

anthem



Emergency service transformation sees patients treated more quickly

The emergency assessment unit has been expanded, thanks to funding granted to the department in recognition of top performing urgent and emergency services. Read more on page 3.

Also in this issue:

A generous donation to support bereaved parents
Reaching a new milestone in robotic surgery

Hospital volunteers honoured with local award



Dear reader,

Welcome to the latest edition of Anthem.

So far we have had a very busy winter period across our services at University Hospitals Tees. I want to thank our staff for everything they have done to support and care for our patients and their loved ones, as well of course to patients and our community themselves for supporting us too.

A particularly high spike in flu in our community has been an added factor this year – but I am pleased to say we have continued to serve patients and adapt and improve our services so we can continue moving forward.

The launch of our care coordination centre has been a real example of this. In just a few months, the team has had hundreds of discussions with patients being cared for at home where hospital admission was the original intention. These patients have received the same level of care in their own homes thanks to our amazing community teams and other partners. Thanks to the hard work of medical staff and community teams we have been helping keep patients at home where they feel most comfortable and have a better recovery.

In this magazine, you will find details about our how national cancer charity Maggie's has joined forces with the Trinity



Holistic Centre in the grounds of James Cook, at the invitation of University Hospitals Tees. I was lucky enough to attend a celebratory event – as I said at the time, I am delighted they are now on site. I know since being there, they have been a vital service in offering practical, emotional and psychological care and support to so many affected by cancer.

You will also find stories about a mum of two's career journey in our mortuary service, how a dad's life was saved from severe brain damage and how a young woman has moved from being a hospital volunteer into a career in our radiology department.

There are also details about all of the winners of our special Allied Healthcare Professionals Day Awards from an amazing 100 nominations received.

And there is also plenty of news about innovations and team successes across our hospitals and community services in the Tees Valley, County Durham and North Yorkshire.

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

Keep up-to-date with University Hospitals Tees

From career stories to innovations in patient care and more, follow University Hospitals Tees on social media to keep up with the latest news.

 LinkedIn: University Hospitals Tees

 TikTok: @UniversityHospitalsTees

 Instagram: @NorthTeesAndHartlepoolNHSFT

Transformed hospital emergency service will see patients treated more quickly

Works to transform a hospital emergency unit are now complete – thanks to funding granted to the service in recognition for having one of the country's top performing urgent and emergency services.

The building works in the emergency assessment unit at the University Hospital of North Tees have been finished in less than a year – and will help patients be treated and return home more quickly.

This has helped create a range of new facilities including new waiting areas, assessment rooms, triage rooms, a procedure room, a doctors' office and a new patient monitoring system directly linked to the hospital's electronic patient records system.

The £2.7million works were funded from part of £5million the organisation was awarded from NHS England's winter incentive initiative – recognising performance for ambulance handover times and the speed patients are treated.

Kate Armitage, consultant in acute medicine, said: "This new space will help us to get patients treated more quickly and back home the same day more often and is also hugely beneficial for the staff here.

"Our team have done a phenomenal job in the past in often difficult circumstances, particularly in winter months when we treat more patients. Staff have always done the best they possibly could but never in an area that was designed for the care we provide.

"Now we have a space that is fit for purpose, to provide that high quality care and help the team make further progress."

Guests from companies involved in the site construction



The clinical team in the emergency assessment unit.

were invited along to an official opening event. This included representatives from NTH Solutions who oversaw the project.

Dave Younger, design and development manager, said: "Faced with limited space, we extended the department by infilling the courtyard with a steel frame structure.

"This enabled the addition of two waiting areas, two triage rooms, six treatment rooms, nine treatment chair spaces, and four bed clinic rooms, significantly increasing capacity."

Glen Newby, head of design and development, continued: "We extend our thanks to P&HS Architects, BGP Structural Engineers, TG Armstrong, Driver Project Services, Richmond Safety Services, Geoffrey Robinson Ltd, and especially the latter's site management team for delivering this complex project with such expertise on time and within budget."



The team from NTH Solutions and building contractors involved.

Local company donates specialist pram to support bereaved parents

A local Stockton company has donated a pram to help support parents who have experienced the loss of a baby when an inpatient at the University Hospital of North Tees.



NTH Solutions procurement support officer Melissa Loughran, Rachel Shaw from W.H. Watts, and mortuary and bereavement service manager Neil Wdowikowski.

The pram, which includes a privacy screen, allows parents to take their baby for a final walk or accompany them to the mortuary in a way that feels more personal and respectful.

Neil Wdowikowski, mortuary and bereavement service manager, said: "We are aware that the hospital can be a very busy place and we always want to make sure we are showing the utmost respect and compassion to support those going through the loss of a baby."

"My goal was to give parents the choice of being able to transport their babies to our mortuary family room in that unimaginable moment. It's about giving parents the option to take that last walk with their child rather than having to walk away leaving them on a busy ward."

Neil approached NTH Solutions procurement support

officer Melissa Loughran, who investigated where the team may be able to purchase a bereavement support pram. Melissa then contacted W.H. Watts to explore options.

The company checked their stock and soon came back with an offer to instead donate a pram that met the mortuary team's specifications.

Melissa said: "The whole of the procurement team were completely overwhelmed by W.H. Watts' generosity when we heard they would like to donate the pram rather than have us pay for it. We're so grateful for their kind and generous donation."

"The loss of a baby is such an emotive subject and it's nice to think that we can support those parents to say their goodbyes when the unthinkable happens."

Physio apprentices qualify into new roles at local hospital

Eight physiotherapists are progressing into their new roles at the University Hospital of North Tees after gaining their qualifications while on the job.

