

INSIDE

Community diagnostic centre welcomes first patients

Mavis heaps praise on specialist team for bringing care closer to her home

Behind the scenes with the Friarage discharge team

TALKING POINT

Spring 2025

A photograph showing a 5-year-old child in a wheelchair, wearing a dark jacket and a name tag. A nurse in a blue patterned jacket is adjusting the child's leg. An older woman in a blue dress with a butterfly brooch stands beside them, looking down at the child. The background shows a home interior with a painting and framed photos.

Teesside nurse takes 5-year-old epileptic patient on trip of a lifetime

Friarage discharge team share their story



Lara Rundle

LARA Rundle, who works as a patient flow coordinator at the Friarage, made this analogy when describing her role and what the site team does daily.

She works as part of the Friarage discharge team, which consists of a site sister, two discharge facilitators and a social care worker.

The site team aims to ensure that patients have a seamless journey and discharge and that the patient's pathway is effectively managed across Friarage and Friary hospitals.

They achieve this objective by handling 152 beds across both sites Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm, while also being the contact for clinical staff when they require a bed for their patients.

Lara said: "As with chess, we do a lot of thinking and juggling around to create space, whilst keeping our patients safe and in the most appropriate place.

"Our work is crucial as every patient we take from James Cook frees up a bed there and reduces massive pressure – helping them to treat more patients, reduce waiting times and increase income for the trust."

Although 152 beds seems a huge number in the first instance, the number of beds available at both sites can be less than five on any given day due to several reasons.

On average, they accept around three patients every day from James Cook while also receiving patients from North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust and County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust.

But their work doesn't just stop at accepting patients from these hospitals as they have received patients from as far as Wales and Surrey.

These individuals reside in North Yorkshire and have received care at one of the hospitals in that region; however, they need to be sent back to North Yorkshire for ongoing treatment closer to their homes.

Patients who live in the Northallerton area and have undergone surgery at

James Cook can also receive acute post-op treatment at the Friarage.

This work also assists the broader hospital and community teams in preparing patients for discharge.

As a result, the discharge team gets into action whenever they receive a request for a 'free bed' and coordinate with all wards and departments across both sites.

This work includes multiple visits to wards several times a day and checking with ward staff to see if there's a patient ready to be discharged so the bed could be utilised for the next patient.

"Although people may get confused at times, Friarage is an acute hospital with several departments such as MRI, cardiology and pharmacy on site and with the new £35.5million surgical hub opening soon – it's a good time to be working here.

"The whole Friarage team does an amazing job and we would like to thank each one of them for going the extra mile every day," added Lara.



Jess Norwood,
Somia Chacko,
Lara Rundle and
Imogen Peacock
(Left to right)

First trust in the region to implement digital national paediatric early warning score system

SOUTH Tees is the first trust in the region to implement the National Paediatric Early Warning Score (PEWS) system in a digital format.

NHS England is rolling out a national standardised approach of tracking the deterioration of children in hospital.

PEWS will allow for consistency in how deterioration in children is recognised via a system called Patienttrack.

Currently, many hospitals track deterioration differently and this can present challenges for staff working across different hospital sites.

The project started in 2018 and is a collaboration between NHS England and the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) and the Royal College of Nursing (RCN).

PEWS charts have been collaboratively developed by clinical teams across England and will be used on general children's wards.

Building on a programme of research and clinical piloting, the digital PEWS system has been rolled out in paediatric areas across the trust and early user feedback is very positive.

"The implementation of our new digital PEWS and sepsis systems will bring significant benefits to patient safety across the trust."

In addition to implementing the national PEWS system, the team at South Tees has worked hard to embed an automated sepsis tool within it which will aid in the early identification and treatment of children with severe infections and sepsis.

Jonathan Grimbley, consultant paediatrician and South Tees lead for national PEWS, said: "The implementation of our new digital PEWS and sepsis systems will bring significant benefits to patient safety across the trust."

"This is the result of a lot of hard work from a range of staff across the trust working collaboratively with the national team and it's great to finally see it working well."

Nicola Howe, clinical matron for children and young people, added: "We value the importance of early recognition of clinical deterioration when caring for children and young People. The NPEWS is a great standardised approach to aid this early recognition of deterioration and tracking of clinical observations over time."

"Using NPEWS in a digital format provides added benefits including accessibility to review observations from different locations, embedded escalation prompts and audit opportunities."

"This has very much been a joint effort between the paediatric clinical teams, digital educators and Aldicion. I am extremely proud of the work everyone has contributed to ensure the successful implementation of digital NPEWS at South Tees."



Paediatric Patienttrack team

Mavis heaps praise on specialist team for bringing care closer to her home

MAVIS Ann Connors, 88, was rushed to the emergency department at James Cook after having two falls within 24 hours and noticing a sudden change in her mobility.

After receiving care in the emergency department, Mavis was discharged and sent home with support from Middlesbrough Independent Living Services' hospital to home team.

The specialist service offers support to aid a patient in returning home to a safe environment whilst providing equipment to promote their independence and is available for patients living in Middlesbrough.

The team is made up of Middlesbrough Council's social care professionals who work collaboratively with South Tees Hospitals to facilitate discharges for patients residing in Middlesbrough.

