

ISSUE 68

SUMMER 2025



North Tees and Hartlepool  
NHS Foundation Trust

# anthem



## Robotic and emergency maternity theatre unveiled

One of our most ambitious estates projects to date, the theatre is now open and being used for our patients. Read more on page 4.

Also in this issue:

Supporting patients from the comfort of home

Rewarding careers in midwifery

Celebrating our volunteers



“ Exciting plans are in place to develop our community services further over the coming months. ”

## Dear reader,

Welcome to the summer edition of Anthem magazine.

So much has been going on across the Stockton, Hartlepool and County Durham area of University Hospitals Tees.

Included in this issue of Anthem are details of our new state-of-the-art robotic and maternity operating theatre. This has been a real triumph for those who have been behind it and I want to congratulate those involved. Robotic technology continues to develop at pace and it's so important we stay at the forefront of this – something our patients will benefit from.

You will also read the story of one of the patients of our successful virtual frailty ward and how it's helping keep patients in their own homes. Exciting plans are in place to develop our community services further over the coming months. We know most patients would rather be cared for at home and we know it is the right thing to do for so many of our patients.

We were delighted yet again this year to hold our special volunteers celebration evening. I was privileged to be able to spend the evening with many of them and thank them for their service to our staff and patients.

You will also see information in here around our cost of caring campaign across the group. As you will have seen, the whole health system nationally has been reacting to reductions in spending and this is our own response to this challenge at group level. We have been asking our staff for suggestions –

however big or small – around how we can make those savings and championing those teams who have already come up with initiatives themselves. You will be able to see some of these fantastic examples in this issue of things that are not only saving us money but improving patient care.

As there always is, you will also find news about innovations, career stories and team successes. So much fantastic work is going on across the organisation

Please do share positive stories with us and we will look to include these in future issues.

Thanks for reading.

*Stacey Hunter*

GROUP CHIEF EXECUTIVE



WORLD  
LAND  
TRUST™

This newsletter has been printed on carbon balanced paper. (CBP019486)  
[www.carbonbalancedpaper.com](http://www.carbonbalancedpaper.com)



# Linda celebrates five-decade NHS career

## I love being a nurse because...

"I love to see patients come in, get well and go home, knowing that the care I've given has helped to make that change. My whole life has been about nursing and providing patient care."

Linda Wildberg's passion for nursing started at the age of 16, when she and a group of school friends gave up their time on a weekend to volunteer on the elderly card ward at Hartlepool General Hospital.

Destined to be a nurse, Linda became a cadet in 1972, a time where everyone was admitted through a carbon copy book with pen and paper. Here Linda gained invaluable experience working in a variety of different departments.

However, it was the Hartlepool trauma and orthopaedics department that stole Linda's heart. 54 years on, Linda is still working within the trauma and orthopaedics department as a clinical quality data management lead for collaborative care.

Reflecting on her career, Linda said: "My whole career has been a highlight and I am so proud of what I've achieved. It has been such a pleasure to see the development of my colleagues, many of whom have now advanced into practitioner and consultant roles.

"I could go on forever talking about what I love about being a nurse, but it's not as one person that you can achieve – it's the team you work with."



Pictured: Linda (front row, second from right) with the ward 4 team.

## Linda's career highlights

- **1 January 1973:** started her first shift as a cadet
- **1974 to 1977:** completed her state registered nurse training
- **1977:** secured her first staff nurse role working in female elective orthopaedics at St Hilda's Hospital
- **1977 – 1981:** worked as an orthopaedic clinical educator alongside her staff nurse role
- **1981:** promoted to junior ward sister
- **1982 to 1983:** completed her orthopaedic specialist certificate at Sunderland General Hospital
- **1984:** transferred to Hartlepool General when St Hilda's Hospital closed
- **1986 to 2020:** promoted to a ward matron when Sister Brown retired
- **2004:** started surgical site surveillance for the UK Health Security Agency (previously Public Health) alongside her ward matron role
- **2018:** won a Shining Star award on the 70th anniversary of the NHS

# Robotic and emergency maternity surgical theatre opens

Patients are now benefitting from our new robotic and emergency maternity surgical theatre at the University Hospital of North Tees.



Pictured: Staff attend the grand unveiling of the new robotic and emergency maternity surgical theatre.

One of the most ambitious estates projects in the history of the hospital, the state-of-the-art facility includes a cutting-edge robotic surgical and training space and a dedicated emergency maternity surgery theatre.

The robotic theatre is equipped with the Da Vinci robotic surgeon, affectionately nicknamed 'Robbie' by a patient. The robot is controlled remotely by surgeons to enhance the accuracy and efficiency of complex operations.

The new emergency maternity theatre is close to the delivery suite and is designed to provide the best clinical environment to support surgeons during what are often lifesaving procedures.

Stacey Hunter, group chief executive, said: "The new operating theatres will benefit hundreds of patients for years to come.

"Robotic surgery is the future. It's often much quicker and less intrusive for patients, resulting in reduced post-surgery length of stay.

"The new emergency maternity theatre is right next to the delivery suite. Any woman needing urgent surgery during labour will now be able to get that surgery instantly.

"I'd also like to thank the clinical team who have worked hand-in-hand with our estates colleagues throughout this entire project. I'd especially like to thank surgeon Anil Agarwal for his leadership. His advocating for the need for investment and his patience and guidance

over the last two years has been inspiring. He has been instrumental in securing this new facility for colleagues, patients and their families."

The opening saw plaques unveiled stating the theatres are proudly 'dedicated to the population of Teesside'.

The construction project was managed by NTH Solutions with Geoffrey Robinson Ltd carrying out the building work.

Thank you to charities MUSIC V CANCER and Support Your Bowel who have collectively donated £40,000 to support this project.



Pictured: 'Robbie' the Da Vinci robotic surgeon.



# Helping patients stay where they're happiest – at home

When Thelma Barnes became unwell with yet another infection, her daughter Deb couldn't help but feel a sense of déjà vu.

After COVID-19, Thelma's health became more fragile — but it was a visit from a practice nurse that changed everything.

Deb explains: "Catherine, the nurse, came to see us and said there's a service called the virtual frailty ward. I'd never heard of it. She explained how Mum could get care at home instead of going into hospital again. That's how it all started."

The virtual frailty ward is part of the Hospital at Home service — a way to deliver the kind of care patients would normally receive on a hospital ward, but safely and comfortably in their own home. It supports people living with frailty or long-term conditions, and aims to reduce avoidable admissions and the stress that often comes with them.

Deb continues: "It's a massive relief. You know someone's going to be there if we need them. It's that peace of mind."

"If Mum gets an infection now, she can have her antibiotics at home. She doesn't have to go through all that again."

Jess Spencer works as a community practitioner in the virtual frailty ward team. She and the team provide a wide range of support – from medication reviews and IV treatment, to helping patients with everyday needs.