The BSC Physiotherapy Degree, first launched in 2021, saw the group of trainee physiotherapists undertake one day of learning a week at Teesside University's School of Health and Life Sciences, while putting their theory into practice four days a week as a physiotherapist assistant at the hospital. They also undertook block practice placements – gaining experience in various wards and specialties.

Faz Khan, 32 from Stockton, and Laura Elwell, 33 from Easington, are two of the cohort who completed the programme in May. They now work full time at the hospital as chartered physiotherapists.

Faz first became interested in becoming a physio at college while on work experience with The James Cook University Hospital. But after struggling with traditional learning, she put her aspirations on hold.

She said: "I found college really difficult and didn't know I was dyslexic at the time. I felt like it put me on the back foot.

"For people like me who struggle academically, an apprenticeship is a really good opportunity to learn in a

different way, showcase your skills and get support with the academic side of things. It really gave me hope on the things I was doubting myself on.

"It's opened so many doors and this could lead onto anything else. I feel like the world's my oyster right now. I'll always be grateful to North Tees for that."

Mum Laura began her career at the University Hospital of North Tees aged 17 and had worked as a physio assistant in elective orthopaedics since 2012. It wasn't until Covid hit and her role became rotational that she found a new confidence to progress further in her career.

Laura said: "I moved around different departments and really enjoyed that challenge. If it wasn't for that, I don't think I'd have taken the next step and pushed myself. With the apprenticeship, we were able to put everything we were learning into practice as we were working.

"With a mortgage and a family, I would never have had the nerve to leave and go to uni full time. I feel really lucky to have been accepted on the apprenticeship programme."



Five of the eight physiotherapists to complete their apprenticeships.

Celebrating a year of the arts council

The organisation's arts council is working to incorporate arts into our healthcare settings, as part of a national arts in hospital initiative.

There is a wealth of evidence to show that art helps to enhance patient experience while visiting and staying in hospitals. It can help to reduce stress and improve health and wellbeing.

Now, one year since the council's launch, we are celebrating just some of the new art and wellbeing initiatives our team is involved in, with the help of our local museums and galleries, libraries, local artists, music venues, schools, and universities.



Peterlee estates team with newly erected McCracken artwork.

McCracken artwork goes on display at Peterlee Community Hospital

A collaboration with Hartlepool Art Gallery and the support of the Art Fund Reimagine grant has allowed high quality reproductions of the work of local artist John Wilson McCracken to be placed on display in Peterlee Community Hospital.

Writers' Nook celebrates the written word

Launched in October, the Writers' Nook in Café Wilburs at North Tees is a space to showcase some of the prose and poems written by members of staff following a creative writing research project with the Open University.

The space shines a light on the power of the written word and will be used to promote literacy-based initiatives with support from our library colleagues.



Some of the photographs helping patients with delirium and dementia.

Dementia-friendly living wall

A vibrant new collection of photographs and music memorabilia was unveiled outside of an elderly care ward at the University Hospital of North Tees in October.

Developed through community collaboration with members of the Stockton Camera Club and Stockton Globe volunteers, the new displays showcase local landmarks, activities and poignant moments of music history. They provide a calming and therapeutic space for patients living with dementia and delirium, prompting recollection and conversation.



Staff get crafty with their colourful fish tank display.

Fibre-art fish tank

The talented teams in infection prevention and control and tissue viability have created a fabulous underwater display following the relocation of fish from the fish tank in North Tees' north wing to more suitable waters.



Stockton Sixth Form students with their memorial artwork.

COVID-19 memorial artwork

Memorial artwork created by Stockton Sixth Form College students to commemorate the challenges faced by our community during the COVID-19 pandemic was unveiled at our Stockton and Hartlepool hospital sites in April.

Nine students created a series of circular pieces as a clever representation of the isolation and 'social bubbles' that society had to form throughout the pandemic.

Second and third place art from students at St Hilda's secondary school in Hartlepool, also found new homes on our walls.



Lucas Roy standing in front of his artwork, which has pride of place outside of North Tees respiratory wards.

Nursing in the Tees Valley artwork and photography

Unveiled in January 2025, artwork featuring nursing staff from the organisation is now on display outside of North Tees respiratory wards 24 and 25. Created by artist Lucas Roy in 2024, the multimedia piece was originally part of a 'Nursing in the Tees Valley' exhibition held at Kirkleatham Museum.

Two further photographs that formed part of the exhibition were donated to the hospital and to staff members. The first piece, a bright image highlighting the rainbow corridor, has been donated to the west wing breakout room for staff to enjoy.

The second piece, was presented and gifted to ward matron Mercy Cabrega, who features in the image.

Yarm exhibition

The artwork of students from Yarm school is being displayed across the North Tees for the next six months, following a special evening exhibition held in the hospital spirituality centre.



Some of the Yarm students stood in front of their artwork.

Time for Tea workshops

A series of sensory workshops led by the Museum of Hartlepool exploring the scents, stories and nostalgia of Hartlepool through the blending of tea, brought a moment of calm and connection to staff and visitors at the University Hospital of Hartlepool.

Celebrating 200 years of Stockton and Darlington Railway

The arts council was thrilled to get stuck in and support the region wide celebrations of the Stockton and Darlington Railway. They unveiled a special replica painting commemorating the opening of the railway by artist John Dobbin, thanks to the support of Hopetown Darlington.

A special display of famous locomotives were also donated by Jennie Hobbs and Olivia Tullius to the children's outpatients department at North Tees.

Coming in 2026

- COVID 19 memorial artwork at South Tees Hospitals
- Robotic theatre artwork
- Hartlepool history trail
- Fragments the Dementia Bear
- EAU corridor mural in North Tees
- Musical interludes for patients
- Frieze and stair art in the Community Diagnostic Centre
- James Cook chemo unit

Art survey

We would love to hear your feedback to help shape the future of arts across University Hospitals Tees. Please take a moment to share your thoughts in our short survey.