Due to Mavis suffering from high blood pressure and early stages of macular degeneration, which is a common condition that makes things like reading and recognising faces difficult, she was referred to the hospital to home team.



Mavis Ann Connors

The prevention liaison officer from the specialist service carried out a holistic assessment of Mavis and discussed any concerns and risks with her family.

Due to concerns with memory and the ongoing risk of falls, Mavis was offered the telecare service, which is a personal monitoring system that helps individuals like Mavis to stay safe and independent at home.

It included a specialised fall alarm, a wristband that can automatically detect when someone falls and sends an alert to a call centre without the user needing to press a button, providing immediate assistance in case of a fall.

Flood, heat and smoke sensors were also installed as part of her care that ensured she had adequate support and helped reduce risk to both Mavis and her property.

Mavis said: "They were all lovely and absolutely brilliant. Thanks to all these adaptations, I can live without any worry, I am truly grateful for the help that I have received from so many teams."

She has been receiving ongoing support from Middlesbrough Community Reablement Service, which is a personalised, home-based service that helps individuals to live as independently as possible.

Thanks to all their efforts, Mavis has avoided further admissions to hospitals over the past six months and has received dedicated expert care and support in the comfort of her home.

Mavis's children, Jeanette and Billy, have been with their mother since the start.

Jeanette said: "Mam received excellent care whilst she was in the emergency department. They were very patient, kind and thorough with her."

"She loved everyone from the hospital to home team and has never complained once about any of them, they were all very kind and lovely to her."

Strategic system lead Rebecca Shea said: "South Tees is fully invested in this model of care that enables discharge and all staff work closely together on this pathway."



Rebecca Shea with Mavis and the hospital to home team

Teesside nurse takes 5-year-old epileptic patient on trip of a lifetime

AN inspirational nurse from Teesside nominated one of her patients for the trip of a lifetime after the brave youngster lost his mum last year.

Helen Gilpin, Roald Dahl paediatric epilepsy nurse specialist, joined five-year-old Lenny Wilans Jobson and his family on a special visit to London to meet Her Majesty The Queen back in December.

The brave youngster from Middlesbrough who receives specialist care from Helen for his childhood epilepsy at James Cook was invited to enjoy a special Christmas lunch at Clarence House with Roald Dahl's Marvellous Children's Charity on Thursday 12 December. The Queen is the charity's Royal Patron.

Roald Dahl nurses like Helen are specialist senior nurses based in NHS trusts across the UK. They are supported by the charity to provide a bespoke, holistic kind of care for children and families living with some of the most serious and complex lifelong health conditions.

Lenny was one of five families nominated by their Roald Dahl nurses to enjoy an array of surprises at

Clarence House including a visit from Santa, live music from the Bugles of the Rifles and the opportunity to help The Queen decorate the Christmas tree.

A dream come true

Helen has been providing specialist care to Lenny since March last year, when the youngster was admitted to the paediatric critical care unit (PCCU) at James Cook following an increase in seizures.

Lenny also has a rare genetic and life limiting disorder called FOXG1 which affects brain development.

Helen said: "Nobody was more deserving of this special Christmas treat than Lenny. He is such an incredible little boy who has overcome so much in his life already and always lights up every room he walks into with his cheeky smile.

"I cannot thank the charity enough for all their continued support throughout the year and for making dreams like this come true."

Helen became a Roald Dahl nurse back in June 2024. As part of her role, she helps families navigate through the challenges that living with epilepsy may bring by providing specialist clinical and emotional support and resources, accessed through the charity.

Helen is one of four specialist Roald Dahl nurses working at South Tees and one of 40 specialising in epileptic care across the UK.

She works closely with the charity who are fundraising to establish more Roald Dahl nurses.

She said: "The more Roald Dahl nurses we have working across our NHS trusts, the more we can help to reduce the impact epilepsy has on children and their families including physical, emotional, social and financial.

"Providing this specialist care in the community can in turn reduce their number of trips to our hospitals."

How to become a Roald Dahl nurse:
www.roalddahlcharity.org



Teesside nurse takes five-year-old epileptic patient on trip of a lifetime. Photo credit Ian Jones

Hospital trust celebrates success of digital donation events

OVER 150 electronic devices were donated to the trust's appeal to tackle digital poverty.

Two digital donation events were held at James Cook and the Friarage in partnership with furbd, part of Middlesbrough charity the Hope Foundation.

Over 80 working smartphones, 20 laptops and a collection of tablets, PC's, monitors and printers were received from individuals and businesses within the local community.

Many of the devices have already been distributed to maternity patients across Teesside by Grace Murray, the trust's lead digital midwife.

"A worthwhile cause"

Grace led on the appeal and is part of the trust's digital inclusion team.

She said: "I want to say a huge thank you to everyone who took the time to help support our appeal.

"It's such a worthwhile cause and these devices will really make a huge difference to our maternity patients, many of whom are unfortunately facing digital exclusion across Teesside.

"We are planning on holding these on a regular basis so that we can continue to help as many patients as possible and in turn, reduce the percentage of digital poverty in our area.

On the day, the teams were also able to provide support to a non-maternity patient called Lee who was facing digital exclusion.

Lee had been unable to get in touch with support services in the local area because he didn't have a phone.

