering and leading outstanding care in the community and will certainly have benefit for both the organisations and our community service. I am honoured to be awarded the Queen's Nurse title.

"Working in the community comes with differing challenges and it has been an absolute privilege to be able to support patients at home in what can be very complex situations. We have been involved in lots of service improvement and innovative work in the community setting and are dedicated to ensuring the care provided is the best it can be."

Reflecting on the award, Emma explained: "Becoming a Queen's Nurse is an honour and privilege to which I am very grateful and humbled. I am committed to delivering high standard quality of care to our patients in the community."

Amy Oxley, deputy chief nurse said: "We are extremely proud of Kelly, Emma and Hayley having been awarded with the prestigious Queen's Nurse Award. Their commitment to delivering, leading and improving community nursing care is commendable.

"Their achievement not only enriches the trust but it also serves as a source of inspiration for the wider nursing community."

Brain tumour dad raises thousands for hospital charity

A BRAIN tumour patient has raised nearly £9,500 for Our Hospitals Charity by taking part in the Great North Run.

Chris Neal, 39, was originally diagnosed with a grade 2 astrocytoma benign brain tumour in spring 2023. Astrocytoma is a primary brain tumour which is formed in the brain, instead of spreading there.

Until May 2023, Chris was fit, healthy, happy and had no symptoms. He was working as an offshore electrical engineer when he suddenly collapsed and had a seizure.

Chris said: "I was working in the Rotterdam office at the time, so they transferred me to Saint Franciscus hospital in the city."

Franciscus hospital undertook various tests and an MRI scan where they originally identified a brain tumour. All Chris wanted to do was return home. That's when they referred him to James Cook.

Consultant neurosurgeon, Anil Varma, performed Chris's first awake craniotomy surgery – a type of procedure performed on the brain while you are awake and alert. He was successful at removing part of the tumour in June 2023.

Regrettably there was no cure for the type of tumour he had. It was a matter of time until it developed.

To thank the intensive care unit, neurosurgical unit and ward 24 teams who treated and looked after him so well, in September 2023 he decided to sign up for the Great North Run 2024. The objective was to raise money for Our Hospitals Charity, the fundraising arm of South Tees Hospitals.

Tragically an MRI scan in early 2024 identified the tumour had progressed.

Chris underwent a second awake craniotomy in June 2024, heartbreakingly Chris was informed the growth had developed onto a Grade 4 GBM (Glioblastoma), which is the most aggressive high-grade malignant tumour.

"It was a shock at first to be told it had developed into a GBM, but the way the hospital care team handled

this awful subject, especially my neuro-oncology specialist nurse Sue, was brilliant."

Chris explained: "Because I was told I needed further treatment, it stopped my training plans for the GNR so we thought my wife, Sarah Neal, might have to step in for me."

Sarah works as a radiographer in the catheter labs at James Cook. Together

they have two children, a ten-year-old daughter, Ava, and eight-year-old son, Lucas.

Determined as ever, Chris and Sarah decided to honour the Great North Run on Sunday 8 September 2024.

"I'm proud to say I have had the best treatment at James Cook. All the staff have been very supportive. They've been kind, patient and sensitive to not only my needs, but those of my family."



Chris and Sarah Neal smashing it



Chris and Sarah running GNR



Chris Neal post-surgery



Middlesbrough Football Club mascots Ava and Lucas Neal

James Cook surgeon's new procedure saving legs from amputation

CONSULTANT vascular surgeon Ian Nichol recently introduced reversed deep venous arterialisation for patients who would have no other treatment options available and would have undergone major amputation of their legs.

Reversed deep venous arterialisation is a bypass graft vascular surgery that essentially turns a vein into an artery.

Normally a bypass graft would involve joining an artery to an artery to deliver blood to the foot, but this operation joins an artery to a vein – helping restore blood flow to the foot and preventing permanent limb loss.

This revitalises circulation in the foot by creating a new blood flow connection between a healthy artery in the calf or ankle and a vein in the foot.

The procedure is performed when there is no other option to improve the foot blood flow and the only option remaining is a major leg amputation. This is due to the fact there are no visible arteries left in the foot – a situation termed a “desert foot”.

One of the patients to benefit from this new surgery was civil servant Christopher Dolan.

“I am over the moon with the surgery as I still have a leg and it is a big change in your lifestyle which I was not ready for just yet.”

Chris, 50, was initially admitted to the hospital in July 2023 after suffering from a serious ulcer due to problems with footwear.

A debridement operation on his right foot ensued to remove dead and infected tissue to improve the healing of the remaining healthy tissue. Following the procedure, the medical team advised him to keep his wounds open to allow them to heal.

However, his wounds were still not healed after a few months which was attributed to his diabetic history.

After seeing the podiatry team, Chris was referred to diabetic foot specialist

and vascular surgeon Mr Nichol in November 2023.

Following a brief medical examination, the Middlesbrough consultant introduced the new procedure to Chris and made him aware of the potential benefits of the surgery.

As one of the first patients in the region to be offered this treatment, Chris said: “I have been diabetic for 36 years and have always been happy to help out medical staff with research anyway I can, and this was an opportunity to help myself and Mr Nichol refine his technique.”