Find out more about the arts council:
www.nth.nhs.uk/about/visual-arts



Stockton mum shares her career journey working in a hospital mortuary



A mortuary worker is climbing the ladder in her dream career, as she progresses into her new role while balancing being a mum of two young children.

Shaunna Cahillane, from Roseworth, began her NHS career aged 23 at the University Hospital of North Tees working as a healthcare assistant in endoscopy. After a tour of the hospital's mortuary piqued her interest, she took a chance and applied for job in a trainee position.

Shaunna has worked in the department for almost 10 years now, working through her qualifications to progress in her career, most recently by completing her Level 4 Diploma in Healthcare Science qualification.

Working across University Hospitals Tees' four main hospital sites, her role sees her caring for patients after death, performing post mortem examinations, supporting patients' loved ones with viewings and liaising with funeral directors to continue care after hospital.

Shaunna said: "There's a lot of care and compassion in this job. Our patients might not know, but they are getting the care and dignity that they deserve, just as they would have in life.

"Some days are especially tough, but just knowing that our patients are safe and comfortable – that carries on with us after death – it gives me a real sense of pride.

"I've been here almost 10 years now and I've never looked back. I don't think there's anything else I'd ever want to do."

Shaunna's new qualification sees her taking on more complex post mortem cases and responsibilities in managing the mortuaries at the University Hospital of North Tees and The James Cook University Hospital.

Neil Wdowikowski, mortuary manager, said: "Shaunna's qualification is really well deserved. Shaunna always shows high levels of care and compassion to patients and their relatives, having on many occasions, gone above and beyond to assist in making what is often one of the worst times in a person's life as supportive and empathetic as possible.

"Professionally, Shaunna stands out in both skill and knowledge and, I dare to say, is an ambassador for anatomical pathology technologists everywhere."



Anatomical pathology technologist Shaunna Cahillane.

Maggie's joins forces with Trinity Holistic Centre



People living with cancer, as well as family and friends, can now access free expert cancer support in Middlesbrough.

National cancer charity Maggie's has joined forces with the Trinity Holistic Centre in the grounds of James Cook, at the invitation of University Hospitals Tees.

Maggie's marked the moment with a celebratory event where guests included Maggie's chief executive Dame Laura Lee, DBE, chair of Maggie's Stuart Gulliver, and University Hospitals Tees chief executive Stacey Hunter.

Dame Laura Lee, DBE, said: "Bringing our support to Middlesbrough has been made possible thanks to the NHS, Our Hospitals Charity, Carlton Power and the Wainstones Hotel. I am so grateful to everyone who has made this happen."

Growing need

Stuart Gulliver said: "With the number of people receiving a cancer diagnosis set to grow even further over the next decade, the need for Maggie's is even more important – we are on a mission to ensure that everyone impacted by cancer in the UK can access the emotional and practical support they need."

Maggie's expert support will benefit people like Rachel Hanley, from Middlesbrough, who is living with secondary breast cancer and currently supported by Maggie's in Newcastle.

Rachel said: "After my stage 4 diagnosis in 2017, I found a safe space in Maggie's Newcastle. The expertise and support I received from the team is second to none. Joining a facilitated support group for others going through the same was very comforting and reassuring.

"Newcastle is quite far from where I live, so to have a Maggie's in Middlesbrough will be an absolute lifeline. I look forward to making connections to others in my community."

The charity has joined forces with the Trinity Holistic Centre and will now deliver Maggie's expert psychological, emotional and practical support to people with cancer, as well as family and friends, across the University Hospitals Tees area.

University Hospitals Tees CEO Stacey Hunter said: "Special thanks to everyone who has fundraised for and supported the Trinity Holistic Centre over the years. We hope you will all join us in welcoming Maggie's to the Middlesbrough centre as they look to continue and expand this fantastic support service."

Maggie's Middlesbrough Centre head Michelle Holmes added: "Maggie's expert support is vital in helping people to live well with cancer and I know how desperately this is needed in Middlesbrough and the surrounding area."



Maggie's CEO Dame Laura Lee, DBE, Maggie's chair Stuart Gulliver, University Hospitals Tees CEO Stacey Hunter and Rob Harrison, interim chief executive of Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (and former South Tees director) (left to right).

Hospital group celebrates AHP workforce at special event



University Hospitals Tees celebrated its incredible allied health professionals (AHPs) workforce to mark their outstanding contributions to local communities.

The AHP Day Awards, which were held at the Riverside Stadium in Middlesbrough, honoured AHPs who regularly go above and beyond their roles.

AHPs are healthcare professionals who provide diagnostic, therapeutic, and rehabilitative services in various healthcare settings and are the third largest clinical workforce in health and care.

More than 100 nominations were received for a diverse range of categories for the prestigious awards.

Occupational therapist Sharon Barker received the Group Chief AHP Outstanding AHP Award of the Year.

Her achievements were part of a wider project in expanding the development of occupational therapy in critical care, from a single member to an established team helping critically ill patients relive their lives at James Cook.

Occupational therapists like Sharon play a crucial role in assessing and treating patients' physical, cognitive and psychological needs to improve their functional independence and quality of life.

Sharon said: "It was a real privilege to be nominated with such an amazing group of AHPs. I feel really honoured as it was totally unexpected.

"I would also like to thank the people with whom I work daily and to everyone who has supported me throughout my career."

Emma Nunez, group chief nursing officer, said: "It was an honour to present the awards to our first ever University Hospitals Tees AHP Awards.

"I know the valuable contributions each one of our AHPs make every day and reading through the nominations reaffirms my belief in the importance of their roles.

"Congratulations to all the winners and those nominated but also, I would like to take this opportunity to thank every AHP who is on the wards and out in our communities – treating, rehabilitating and improving the lives of patients."

