Issue 73

AUTUMN 2026

NHS
North Tees and Hartlepool
NHS Foundation Trust

anthem



How University Hospitals Tees is grappling with violence against staff

From prosecuting violent offenders and introducing body-worn cameras, University Hospitals Tees is taking a zero-tolerance approach to violence against staff. Read more on page 4.

Also in this issue:

Gastroenterology team recognised for clinical excellence

The digital transformations speeding up patient care

Trial lung treatment hailed as a 'brilliant success' by patient



Dear reader,

Welcome to the autumn edition of Anthem.

This edition is packed with stories from our hospitals and community sites, showcasing the incredible work taking place every day.

We begin with a very important feature on how we are taking a zero-tolerance approach to violence and aggression towards our staff. In 2025, more than 1,400 incidents were recorded across University Hospitals Tees, reflecting a concerning national trend. No member of staff should feel unsafe when at work, which is why we are taking action. Thank you to our brave colleagues for sharing their experiences.

You will also read about how healthcare organisations across the Tees Valley have come together to demonstrate their commitment to improving the health of local people and reducing the health inequalities many continue to face.

Elsewhere in this issue, you'll find information about our annual staff flu vaccination programme, including information about where and when staff get their free jab.

This is also a very special edition of Anthem, as it will be the last published in this format.

For many years, our staff magazine has helped us celebrate colleagues, share achievements and tell the stories that make our trust special.

As we continue our journey as University Hospitals Tees, from 2027 we will be bringing our staff magazines together to create one shared publication.

I know Anthem means a great deal to many of you. It has a long and proud history, and I want to reassure you that this is not about losing something valuable. It is about building on our legacy and evolving it for the future.

As our teams continue to come together, we have an exciting opportunity to create a magazine that reflects who we are today and where we are heading together. It will celebrate the very best of both trusts, shine a spotlight on our incredible colleagues and provide a shared voice across University Hospitals Tees.

I hope you enjoy reading this final edition and will pick up a copy of our brand-new magazine when it launches in the new year.

Until then, please enjoy this latest issue.

Best wishes,

Stacey Hunter

CHIEF EXECUTIVE
UNIVERSITY HOSPITALS TEES

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

"The team have been unbelievable" – patient's praise for heart failure team's help

The heart failure hospital at home team have been caring for James Walker ever since he suffered a heart attack four years ago.

James, from Stockton, has had various issues linked to his heart including an irregular heart rhythm, breathlessness and fluid retention.

Since then he has had regular support from the cardiac remote monitoring service who visit him at his home.

Patients like James are given a special app and a monitoring kit, allowing them to do their own recordings for blood pressure, heart rate, oxygen saturation and weight.

These details are reviewed by the specialist heart failure team allowing them to closely monitor a patient's condition and respond quickly if any concerns are flagged including adjusting medications.

James, 63, said: "The team has been unbelievable. I've been seeing them for five years now and we're so lucky to have them. Over the last five years I have seen them on and off and whenever I am discharged I genuinely miss them because they're such a fabulous team.

"The team turn up to my home and get things done so quickly. They really make a difference."

James has recently had a setback after being admitted to the University Hospital of North Tees with an irregular heartbeat.

Speaking from his hospital bedside, he said: "Even while I've been back in hospital this time, members of the heart failure service have popped their heads through the door to see how I am.



Heart failure hospital at home team



James Walker

"They're an amazing resource. Five years ago I didn't need a lot of their help, but now they're an absolute lifeline.

"The patient-initiated follow-up system is brilliant. If things aren't quite right, I know I can get in touch and the team will help.

James is also full of praise for the wider cardiology teams across University Hospitals Tees.

He added: "The support I have also had from staff on the ward and in the community cardiac rehabilitation teams has been fantastic – it has given me confidence and helped me manage my condition."

The cardiac remote monitoring service, previously known as 'managing heart failure at home', is part of a national approach that supports people to live well at home through remote monitoring and patient education.

Since the service was selected as a pilot scheme four years ago, it has gone from strength to strength.