She sees first-hand how much the service can mean – not just to patients, but to their families too.

Jess said: "For people living with dementia, taking them out of their familiar environment and into hospital can be really distressing. This way, they stay where they're most comfortable, and we bring the care to them."

"We want to keep people safe, supported and at home for as long as possible. We're here for the patients, and for their families too."

"It makes me really proud. I feel so lucky to be part of it. When a patient is discharged, doing well and happy, that's job satisfaction."

Scan the QR code to watch Deb and Jess' video:



Pictured: Deb Barnes recently shared her and her mum's story in a short film.

# NHS volunteers treated to special thank you evening

Volunteers were the VIP guests as NHS staff organised a special evening to thank them for everything they do.

The event, hosted at the University Hospital of North Tees, was a chance to thank our 400-strong group of volunteers for everything they do to support staff and patients across the organisation.

This year's 'Thank you dinner' welcomed volunteers to a bucks fizz reception, where they were entertained by keen pianist and member of the catering team, Ray Adavbiele. They then watched a short video presentation showcasing some of the volunteers' highlights and thank you messages from staff.

The evening welcomed volunteers representing a variety of roles across the organisation, including hospital radio volunteers, mealtime companions, welcomers, drivers and chaplains.

Group chair Derek Bell said: "My message is one of thanks to every one of our volunteers – without you we couldn't do what we do. You do so much to support fellow colleagues and patients and you work with such passion and dedication.

"We hope this event we hold every year for you in some way is a demonstration of the appreciation we have for you all."

The event celebrated some of our longest serving members, with dozens of volunteers reaching important milestones this year. Certificates and long service badges were presented by Derek and group chief executive Stacey Hunter to the volunteers who were in attendance.

Speaking at the event, Stacey said: "The work that you all do here with us is massively impactful for our patients, their loved ones and for our staff.

"Our whole focus is about doing the most we can do for our patients. We simply wouldn't be able to do this without the time and support you give us.

"So, it's a massive thank you from me for everything you all do."

A two-course meal was provided by the catering team at NTH Solutions, and hospital staff took the opportunity to share their thanks by waiting on volunteers for the night.

Paul Wharton, head of volunteering, said: "The volunteering team is so grateful to our volunteers for the time and the support they give to our organisation. All of our volunteers are dedicated to helping make things a little better for our patients during their appointments or hospital stay."







## Get involved

### Thinking about volunteering?

If you are interested and would like to find out more about volunteering with us, call 01642 383933 or email:

**[nth-tr.volunteersnth@nhs.net](mailto:nth-tr.volunteersnth@nhs.net)**

### Support with a donation.

If you would like to donate funds to keep our volunteers service running, scan the QR code.



Alternatively, text **NHSVOLS** followed by your donation amount to **70085** to give that amount\*.

*\*Texts will cost the donation amount plus one standard network rate message, and you'll be opting into hearing more from us. If you would like to donate but don't wish to hear more from us, please text NHSVOLSNOINFO instead.*

# A day in the life of... a healthcare clinical support worker

After more than two decades working in care homes, Jon Cox decided it was time for a change and applied for his first hospital job.

With 25 years' experience in health and social care under his belt, Jon, 45 from Middlesbrough, is now a NHS healthcare clinical support worker. He works on the emergency assessment unit (EAU) at the University Hospital of North Tees, supporting patients with a variety of care needs.

He works alongside nursing and medical staff to support with monitoring patients, assisting with personal care and undertaking some clinical duties.

We sat down with Jon to find out a little more about his role...

## **Q: What led to your role as a healthcare clinical support worker?**

I've worked in care for about 25 years. I used to work in residential care and just wanted a change really so I applied for this role.

I came through the recruitment centre and found the process really easy. It was very straightforward and quick for me.

I've been on EAU at North Tees for about two and a half years now.

## **Q: What does the job involve?**

I do mainly clinical tasks – catheter care, cannulas, bloods. I do the scans and the ECGs, all the obs and escalate patients when they're really poorly.

There isn't such a thing as a typical shift really. Some days it's quite steady and relatively easy going, other days it can be manic – but I love that side of it and being kept on my toes.

## **Q: What do you love about your role?**

I really do get a lot of job satisfaction from knowing that I've helped people. Having a poorly patient come in and then seeing them getting better and going home – you know you've done your job.

I love the variety on EAU as well. We see different patients with different needs. It is busy, but I enjoy that.

From my personal experience, I've found the trust and the EAU team really accommodating. I have healthcare needs myself so between my condition and treatments, everyone's been so cooperative and great. I really can't fault them.

## **Q: Any advice for someone considering a career as a healthcare clinical support worker?**

I'd say just go for it. I'd considered it years ago but just had a bit of fear about the change. I realised that you're never really going to know for sure until you try. So I tried it, I loved it and here I am still.



Pictured: 45-year-old Jon Cox landed his first NHS job two years ago



# Hospital implements new technology to advance care for poorly babies

The University Hospital of North Tees has invested in camera technology to help staff quickly intubate babies who are struggling with their breathing.



Pictured: Ward matron Clare Easson demonstrates the new GlideScope with a manikin.

The equipment, a 'GlideScope', is now in place in the special care baby unit – which cares for babies who are born prematurely or sick.

The 'GlideScope' is a piece of video laryngoscopy technology, with a small camera and accompanying screen. Once inserted into the mouth, it provides a clear, real-time view of babies' airways, allowing trained staff on the ward to intubate newborns quickly and with precision during a respiratory emergency.

Clare Easson, ward matron on the special care baby unit, said: "As you can imagine, the patients we care for on this unit have very small, very delicate airways. In an emergency, we need to intubate very quickly under what can be difficult circumstances. This piece of equipment is going to help us do just that, while also reducing the associated risks to our young patients.

"We also hope it's going to give some extra reassurance and confidence to parents. Seeing your baby in hospital is already worrisome, so we hope that by being able to do this procedure quickly, efficiently and on the first attempt, we're lowering the distress that parents feel a little.

"I really think this piece of kit is going to be amazing."

As well as helping the team to intubate quickly, it will also decrease the numbers of repeat attempts – reducing the physical tolls that can come with intubation.

Consultants and nurse specialists on the ward are currently being trained in using the GlideScope on an infant manikin. With training nearing completion, the team will begin using the equipment in the coming months.

# Opinion: "Being a nurse or midwife are the best jobs"



By Emma Nunez, chief nursing officer

As the chief nursing officer for University Hospitals Tees, I'm responsible for nursing and midwifery standards across the group, making sure our services meet the needs of our patients.

For me, being a nurse or a midwife are the best jobs.

You can't overstate the impact you can have on people. We can be the positive, in even the worst of situations. People remember those who gave them great care.