AHP-themed Dragon's Den

Besides the glittery awards event, a special AHP themed Dragon's Den event was also held, where AHPs pitched their innovative ideas to the senior leadership team of University Hospitals Tees.

The best winning ideas were offered extensive support and guidance to further develop the plans, with the sole purpose of improving the care of patients in hospitals.



Occupational therapist Sharon Barker received the Group Chief AHP Outstanding AHP Award of the Year.

Other AHP award winners



Senior specialist physiotherapist Linda Furness - AHP Research Award.



Dietitian Deborah Green - AHP Greener Award.



Hambleton and Richmond outpatient physiotherapy team - AHP Digital Award.



The paediatric occupational therapy services at West Acklam Centre - AHP Innovation and Improvement Award.



Radiology CPD team - AHP Clinical Educator Award.



Head of occupational therapy Christina Hartley - AHP Leadership in Equality, Inclusion and Diversity Award.



Advanced practice reporting radiographers - AHP Workforce Transformation Award.



Katie Hill - The Group Chief AHP Outstanding AHP Support Worker Award.

Dad's life saved from the cusp of severe brain damage after family's quick thinking

An NHS worker is urging people to be aware of a condition that can cause severe brain damage if not treated quickly – after her dad was on the cusp of losing his life.

Claire Lambert, a clerical officer at the University Hospital of Hartlepool, received a distressing call from her mum after her dad Thomas Lambert collapsed at the local bus stop in the early morning.

Thomas, 79, was quickly helped by locals and managed to reach home. Thinking his morning dizziness was just a sign of being tired, he went to sleep.

"My dad only had an hour left for his life"

When asked by Claire, Thomas described the episode as a 'funny spell' and thought he needed more sleep. But when Claire spotted that her dad's hand had become stiff, she immediately called NHS 111.

Thomas was blue lighted to University Hospital of North Tees, where he was assessed by the stroke team.

They determined that Thomas had suffered a right total anterior circulation stroke due to blockage from a blood clot. Without treatment within a four-and-a-half-hour window, Thomas was at risk of severe brain damage which could cause paralysis.

Thomas said: "I am so grateful to the doctors, nurses, consultants and stroke teams at University Hospitals Tees, as I know they rushed to see me when I arrived and made me and my family understand how little time I had for my life to be saved."

The team quickly administered thrombolysis – a medical treatment using "clot-busting" drugs to dissolve blood clots and restore blood flow. Thomas was then urgently sent to James Cook to undergo mechanical thrombectomy to remove the clot.

Dr George Thomas, consultant in stroke medicine at The James Cook University Hospital, explains: "It has been a decade since this revolutionary procedure was introduced. We get the best results in the six hours from when a stroke starts."

Dr Whitehouse, consultant in stroke and geriatric medicine at the University Hospital of North Tees, continued: "Luckily, Thomas's family quickly recognised his stroke symptoms and took appropriate action by calling for an ambulance.

"Due to this, it was suitable for both our acute stroke treatments – thrombolysis and thrombectomy."



The Lambert family (left to right): Clerical officer Claire, dad Thomas, mum Maureen and brother Neil.

Volunteer following in her father's footsteps into a dream career



A volunteer from Stockton is preparing to take her first steps into her dream career – after being inspired by her father and his love for the job.

Zephora Cabaluna, 21, had been volunteering at the University Hospital of North Tees since January 2025 and has now successfully secured a role as a radiography assistant at The James Cook University Hospital.

Her father is a qualified radiographer and his passion for the profession left a lasting impression on her. Determined to follow in his footsteps, she reached out to the volunteering team, who managed to place her within radiography.

Zephora said: "I had seen first hand how rewarding my dad finds a career in healthcare and it has been inspiring.

"Volunteering was a great way to get my foot in the door and to get an idea of what the role would entail before going down a more formal training route."

During her time volunteering, Zephora assisted radiology staff by preparing rooms for appointments, ensuring there was a safe working environment for patients and staff and helping wherever she could.

After successfully applying for a radiography assistant role, Zephora recognises the experience from volunteering

helped her to make her first steps into the career.

She said: "Everyone within radiology at North Tees has been amazing – I'm so grateful for their guidance and support. Volunteering has truly changed my life and I wouldn't be where I am now without the support of the team"

Zephora hopes to continue to progress in her new role and hopes to gain deeper insight into the profession and eventually pursue an apprenticeship or university degree.

She added: "I want to help people and be like my dad – to make a difference and have a career that is meaningful and rewarding. I'm excited to start this new chapter."

Volunteer with us

To find out more about volunteering at Stockton or Hartlepool, visit our websites:

- North Tees and Hartlepool: www.nth.nhs.uk
- South Tees Hospitals: www.southtees.nhs.uk



Zephora Cabaluna.

Bowel cancer patient praises use of surgery robot – with surgeon hitting double century milestone

A man who has become a hospital surgeon's 200th patient using a special robot has praised the state-of-the-art technology.



Patient Marn Singh with the operating theatre team.

Marn Singh from Fairfield had a tumour in his bowel removed in a procedure carried out at the University Hospital of North Tees by surgeon Talvinder Gill.

He is the 200th patient Mr Gill has performed colorectal surgery using the robot – with the robot being used more than 700 times in the hospital's operating theatre.

Marn, 68, was diagnosed with bowel cancer after discovering blood when going to the toilet. This led to a colonoscopy investigation and a scan.

Speaking the day after surgery, he said: "A friend of my wife's had the same procedure at North Tees using the robot – they gave me a glowing report of Mr Gill and his team. I knew I was in the best of hands."

"Prior to this I had never heard of robots being used to help carry out operations, it's incredible and gives you even more confidence."