The Middlesbrough resident successfully underwent the reversed deep venous arterialisation surgery in December 2023 – which has prevented his right leg from being amputated.

Mr Nichol said: “Introducing this new method of surgery has hugely benefited patients like Chris who have successfully avoided major amputations of their leg and are now able to walk without the need for a prosthetic leg.

Chris added: “I am over the moon with the surgery as I still have a leg and it is a big change in your lifestyle which I was not ready for just yet.”



Christopher Dolan



Consultant vascular surgeon Ian Nichol



The radiology team at South Tees Hospitals

Quicker diagnosis and treatment of lung cancers in Teesside – thanks to new artificial intelligence investment

ARTIFICIAL intelligence is helping health staff diagnose lung cancers and other issues quickly and accurately – after being rolled out across Teesside.

The new technology, more commonly known as AI, is in use for patients getting chest X-rays across University Hospitals Tees.

The health group, formed of North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust and South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, brought the Annalise AI system into use earlier this month.

Patients can be referred to the lung health team for an X-ray through a number of places, including a GP or from hospital departments including emergency care, outpatients or as an inpatient.

Clare Butt, advanced practitioner in radiology, said: "This is already supporting us in identifying potential issues straight away. This might not always be something we are initially looking for but which AI has helped to raise with us as a potential issue to look at.

"It's a tool to help guide us and find anomalies before a full radiological report is carried out by the team.

"It is also helping us to prioritise the most urgent images and ensure these are seen first.

"It is ultimately helping us diagnose

issues at the very earliest opportunity and provide earlier treatment and improved health outcomes."

Consultant musculoskeletal radiologist Dr Maya Jafari said: "This is exciting times for our radiology department. This artificial intelligence tool will help radiologists and radiographers responsibly and safely prioritise our chest x-ray workload and make sure we can quickly identify patients who need further tests or specialist appointments."

Across the country, £21million government funding was allocated to more than 60 NHS trusts across all regions of the country for the AI tool – to help with more than 600,000 chest X-rays performed each month in England.



Yasmin Adamson and Ginette Draper

£150,000 secured to bring care closer to cancer patients

MACMILLAN information centre, based at James Cook, has received more than £150,000 in funding from Macmillan Cancer Support.

The funding has led to the creation of two new Macmillan cancer support worker roles, which aim to bring the hospital-based Macmillan information centre's services closer to patients in Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland as part of a two-year pilot.

This will involve proactively seeing patients on wards, in their homes and community settings. The Macmillan information centre helps in giving patients access to knowledge on a wide variety of topics, providing details on the financial help they may be entitled to and listening to patients' concerns.

Two individuals, who were already working at the trust, have been recruited into the roles to provide face-to-face, email and telephone advice and support to those affected by cancer.

Since commencing their roles last month, Yasmin Adamson and Ginette Draper have received positive feedback from patients and staff.

Besides providing emotional support to cancer patients, they ensure people affected by cancer have access to good quality, comprehensive and appropriate information and support when they need it.

As part of their roles, Yasmin and Ginette have been visiting cancer patients on wards as well as in their homes – offering support as required while referring them to clinical staff if the need arises.

“Enjoying every minute of my role”

Yasmin Adamson started her career seven years ago as a Macmillan volunteer, where she loved every moment of working with cancer patients.

She said: “I had seen the vacancy for the Macmillan cancer support worker and found it interesting to work in a new role as it would mean getting the

service out to patients in the comfort of their own homes as well as on hospital wards.

“I knew this role would suit me as I enjoy patient contact and helping patients and their families.”

“Perfect opportunity”

Ginette Draper began her NHS career in 2006 as a staff nurse – a role she thoroughly enjoyed and had the pleasure of working on different wards and meeting amazing patients and families.

After taking some time out, she returned to the trust in 2015 to work in administration before moving to work in cancer as a receptionist/administrator at the Trinity Holistic Centre.

She said: “Working in the Trinity Centre has been a lovely experience and seeing first-hand the amazing support and treatments the centre offers to patients and family members, and the difference this makes inspired me to once again become more involved in a hands-on patient-centred role.”

Robotic cleaners bring Friarage to forefront of innovation

DON'T worry, your eyes are not deceiving you – there are now robots assisting with the cleaning at the Friarage!

Thanks to generous funding from Friends of the Friarage, the hospital is now the first in the UK to use Akara UV decontamination units in a ward environment.

Following positive initial trial results, two decontamination robots from Akara Robotics - best newcomer award winners at the Infection Prevention Society Conference 2024 - can now frequently be seen in the hospital's clinical decisions unit, wards and operating theatres as part of the next stage of the clinical evaluation of the technology.

Environmental services teams at the Friarage are currently undergoing training on how to programme the robot and work alongside it.

Working in tandem with the strong team of domestic staff the robots serve as a powerful tool to enable environmental services staff to

decontaminate rooms with a quicker turnaround time.

Akara's robot builds on more than a decade of robotics and artificial intelligence research at Trinity College Dublin. Its unique AI capabilities give the robot the ability to operate autonomously, whereby it can navigate and decontaminate rooms based on a programme of cleaning instructions that it is given.