Nurses and midwives are leaders in their own right. We are involved throughout the full life cycle in the patient journey, when people are born and at the end of their life. We lead on academic research and ward managers (arguably one of the hardest jobs) are nurses or midwives by profession.

When I first applied to be a midwife, I thought I'd be delivering hands on-care forever and I was quite happy about that. But after beginning my career in Newcastle, I moved through a variety of roles including patient safety and governance positions, into commissioning and then

to leading a patient safety improvement programme called Safer Care North East, which focused on process and behavioural change to improve patient safety outcomes.

My last role was at Harrogate as director of nursing and deputy chief executive. None of those jobs would be possible without my clinical training and background.

It might be a cliché but it's genuinely a privilege to be alongside another human being when they need you most. The privilege we have as nurses and midwives is that we are alongside people long-term, carrying them through the worst times and celebrating the best times.

The reality of the NHS is that there are vast opportunities for nurses and midwives – too many to list – and more are being developed and created all the time.

It's an exciting time in the NHS and the next generation of nurses and midwives will be taking up roles I can't yet imagine.







# New pilot service launched to improve outcomes for cancer patients

University Hospitals Tees is introducing a new 'prehabilitation' service to prepare people with cancer for treatment.

Patients are referred into the service upon receiving a cancer diagnosis. It supports those with cancer to get as fit and healthy as possible to help them cope with the physical and emotional tolls of treatment, reduce side effects and improve their recovery outcomes.

Funded by the Northern Cancer Alliance, the service will form part of patients' personalised care plans and will be supported by cancer nurse specialists and cancer care coordinators.

It is led by Chloé McMurray, personalised cancer care prehabilitation lead, and Tom Wing, cancer prehabilitation lead.

Chloé said: "The aim of prehabilitation is to capture patients as soon after diagnosis as possible and optimise them nutritionally, physically and emotionally before they start treatment – whether that's surgery, chemotherapy or radiotherapy.

"We know that the benefits of prehabilitation can be seen in as little as two weeks which can make big differences before, during and after treatment."

Chloé and Tom have collaborated with patients and cancer specialists to pilot a co-designed virtual 'cancer prehabilitation school' and subsequent programme of support, which underpins NHS England's long-term plan and ambitions for cancer.

Following this virtual session, patients will enter a prehabilitation pathway suitable for their needs and personalised care plan.

Tom said: "Research shows that prehabilitation is improving cancer-related outcomes and reducing the likelihood of adverse side effects during and after cancer treatment.

"We very much want this service to be part of our cancer pathways and patients' journeys. This isn't an extra – it's part of our patients' treatment plans – but we're trying to implement it out in the community as much as possible with the hope that people carry on with these changes after treatment, helping them to not only live longer but also live better for longer."



Pictured: Chloé McMurray, personalised cancer care prehabilitation lead, and Tom Wing, cancer prehabilitation lead.



**Every organisation within the NHS has been asked to review its financial position and contribute to reducing waste and ultimately cost.**

University Hospitals Tees is committed to the delivery of safe quality care. This continues to remain our absolute priority but we need to save at least 5% on the day-to-day cost of running services in the next financial year.

That's why we've launched our 'cost of caring' campaign, shining a spotlight on some of the initiatives our teams have embedded in their day-to-day roles to help reduce costs across our organisation...

## Card readers in urgent care

**The urgent care service has set up a way to allow patients to pay for an overnight prescription – helping the team also make savings to put back into patient care.**

The service, which runs 24 hours a day, seven days a week, can often prescribe medication to patients outside of daytime hours.

Nicola Grieves, head of nursing for the urgent care service at University Hospitals Tees, explains more: "If a patient needs to be prescribed medication then we don't want any delay with that prescription.

"Because we haven't previously had a payment system available overnight, we haven't been charging for these prescriptions. Now we have the card reader, our team can take payment from those patients when appropriate.

"It is also helping the department to make savings – money which can go back into the service to allow our teams to provide the very best care to our patients."

This system has already been set up at the University Hospital of North Tees and the University Hospital of Hartlepool, with plans in place to roll out across urgent care centres at Redcar Primary Care Hospital and The James Cook University Hospital.





## Swap shops

Our swap shops are based out of the yards at both the University Hospital of Hartlepool and the University Hospital of North Tees. Managed by NTH Solutions environmental services and sustainability officer Natasha Cuthbert and a number of our porters, they take in pre-loved furniture and clinical aids for repair, repurpose and redistribution.



These include sharps trolleys which retail for around £100, medical trolleys worth around £300, walking aids and furniture. All are free for staff to take away and rehome in their department.

The swap shop also receives out-of-date medical devices, for example unused tourniquets, which are redistributed for students and staff to use on simulation manikins as part of their training.

Where items can't be repaired, they are stripped of their useful parts (screws, bolts and wheels for example), ready for the next item that needs a replacement fixing.

And it's not just old furniture that lives in the yards. They also house waste bound for recycling, including cardboard which yields £50 per tonne in income, and scrap metal. A boiler room recently cleared of scrap metal generated around £5,000.

In short – if you can't make use of something in your department, Natasha and the team will.

## Got a cost-saving idea?

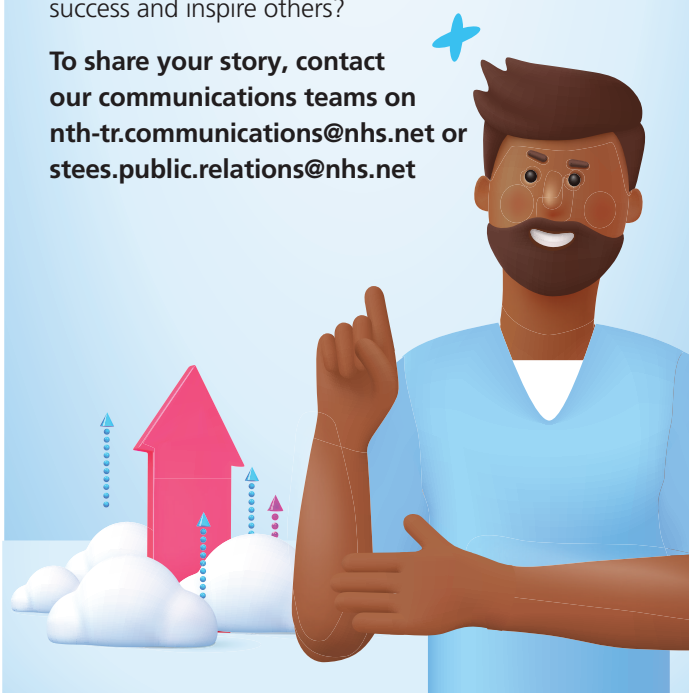
If you have an idea and need some support to put it in place, our improvement teams are here to help.

They welcome all your ideas to improve processes, save time, reduce costs and be more efficient. Every suggestion, no matter how large or small, could make a difference.