Trudy Hunt, heart failure specialist nurse, said: "Feedback from patients like James means so much to us all – we are really proud of how far the service has come.

"We help patients have a better experience, keeping them out of hospital whenever possible by providing treatment and ensuring all of their needs are met in an individualised way."

How University Hospitals Tees is grappling with violence against staff

From prosecuting violent offenders and refusing treatment to abusive patients, to introducing body-worn cameras, University Hospitals Tees is taking a zero-tolerance approach to violence against staff.



North Tees nursing sister Leanne Powell and emergency department manager Laura Pennicott

"Which violent incident would you like to know about? Violence in the emergency department is constant," said an emergency department staff member at The James Cook University Hospital.

University Hospitals Tees recorded more than 1,400 incidents of violence and aggression across its hospitals in 2025 alone. Staff report verbal, physical and racial abuse from patients and visitors, reflecting a wider national trend of rising violence and aggression against NHS staff.

As part of the organisation's zero violence approach, staff in James Cook's emergency department are now wearing body cameras in a bid to deter individuals from being aggressive.

A few miles away, the emergency department in the University Hospital of North Tees is also planning to introduce body worn cameras after the growing threat of aggression from patients and families.

Leanne Powell, nursing sister in the North Tees emergency department, was treating a patient who had suffered wounds to her arms, in an incident she recalls from several months ago.

She explained: "The nurse I was working with in triage briefly left the room to collect dressings. While she was gone, the patient took a knife – which was a large Stanley knife – from their pocket and gave me the knife, stating this was how her arms were cut.

"I moved the knife to the other side of the desk and continued the assessment. The patient remained calm and cooperative, then asked what I would do if she took the knife back. The patient suddenly jumped from her chair and attempted to grab it. I secured the knife first, but she pushed me back into the chair.

"As I tried to leave, the individual grabbed my hand, attempted to take the knife, and pushed me against the wall while holding my wrist.

"I was able to use the tannoy system to ask for help and within 30 seconds, staff and security came to my rescue."

The patient was later prosecuted for their actions.

An unnamed staff member at James Cook has also received verbal, physical and racial abuse.

They recall: "I remember this one incident where a patient was brought in by the police to the emergency department. I offered him water and, without warning, he tackled me to the ground."

The staff member, who now wears a camera while working, believes the initiative is making an impact as aggressive patients try to control their behaviour when they are made aware of the camera.

Laura Pennicott, emergency department manager at North Tees, said: "We are developing plans to equip our staff members with cameras in the future, similar to the approach taken by the James Cook team. Staff members are empowered to withdraw or delay treatment when patients or visitors behave aggressively, except where immediate clinical needs or capacity issues require further management."

It's not just A&E staff experiencing abuse at work. Sarah Brooks, lead nurse for the therapeutic care team, says her team in James Cook has reported some of the highest levels of violent incidents outside of A&E. Many of the incidents faced by her team are by patients who have cognitive impairment, which can sometimes be a way of communicating an unmet need.

She said: "By supporting both patients and ward teams, we strive to reduce escalation, keep patients safe, and create environments where everyone feels supported. While the team is committed to helping others feel safe, we also want to emphasise the importance of their own safety and wellbeing while delivering this vital care."

Chief executive for University Hospitals Tees, Stacey Hunter, added: "All NHS workers have the right to feel safe at work to allow them to provide the best possible care to our patients.

"I want to say how proud I am of the outstanding professionalism of our staff – who in the face of aggression – continue to provide the best care to our communities.

"We have taken a zero tolerance approach to violence, and we will ensure we do everything to make our staff and patients feel safe at University Hospitals Tees. This means refusing treatment where appropriate, pursuing legal action against offenders, and working even more closely with partners, including the police and local councils."



James Cook therapeutic care volunteer team with ward 24 staff

Teesside specialist gastroenterology team given award at national conference for obstructive jaundice pathway

A Teesside-based specialist gastroenterology team has been awarded a clinical excellence award after recently presenting their work on improving obstructive jaundice pathways for its patients.