The high-tech machines can be manually operated or programmed to each room's specifications and will automatically stop if anyone gets too close to the UV light beams. They are easily moved to different areas of the hospital using their handles or via a remote-control handset.

Frontline staff, working with Akara, have created a bespoke workflows app with the aim of removing

the need for paper checklists, and providing real-time alerts when rooms are available.

James Dunbar, consultant in infection and general medicine and chair of the Friarage clinical collaborative, said: "Microbes with resistance to antibiotics are probably the biggest emerging challenge in healthcare today. Our main defence is cleaning and decontamination. Last year our pilot study using Akara technology had amazing results.

"We are so grateful to the Friends of Friarage for funding our continued collaboration. It is massively exciting to work with absolutely cutting-edge robotic decontamination units and be right at the forefront of innovation."

Susan Watson, co-chair of Friends of the Friarage, said: "We are proud to have been able to bring to the Friarage Hospital this transformative cleaning equipment which will add a scientific aspect to the excellent work of the domestic team."



James Dunbar with the robot and representatives from Friends of the Friarage, Akara and the Friarage team

SOUTH TEES STARS

THE STARS Awards present an opportunity to recognise the individuals, teams and services that go above and beyond their role in delivering excellent patient care.

Congratulations to the winners and to the hundreds of staff who were nominated.

You can also nominate your colleagues or teams that have made your day by going the extra mile. Search STARS Award on the intranet to make a nomination. Members of the public can also nominate via southtees.nhs.uk.

South Tees STARS shine brightly

Kate McCamley – Attention to detail

Kate McCamley won a STARS Award for her attention to detail.

Ever since she joined the team, Kate's prompt and effective actions have resulted in a positive impact on the department.

The nomination said: "Kate has helped and coordinated with the ordering of supplies for the eye day unit, which has had a significant impact on the department. She is proactive, organised and always willing to help. It is greatly appreciated by our team."

Christine Fiatal – Communication

Christine Fiatal was nominated for her exemplary communication skills.

The nomination said: "I would like to thank Christine for all her support with the prospect learner queries that have come in this

week while on her own in the admin office.

"With it being the new cohorts' first week, there have been a lot of calls, especially on the days that I have not been on site and she has supported both learners and managers with any queries – which is greatly appreciated."

We are proud of you Christine!





Ward 14 – Teamwork

Congratulations to Ward 14 for winning a STARs Award.

The nomination said: "Working in a busy acute oncology ward can be emotionally challenging when sadly our patients are terminal."

"I am so proud of how the staff support each other in difficult situations while still caring for our patients in a busy acute area."

A big thank you to everyone for their amazing teamwork.



Kate Briggs – Dealing with Difficult Situations

Kate Briggs, who won a Dealing with Difficult Situations award, received a heartwarming compliment from a family member of a patient.

When an unwell patient was admitted to the A&E, the individual and their family were unfamiliar with the hospital and everything that was taking place in the unit.

However, they met a wonderful nurse named Kate, who exhibited

nothing but compassion and empathy for the individual. This made the family and the individual's journey in the hospital extremely comfortable and peaceful.

The nomination said: "Kate showed us such compassion and empathy and as the saying goes "you forget what people say but never how they made you feel." She took time out of what appeared to be a very busy shift to sit us down, explain everything and gave us time."

We are grateful to you, Kate!

Samantha Crouchley – Going the extra mile

Samantha Crouchley was recognised for always going the extra mile.

She has consistently received positive patient feedback which was evident from the recently concluded Nursing Midwifery Conference.

Patients highlighted that Samantha works non-stop and noted how she cuts their hair, does their makeup,

sings to them and attends to all their needs.

The nomination said: "Patients have said that they hate it when Samantha is on annual leave as she is more like family to them – they miss her when she is not on the ward."

"We can clearly see how much she loves everything about her job."

Thank you for always going the extra mile Samantha!



Community falls team win national award for falls prevention

THE South Tees community falls prevention team have been crowned winners of the national Chief Allied Health Professions Officer (CAHPO) Public Health award 2024.

The team were recognised for leading on the South Tees wide falls prevention strategy; a public health approach to reduce falls across Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland.

The national award from NHS England recognises an allied health professional (AHP) team or individual who has delivered service improvements which benefit population health and wellbeing and/or reduced health inequalities.

The team of physiotherapists, occupational therapists and therapy assistants have been working in partnership with local organisations to develop specialist pathways and resources to help every person in their community access a free falls assessment.

They joined forces with their local voluntary and housing teams, public health services, exercise providers, local authority and third sector organisations to

create a multi-agency strategy group and developed and delivered specialist training sessions centred around falls prevention.

In 2020, the team proposed an idea for an online support platform for falls prevention and worked collaboratively with marketing agency, Better to develop Steady on your Feet. The online falls prevention platform allows users to access practical tips and guidance on staying active, independent and safe during everyday activities.

The platform includes an online self-assessment form that can be completed individually or with support from loved ones or health professionals. It creates free, personalised falls prevention action plans for users and reduces the need for a GP or hospital referral.