The Da Vinci robot, controlled remotely by surgeons, improves the accuracy and efficiency of surgery in complex operations – leading to improved outcomes for patients.

First used at North Tees in July 2022, it allows surgeons to perform delicate and complex operations through a few small incisions with robotic-assisted surgery.

It can adjust in various ways to help surgeons get a good fit for their height and reach and gives them total control of the wristed instrument on each of the four arms, with live images produced in 3DHD.

Mr Gill explained: "The robot means we can be as accurate as possible, while seeing everything clearly using a 3D image displayed."

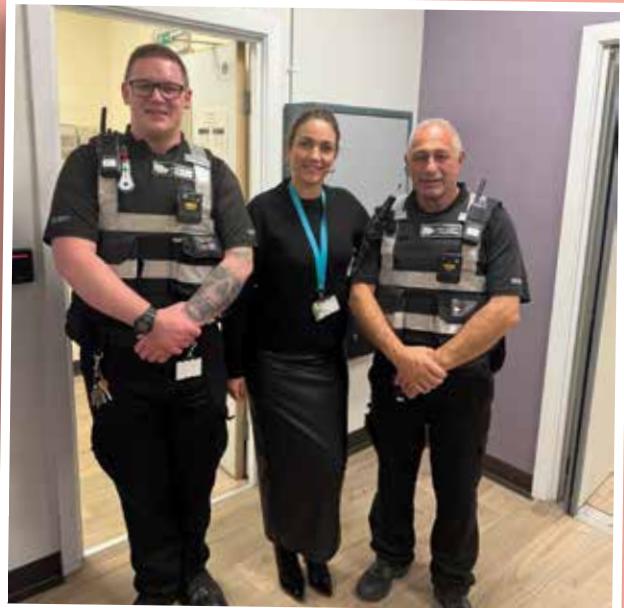
"It is also less invasive and leads to reduced complications. It means our patients have a more successful outcome and a quicker recovery time after surgery."

Rebecca Poyser, the unit's colorectal surgical care practitioner, has led on the training programme for registrar doctors and resident doctors in using the robot.

She said: "I have personally been involved in more than 400 cases using the robot – it's been an amazing journey."

"It has been a real game changer and it has changed surgery for the better."

From security to police officer



Left to right: Luke Parslow, Laura Wilkinson and security officer Andrew Garbutt.

Security officer Luke Parslow began his career journey with NTH Solutions in 2018 through Choices College Stockton, an organisation which supports young people with additional needs into employment.

After completing his placement, he secured a permanent role in facilities before moving into security in 2021 – where he quickly became an invaluable member of the team.

Now, with more than four years' experience under this belt, he is now pursuing his lifelong ambition of joining the police force.

Head of security Laura Wilkinson described him as "an incredible asset whose positive attitude has made a real difference".

A newly refurbished ward 27

The estates team has recently completed a full refurbishment of ward 27 at the University Hospital of North Tees, giving the space a brighter, more welcoming feel for patients and staff.

The project has modernised the ward in line with clinical and building safety standards, while also making it a more pleasant environment for care.

Lead nurse for infection prevention and control Vick Hancock commented: "Following the refurbishment of ward 27 it looks fantastic and is greatly improved. A huge thanks to the estates team from the whole IPC team."



Plumber Jack and joiner Craig support with the refurbishment.

Improvements include:

- New flooring and corridor sinks to support hygiene and ease of cleaning
- Enhanced wall protection to cut down on ongoing maintenance
- Upgraded electrical systems, LED lighting and fire safety measures
- Joinery works to doors and fixings



NTH Solutions: Did you know?

Every Christmas Day, our catering team serves dinner for around 1,500 patients, staff and visitors. This amounts to:

- 3,000 slices of turkey
- 3,000 pigs in blankets
- 1,500 portions of potatoes and veg

Award success for volunteers

Hospital volunteers are celebrating after picking up a special award for the difference they make to local people every day.



Hospital volunteers and members of the volunteer coordination team.

The volunteers at the University Hospital of North Tees were recognised for their contribution to improving the experiences of people and patients at the Community Stars Awards event held by Stockton on Tees Borough Council.

Volunteers Alison McNab, Mike Walmsley, Leah Wood and Paul Musson attended the special event where they gratefully accepted the award on behalf of the volunteer team.

Volunteer Alison McNab said: "We won an award! What a lovely surprise.

"Helping out at our local hospital is really rewarding. We try to make a difference to patients every day.

"We don't do it to be recognised but a pat on the back is nice at times."

Paul Wharton, volunteer coordinator, said: "I'm just so

happy for the team to receive this award. Whilst only a few volunteers could make the award ceremony, it really is on behalf of every volunteer who supports our patients, staff and our community.

"Our volunteers really are community stars."

Councillor Norma Stephenson, Stockton on Tees Borough Council's cabinet member for access, communities and community safety, said: "I was honoured to present a Community Stars award to the hospital volunteer team, who work tirelessly every day to support patients and staff.

"They are a shining credit to the Borough, and this award is a well deserved recognition of their compassion, dedication and the positive impact they make in our community."

To find out more about volunteering, call 01642 383933 or email: nth.volunteers@nhs.net

Hartlepool Stop Smoking Service celebrates 400th quit plan

Hartlepool's smoking cessation service is celebrating after helping more than 400 smokers set a quit date to stub out the habit for good.

Since its launch in January this year, the Hartlepool Stop Smoking Service has offered expert support and advice to more than 400 local people.

With each service user receiving a personalised quit plan and tailored support, including nicotine replacement therapies, the service has been hailed as an 'outstanding success for Hartlepool.'

The service, which operates out of convenient community locations throughout Hartlepool, complements existing schemes including specialist support for pregnant women, hospital inpatient advice, and community navigators at Hartlepool's Community Hubs.