Submit your ideas by emailing [nth-tr.pmioreferral@nhs.net](mailto:nth-tr.pmioreferral@nhs.net) or [stees.sio@nhs.net](mailto:stees.sio@nhs.net)

And if you've already implemented a cost-savings initiative in your department, why not share your success and inspire others?

To share your story, contact our communications teams on [nth-tr.communications@nhs.net](mailto:nth-tr.communications@nhs.net) or [stees.public.relations@nhs.net](mailto:stees.public.relations@nhs.net)





# Outstanding response to the children and young people's patient experience survey

University Hospitals Tees has been highly commended for its positive results in the Care Quality Commission Children and Young People's Experience Survey.

The survey involved 120 acute NHS trusts in England, with 25,821 responses received from 133,138 surveys – resulting in a national response rate of 19.6%.

University Hospitals Tees' services were commended for their waiting areas, food and the overall experience of their patients.

Emma Nunez, chief nursing officer, said: "We're very proud to see the results of this survey. Children, young people and their families across Tees Valley use our services everyday so receiving their feedback in how we are doing and where we need to improve is important to us.

"The results reflect the hard work of our colleagues who I know are passionate about providing the best patient care and experience and it is amazing to see that their commitment and skills are so highly valued by our patients and their families."

The full results from our organisations can be found on the CQC website. For further reading, please scan the QR code.



## The views of our patients

"We cannot fault our experience at North Tees. Our daughter was seen swiftly and staff made us all feel relaxed. Staff took their time and ran all tests necessary before they were satisfied and she could go home. We did not feel rushed and were well looked after. This was our first hospital visit, and it was good to have our worries eased. Communication was good and care was wonderful. Thank you." - **University Hospital of North Tees**

"Staff were very accommodating, friendly and very knowledgeable. The department was run very well and the staff continually came to ask if we had any needs that were not being met." - **The James Cook University Hospital**



Pictured: Nursery assistant Phoebe Galloway with six-year-old Fox Saunders on ward 21, James Cook.



Pictured: Play specialist Jennie Hobbs and five-year-old Ida on the North Tees children's ward.



# Family ties

At University Hospitals Tees, we're more than colleagues and co-workers – we really are a NHS family.

And for some, that is more literal than others...

## Chris, Alison and Julie

Pathology IT systems support officer Chris Lithgo has worked at the University Hospital of North Tees for five years.

While he's at work, Chris often bumps into his mum Alison Lithgo who has been serving food in the Tees Restaurant since 2022. Not only does Chris see his mum on a regular basis, his mother-in-law Julie Park also works as a clerical officer in our medical records team.

Chris said: "I don't know what I did to deserve it, but I work with my mum and mother-in-law! I'm always on my best behaviour when I see them around."

Mum Alison adds: "I always introduce Chris to everyone as 'my little boy' even though he towers over me! It's always nice when I see him or Julie around the hospital."



Pictured: Julie Park, Chris Lithgo and Alison Lithgo.

## Robyn, Roxy and Reggie

Sisters Robyn and Roxy Ross are proud to work side-by-side with each other, playing an important role to improve the lives of patients across Teesside.

Robyn is a stoma prescribing coordinator, while Roxy is a senior support worker for the specialist weight management service.

Based primarily at Langbaugh House in Guisborough, they often catch-up over lunch – something made possible by Robyn's instinct to share a job advert that kickstarted Roxy's career.

Roxy said: "Robyn started working in healthcare first when she was 16, travelled abroad and then rejoined in 2020. She sent me a job advert for a team she knew I would love working in and as always, she was right, as I've progressed from a band 2 to a band 4 in just three years."

Now, even Roxy's daughter, Reggie, is getting involved, starring in our zero-tolerance to violence against staff campaign.

## Rachel and Sue

Sue Mincher joined our pre-assessment unit at the University Hospital of Hartlepool in 2008 as a receptionist.

Five years on, she let her daughter, Rachel, know about a vacancy – and Rachel joined the University Hospitals Tees family.

Now working in patient safety and quality admin, Rachel said: "I wanted to join an organisation that I was proud to be part of."

Sue continues: "We're both proud NHS employees. It means a lot to us both. We're all small cogs in this big wheel but we always do our best for our patients."



Pictured: Patient safety and quality admin Rachel works at University Hospitals Tees with her mum, receptionist Sue.

## Join our family

Scan the below QR codes if you are interested in finding out more about joining the University Hospitals Tees family.



North Tees and Hartlepool (NTH-QR)



South Tees Hospitals (STH-QR)



Pictured: Robyn, Roxy and Reggie.

# Spotlight on midwifery

Our midwifery teams across University Hospitals Tees deliver more than 7,000 babies a year across Teesside, North Yorkshire and parts of County Durham.

With more career opportunities than ever before, we caught up with some of our midwifery colleagues to find out more about their experiences and careers as midwives...

## Clare's story

Clare McMann, midwifery manager at the Friarage Maternity Centre, was inspired to become a midwife after the birth of her twins – an incredible detour from her successful career as a travel agent.

Clare said: "Originally, I left school to travel the world as a travel rep and lived in Spain for three years. When I came home I decided to work in a travel agents, met my husband and had my first child.

"It was during my second pregnancy while I was expecting twins at James Cook. I was determined that I wanted to have a natural birth and the midwife who was looking after me was a massive inspiration. She was my advocate and empowered me and helped me to have a really gorgeous birth.

"The moment I got home with my twins, I broke the news to my husband that I wanted to become a midwife – as you can imagine, he was a bit shocked!"

While still on maternity leave, Clare enrolled in college and completed her access course. Upon her return to full-time work as a travel agent, she volunteered as a breastfeeding supporter and did counselling for SureStart.

Clare trained at Darlington Memorial Hospital and qualified in 2014, before starting work at James Cook. She spent time working in the delivery suite, staying on the labour ward for about five years before moving to community, postnatal and finally to the Friarage in 2020.

When asked what she loves most about the job, Clare said: "You really don't realise the impact you have on that person – but they never forget you. You play such a significant part in someone's life.

"There's always that one specific moment I love – the one when a woman and her partner become a family. Placing their baby in their arms for the first time and seeing them come together as a family. It's my favourite bit and it melts my heart every time."



Pictured: After a change in career, Clare is now midwifery manager at the Friarage Maternity Centre.



## Tracy's story

Tracy Scott, has been a midwife since qualifying in 1995. She is currently working within the day assessment unit at the University Hospital of North Tees.

Tracy began her pre-nursing course aged 16, but left in her second year when, in her words, 'life happened'. It wasn't until age 26 when her eldest son was born that she decided to chase her original dream.

Tracy said: "I love my job and I love my patients. Midwifery has been a massively rewarding career for me.

"I've seen technology change a lot over the years, but knowing the job inside out and being there to care for our mums-to-be, for me, is still at the heart of being a midwife.