The hepato pancreatico-biliary (HPB) team, based at the University Hospital of North Tees, recently presented their work on the 'Safety and Efficacy of Obstructive Jaundice Pathway in Emergency Assessment Unit' at the British Society of Gastroenterology's annual conference in Liverpool.

The team's work on improving this pathway awarded them a prestigious 'Clinical Services Excellence' third place award.

The consultant supervised, nurse driven pathway has already helped to streamline HPB patients' care in obstructive jaundice for 88 patients within the emergency assessment unit and has achieved an estimated £140,800 efficiency savings so far.

This has been done by managing patients within an outpatient pathway where they would otherwise historically be managed as inpatients.

Professor Vikramjit Mitra, consultant gastroenterologist and lead clinician for HPB cancers, said: "The pathway was first introduced in November 2023 at the University Hospital of North Tees.

"We have successfully managed 88 patients safely through this pathway so far. It has led to more appropriate initial radiological imaging, faster access to specialist HPB care and prompt treatment and avoidance of unnecessary hospital admissions for our patients."

The HPB team have also been working closely with other consultant physician colleagues in the medical assessment unit, driving the pathway's use further and improving patient outcomes by helping to reduce the need for them to attend hospital as an inpatient.

Vikram continues: "HPB conditions are very common, often complex and difficult to diagnose and treat. We are fortunate to have a brilliant multi disciplinary team of highly skilled HPB physicians, specialist nurses, dietitians, radiologists, surgeons, anaesthetists and pathologists who offer an incredibly high standard of clinical care.

"We're really pleased with the acknowledgement for our work at the British Society of Gastroenterology's annual conference and we're passionate that this pathway should be explored in other areas in the organisation to further benefit our patients."



Professor Mitra (second from right) accepting a clinical excellence award on behalf of the specialist gastroenterology team

A fresh start through volunteering

When Ahmed Bakheet arrived in the UK as a refugee, he faced the challenge of rebuilding both his career and his life.

A qualified sonographer and healthcare professional, Ahmed had been forced to flee Sudan after years of conflict, persecution and personal tragedy. After being separated from his profession and spending several years unable to work while seeking asylum, he feared he might never return to healthcare.

That changed when he joined the Helpforce volunteer to career programme at the University Hospital of North Tees.

Ahmed initially volunteered as a ward assistant before moving into the radiology department. There, colleagues recognised his clinical skills and supported him in reconnecting with the profession he loved.

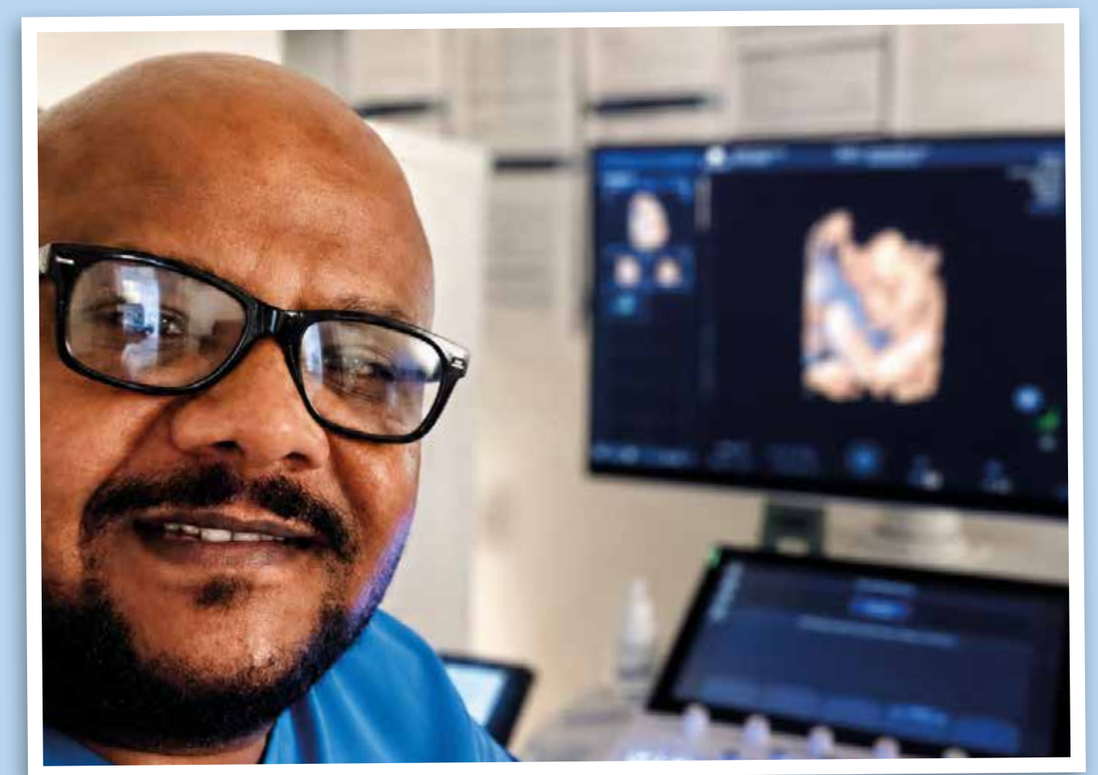
Ahmed said: "It helped me remember what I could do. Step by step, I started to feel like myself again."