However, the team were able to gift him a donated smartphone from the appeal and he was able to make an appointment with the Hope Foundation on the same day.

"Every device makes a difference"

David Thomas, business development manager for furbd, said: "We are often in short supply of devices but to due people's generosity across Teesside, our team has now been able to refurbish lots of un-used devices that can be redistributed to people who really need them like Lee.

"From giving maternity patients better access to their records or providing families in need with the ability to sit down with their children on an evening and help them with their homework, this appeal really highlights how every device really does make a difference to someone's life."

If you were unable to make the events but would still like to donate, please email grace.murray@nhs.net or scan the QR code to find a donation site.



Grace Murray, David Thomas, Laura Smith and Rosemary Dawson at the donation event (Left to right)

Helping to reduce the number of missed hospital appointments

A NEW campaign is reducing the number of missed hospital appointments across the Tees Valley and beyond.

University Hospitals Tees saw 70,592 outpatient and 2,469 theatre appointments wasted from April to December 2024 due to patients not turning up for their appointment or cancelling the night before or on the day of surgery.

Now staff are asking patients to contact the relevant department with at least 24 hours' notice to let them know if they need to cancel or rearrange their appointment or surgery date. This can then be re-allocated to somebody else.

They are also encouraging patients who struggle to get to hospital because of financial reasons to get in touch to see if they are eligible for travel expenses.

Austin Mathews, consultant anaesthetist and theatre lead at North Tees and Hartlepool, said: "A lot of preparation goes on behind the scenes to make sure we have the right team and the right set of equipment and facilities are available on the day. If a surgery date has been confirmed, we are urging all patients to try their best



Jo Jordan, general manager for obstetrics and gynaecology at South Tees Hospitals

to come in.

"We understand there are genuine reasons why people are unable to attend and need to reschedule, so if that's the case, we're asking patients to contact us as soon as possible so that we can offer that slot to someone else on the waiting list."

One group of patients really feeling the impact are those waiting to be seen or treated for endometriosis at South Tees Hospitals.

Jo Jordan, general manager for obstetrics and gynaecology at South Tees Hospitals said: "We are experiencing lots of patients

not turning up for their clinic appointments and on the same hand, seeing a huge increase in the number of requests to be seen sooner, particularly those experiencing symptoms of endometriosis and other similar conditions.

"The effective management of these chronic conditions rely on patients being seen and treated as soon as possible. Therefore, we need patients who are unable to make their appointments to let us know in advance so that these appointments can be reallocated to help other patients move up the waiting list and be diagnosed and treated as soon as possible."



Austin Mathews, consultant anaesthetist and theatre lead at North Tees and Hartlepool

How to cancel or rearrange an appointment across University Hospitals Tees:

- ✓ Follow the instructions on the appointment letter
- ✓ Request to cancel or change an appointment by logging into the DrDoctor patient engagement portal (South Tees)
- ✓ Submit an online request (South Tees)
- ✓ Access the online directory to contact the department direct (North Tees and Hartlepool)



Health staff volunteer to improve healthcare in Cambodia

HEALTHCARE staff from across University Hospitals Tees recently made the trip to Cambodia to support local hospitals and doctors in improving healthcare in the country.

Cheryle Buckle, a 40-year-old senior wheelchair therapist at North Tees and Hartlepool, and Greta Rocchino, a 28-year-old urology nurse from South Tees Hospitals, spent 10 days in Battambang with charity Transform Healthcare Cambodia.

Cheryle, Greta and the rest of the Transform Healthcare Cambodia team volunteered their time to provide education and training to Khmer healthcare staff at Battambang Provincial Referral Hospital and Roka Community Hospital.

During the trip, Cheryle met with a young boy who is a wheelchair user as a result of a farming accident. Cheryle assessed his upper limb function and taught him how to safely transfer in and out of his chair independently using a transfer board.

She and the team then visited a local carpenter to make three copies of the transfer board – one for the boy and two for local hospitals to be used as prototypes.

Cheryle said: "Watching that little boy give it a shot and nail it first go felt like silent fireworks were going off everywhere as our hearts burst from the excitement and joy from him and his mum. We provided an opportunity for independence for this lovely little boy."

"I have so many moments that have been rewarding and emotive but this one was really special."

Meanwhile, Greta taught lectures on sepsis management and observation as well as interactive hand hygiene sessions. She then spent a further month completing a medical internship in Chiang Mai, Thailand, with the Friends for Asia Foundation.

Greta said: "One reflection for me, brutally and honestly, is how much the NHS gets taken for granted. The Cambodian hospitals generally have less resources than the UK, however the staff are equally as capable. There

is definitely space for improvement in the Cambodian healthcare system, but what also struck me was how grateful everyone was for the care that they received."

Cheryle continued: "The dedication, commitment and determination from the health professionals to do their best is beautiful. This has been one of the most memorable and amazing experiences of my life."



Wheelchair therapist Cheryle Buckle and urology nurse Greta Rocchino (left to right)



Greta Rocchino and Dr Oum Nhel (left to right)



Cheryle (right) teaching transfer skills to therapy staff

From apprentice novice to group director of estates: Decoding Steven Taylor's journey

GROUP director of estates Steven Taylor shares his journey from an apprentice electrician to spearheading estates and capital planning for University Hospitals Tees.