Users can also identify hazards around their home using the home safety

checker, download practical strength and flexibility exercise programmes and videos and access links to local support services in Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland.

Since its launch, the falls team have signposted over 800 people in the South Tees locality to the platform and helped them to receive a free, personalised falls prevention action plan from the comfort of their own residence.

Kathryn Hodgson, clinical lead for the South Tees community falls team said: "I am immensely proud of all the work the team has done to develop the falls pathway and prevention resources.

"Their passion for falls prevention has been the ultimate driving force to achieving this award.

"We have also been very lucky to work with some fantastic partners across South Tees and I am looking forward to the future where we will continue to adapt and develop our strategy to meet the needs of our community and ensure that falls prevention is at the forefront of everybody's minds."

Anyone wanting to access the Steady on your Feet website can do so by visiting <https://south-tees.steadyonyourfeet.org/>

"Their passion for falls prevention has been the ultimate driving force to achieving this award."



The South Tees community falls team celebrating their success



Kevin Moore, clinical director for emergency care at North Tees and Hartlepool; Josie Hale, operations manager at NEAS; Lucy Falcus, medical director at HASH; Andy Hebron, clinical director for emergency care at South Tees Hospitals (left to right)

New urgent treatment centre helping A&E teams focus on most seriously ill patients

MORE than 30,000 patients have been seen at James Cook's urgent treatment centre (UTC) within its first six months of opening.

The new UTC, which opened in April, is helping to relieve pressure on the emergency department which has seen attendance drop by over a third.

Statistics for its first six months show:

- A&E has seen a 36% reduction in attendances but still remains very busy
- Around 168 people use the UTC each day
- 94.1% of those using the UTC are seen and have a decision made about their onward care within four hours

Middlesbrough's UTC is one of four across the Tees Valley that are now jointly ran by: University Hospitals Tees (North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust and South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust), the North East Ambulance Service (NEAS) and Hartlepool and Stockton Health (H&SH) GP Federation.

Patients can access the same care and treatment for minor illnesses and injuries at all four centres.

The centres at James Cook, University Hospital of North Tees and University Hospital of Hartlepool are open 24/7, while the UTC at Redcar Hospital is open from 8am to midnight. There's also the UTC at the Friarage which is open 24 hours a day.

Fran Bowden, senior clinical general manager for emergency care at South Tees Hospitals, said: "While we are seeing less people coming into the main emergency department the people we are treating are very poorly and require more attention, so we are still very busy.

"The UTCs are helping to ensure people get the right help, at the right time, and in the right place, freeing up A&E for those who need it most."

Patients who are unwell and need to access urgent care at any of the centres are advised to visit 111. nhs.uk or call NHS 111 first so an appointment can be made where appropriate. For minor injuries patients can walk into all the centres without an appointment.

Fran added: "Patients should continue to contact their GP, pharmacist or 111 for non-urgent health issues, but if they have a minor illness or injury that needs urgent attention, the UTCs are here to help.

"If you've got a strain or sprain, suspected broken limb, minor head injury, cut, minor scald or burn, skin infection, eye problem, feverish illness or abdominal pain – There's a UTC for that!"

For a full list of what the UTCs can treat visit: southtees.nhs.uk/services/urgent-and-emergency/minor-illnesses-and-injuries/

Going the extra mile

A TRUST employee is showing gratitude to colleagues who saved her life.

On 17 November 2023, Susan Ridsdale, who works in the administrative team in the pain clinic, was working at James Cook when, without warning, she collapsed with a cardiac arrest of unknown cause.

Kerry Briston, secretarial assistant, who was working with Susan in the same room at the time, called for help.

Nurse team leader, Morag Brookes, who was working next door, started cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

Diane Monkhouse, intensive care unit consultant, who was working nearby, managed Susan's airway. Susan said: "I was informed because I fell in such an awkward position, between two desks, it was challenging to protect my airway."

Susan can't remember the next couple of days when she was transferred to resuscitation in accident and emergency. Cardiology consultant, Pamela Brown and resus officer,



Susan Ridsdale and Meghan Clarke

Mark Chamberlain managed Susan's resuscitation and care.

She can't even remember being on ward 37, or her sister Helen visiting. She explained "Helen had been on holiday at the time so when she landed and turned on her phone, there was a message saying: "Don't panic but...."

Susan who works in the Murray Building, believes: "If it wasn't for the swift actions of all my colleagues calling for help and starting CPR etc, I'm sure I wouldn't be here today."

Susan explained: "The pain admin team, led by my manager, Meghan Clarke, have been brilliant. They have



Morag Brookes and Susan Ridsdale

been so supportive ever since I was on sick leave and during my phased return to work. I'm lucky enough to be back to work full-time now.

"I'd like to thank everyone for going above and beyond in such a challenging situation. I am sincerely grateful. I feel blessed to be here and have such kind and supportive colleagues."

Group chief executive officer, Stacey Hunter said: "Events such as this really do reinforce what amazing people we have working at James Cook. I am extremely proud of how everyone reacted on the day to ensure Sue got the best care possible."

Happy retirement Wendy

AFTER 44 years of loyal service, Wendy Jackson has retired from the NHS.