"I have loved working in every area of maternity. From community to delivery, each area has a different buzz and plays a different part in the patients' journey.

"For myself, I've always loved being on the shop floor and being with my patients, and they are the reason I come in day after day. I couldn't imagine doing anything else."



Pictured: Midwife Tracy Scott has been working in the field for three decades now.

## Eleasha's story

Recently qualified midwife Eleasha Spencer has been working on the delivery unit at the University Hospital of North Tees for almost two years now, after completing her studies at Northumbria University.

She said: "I came to the organisation newly qualified and the transition and support from my colleagues has been next to none.

"I am one of 10 siblings, so I had gotten to experience my mum's pregnancies with her and always knew I wanted to do something medical and to be able to support others on that journey to parenthood."

After working in NHS finance for a short time, it was upon having her first child that she realised she wanted to go back to university and study midwifery.

When asked what she loves most about her job, Eleasha said: "Whether it's the first child or the fourth, seeing my patients become parents, seeing the baby born, seeing the whole family celebrating that exact moment they grow and them having that first cuddle – it's memorable every time. There is nothing more rewarding."



Pictured: Eleasha has been working on the North Tees delivery suite since she qualified almost two years ago.

# Aspiring radiographers share apprenticeship success

Two aspiring NHS radiographers are sharing their stories after being supported to fulfil their career ambitions.



Pictured: Radiography apprentices Abigail Muir and Salma Sajad.

Salma Sajad and Abigail Muir both already worked in the radiology department at our Stockton and Hartlepool sites before starting apprenticeships. Both have been able to continue working within the service while carrying out their studies.

For working mother Salma, she gained a role working as a healthcare support worker before hearing about further opportunities.

Speaking from our new community diagnostic centre in Stockton town centre, she said: "My background is in healthcare – I originally joined because I wanted to help more patients.

"It was a year into my time here that I heard about this apprenticeship. It's something, as a single mum, I couldn't have afforded to do.

"I am now in the second year and enjoying the challenge and the experience. My mentor and the team here have also been so supportive."

Once both have completed the three-year degree at Teesside University, they will be qualified diagnostic radiographers – allowing them to earn while they learn as well as gain on-the-job training and experience.

For Abigail, she first joined the service three years ago in an office admin role before hearing about the apprenticeship.

Abigail already has a degree in physiology and is now two years into the apprenticeship. She said: "I wanted some experience working in a healthcare setting.

"I had been considering going back to university to study, before then hearing about this opportunity. We are already part of the team and they have been here for us when we have needed them.

"We are learning more on-the-job and feel more ready for the job than we may have done."

Salma continued: "Because of this support, we also feel so loyal to the organisation – we have so much to thank them for"



# Top performance is marked with funding award

Our hospital sites have once again been recognised for the speed and quality of care it gives patients – with the awarding of national incentive funding.

North Tees and Hartlepool is regularly among the best trusts when measured against two key national standards.

Over the last year the trust is the fourth best nationally for the 'four hour standard' benchmark – which sets a target of a maximum four-hour wait in urgent and emergency care from arrival to being admitted to a hospital ward, transferred or discharged from hospital.

It is also eighth in the country for its performance against the 12-hour standard, a target where no patient should wait longer than 12 hours in emergency care from arrival to being admitted to hospital, transferred somewhere else, or discharge back to their home.

This has led to the trust being awarded £4million by NHS England in its round of capital allocation funding for the best performing health trusts.

Kevin Moore, clinical director for urgent and emergency care, said: "This fantastic news is the result of the work of all of our teams across the organisation.

"From those of our staff in our communities helping keep our patients out of hospital, to the staff on our wards working hard to get patients better and back in their homes, to my own team at the front of house of our hospital sites in urgent and emergency care, we are all playing our part. And we also must recognise the role our support staff play in making sure everything runs efficiently behind the scenes.

"It is also, of course, thanks to the work of all of the organisations we work with – including our neighbouring health trusts, the ambulance service, local authorities and voluntary organisations including our very own group of committed volunteers."

This is the second year the trust has been awarded funding – after it secured £5million last year. This was used to help fund works to redevelop the emergency assessment unit at the University Hospital of North Tees.



Pictured: The emergency care team at the University Hospital of North Tees.

## *Staff lead on patient improvement projects – thanks to our community*

North Tees and Hartlepool Together has been supporting our staff and patients for more than 25 years now – all thanks to the generosity of our local community who put their time and kindness into donating.

From fundraising events like the Great North Run, to donations in memory of a loved one, each generous donation allows us to fund projects and services above and beyond what the NHS can offer – enhancing patient care and improving staff welfare.

While people often donate with a specific department or cause in mind, some of our donors prefer to gift what we call 'general charitable funds' – accessible to all our departments and services to back the improvement projects they would like to see in their area.

When we open up our general charitable funds initiative, we encourage staff to apply for money to support patient welfare, new medical equipment, improvements to patient areas and staff education.

Our most recent round opened up last summer and we were pleased to approve over 50 charitable applications, totalling more than £700,000. Many of these projects are now complete – or are well on their way to completion.

### **Your generous donations have recently funded:**

- Cystoscopes at the University Hospital of Hartlepool's elective surgery hub to speed up diagnostic pathways in bladder care
- Interactive floors in both children's outpatients departments to entertain and develop cognition in young patients
- Refurbishing Oasis suites at the University Hospital of North Tees to support patients receiving end of life care and their loved ones
- iPads to give patients under the care of speech and language therapy access non-verbal communication tools and therapy programmes
- New furniture for the patient discharge lounge at the University Hospital of North Tees
- Two Barkey Rapid Plasmatherm V instruments to reduce the time it takes to thaw frozen blood products for transfusion at both of our sites
- A 12-month 'Investing in Volunteers' qualification for our volunteer coordination team to enhance volunteers' experiences
- Additional continuous veno-venous hemodialysis machines in critical care for patients with acute kidney injury or failure

### **Making a donation**

For more information about supporting North Tees and Hartlepool Together, scan the QR code to visit our website:



Pictured: The new interactive floor in children's outpatients at the University Hospital of North Tees.



Pictured: The new Barkey Rapid Plasmatherm V instruments are now being used in blood sciences.



# *"A deeply emotional moment" – Recovering stroke patient shares experience of hospital therapy garden*

**A stroke patient is sharing her experience of using a hospital's therapy garden to aid in her recovery.**

73-year-old Isobel Stefaniuk, from Yarm, was admitted as a patient to the University Hospital of North Tees after experiencing a stroke. Part of her recovery involved the use of the hospital's 'Kaleidostroke' therapy garden.

With walking rehabilitation facilities, specialist equipment for building muscle, cognitive learning activities and more, the garden supports stroke, dementia and elderly patients as part of their hospital care. It aims to improve patient rehabilitation, provides holistic therapy and allows patients to regain their independence.