Steven kickstarted his career as an apprentice electrician at North Tees and Hartlepool in 1989. He assisted the estates team with the maintenance, repair and installation of electrical systems across the hospital sites.

Here he developed a specialised skill set working under the supervision of experienced electricians and performing installation and maintenance tasks to ensure the effective operation of various electrical equipment.

Steven said: "My apprenticeship has been a rewarding experience for me and has helped me gain knowledge to work in diverse areas."

"Apprenticeships present a fantastic opportunity to kickstart your career and gain access to a company or a sector you want to work in. While doing an apprenticeship, you will learn skills that are relevant to the sector you desire to work in and gain valuable work experience while getting paid.

"My advice would be to definitely go for an apprenticeship if you can."

Following his apprenticeship, Steve completed a bachelor's in engineering from the University of Sunderland in 1995. He then took up the role of project officer at South Tees in 2005.

Slowly and steadily, Steven climbed the ladder and rose through the ranks in the trust. Throughout his time, he was commended for his proactive approach to problems and was a team player. He was credited for helping the estates team in the smooth running, general upkeep and maintenance of the trust's estates.

"Steven moved on from his role in South Tees and shifted his based to North Tees and Hartlepool, working for the trust's subsidiary company, NTH Solutions, when it was established in 2018."

Following last year's formation of University Hospitals Tees, Steven was appointed as the first group director of estates, capital planning and facilities.

As a director of a hospital group with more than 15,000 staff, he strives to not only provide the best possible estates, facilities and procurement services to patients but to look outside the organisation for opportunities where collective skills and knowledge could bring in external income for the benefit of our patients.

For more information about NHS apprenticeships and to find the career path for you, scan the QR code to visit NHS Health Careers.



Group director of estates Steven Taylor



"My advice would be to definitely go for an apprenticeship if you can."

New town centre NHS community health hub welcomes first patients

THE first patients have been welcomed into a new state-of-the-art community health facility in Teesside.

The Tees Valley Community Diagnostic Centre will offer rapid tests for a range of health issues including cancer, heart and lung disease.

The site is being run by the University Hospitals Tees group, with the estates facilities managed by NTH Solutions LLP. It will include facilities such as CT scanners, two MRI scanners, ultrasound machines, x-ray facilities and a range of heart, lung and blood function tests.

Jonny Rutherford was one of the first patients to be treated, having an MRI scan on his knee.

Jonny, 34 from Billingham, said: "Everything was very straightforward from the moment we left for the appointment. My dad drove me along, we got parked very easily close to the building. It was surreal being in a brand new building.

"I was seen by the radiology team who were very helpful. Everything felt very calm and safe, staff were also very friendly and helpful. A really positive experience."

Phil Woolfall, a radiologist and clinical lead for the centre, said: "We know patients who come here will have the best possible experience. A quicker appointment, a convenient journey to the building, diagnostic tests in a pleasant environment out of the hospital setting and a fantastic facility for our teams to work in.

"We are also thankful to all of our organisations involved in these works, including our council and construction partners, who have gone above and beyond on this project."

The centre, built by Kier, is based on the southern end of the Stockton Waterfront site. It is part of the wider transformation of the town centre to create inspiring and attractive



First patient
Jonny
Rutherford
with senior
radiographer
Helen Stamp

public spaces, led by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council.

Councillor Lisa Evans, leader of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, said: "I am pleased that Stockton Town Centre will be home to such an innovative facility and it's fantastic to see it welcome its first patients. The new diagnostic centre will have a huge impact on residents' access to health services, further improving health and wellbeing for many people across the Borough.

"This is also a major investment which will help drive footfall in Stockton Town Centre, where people can come not only for convenient appointments, but also to be able to access local facilities, shops and spend time in the town centre, in an attractive setting of an urban park."

Dan Doherty, regional director for Kier Construction North & Scotland said: "We're really proud of our work to deliver the Tees Valley Community Diagnostic Centre. I look forward to seeing the benefits the new facility will have for local people."

It will be supported by three 'spoke' diagnostic sites – at the University Hospital of Hartlepool and Friarage Hospital in Northallerton and a new service which recently opened at Redcar Primary Care Hospital following extensive refurbishment works over the last few months.



The main staff break room



The first floor waiting area



Main reception front desk



Lindsay Rutherford-Hoe and Paul Wharton from the North Tees and Hartlepool volunteer coordination team, and Sam Taylor, therapeutic care operational lead at South Tees Hospitals. (Left to right)

New scheme helps army veterans back into work

UNIVERSITY Hospitals Tees' new volunteer to career programme provides work experience and dedicated training to help retired Armed Forces personnel into a role with the NHS.

It offers veterans a gradual route back into work and support in their transition into civilian life. It comes after the success of previous schemes across the hospital group which have seen a number of people take on new roles through volunteering-based career pathways.

The new scheme has been launched collaboratively by North Tees and Hartlepool and South Tees Hospitals trusts along with County Durham and Darlington and Tees Esk and Wear Valley trusts, and volunteer charity Helpforce.

Sam Taylor, therapeutic care operational lead at South Tees Hospitals, said: "We know veterans can be met with challenges that most of us will never face. That's why

it's so important that we're able to offer programmes such as this.