Wendy spent 44 years working in the NHS, starting out as an auxiliary nurse in 1980 on a medical ward. Then becoming a state enrolled nurse in 1982, finally becoming an registered nurse in 1993. Throughout her career she has also worked as a research nurse and as a district nurse where she enjoyed spending quality time with patients, caring for them in their own homes.

In more recent years, she has worked predominantly in the dermatology outpatient department. Taking lead in Dermajet treatment, used for hair loss in those living with alopecia. She has also become an advocate for these patients, supporting them by continually delivering holistic and compassionate care.

Wendy's colleague Gabrielle described her as "a fantastic nurse, who is a credit to the NHS.

"Wendy is dedicated to her role and genuinely cares for her patients. She is a wealth of information and is always willing to share her knowledge with junior staff. She is highly valued and respected in the department and will be a great loss.

"We all hope she has a wonderful retirement and enjoys finally taking time for herself. After 44 years she's certainly earned it!"

Wendy added: "I'm proud of my time working in the NHS. It has been a privilege to care for people, particularly those who were in palliative care. I hope I provided comfort to them when they needed it



most. I have thoroughly enjoyed every role I have had and have made lots of lovely friends along the way."

Gabrielle said: "Thank you for your service, Wendy, we are truly grateful."

Specialist rehab unit marking 25-year milestone

THE pulmonary rehabilitation service at James Cook is marking its 25th anniversary since treating its first patient on 18 September 1999.

The unit consists of a highly skilled team of physiotherapists, an occupational therapist, therapy assistants, and dedicated admin staff – who all combine to support patients across Middlesbrough and Redcar.

With more than 1,500 referrals every year, the team currently provides 16 group sessions to each patient suffering from symptoms and disability of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and other respiratory conditions.

The service provided has shown to reduce and manage respiratory symptoms of patients such as breathlessness, improving their quality of life, ability to engage in daily activities and do the things that they normally like to do.

The sessions run by the team consist of classes where patients complete individual and tailored exercises under the specialist care of staff whilst receiving planned advice on how to manage their symptoms and conditions.

Senior specialist physiotherapist Halina Baker was one of the key members involved in the formation of the unit 25 years ago – when only



Halina Baker with the pulmonary rehab team a handful of hospitals in England provided this service.

Halina, who started by offering two group sessions every week along with two staff members, said: "I was instrumental in setting the pulmonary rehabilitation programme up in September 1999, and it brings me so much joy to see how the service has developed with my colleagues over the last 25 years."

Meeting people helps

Referred by a consultant to assist with her bronchiectasis diagnosis, Bernadette Povey's first appointment was on 12 July 2024. Since then, she has attended 15 sessions and she has felt motivated after each session.

She said: "The staff are really good, you feel better when it is finished and you get to meet new people who are suffering from a similar health condition."

Explaining what she thinks about these sessions, Christine Cope said: "I love them."

Christine, who has been diagnosed with COPD and pulmonary fibrosis and suffers from asthma, has credited the staff and sessions as brilliant.

"I am sad when the session comes to an end. You get to meet new people and you get an extra go. I am on oxygen currently but meeting new people through these sessions really helps me out," added Christine.



Cheryl Wallbank, Bernadette Povey and Fiona Murphy



Christine Cope

Mum shares courageous post-heart transplant journey of five-year-old

BORN on 24 July 2019 at James Cook, Evie Green was diagnosed with myocarditis when she was just four months old – a condition triggered by simple viral infections that in serious cases can lead to heart failure.

This led to frequent visits to the children and young people's emergency department at James Cook for the young toddler, which was an anxious period for parents Chloe Green and David Green.

However, due to a worsening heart condition, the five-year-old was admitted to the Freeman Hospital and was placed onto a Berlin Heart left ventricular assist device (VAD) in Spring 2023 – where she waited for over a year to receive a heart transplant.

Chloe, 29, said: "Evie was attached to a machine, so she was unable to move around without us following her. She was on strong blood thinners so we made her very cautious about everything because any knock could cause her to bleed out.

David Green, Chloe Green, Evie and Theo celebrating Christmas in 2023



Evie in her home after receiving heart transplant

She could not run around at all and was unable to leave the hospital to go home at all. Moreover, Evie was unable to see her brother Theo when he was ill and could only visit on weekends and holidays."

After countless barriers such as sepsis, infections and several blood clots, Evie finally managed to receive a heart transplant this year.

Since receiving the life-changing transplant Evie's family has seen a significant impact on her life and are thrilled to witness the positive changes.

It has been a delight to see our daughter running around without a machine attached to her – just like a normal five-year-old. Not just running but watching her going to the beach, visiting her late grandad's tree and

having a bath have been a joy for our little family.

"Before the transplant, she did not eat well as she was on a VAD, but ever since her transplant, seeing our daughter have a hearty full meal has been the greatest pleasure and heartwarming," added Chloe.

Specialist nurse organ donation Rachel Eason said: "It is great to hear that Evie is doing so well since her transplant. For lots of children waiting for a life-saving transplant, their only hope is the parents of another child agreeing to organ donation at a time of immense sadness and personal grief.

"We urge parents to think and talk about organ donation for themselves and their family today. Your decision could help save lives."