The support provided by the team of experts, on a clinical or self referral basis, includes:

- 12 week support programme (including nicotine replacement therapies and/or an e cigarette)

- Face to-face clinics across the community
- Telephone consultations
- Home visits for housebound patients
- Workplace clinics

Hartlepool Borough Council has commissioned North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust and Hartlepool and Stockton Health to deliver the service to smokers who live or work in Hartlepool.

Councillor Gary Allen, chair of the adult services and public health committee, said: "Reaching our 400th successful quitter through the Stop Smoking Service is a powerful reminder of the impact local support can have on people's lives and is an outstanding success for Hartlepool."

The Hartlepool Stop Smoking Service can be contacted on 01642 383819.



Left to right: Stop smoking advisor Carmen Carcea, Hartlepool Borough Council councillor Aaron Roy, and stop smoking advisor Leanne Watson.

Run for the care we deliver every day – 2026 Great North Run places available

North Tees and Hartlepool Together, our official charity, has once again secured a limited number of guaranteed places for the 2026 Great North Run.

Thank you to our Great North Runners who took on the challenge in 2025 to raise money for our charity.

To date, your fundraising has helped us:

- Turn waiting time into play for children with interactive floor systems
- Give patients independence through communication and recovery technology
- Create calm spaces for families saying goodbye to loved ones

Every step you take supports patients, families and NHS staff across Stockton on Tees and Hartlepool.

Together we can make a difference. Sign up today and run for the care we deliver to our communities every day.

Want to take part in 2026?

Our charity places are open to everyone aged 17 or over on the day of the event – staff, friends, and family are all welcome.

Date: Sunday 13 September 2026

Registration fee: £68

Minimum sponsorship: £250

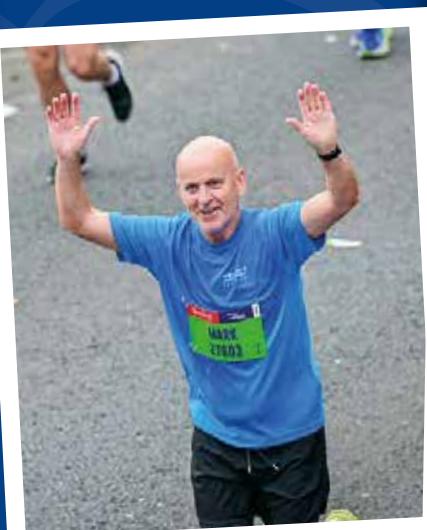
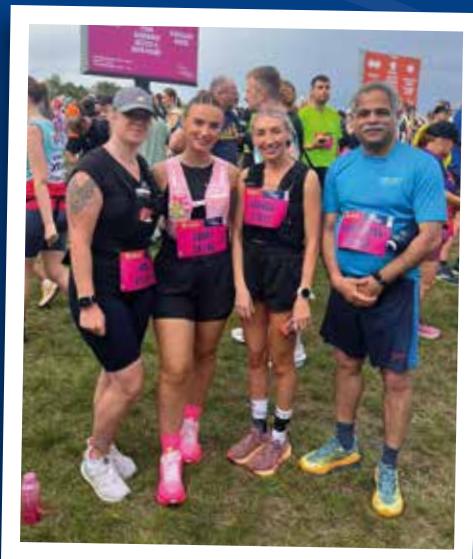
By joining team NTH, you will receive:

- Free charity running vest or t shirt
- Fundraising and training support

Time to celebrate with your friends and family while we look after you in the charity village at South Shields

Ready to sign up and secure your place today? Email: Suzi Campbell, fundraising coordinator, on suzi.campbell@nhs.net

Every mile matters, every step makes a difference.



Just some of our 2025 Great North Runners.

“It saved my life” – Hospital’s new support programme gives patients the tools to overcome addiction

The University Hospital of North Tees has launched a new initiative to support people with addictive behaviours in their road to recovery – working in partnership with local people with lived experience.

The new SMART (self management and recovery training) meetings provide practical tools and techniques for people to cope with urges, maintain motivation and manage the emotions that come with addiction recovery.

The initiative was set up by detox nurse Sam Phillips, who supports patients across Stockton and Hartlepool with intensive detox treatment for alcohol addiction.

She is working very closely with Recovery Connections community coach and SMART facilitator Trish Storey, and harm reduction peer Tee Cook. Both have experience of overcoming addictive behaviours themselves.

Tee said: “I was in detox quite a lot and I know I put my mum through absolute torture. When I first came into recovery, sitting and dealing with all that emotion was unbelievably hard. These sessions are about understanding that those emotions and the urges you’re feeling are perfectly normal.

“Addiction is often trauma-based. It becomes your best friend for so many years and that’s hard to walk away from. But you can overcome them with tools and support.”

SMART Recovery is a scientific, evidence-based programme available to anyone over the age of 18, without the need for a referral. The programme incorporates cognitive

behavioural therapy, rational emotive behavioural therapy and motivational interviewing.

Trish said: “SMART is all about finding the tools that work for you and using them when you need to. I’m two and a half years sober, but I still use those SMART tools now.

“It saved my life.”

Detox nurse Sam continued: “Since we’ve started working with Recovery Connections, I’ve seen a change in our patients and they open up a lot more. Having someone like minded, someone who understands and has been through it themselves, takes away that feeling of stigmatisation and judgement.

“This partnership is so powerful and I’m grateful that we’re able to offer this support to our patients.”

Join our smart meetings

North Tees SMART meetings are confidential. They are open to inpatients, outpatients, visitors and staff who are affected by addiction – either themselves or through a loved one.

Meetings take place every Friday at 2pm in the spirituality centre at the University Hospital of North Tees. No appointment is needed – simply drop in.



Left to right: Tee Cook, Sam Phillips and Trish Storey.