The experience gave him valuable NHS exposure, renewed confidence and professional references, helping him secure a role as a sonographer. Today, he carries out advanced pregnancy scans and is once again caring for patients.

Ramit Imtiaz, advanced practitioner in radiology at University Hospitals Tees, said: "Ahmed quickly became a valued member of the team. His journey shows how volunteering can help people rebuild their lives while bringing valuable skills and experience into the NHS."

Ahmed's story is a powerful reminder of the life-changing impact of volunteering and the difference that support, opportunity and kindness can make.

Amerjit Chohan, chief executive of Helpforce, said: "Ahmed's story demonstrates the incredible resilience, experience and determination that refugee healthcare professionals bring. Greater investment in programmes like volunteer to career could release a torrent of talent, helping thousands more skilled clinicians rebuild their careers and put their expertise back where it belongs - caring for patients."



Ahmed Bakheet in his new role as a qualified sonographer

Care bags support patients beyond treatment

Patients with a learning disability attending the emergency departments at James Cook and University Hospital of North Tees are now benefiting from care bags designed to help reduce anxiety and distress during their visit.

The initiative aims to support those who may find busy urgent and emergency care settings stressful or overwhelming.

Each care bag contains a mix of comfort objects such as fidget items, noise cancelling earphones, eye masks, sensory chew bracelets, colouring pencils, visual aids, sensory-friendly items and information resources.

The initiative has also been extended to include patients who are admitted to wards.

According to the Royal College of Emergency Medicine, patients with a learning disability are more likely to attend the emergency department and attend more frequently than the general population due to complex, co occurring health conditions.

University Hospitals Tees' learning disability teams understood that improving the patient experience for people with learning disabilities would lead to better outcomes.

Since the bags' introduction, the learning disability teams have received positive feedback from carers and patients at both hospitals.

Patients have shared how they have found the care bags helpful and useful, whilst carers have applauded how they have supported patients during a difficult period for them.

The teams believe that the initiative has supported patient communication while also giving a better experience.

Moreover, it has also supported the hospital's ED staff in providing care to patients with a learning disability or autism, to feel more relaxed and calmer in an often stressful environment.

Specialist nurse for learning disability, Elizabeth Dixon, said: "We know patients with a learning disability or autism struggle in our busy emergency department. Our goal is to improve their experience by offering a care bag when they access our emergency departments."

Gemma Crooks, nurse advisor for adult safeguarding and learning disability, added: "Patients with learning disabilities often face much higher levels of anxiety during an unexpected hospital visit. By providing immediate comfort items like noise cancelling earphones and sensory items, we are actively reducing that distress and making healthcare more accessible."

If any patient with a learning disability or a carer requires a care bag, please ask a staff member for further information.