Local MP joins Friarage midwives to celebrate milestone

A LOCAL MP joined the team at the Friarage Hospital's maternity centre to help celebrate its tenth anniversary as a midwife-led unit.

MP Rishi Sunak met members of the unit which has brought more than 2,000 healthy babies into the world in that time.

He also congratulated the team members who recently tackled the Hadrian's Wall National Trail in just four days to raise money to make the unit an even more attractive place to give birth.

Walking more than 20 miles day and camping overnight the team raised more than £4,000 for additional equipment and facilities to create a home-from-home environment in the unit's birthing rooms.

Led by experienced midwives, the maternity centre offers holistic maternity care for pregnancy, birth and beyond, and serves an area of more than 1,000km² in North Yorkshire.

Rishi Sunak spoke to unit manager Clare McMann and her team about the walk and the success of the unit in providing a comfortable relaxed environment 24/7 for women and their partners.



Friarage midwives with Rishi Sunak

The unit is run by a team of enthusiastic, experienced and skilled midwives who provide friendly individualised care to women with straightforward pregnancies.

During his visit, the MP also met the latest arrival on the unit – 6lb 10oz Florence and her proud parents Tim and Katie Smith-Burrows of Morton-on-Swale who couldn't praise the Friarage centre and the team enough.

Rishi said: "The maternity centre is another great success story at the Friarage. Tim and Katie told me what a wonderful birth experience the Friarage team provided and that is the best recommendation for the

great service provided here.

"The Friarage is a good choice for women who are keen to have a natural birth with minimum intervention."

Clare added: "I am proud to celebrate ten years of our midwifery-led unit and look forward to the next ten years and beyond, with the continued support of our wonderful local community. At the heart of our maternity unit is a commitment to family-centred care, where our dedicated and enthusiastic staff provide a range of services to all families throughout pregnancy and the postnatal period, tailored to each individual's needs."

Husband surprises wife on 43rd wedding anniversary

JOHN 'Kevin' Hynes walked towards his wife, for the first time since he had a stroke, gave her a card and some chocolates. The therapy team supported the surprise, and it was magical to watch.

Kevin was admitted to Zetland Ward, Redcar with no activity in his upper or lower limb. He was hoisted to a postural chair and discharged home end of July. He was mobile with a tripod and one with early supported discharge (ESD) follow up for mobility and upper limb therapy.

Kevin said: "It was nice to see the team's reaction when I managed to do something. Everyone gets a buzz out of it. Everyone gets a lift. Hydrotherapy is fantastic. I found it so beneficial.

"The nursing staff and care have been absolutely first class. They have been brilliant."



Kevin and the therapy team

Sally and team help Joy return back to work

JOY Cole, 39, moved to James Cook in 2011 to work as a therapeutic radiographer. Here, she was involved in providing radiotherapy treatment and support to patients with cancer.

In October 2022, Joy noticed a small swelling starting to grow on the front of her left thigh while on maternity leave.

Following a brief period, Joy was referred to undergo an MRI scan on her left leg in December 2022. The next day, she was diagnosed with sarcoma, which is a rare type of cancer that originates from soft tissue or bone, on her left femur by her general practitioner (GP).

Feeling like the world had just collapsed, Joy said: "The GP showed me and my husband the MRI images and said the tumour was big and aggressive. When we saw how big the tumour was, we both thought we were going to be told it was incurable.

"It was four days before Christmas and my mind was buzzing with thoughts about how I was going to make my last Christmas with my children special."

She was referred to the regional sarcoma specialists at Freeman Hospital in Newcastle where she started her cancer treatment and underwent chemotherapy from January 2023.

At the end of her first ten weeks of chemotherapy, Joy's consultant informed her that her left leg needed to be amputated due to the extent of the tumour.

Devasted by the news but left with no alternative, Joy had her leg amputated on 6 April 2023 – the surgery was successful and achieved a disease-free margin of two centimetres around the whole tumour.

Following surgery and a further 20 weeks of intense chemotherapy sessions at Freeman Hospital and being treated for infections at the



Joy Cole



Sally Smith and Joy Cole

University Hospital of North Tees, Joy was referred to the prosthetics team at James Cook.

Joy said: "I was surprised to be referred to prosthetics at James Cook as I had been told by my surgeon that a prosthetic leg probably would not be possible due to my amputation being so high up.

"However, the prosthetics team said that although it would be very difficult to learn to walk with and to use it, they were willing to make a leg for me if I was willing to put in the work with it. I agreed and the process was started."

With the expert help and guidance of senior specialist physiotherapist in prosthetic rehabilitation Sally Smith, the 39-year-old started her recovery process in the hopes of being able to walk again.

Sally and her team assessed Joy to see if she was suitable for a prosthesis. After an initial assessment by the team, Joy received the green light that she was going to get a prosthetic and was promised she would walk

again – despite the surgeon saying otherwise.

She said: "My walking training sessions soon became something that I looked forward to, being given the chance to learn to walk again when I did not think it would ever be possible was amazing.

"Sally and her team are amazing. I was determined to give it my best shot and pushed myself to achieve as much as I could.