Echocardiographer recognised for contribution to education

A clinical scientist has been received national recognition in return for his contribution to training future generations of echocardiographers.

Steve Hodgson, from Sedgefield, has been lead echocardiographer at the University Hospital of North Tees for almost 15 years now. His role sees him leading a team responsible for diagnosing and monitoring heart conditions.

With a career in cardiology spanning more than three decades, Steve has also been heavily involved in training and accrediting echocardiographers across the UK. Now, he has been recognised with a fellowship by the British Society of Echocardiography (BSE) – an organisation which benchmarks quality patient care in echocardiography.

Steve was nominated for the fellowship by members of the BSE council.

He said: "It was very humbling to be nominated – to be recognised by your peers and the people you hold in high esteem. It was quite emotional.

"It's certainly something to be proud of."

Over the last 15 years, Steve has held several voluntary roles within the BSE. His current position as national lead for practical exams sees him travelling around the UK to assess exam candidates as they develop in their careers as echocardiographers.

In early 2023, Steve became the first registered cardiac clinical scientist with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) at the University Hospitals of North Tees and Hartlepool.

Steve continued: "I've been heavily involved with the BSE for the last 15 years. It was for quite a selfish reason initially, for my own career progression and to assist with training and developing our department at North Tees.

"Now, I've been partly responsible for ensuring the quality standards of hundreds, maybe even thousands, of the current echo workforce across the UK. It's really quite moving when I think about it."



Steve Hodgson, lead echocardiographer and cardiac clinical scientist at the University Hospital of North Tees.

Open day event supports members of the public with audiology concerns

Audiology staff invited external organisations from across the region to offer support and advice to members of the public with hearing concerns.

The open day, held at the One Life Centre in Hartlepool last autumn, included:

- Hearing aid maintenance workshops
- Visual reinforcement audiometry (VRA) demonstrations
- Free hearing screenings
- Advice and support from experts on hearing loss and other auditory disorders
- A colouring competition for children to get involved in

Audiology team lead Sue Kitching said: "We knew that we wanted to organise an open day to ensure we were doing all we could to support our local community with their hearing-related concerns.

"We were all overwhelmed by how well attended our open day was. We managed to see over 120 members of the public with our hearing screening offer and were able to offer support and advice on topics such as hearing aid maintenance."



Colleagues welcome patients to the open day.

The open day welcomed external support groups and stakeholders along to support the public. Stalls included the National Deaf Children's Society, Action Deafness Durham, Phonak, Sarabec, Deaf Empowering Network, Sensory Teaching Advisory and Resource Service (STARS), and Hearing Dogs.

Sue added: "We were also really pleased and have to say a big thank you to all the great external groups and organisations at hand to offer advice, support and information to our patients and members of the public."



Patients were able to get advice from external support groups.

Hospital volunteer successfully secures new role

A Hartlepool volunteer is replacing her blue shirt for a clinical uniform – after successfully securing a place into a paid role as a healthcare support worker.



Mehtap Durmus.

Former volunteer, Mehtap Durmus, has lived in Hartlepool since 2019 and has been volunteering at the University Hospital of Hartlepool for the last four years.

Mehtap originally started volunteering after her English tutor from Stockton Riverside College suggested it would help with her speaking proficiency. It then felt like a natural fit for her to volunteer at the hospital, as she has a background as a nurse and midwife.

Mehtap shared her first days of volunteering: "I started as a welcomer in main outpatients in Hartlepool with another volunteer Lorna. She and Elaine from my volunteering on ward 40 have been a great – helping me to develop my English and being great friends.

"I love getting to come in and see the patients and

volunteering was invaluable in helping me to be successful in getting a role as a healthcare support worker."

Mehtap's new role as a healthcare support worker will see her supporting patients with physical and social activities, to providing basic health checks and delivering everyday support that can make a real difference.

Mehtap added: "Volunteering has been a way for me to do work that is really important to me and makes me happy. I have a background in nursing and midwifery and it is my dream to work at North Tees Hospital and to find my way back into a profession I love.

"I want to build a career in a hospital that has helped me so much – and to get back into a profession that I'm really passionate about. I can't wait to start in my new role."

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"Impressed would be an understatement"

For anyone who struggles to leave their home without support, at-home health services can be a lifeline.

This is something that Derek Brown, who cares for his wife Margaret, knows only too well.

Specsavers is committed to ensuring that everyone has access to essential eye-health and hearing care – but also understands that it's not always easy for people like Margaret, who suffers from Alzheimer's disease, to attend in-store appointments.

That's why, for the past ten years, Specsavers Home Visits has provided comprehensive NHS-funded eye tests to anyone who's unable to visit a store unaccompanied. It's also started to provide free at-home hearing services in selected locations in the UK.

Derek called on the Specsavers Home Visits service when Margaret needed a routine eye test and it was too challenging to get to a store. He was blown away by the expert care that was delivered during the visit and the difference the new glasses made to his wife.

Although Margaret wasn't able to respond to the questions of the optician and their assistant, during the visit, they adapted their approach so they could prescribe the reading glasses that have expanded her world.

"If I was to say I was amazed, that would be an understatement," says Derek. "What was so significant for me as a full-time carer was that the Specsavers experts were punctual, quiet-speaking and patient, reassuring Margaret with everything they did. The level of care expressed towards her was incredible."

Derek, from Northallerton in North Yorkshire, has been the primary carer for Margaret, since her diagnosis with



Alzheimer's in early 2018. After she spent four weeks in hospital in 2022, Margaret's condition deteriorated, and she has since been confined to a hospital bed in the couple's living room, and a hoist to access a wheelchair. With multiple other health challenges, caring for Margaret is complex – but after 25 years of love and marriage Derek has risen to the challenge. As well as taking care of her everyday needs, he's been able to improve her quality of life thanks to Specsavers at-home service.