When asked about her first time using the garden, Isobel described it as a 'deeply emotional moment'.

She continued: "Following my stroke I'd been stuck indoors, and just being outside again really hit me. It gave me a sense of calm and hope.

"It was so peaceful and private – completely away from the hustle and bustle of the hospital. I could see how it might help others with physio in the fresh air. It really makes a difference being outside."

The garden has been designed to actively engage patients in both one-on-one and group therapy sessions. It also boasts rest and relaxation areas so that patients can enjoy time away from the clinical ward with their visitors.

A lover of nature, Isobel was able to celebrate her birthday in the garden as an inpatient, inviting her husband and daughter to join her.

Isobel said: "It was lovely to have a space where we could just sit and talk. It gave me a bit of freedom – something you miss in hospital.

"It inspired me to get home, and to be back in my own garden."

The £150,000 Kaleidostroke therapy garden opened in summer 2024 and has since been widely used by inpatients at the University Hospital of North Tees.

The garden was funded through the Greener Communities Fund after a successful bid from North Tees and Hartlepool Together. The fund is a partnership between NHS Charities Together and environmental charity Hubbub, funded by the Starbucks 5p cup charge.



Pictured: Isobel enjoying the Kaleidostroke therapy garden. Photo credit: Hubbub.

# “It’s such a privilege to be able to support vulnerable mums-to-be” – new maternity social prescribers share time in post so far

Vulnerable pregnant patients are being supported by specialist maternity social prescribing link workers – thanks to funding for two new maternity social prescribers.

Our two new social prescribers have both been in post since the end of March. They are Julie Glass, who is based at the University Hospital of North Tees, and Nicola Rowbotham, based at the University Hospital of Hartlepool.

Julie and Nicola play a vital role in supporting patients to access a wide variety of non-clinical services in the community. This includes health and wellbeing support, financial support, foodbank, baby bank, breastfeeding support and family hub services.

Julie said: “It is amazing being able to support women from the moment they find out they are pregnant, right through to them having their baby and then those first tentative steps as a new mum. I still get emotional when I get to hold the children and to see our mums so self-assured and thriving.”

Nicola Rowbotham continued: “It’s been powerful to see how the smallest intervention can make a huge difference in building confidence and seeing patients come into their own.

“Ultimately, it’s about listening and giving our patients time. But it can also just be about checking in and making sure that our vulnerable mums know what is out there and how they can access the support they need.

“We want you happy and healthy, so baby is happy and healthy in turn.”

The two new link workers are employed by Hartlepool and Stockton Health (H&SH), but work alongside vulnerability midwives and the community midwifery team at University Hospitals Tees.

Senior clinical matron in community midwifery, Anne-Marie Collighan said: “Julie and Nicola have already proven themselves as invaluable members of the team and it’s great that we have them on board.

“They have been able to give our vulnerable mums-to-be that extra level of wrap around care at what can be a pivotal time in their lives. Having someone who will sit with them, listen to them and be non-judgemental and unbiased in offering support and signposting to the right services.

“Most importantly – they are able to recognise the needs of our patients beyond purely healthcare needs.”



Pictured: Maternity social prescribers Julie Glass and Nicola Rowbotham.



# From mailroom to hospital gym – a NHS physio's 50 year career

Denise Mulligan reflects on her five decades working at the University Hospital of North Tees – from shy mailroom clerk to dedicated physio supporting hundreds of hospital patients to recovery.



Pictured: From mailroom clerk to physio, Denise reflects on her 50 year career.

67-year-old Denise began her NHS career on 24 March 1975, aged 17, in the mailroom at the University Hospital of North Tees – or North Tees General Hospital as it was known then.

When her former job working in stables came to an end, Denise's uncle – who worked as a porter at the hospital – suggested she apply for a job in the mailroom.

Denise said: "Getting that job was just the best thing. I was quite shy, I used to get embarrassed if anyone spoke to me so it pushed me into meeting people and socialising with people. I went to every department, every office, every ward – I got to spend my days talking to people and I absolutely loved it.

"It was a job you were supposed to start in and then move on but I loved it that much that I just stayed. I worked in that mailroom for nearly 16 years and loved every minute of it."

During her time in the mailroom, she also met her best friend – someone she would come to enjoy a lifelong friendship with until her passing last year. When the pair got a job share in the acute psychiatry unit together in 1990,

Denise began her tenure in therapy as an occupational therapy assistant.

50-years on, Denise's role as a specialised therapy assistant sees her supporting outpatients to restore movement and function after an injury or illness.

Now flexi-retired, Denise still works two days a week in the hospital's Tatchell Centre – alongside her role as Nana, looking after her nine-year-old granddaughter.

Denise continued: "I'm 68 this year and I think while I still enjoy work, I'll always do it. I've met so many people in my years and I think they've all had a bit of an influence on my life and I hope I have on some of theirs as well.

"Thinking back to when I was 17, I didn't know what I wanted to do. It wasn't that I necessarily wanted to work in a mailroom or a hospital. For me, it was an opportunity that led to other things and I'll always be so grateful for that.

"Taking that job in the mailroom 50 years ago just formed everything for me."

# Local students' pandemic memorial artwork unveiled at hospitals

Memorial artwork created by college students to commemorate the challenges faced by a community during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Students from Stockton Sixth Form College were commissioned to paint duplicate pieces for installations at both North Tees and Hartlepool hospital sites, after successfully winning a competition.

The installation is a poignant memorial, highlighting the pandemic on the fifth anniversary year of the first lockdown.

Dr Jean MacLeod, lead medical examiner and chair of the visual arts council, said: "As a healthcare organisation throughout the pandemic we were very conscious of what staff, patients and families were going through. But it was only afterwards we realised that we had no specific memorial to mark and reflect upon what we all went through as a community."

"Following the formation of our visual arts council, we wanted to invite local schools and colleges to have the opportunity to create a visual piece that would reflect that moment in time and would showcase how the pandemic affected our younger generation."

The circular 'bubble' pieces are a clever representation of the isolation and 'social bubbles' that society had to form throughout the pandemic.

The paintings speak for the thoughts and feelings of nine students Nikita Chenjerai, Daisy Bell, Finn Clarvis, Lucinda Fox, Lily Kennedy, Divine Mesole, Maisy Thomas, Emilia Vaughan and Sophie Wilks during the pandemic.

Professor Derek Bell OBE, chair of University Hospitals Tees, said: "I have to thank the visual arts committee and governors who worked through and judged all the brilliant submissions, alongside helping to pull this day together."

"But most importantly, I'd like to thank Stockton Sixth Form College and ultimately the students, who have made such meaningful memorials for us to mark the pandemic and to reflect just some of the emotions and experiences we all had during this time."

"At a time where things changed rapidly, this artwork reminds us that it's important to reflect on what has happened so we can also look to learn for the future."