The team at the University Hospital of North Tees



The learning disability team at The James Cook

Staff health and wellbeing festival gets bigger and better

University Hospitals Tees teamed up with local organisations across our community to champion the health and wellbeing of our workforce.

Staff were able to access support, advice and wellbeing resources at the annual health and wellbeing festival, which welcomed a wide range of local charities, support groups and businesses.

The marketplace event was held at University Hospital of North Tees, James Cook, University Hospital of Hartlepool and Friarage.

Interactive stands offered everything from financial and legal guidance and suicide prevention initiatives, alongside practical benefits such as vehicle health checks and cinema discounts.

Internal health support services and networks were also on hand to empower staff to better support their own health and wellbeing and that of their patients.

Rachael Metcalf, chief people officer, said: "Our annual festival is a dedicated space designed entirely to support our incredible healthcare staff and their families.

"By bringing local organisations and private companies together under one roof, we provide a convenient, one stop shop for vital financial advice, wellbeing support, and exclusive offers for our staff to ensure they can easily access the care and guidance they deserve."

Marie Weedall, healthcare assistant in post anaesthetic care, said: "Alongside my clinical role, I am also the wellbeing link nurse for our department. I attended the festival to gather useful information and resources to share with my colleagues."

Steven Yull, people experience lead, added: "It's been great to see the variety of people attending and the wide range of internal services and external companies attending, with a wide range of ways they can help. It's also really great to see the festival getting bigger and being held across our other hospital sites."

One of the companies supporting the festival was Everyone Active.



Chief strategy officer Matt Neligan and company secretary Jackie White at the James Cook festival with the medical psychology training and consultation team

Jamie Brown, sales manager at Everyone Active in Middlesbrough, said: "We are proud to come together with University Hospitals Tees to promote fitness, health and wellbeing within our community. We love being invited back to the health and wellbeing festival because we believe fitness brings people together and helps create a stronger, happier community for everyone."



The health and wellbeing festival at the University Hospital of North Tees

Making a difference together

“We will do all we can to improve the health of our community and the opportunities to access our services”.

This was the key message from healthcare teams across the Tees Valley as they came together to show their commitment to improving the health of its population and reducing the healthcare inequalities people face.

The Improving Population Health and Healthcare Inequalities in the University Hospitals Tees Population event, hosted by University Hospitals Tees, brought together NHS organisations, local authority partners, academics and public health.

The day included the launch of the organisation’s new population health and healthcare inequalities strategy.

Speaking at the event, Stacey Hunter, chief executive of University Hospitals Tees, said the organisation was committed to supporting its communities in being healthy and being able to access the best quality care when needed through working with local partners.

Professor Esther Mireku, public health consultant, said: “Improving population health and reducing healthcare inequalities is one of the most important challenges facing health and care services today.

“The conference was our chance to bring together experts from across healthcare, share learning and strengthen our commitment to improving outcomes for our local people.

“The launch of our strategy marks an important step forward, but the real success will come from the partnerships and actions that follow.”

Diane Addei, national director of the healthcare inequalities improvement programme at NHS England joined the event. She spoke to staff from a range of services, including the waiting well team who help people become fitter for their surgery and the prospect programme team who arrange work placements for people to boost job opportunities.

Dr Addei said: “It was inspiring to see the level of commitment across Teesside to improving population health and reducing inequalities. The challenges faced by our communities are complex and cannot be solved by any one organisation alone, which is why partnership working is so important.

“By working together and focusing on the needs of underserved communities, we can make meaningful progress towards achieving fairer health outcomes for everyone.”

During the afternoon, delegates took part in a series of workshops showcasing successful initiatives from across University Hospitals Tees.

This included work focused on lung cancer screening, reducing inequalities in maternity care, improving outpatient access, supporting children and young people from deprived backgrounds, health literacy and poverty proofing.

The event concluded with a shared call to action, with partners committing to continue working together to address the wider factors influencing health and wellbeing and to ensure everyone has equitable access to high quality healthcare services.



Dr Addei (second, left) with members of the waiting well team at University Hospitals Tees

NHS
University Hospitals Tees



BE WISE
IMMUNISE
AGAINST FLU

Protect yourself and those you care for.