"This pathway provides a tailored approach to support not only veterans, but their spouses, children and loved ones as well, to gain experience in the NHS. It's an opportunity for participants to see what it's like working in the NHS and our individual organisations, to learn new skills and get one-to-one support in applying for health and care roles."

Paul Wharton, head of volunteering at North Tees and Hartlepool, continued: "Our two trusts are very proud to hold the 'Veteran Aware' status to support those who have served for our country. This scheme, working with other NHS organisations in the area, is doing just that.

"We've held a number of veterans' coffee mornings in the last year to nurture a local network and understand the support veterans want and need. We know there's an appetite from the community to work in the NHS and now we're honoured to be able to offer that opportunity to them."

The volunteer to career programme allows veterans to explore careers and provides a direct route to work in the healthcare sector through career-based volunteering. They will also receive training to hone their skills and dedicated support for job applications and interviews.

For more information and to register your interest, please scan the QR code:



The integrated single point of access service supporting patient care

THE integrated single point of access (iSPA) team is the central point of contact for all health and social care services across Tees Valley.

The iSPA provides one point of access with one phone number for South Tees and one for North Tees and Hartlepool. Patients and professionals can get in touch when they require advice, guidance, assessment and access to health and social care services.

iSPA ensures patients and professionals can access the services they need at the right time in the right place and assists adults to remain in a place they call home.

Siobhan Smith, senior lead for transfer of care and iSPA said: "The iSPA teams are dedicated and work hard to providing an integrated approach across health and social care, to ensure patients are cared for in the community."

"The iSPA teams are dedicated and work hard to providing an integrated approach across health and social care, to ensure patients are cared for in the community."

The service aims to provide a coordinated response through a single point of access ensures a 'no wrong door' ethos is applied. The team within the single point of access has access to multi-professional, multi-organisational clinical and non-clinical systems.

The teams within iSPA triage and prioritise all patients who may require an urgent community response or are suitable to receive hospital at home services. They work closely with North East Ambulance Service (NEAS) to ensure where possible people are cared for in the community, avoiding an unnecessary trip to emergency department.

The single point of access receives referrals from several sources, across primary care, acute based wards including front of house, primary care hospitals, community-based health and social care services, as well as care homes and the voluntary sector.

The service also accepts complex patient referrals into a multi-disciplinary team from any health and social care practitioner.

All referrals are captured via the call handling and clerical team. They are then processed and sent through to the integrated triage team – which consists of a community nurse and community therapist.

Contact

South Tees Hospitals iSPA
Open 8am to 8pm, seven days a week
01642 065070

North Tees and Hartlepool iSPA
Open 24 hours, seven days a week
01429 522500



The iSPA service provides guidance and support in accessing health and social care services

Derek takes a look back

AS he turns 70, group chair Derek Bell OBE looks back on his 40+ year career and takes a look at the healthcare future he hopes to help bring to our region:

People think the NHS doesn't change but it's always changing.

When I qualified, a heart attack patient would spend several days in hospital on bed rest. Now they can be home in two days, being much more mobile and enjoying better outcomes. Our imaging technology has improved incredibly. Back in the day we had just X-rays - now we have CT scans, MRI and nuclear imaging.

I'm pleased I kept up my clinical practice for as long as I did. I liked working with junior doctors and learning from my patients.

It's an honour to work with not only great clinicians but also alongside highly skilled researchers and leaders.

One of the things I'm most proud of is my involvement in the National Early Warning System. We created the standardised measure of key parameters to assess patients on admission to hospital, which is now used across the UK and in other parts of the world. Our lay members were surprised that this didn't already exist.

The future of healthcare

We have to improve the patient experience by putting them at the centre of all we do by being cognisant of their overall journey from the time of need onward. We must ensure we are treating the whole patient, not just that particular symptom, to help them get back to the best life possible.

I've had the opportunity to see healthcare around the world. We have to be more open to learning from other cultures and not being so focused on North America. There are many countries delivering innovative care that we could take best practice from.

A key element of ensuring our clinical and financial stability is improving and expanding community-based care. Patients with deep vein thrombosis, and many other conditions, are usually

outpatients now, rather than spending a week on a hospital ward they are back at home.

The NHS is always changing, always

"The NHS is always changing, always learning, always improving."

learning, always improving. I hope that as I look back on my career it's an ethos I have reflected and have encouraged others to take to heart.

I am sure that throughout the health and care system we are aware of the challenges facing us. It's important that we rise to this challenge and maximise the opportunities that University Hospitals Tees can deliver.

Group chair Derek Bell OBE



NHS research team helping patients return to work more efficiently following surgery achieve national milestone

THE trauma and orthopaedic delivery team from South Tees Hospitals are the first team in the UK to have recruited 100 patients to the national OPAL study.

Funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), the study is designed to help patients who are having hip or knee replacement surgery return to work more efficiently.

The team is part of a wider research network of physios, nurse practitioners and orthopaedic specialists at James Cook who are working together to identify, screen and recruit eligible patients to take part in the randomised research project.

Following surgery, patients receive a personalised programme tailored to their individual needs, have access to specialist resources and be able to access support from dedicated return-to-work co-ordinators.