Pictured: The grand unveiling at the University Hospital of Hartlepool.



Pictured: Stockton Sixth Form College students showcase their work at the University Hospital of North Tees.



# Parents support study into type 1 diabetes in children

Parents are supporting a NHS research team as it looks to identify children who could have an increased risk of developing type 1 diabetes.

Morgan Ellis and John Taylor are among those parents, after they agreed to take part in the study.

The couple from Yarm were approached by the research team after their newborn daughter Imogen was delivered at the University Hospital of North Tees.

Morgan said: "When we were asked, we thought it sounded a good thing to take part in. It will give us that peace of mind, you don't know if your child could develop type 1 diabetes.

"If you are aware then we can act on it and that can only help in the future."

Tees Valley Research Alliance's North Tees and Hartlepool service is part of the INGR1D2 study which aims to identify children with genetic markers that put them at increased risk of developing type 1 diabetes.

This is a lifelong condition that causes glucose levels in the blood to become too high.

People affected have to take insulin every day to manage their condition and it can increase the risks of someone developing other medical conditions.

Claire Morning, clinical trials assistant, said: "By screening newborns like Imogen, the study offers parents the chance to get involved in further research aimed at reducing the chance of their baby developing the condition or delaying its onset.

"It also means parents and children can learn more about the early signs and symptoms of type 1 diabetes.

"Without parents like Morgan and John willing to be part of studies like this, we wouldn't be able to investigate and improve the care we provide."

This study is led by Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. To find out more, please scan the QR code:



Pictured: Morgan Ellis and John Taylor with baby Imogen.



# Hospital decontamination units accredited for standards of excellence

**Our central sterile services department (CSSD) has once again achieved a national accreditation in recognition of the high quality services it provides in endoscopy.**

CSSD provides sterilisation and disinfection services to all theatres, wards and departments across our hospitals. This includes endoscopy equipment and items used in surgical procedures.

Operated by NTH Solutions across our Stockton and Hartlepool hospital sites, the service has retained its Joint Advisory Group (JAG) accreditation. The accreditation is an annual quality assurance process, recognising endoscopy services that meet high standards of care.

The scheme offers assurances to patients that they will receive high-quality endoscopic care in our hospitals, and recognises decontamination technicians as healthcare scientists.

The department also recently passed its three-yearly ISO re-accreditation audit, which ensures compliance with UK medical device regulations.

Derek Watson, head of decontamination services, said: "These accreditations are the national standard for decontamination services. They demonstrate our ongoing

commitment in providing our patients with safe, sterile and fit-for-purpose medical devices and instruments used in wards, theatres and clinics throughout our hospital and community settings.

"Thank you to our team for helping to ensure our service maintains our consistently high standard."

Both accreditations look at a broad range of areas to ensure we are continually improving the quality and safety of our care, and maintaining a focus on positive patient experience. These include staff training and development, effectiveness of the department's quality management system and work instructions, and the end-to-end equipment sterilisation journey from wash through to pack (both high and low temperature).

The CSSD team processes around 1.5 million individual items annually, including around 65,000 theatre trays and 52,000 surgical instruments. The service also processes roughly 2,000 endoscopes a month for the Tees bowel screening service.



Pictured: Members of the NTH Solutions central sterile services team.



Pictured: Joseph Akhilumele, CSSD technician.



# Learning on the job: The value of apprenticeships

Our NTH Solutions apprenticeships offer the opportunity to gain professional qualifications while on the job.

Many of our colleagues have joined us through this route, gaining qualifications in administration, management and more to progress in a meaningful career with us. Each role supports our clinical colleagues to deliver safe and effective patient care.

As interim head of estates Richard Bertram puts it: "Working in estates is incredibly rewarding. Our clinical colleagues couldn't deliver the levels of care they do without the work our teams do to proactively manage the fabric and systems within our buildings.

"Many of our colleagues will say they get their job satisfaction from fixing something that's critical to someone else's day, or playing their part in making sure that someone's operation or treatment goes ahead without a hitch. There aren't many jobs where you can say that."

As we recruit to our latest apprenticeships in estates and clinical engineering, we're shining a spotlight on some of our colleagues who have been on this journey...

## Meet Olly

Olly Potts qualified as a mechanical engineer two years ago. He is now studying for a degree in mechanical engineering alongside his work at the University Hospital of North Tees.

He said: "I have received so much support in college and in the workplace from my NTH Solutions colleagues that it's really helped me to learn an entirely new skillset and push myself to develop even further.

"I've learnt so much on the job already, yet it still feels like every day's a school day!

"I know that I have a really strong career path ahead of me, and I get to do work which challenges me and is really interesting given the unique hospital environment we work in. This is a really interesting career where I feel like I make a difference."



Pictured: Olly Potts, mechanical engineer.

## Simon's story

Simon Lloyd is one of our estates supervisors at the University Hospital of North Tees. He has been supported in his career as an adult learner apprentice.

Simon said: "Leaving an established career in catering and returning to study was daunting at first. However, stick with it! Once you start to be more hands-on and learn new skills, you start to pick things up fast, and it's great that you can put your classroom skills into practice really quickly.

"There isn't really a learning opportunity like it – working in a hospital environment is so diverse that you come across different situations and problems to solve literally every day. People are reliant on the NTH Solutions support functions for their operations going ahead and the equipment they need working properly, so even though I'm not in a frontline care-giving role, I'm still part of the wider team that enables patient care delivery. It's so rewarding."



Pictured: Simon Lloyd, estates supervisor.



# The new role preventing patient falls during hospital stays

A new role is supporting NHS staff and patients to prevent fall injuries during hospital stays and reduce hospital re-admissions.



Pictured: Falls educator D'Arcie Hall.

30-year-old D'Arcie Hall, from Billingham, was appointed falls educator in February 2025. Her role looks to educate staff and hospital inpatients about preventing falls to ultimately reduce the number of incidents and re-admissions due to fall injuries.

With a background in occupational therapy, D'Arcie has worked in the orthogeriatric ward at the University Hospital of North Tees for the past three years. Her previous role as senior occupational therapist saw her supporting and caring for elderly patients with fractures – many of which were caused by falls.

Her experiences sparked a particular interest in falls prevention and support. Now in her new role, she looks for trends and themes in incidents to identify areas for additional staff training in falls prevention.

D'Arcie said: "Falls are a very highly-reported incident within the trust and with an ageing population in our communities, we're seeing an increase in admissions due to falls-related injuries as well.

"Falls aren't always necessarily avoidable and there's so many factors that contribute – from dementia and delirium

to our muscles deconditioning as we age. We know falls are going to happen, but our aim is to make sure all staff supporting elderly patients have as much knowledge and awareness as possible to minimise incidents and the severity of the injuries they cause."

According to NHS England, 30% of people aged 65 and above will experience an episode of a fall at least once a year.