"The support and encouragement I received were invaluable and I felt like I was fully supported as a person, not just a patient. I was disappointed when I was discharged and did not have to keep attending the unit, but I can always go back and visit the team since I work in the same hospital."

Finally, after undergoing months of walking training sessions with a prosthesis, Joy returned to work as a radiotherapy research radiographer in

September 2024 where she currently coordinates clinical trials involving radiotherapy.

Sally said: "Joy was referred to us in our walking training sessions following her amputation.

Even though she was exhausted after months of treatment, her positive outlook and determination were inspirational and made our treatment sessions with her a pleasure."

Joy added: "The prosthetics and physiotherapy staff at James Cook have been crucial in my recovery in a completely different way. I was physically healed before I was referred to them, but they allowed me and helped me to recover mentally.

"They helped me to realise that I was making great progress and should be proud of how far I had come. The teams were not just there for me to learn to walk, but to support me fully and I can never show them enough how grateful I am to them.

"The combined support and help boosted my confidence and is the reason why I am back to work today."

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Teesside surgeon giving gift of hearing thousands of miles away

MR NOWEED Ahmad received a call in early 2012 from the International Medical Relief Agency (IMRA), a UK-based charity providing medical care to individuals from underprivileged countries.

The charity needed an ENT (ear, nose and throat) specialist who would help them set up a cochlear implant programme, treating children born deaf in underprivileged or developing countries.

IMRA approached Mr Ahmad for his help after being turned down by other specialists, owing to the massive costs and time commitments required for the project.

A single cochlear implant costs around £20,000 and needs a dedicated team of healthcare professionals – which is a scarce resource in countries with poor health infrastructure and acute health inequalities.

Noweed initially thought the programme may be unrealistic but decided to give it a try.

After much hard work and deliberations, Mr Ahmad flew to Karachi, Pakistan in December 2012 and performed the first free cochlear implant operations on two patients as part of his humanitarian mission.

Since then, Mr Ahmad, who works as a consultant ENT at James Cook Hospital, has conducted more than 170 cochlear implant surgeries – helping to restore hearing and allowing children to develop speech.

He said: "I know how devastating the effect of deafness can be for children in the developing world. They are considered to be not only deaf and incapable of speech, but mentally disabled – which is simply incorrect – and are excluded from relationships and sections of society."



Noweed Ahmad



Mr Ahmad with the recipient of the world's first free bilateral humanitarian cochlear implant

Moreover, Noweed uses his annual leave to jet off to different parts of the world to conduct specialist ear operations for patients who would otherwise potentially die of complications in places like Somalia.

In 2022, the Yarm resident's humanitarian mission reached a new milestone where he performed the world's first bilateral humanitarian cochlear implant on an underprivileged child in Pakistan – free of cost.

Noweed added: "The families who undergo surgery and receive post-op care are so poor that they cannot often afford the taxi fare to the hospital, never mind a £20,000 implant.

"The charity (IMRA) decided to try starting a cochlear implant programme when a father said that even if he sold everything he owned, including his motorcycle and wife's jewellery, he still could not afford even a quarter of the implant for his deaf child."

The trust supports him by allowing up to five days of extra professional leave for such operations and donates unused stock for his mission.

Inspirational physio scoops national award for excellence

RUTH Mhlanga, professions lead for allied health professionals, was awarded the CAHPO Gold Award for Excellence 2024 by Professor Suzanne Rastrick OBE, chief allied health professions officer (CAHPO) for NHS England.

The inaugural award, which was won by a select few healthcare staff from across the country, was in recognition of individuals who have made significant, outstanding and exceptional contributions to the healthcare system as an allied health professional.

Delighted with the recognition, Ruth said: "I am extremely pleased to have won the inaugural CAHPO award and want to thank everyone who has played a part in my time at the trust."

Commencing her career in 2002 as a physiotherapist at South Tees Hospitals, Ruth quickly climbed the professional ladder and now works in diverse roles across the trust.

Since January 2019, she has held the post of professions lead for acute services and head of physiotherapy with an 18-month secondment into the chief AHP role between 2021 and 2022.

During her 25-year career, Ruth has gone through a host of changes and has actively played a role in raising the profile of allied health professionals in the trust and the wider region.

Ruth's job includes providing clinical and professional governance for the physiotherapists in the trust providing strategic and operational management of services and raising the profile of the physiotherapy and other allied health professions.

She added: "I also chair the North East and North Cumbria Allied Health Professions Council, which is a multi-agency forum that includes local authorities and higher education institutions working very closely with the ICB (Integrated Care Board) – to ensure we support and learn from each other to meet the needs of the populations that we serve."

Suzanne added: "Congratulations to the inaugural winners of the award and thank you most sincerely for your contribution."

"For the first round of these awards, I have had the privilege of personally identifying individuals who have, often in their own time or unseen by others, strengthened significantly and supported the work that I or my wider team have undertaken during the last ten years."



Ruth Mhlanga

Charlotte urging pregnant women to quit smoking

CHARLOTTE Farr, 33, is one of the many pregnant women being supported on their smoking cessation journey by the maternity tobacco dependency team at South Tees Hospitals.