Following her at-home eye test, the optician suggested Margaret tried some reading glasses to help her enjoy looking at family photos.

Derek was unsure how she would adapt to wearing glasses but seeing her smile while looking at old family pictures told him everything he needed to know.

"If anyone is in any doubt about inviting Specsavers into their home, all I can say is: simply try it," Derek says. "You won't regret it for a second."

Derek now fights for better support and recognition for carers nationwide, and has launched a website (www.dementiaguidance.co.uk) dedicated to helping carers like him across the UK. He's keen to ensure they have all the information they need – including the option of getting a comprehensive at-home eye test from Specsavers.



Expert eye and hearing care tailored to your needs

For those eligible, our mobile experts will provide a comprehensive NHS-funded eye test from the comfort of your own home, with all the same care and thoroughness as you would receive in-store. Specsavers has now also started to roll out free at-home hearing services across the UK. To find out what locations this service is available in visit our website.

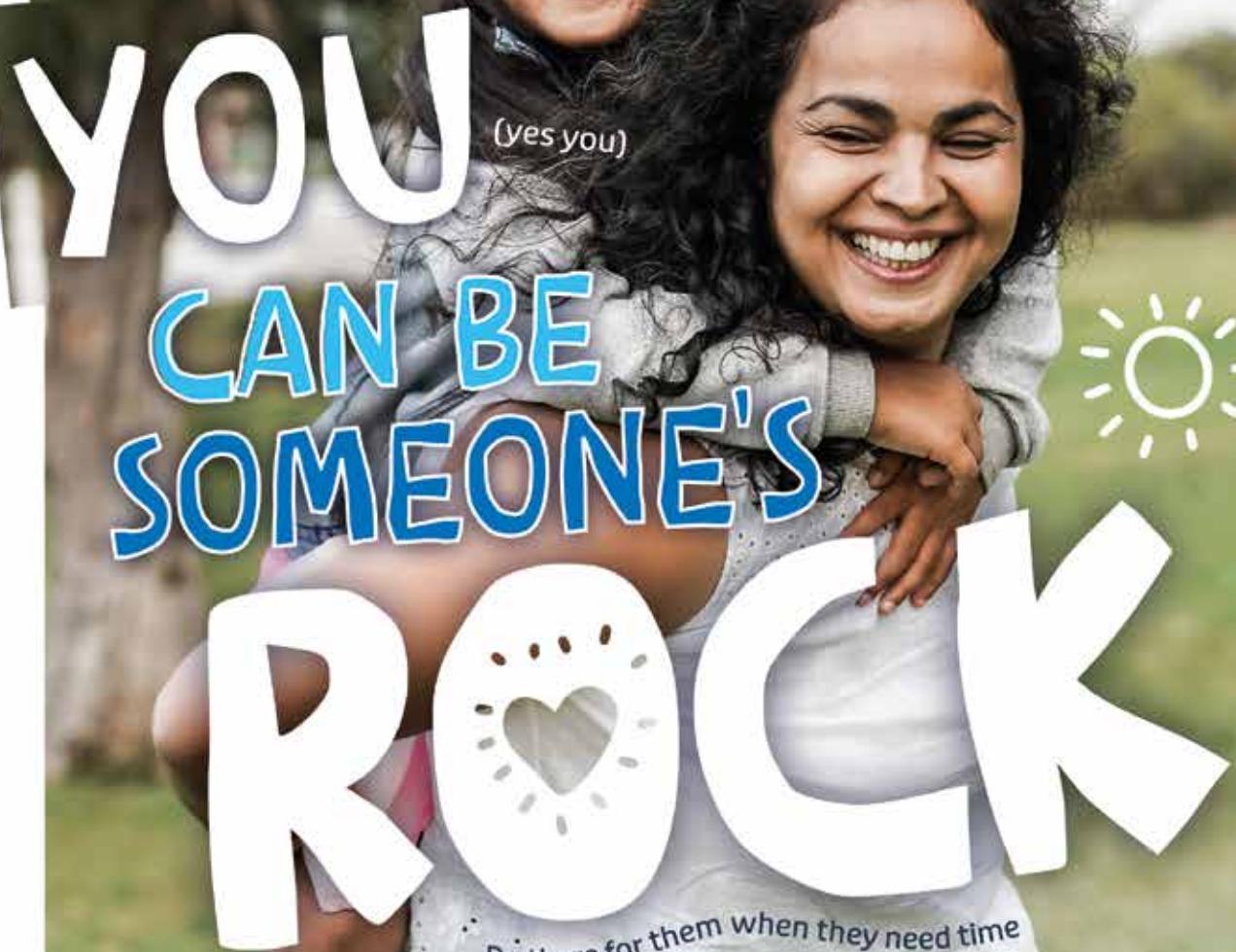
Our eye care and hearing services are tailored to each person and their needs. They are designed to provide eye care and hearing services that are as individual as they are and can be adapted to meet their changing circumstances and comfort levels.

Why Choose Specsavers Home Visits?

- Convenience:** Our experts come directly to you.
- Personalised Care:** Visits are tailored to the individual's needs, with specialist equipment to ensure comfort and accuracy.
- Peace of Mind:** Your loved one will receive the same kind of high-quality care as they would expect in-store.

Specsavers

To see if you or your loved one are eligible, call 0800 0890144 or visit specsavers.co.uk/home-visits



YOU CAN BE SOMEONE'S ROCK

Be there for me when I need you
(yes you)

Be there for them when they need time

As an NHS worker,

your kindness and care have a positive impact every day. Through fostering, even for a short time, you can help support someone in need by offering a home.

There are so many ways you can make a meaningful impact as a foster carer. You be their care and support and we'll be yours.

Foster with your local council.



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