It is hoped the study will help these patients have a better understanding of their recovery process, manage their time off work more efficiently and feel more prepared to return to work.

Orthopaedic research nurse, Andrew

Shepperson is part of the trauma and orthopaedic delivery team leading the study.

He said: "Patients who are scheduled to undergo hip or knee replacement surgeries often face challenges in their recovery and may experience difficulties returning to work due to pain, mobility issues or lack of support during the transitional period.

"The OPAL study is designed to address these challenges and provides resources specifically aimed to help patients return to their jobs quicker and more safely following surgery."

South Tees is one of 20 sites delivering the study throughout the UK, following a recognised need to improve the return-to-work processes for patients undergoing hip and knee replacement surgery.

The research team has implemented streamlined processes for screening and enrolling, established trusting relationships and encouraged open and honest conversations with their patients. They are delighted to have just recruited their 100th patient.

Research nurse Matt Atkinson is the principal investigator for the study.

He said: "Everyone in the trauma and orthopaedic delivery team is over the moon to be the first team in the UK to reach this milestone.

"It hasn't been easy but through hard work, sweat and tears and fantastic support from our multidisciplinary team and return-to-work coordinator, we are delighted to have been able to support the national target.

"Ultimately, knowing that our patients now and in the future will benefit from this gives us a sense of achievement and pride."

"Ultimately, knowing that our patients now and in the future will benefit from this gives us a sense of achievement and pride."



Marc Atkinson and Andrew Shepperson

Physio's effective change cuts waiting list by more than half

A PHYSIOTHERAPIST'S use of digital technology has seen the waiting list for physiotherapy fall by more than 80% and has helped patients like Stephen to be seen even quicker.

Senior specialist physiotherapist Linda Furness, who works at the Friarage, has been credited for driving a change within the hospital's physiotherapy department - which has helped massively bring down the waiting list and enabled patients to receive prompt care.

In January 2024, more than 798 patients were on the waiting list for physiotherapy in the Hambleton and Richmondshire region. The increase in the waiting list was attributed to a COVID-19 backlog.

To ensure that the waiting list came down and patients were seen sooner, Linda and her team adopted Communication Annex, a software designed to facilitate the sending of information to patients.

Prior to this, patients on the physiotherapy waiting list were sent key information, such as partial booking letters or appointment letters, by post.

This process required patients to confirm their appointments either by post or by calling the department, which was expensive and took several days.

As a result, the team developed a two-question text message that was sent to patients on their mobile phones using Communication Annex.

The text message sent to patients on the waiting list asked if they still required treatment and if they could attend their appointments on short notice if there were any cancellations.

Patients receiving the text message either confirmed they no longer needed care and could be removed from the waiting list, or those who still needed care were allotted an appointment slot accordingly.

The process made communication between the hospital team and patients swift and rapid and reduced pressure on the admin team.

Patients can still opt out of any information being sent to them digitally from the hospital and can carry on receiving appointment letters through post.

After a year of adopting Communication Annex, the physiotherapy service at Friarage has successfully reduced the waiting list across Hambleton and Richmondshire from 798 at its peak in January 2024 to 152 in January 2025.

One of the patients who benefitted from the swift communication process was Stephen Brooks, who was referred to the Northallerton hospital's physiotherapy department after undergoing surgery to repair his broken elbow in September 2024.

Thanks to this, Stephen's first physiotherapy appointment took place within 14 days of his accident.

Linda said: "By utilising this method, it meant that the team could all assist in sending out texts and appointments, which in turn reduced pressure on our admin team."



Laura Bookall, Will Boggis, Linda Furness, Mike Jessop and Fiona Clarke (Left to right)

Heart teams introduce MIYA

THE positive outcome within cardiology, which is one of the latest areas to introduce MIYA into their clinical workflow, follows successful implementation of clinical noting and patient flow boards in 37 other inpatient areas across South Tees sites.

With all inpatient areas utilising electronic Prescribing and Medicines Administration (ePMA) alongside Patienttrack, it was highlighted that patient care would be enhanced by reducing interruptions into the digital workflow.

There was some anxiety prior to introducing the digital system as the team shared concern that the varied pathways were specialist and therefore it would be challenging to visualise this on a digital system.

Fast forward four months and manager of the coronary care unit (CCU) and cardiology assessment day unit (CADU) Sue Mullender says: "We only wish we started this earlier. It is fantastic – having visibility of the unit



Cardiology and cardiothoracic MIYA clinical workflow team

on one screen whilst in charge gives me great assurance. I can manage the workflow and make sure patients care is optimised, supporting the staff as needed.

"I have to say I feel the success of the project was down to the collaborative working between the clinical and digital teams. We were given opportunity to plan and visualise the digitalisation of the pathways

with the business change team who translated our requirements into a digital pathway."

The MIYA team is currently collaborating with the spinal injuries team, aiming to bring them live next. Additionally, efforts are underway to digitise the remaining paper notes on the wards into the MIYA solution.

Game changer for how we deliver patient care

AS the building work on Friarage Surgical Centre nears completion Talking Point went behind the scenes with the project's lead nurse, Sarah Baker, and one of the clinical operational leads, Drew Murray...

Set to open its doors in May, the new £35.5million facility will feature state-of-the-art technology and streamlined pathways.