The 33-year-old was referred to the trust's maternity 'Best Start in Life clinic', which is a dedicated service that offers one-to-one support for pregnant smokers and their partners and significant others.

In 2024 so far, the clinic has offered support to 357 pregnant smokers to help them give up the harmful addiction.

All pregnant smokers accessing maternity services at the trust are automatically referred to the clinic where they receive an individualised programme of help. This includes nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) – given using an e-voucher scheme – and behavioural support.

Charlotte, who started smoking at the age of 13 to socialise and fit in with her peers, could not go a day without smoking.

During a routine appointment on 8 May 2024, Charlotte discovered that she was pregnant, and she was instantly referred to the



Charlotte Farr and her partner Kyle Whyte

clinic by her midwife – due to her smoking history.

Here, Charlotte met maternity support worker Rebecca Eason, who runs the maternity smoking cessation clinic at the Friarage.

Charlotte said: "The support I received from Becky (Rebecca) was the best – she

immediately jumped at the chance to help me and explained the different options available.

"At the end of every appointment she would always ask 'Do you feel like you need more support'? The support she offered already was enough but it was nice to know that even if I was struggling the offer was there."

Charlotte's treatment has included weekly meetings, nicotine replacement therapy, use of a vape and chewing gum.

Thanks to support from Becky and the wider clinic, Charlotte has quit smoking since the past 28 weeks.

Rebecca said: "It has been a privilege to support Charlotte throughout her smoking cessation journey. She has shown incredible determination and willpower in quitting smoking, not only for her own health but also for the well-being of her unborn child.

"I am also proud that cigarettes no longer control her life, and she has truly achieved her own milestones. It's a joy to see her hard work pay off, and I couldn't be happier for Charlotte."

Charlotte, who is expecting her baby in January 2025, said: "Being able to tell Harley, our little girl, when she is born that her mum managed to stop smoking after 20 years is something that I hope she can learn from."



Rebecca Eason

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Foster with North East

The number of children entering our care system is rising across our region. Foster with North East aims to grow the number of fostering households that can make a difference to the vulnerable children and young people in need in our communities. We bring together 12 councils in the North East including the Tees Valley area to provide increased level of support to anyone thinking about becoming a foster carer.

Whether you can commit to long-term fostering or welcoming a child into your home for shorter periods through emergency, short-term fostering or short break care, you could provide support and care when it's needed most.

"Fostering can be very rewarding, and it can be challenging too. If you're worried about issues, many people, especially other foster carers, will happily talk

to you. We need to speak to each other and support each other. Go to the fostering groups, take those topics you need help with, and you'll find others happy to give you advice and support you because we're all in the same boat at the end of the day," says one of our foster carers Kath.

Our team will work alongside the local authority where you live to ensure for every step, from your initial enquiry through to assessment and beyond, you



have the information you need, feel supported and know what to expect.

Find out more about fostering on our website at www.fosterwithnortheast.org.uk

Can't go to Specsavers? They'll come to you

We caught up with Kejal Shah who has been an Optometrist with Specsavers Home Visits for 8 years. She explains to us how this much-needed service works.



So, tell me more about the Home Visits service...

Our at-home eye test is very similar to what you would have experienced in-store, just with a few adjustments and specialist equipment to make it home-friendly.

Optometrists, like myself, carry out the eye test, adjusting it to your individual needs. If glasses are needed, experienced colleagues will help with frame selection and then return to fit them. And, it goes without saying, all customers are supported with ongoing aftercare.

In response to demand, we've also now launched a new audiology home visits service. So far, we have home hearing services in 16 locations in the UK, with plans to expand this over the coming months.

Who is able to benefit from a home eye test?

Put simply, it's about bringing the service to your door, if you can't get to one of our stores.

So if you, a friend, or loved one, are unable to leave your home or care home unaccompanied, due to a physical or mental illness or disability, we can come to you.

There are a wide range of conditions and reasons why someone might not be able to leave their home. You can speak to us about your situation and we can help you understand if you or your loved one qualifies.

What if someone is bedbound, or struggling with communication? Can you still help them?

The Home Visits service is designed to provide eyecare which is as individual as our customers are.

Some customers might be clinically vulnerable or they might be non-verbal or living with dementia. Depending on the situation, we might use pictures instead of letters for example. Even with a customer who is bedbound, we can change the position of the chart so we're still getting completely accurate results. All the tests are adapted to fit the customer's environment and comfort level. We can also speak to the customer or their loved one ahead of the visit, to address any questions or talk through the process.



Given that you provide such a personal and tailored service, does your care go beyond just an eye test?

Every colleague I know sees our services as something beyond just a job. Whether it's sharing stories over a cuppa, popping something in the post for them, or passing them something out of reach, going that extra mile is such a rewarding part of our role. I only need to see a customer's smile to know I've made a difference.

That's a big part of what we do. Provide a personal service, tailored care and expertise, right to people's homes, no matter what their situation – in homes, care homes or sheltered housing.

How do I find out whether someone is eligible?

You can head to our website at www.specsavers.co.uk/home-visits which features a simple step-by-step guide to eligibility and a wealth of information. Alternatively, you can call **0800 0890144**.

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