While D'Arcie's new role will focus on staff awareness and education, she can also offer one-to-one advice and support to patients who are at high risk of falls, as well as their families, to prevent re-admission to hospital.

D'Arcie continued: "Falls do put a big pressure on the NHS – whether it's falls-related admissions or falls in hospital. But there's also a real personal cost to our patients as well because the injuries can have devastating consequences.

"My hope is that by giving this additional support, we'll see not just a reduction in falls during patients' hospital stays, but after they leave as well to prevent re-admission."



# Radio Stitch volunteer celebrates 40 years at the station

**A hospital radio station manager is celebrating four decades at the station this month, after a chance invitation to tour the studio saw him unexpectedly presenting his own show.**

Elliot Kennedy, has been a part of the Radio Stitch team since 1985, when the station was originally called North Tees General Radio – and turntables and vinyl were a mainstay.

He said: "Originally, I moved to the North East in 1976 to join Eastern Ravens as a group leader. It was during 1985, while in another volunteer role in Acklam, that I met a former presenter at the station – I was invited along to have a tour of the hospital radio.

"I remember turning up on the day, being ushered into the studio, directed to where the pile of records was and told that I would be presenting live at 7 o'clock. Considering I had only been expecting a tour it was a bit of a steep learning curve!"

Elliot's first show aired that evening, 6 May 1985, and would come to be known as 'The Weekend Starts Here' show. He affectionately remembers his first experience presenting being 'two hours of music and mistakes.'

Radio Stitch has been broadcasting to our hospital patients 24/7 at their bedside since 1976. More recently, with the formation of the University Hospitals Tees group, the station has begun broadcasting at The James Cook University Hospital as well.

Elliot continued: "I've always loved volunteering and find purpose in supporting the local community. Throughout my time at the station especially, I've found that music is a great leveller – bringing volunteers from all walks of life.

"Seeing the station go from strength to strength, making some lifelong friends and being able to provide comfort at patients' bedsides has been what has kept me coming back each year."

Elliot's long service was marked with a surprise presentation at Radio Stitch's annual general meeting where he was awarded for his long service.



Pictured: Radio Stitch station manager Elliot Kennedy.

Pictured: Elliot's long service was marked with a special celebration at Radio Stitch's 2025 annual general meeting.

# Dietitian recognised for project to support pancreatic cancer patients

A NHS dietitian has been awarded for a special project she has led to help pancreatic cancer patients get the nutritional support they need.

Chloé McMurray won the GutsUK and Dr Falks dietitian recognition award for her role as a specialist hepato-pancreato-biliary (HPB) dietitian at the University Hospital of North Tees.

As part of the project, she has become a member of the specialist multi-disciplinary team to help patients with effective nutrition management.

For her work, Chloé received an award at the annual meeting of the British Gastroenterology Society in Glasgow recently, where she also presented two abstract posters about her work.

Chloé said: "In 2020, a project started to introduce a specialist dietitian to the HPB service, to assess the impact on patient care and professional practice.

"I have always felt it was incredibly important that patient quality of life was optimised for as long as possible and, as a dietitian, this meant supporting the patient's relationship with, and enjoyment of food.

"When this project came up I felt it was a great opportunity to trial a brand-new dietetic role, with the potential to benefit both HPB patients and the service as a whole, while highlighting the value of including and funding dietitians within a wider specialist team.

"As the service grew, we gained funding, which allowed me to attend three weekly clinics and weekly team meetings.

"I also completed non-medical prescribing training and attended an international masterclass.

"My role then expanded beyond clinical care to include education and training for consultants, doctors, nurses and student dietitians, strengthening collaboration and increasing trust and awareness around pancreatic nutrition management.

"Evaluations have showed that patient care has significantly improved, with reduced appointment burdens, delays in dietetic care and earlier nutritional intervention, particularly for cancer patients.

"To have such a specialist role within the team is not the norm and I feel very privileged to have been part of the project.

"This award has really helped to highlight these benefits."

Carys Robinson, dietetic team leader, said: "Chloé is a dedicated and valued member of the nutrition and dietetic team who prioritises patient experience and safety and constantly strives to improve the quality of life for her patients and excellence in her practice."

Chloé is now working in a new role still within the University Hospitals Tees group, as personalised cancer care prehabilitation lead at The James Cook University Hospital.



Pictured: Chloé McMurray with her abstract presentation at the event.





# “Creating a pipeline of talent” – NHS and college leaders celebrate student placement scheme

**“Together, we are building a pipeline of talent equipped with the knowledge, skills and experience to serve and innovate in the health sector.”**

University Hospitals Tees has celebrated its latest group of T Level students, from both the health and business administration pathway.

The group have completed placements across its hospital and community settings in Stockton and Hartlepool.

Both first year and second year students studying their qualifications gathered for a celebration event at the University Hospital of North Tees.

The qualifications have combined classroom study with more than 300 hours of work – preparing young people for being in the workplace.

The students from Hartlepool Sixth Form College, Hartlepool College of Further Education and Stockton Riverside College were presented with certificates to mark their achievements over the last year by members of the organisation's education team.

Speaking to the students, Gary Wright, group deputy director of education and learning, said: “T Levels are more than just qualifications. They represent a new standard in education – one that blends classroom learning with real-world experience.

“To our students: you’ve chosen a path that requires both compassion and resilience. You have stepped into roles that are vital to the wellbeing of our communities. Whether you are supporting patients on wards, working behind the scenes in labs, or training to lead the next generation of health professionals, you are already making a difference.”

Emma Davies, education lead, said: “This is now the second year we have held this event, to celebrate how far our T Level industry placement offer has come and to mark the students’ achievements. The programme has already come so far and there is potential to do so much more which is really exciting.”

Sadie Rookes, a former T Level student who completed her industry work placement and who is now studying to be a nurse, spoke at the event to share her experience and journey since.

She said: “It was during my placement that everything clicked – working with the district nurses gave me the mindset to move forward. I knew I wanted to be a nurse. It was then that I saw the impact of a reassuring smile, a listening ear and empathy.

“As I take my next steps into nursing training I take everything I learned in my time doing the T Level.

“I want to make a difference in people’s lives, be there for people in their hardest moments, I want to be part of a profession that never stops caring and giving.”

As part of the continuing development of the T Level healthcare offer, the organisation will continue to work alongside all three colleges to continue to offer more placements in the next academic year.

The programme will also be extending its partnership to work welcome students from Stockton Sixth Form College from September.



Pictured: Stockton Riverside College students and staff.



Pictured: College students with their certificates.



Pictured: Student nurse Sadie Rookes.



Pictured: Students from Hartlepool College of Further Education

# TEES VOICES



With Radio Stitch

Telling the stories of the people in our NHS communities.

Tune in now...



Listen on Spotify



Listen on website