Drew said: "This new building has six brand new operating theatres, two minor operating theatres, a 12-

bay recovery, a regional block room and a dedicated admission and discharge area."

Sarah said it's a game changer for how we deliver patient care:

"It's designed for efficiency and allows us to treat more patients, reduce wait times and provide the best outcomes for patients.

"This hub has been designed to create an outstanding work environment with modern facilities and a real focus on wellbeing and collaboration.

"We are creating a centre of excellence that will make a difference to patient care. This is the future of surgery, and we are



Sarah Baker, lead nurse for the development of the Friarage Surgical Centre, and Drew Murray, one of the clinical operational leads, take a tour of the new building

proud to be part of it."

To view the video tour visit southtees.nhs.uk/hospitals/friarage/friarage-surgical-hub

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 the 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.

Rachel Ryan - Attention to Detail

Congratulations to Rachel Ryan for being applauded for her attention to detail.

During an extremely busy shift, Rachel actions in identifying a patient with a severe chest pain and quickly escalating it ensured the best outcome for the individual.

The nomination said: "She acted quickly to assess the patient, who was facing a serious health issue. The patient was transferred to resus and then to cath lab within 40 minutes of arriving – ensuring the best possible outcome for this patient.

"Without Rachel's action the patient could have rapidly deteriorated."

Well done, Rachel.

Cellular pathology – Going the Extra Mile

The cellular pathology team was recognised for going above and beyond for a patient waiting biopsy results.

The nomination said: "After an issue with one of the slides the pathology team rallied round to ensure it would be reported in time for the patient's appointment. They kept me (cancer care co-ordinator) up to date every step of the way so that I could update the patient, so he did not have a wasted journey or have his pathway delayed.

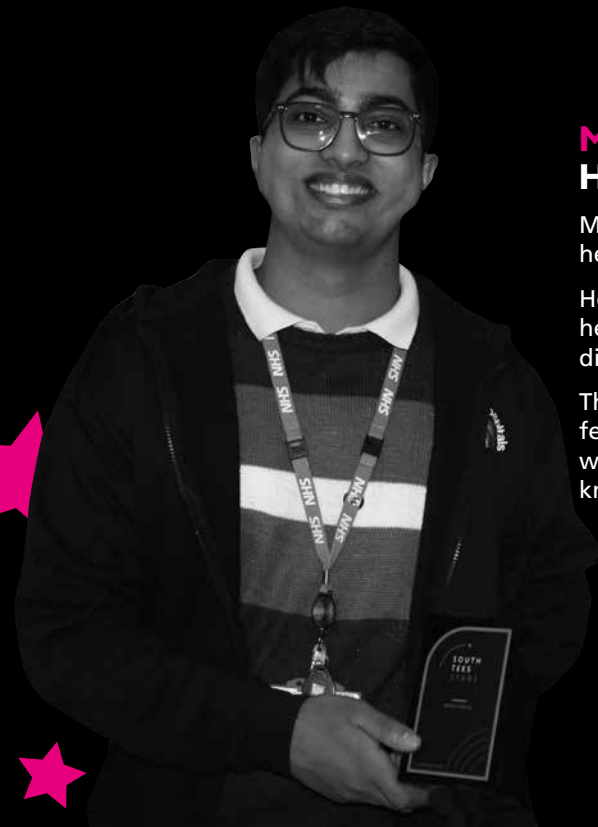
"We were able to see the anxious patient and provide them with the unfortunate results which showed he did have cancer and would need to go on for further treatment."

The nomination further said: "This team, who sit in the background, deserve to be recognised for the outstanding work and care shown to the patients every single week without fail."

Thanks for your hard work.

South Tees STARS shine brightly





Melvin Manoj – Communication

Melvin was nominated for his communication skills.

The nomination said: "Over the past few weeks, my PC had been acting very strange! I raised a job with the IT Helpdesk team, who diverted my job to the faults team where I was put in contact with Melvin.

"He was great in explaining the PC issues and staying connected with me to let me know when he could address the issues. Within such a short turnaround (three days),

"Melvin attended my office to replace my PC. Shortly after, I noticed that my PC was again doing strange things, so I contacted Melvin again to explain what was happening and he was so good! He remotely logged on to my PC within five minutes and again fixed the issue.

"As administrators, we would struggle to do our job without your expert knowledge."

Congratulations.

Melanie Gannon – Helping Others

Melanie was recognised for helping others.

Her knowledge and understanding helped her colleague overcome a difficult task.

The nomination said: "Over the last few weeks I have been asked to work on tasks outside of my current knowledge and understanding.

"Mel has been there for me all of the way, supporting and guiding me. Without Mel's knowledge, understanding, consideration, passion for the work and support, I would have found the tasks difficult."

Thank you Mel for all of your help and support, you have been amazing and it is very much appreciated.



Hambleton and Richmondshire physiotherapy outpatient team – Teamwork

The physiotherapy team based at the Friarage/Friary won a STARS Award for tackling long waiting lists since the pandemic.

This year through the introduction of a waiting list initiative, which utilised the

Communication Annex on SystmOne, the team has managed to take the waiting lists from 796 patients down to 184 in September, with the hope of reducing this further by the end of the year and into 2025.

The nomination said: "The team have worked very hard to achieve this without additional resource and think they deserve recognition for their ongoing hard work and efforts"

Well done.



Hospital anaesthetists earn national accreditation

OUR anaesthetic departments have been reaccredited under the prestigious Royal College of Anaesthetists (RCoA) Anaesthesia Clinical Services Accreditation (ACSA) scheme.

The perioperative services and cardiothoracic anaesthesia teams were recognised for providing ongoing commitment to clinical excellence and delivering high quality care to their patients at James Cook and the Friarage.

The perioperative services team were first accredited back in 2020 and then following a rigorous review process, both teams were delighted to learn they had achieved ASCA reaccreditation.

ACSA is the RCoA's peer-reviewed scheme that engages anaesthesia departments across the UK in quality improvement and the accreditation is only held by around 30% of anaesthetic departments in the UK.

South Tees is one of only two in the North-East of England to have achieved the accreditation.



The anaesthetic departments celebrating their success

The review found that the anaesthesia teams were 'safe and forward-thinking' and were able to demonstrate high standards in areas such as patient experience, patient safety and clinical leadership.

Adrian Jennings, lead reviewer for the Royal College of Anaesthetists said: "We were impressed by the anaesthetic department's ongoing commitment to quality improvement, and their dedication in seeing the ACSA process through to achieve accreditation.

"The complexity of this undertaking and the cohesiveness of the units in working together to deliver and evidence outstanding patient care is commendable."

Rebekah Thompson, consultant anaesthetist at South Tees is the ACSA lead for the trust.

She said: "To get the news that we had achieved ACSA reaccreditation was such a special moment for our teams.

"They all work extremely hard together to ensure that patient safety is at the forefront of what they do so to be recognised nationally for this is amazing.

"We are also very lucky to be surrounded by such a fantastic group of colleagues across our trust, who without their unwavering support and dedication, this would not have been possible."

Leyburn community team secures 4x4 to reach more patients in rural areas

THE Leyburn community nursing team has received a brand-new Dacia Duster 4x4, ensuring they can continue delivering high-quality care to patients in even the most remote areas whatever the weather.

Funded by the trust, the addition of this vehicle marks a significant step forward in improving patient care across the rural community.

Maria Hubbuck, from the Leyburn community nursing team, said "This vehicle will allow us to reach patients we

previously struggled to access during severe weather and those patients that live in our most rural areas."

The vehicle will be available for use across Hambleton and Richmondshire, meaning multiple teams can benefit when conditions demand it.



Jainaba Jobe with the new vehicle

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

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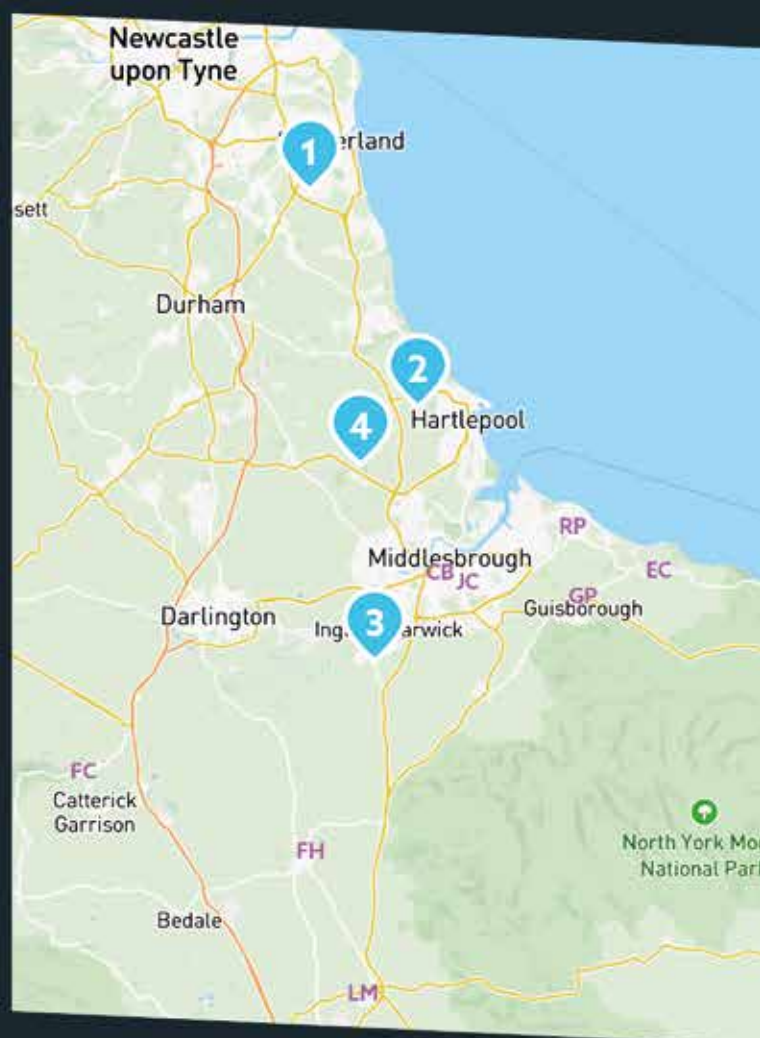
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