Scan the QR code to find out how and where to get your free staff flu jab.

North Tees and Hartlepool staff

South Tees Hospitals staff

HERE TO HELP



Choosing the right place for urgent health issues

People across Teesside and North Yorkshire are being reminded to choose the right NHS service for their needs in the event of an urgent non-life threatening issue.

The urgent treatment centres at the University Hospital of Hartlepool and Friarage provide care for a wide range of minor injuries and illnesses, helping many patients receive treatment quickly and closer to home.

Both are able to perform X rays for suspected fractures during daytime hours.

The centres treat issues including:

- Minor cuts and wounds
- Sprains and strains
- Minor burns and scalds
- Minor fractures
- Bites and stings
- Minor illnesses and infections



The urgent treatment team at Friarage Hospital in Northallerton

For life threatening issues including suspected heart attacks or strokes, breathing difficulties or major bleeding, emergency care is available at other locations, including in emergency departments at The James Cook University Hospital and University Hospital of North Tees.

Nicola Grieves, head of nursing at University Hospitals Tees, runs the services. She said: "Our urgent treatment centres provide excellent care for people with minor injuries and illnesses and are an important part of the services we offer locally.

"But they are not here for patients who need emergency care. For patients experiencing a serious or life threatening condition, emergency care is available at James Cook University Hospital and University Hospital of North Tees. By choosing the right service, patients can access the most appropriate care as quickly as possible and help us ensure all services are run safely."

Patients are advised to contact 111.nhs.uk or phone 111 for advice about which service is right for them.



The urgent treatment team at the University Hospital of Hartlepool

Research team celebrates study milestone

More than 1,000 babies born at The James Cook University Hospital have taken part in a groundbreaking research study testing newborns for rare genetic conditions.

By testing for more than 200 rare genetic conditions, the Generation Study could help babies access life changing treatment sooner.

A participating baby's genome is sequenced shortly after birth using a small blood sample, usually taken from the umbilical cord, with parental consent.

This tests for a range of childhood onset genetic conditions where early diagnosis and treatment can make a significant difference.

It is not just at James Cook where the study has proved popular. Teams across University Hospitals Tees have seen interest from families, with a high uptake at University Hospital of North Tees too.

Among the families taking part was Zana Sellars from Middlesbrough who enrolled her baby, Remi, in the Generation Study shortly after she was born.

Remi's genome was analysed for several conditions, including cystic fibrosis, Barth syndrome and severe combined immunodeficiency.

If a condition is suspected, the results are returned to the parents by a specialist before further diagnostic tests are offered.



Zana Sellars, baby Remi and the research team at James Cook University Hospital



University Hospital of North Tees research team

When asked why she wanted her newborn to take part, Zana's answer was simple: "It's important for future generations."

She added: "Research is important. Although it might not identify something for your own family, it has the potential to help someone you know."

Tracy Ruddick, obstetrics and gynaecology research nurse, said: “Reaching such a significant recruitment milestone at James Cook is an incredible achievement and a testament to the dedication, teamwork and commitment of everyone involved.

“The Generation Study is incredibly important as it aims to build a better understanding of how genetics influence children's health and development. It can help to identify conditions sooner, potentially allowing children to receive support or treatment earlier"

Sharon Gowans, research midwife, added: "I want to thank all our midwives and maternity teams for their continued support and commitment to delivering this important study.

"I'd also like to say a huge thank you to all the parents who have chosen to take part so far."

Teesside physio team brings care closer to home for patients

Physiotherapy specialists from University Hospitals Tees are helping patients across Hartlepool access faster care and treatment, by bringing hospital services into their local community.

The integrated musculoskeletal (iMSK) team recently held a community appointment day (CAD) at Brierton Community Sports and Leisure Centre in Hartlepool.

Using population health data and waiting list information, the team identified and invited more than 250 patients with routine, chronic or ongoing musculoskeletal conditions who were most likely to benefit from early intervention and support.

Patients pre-booked appointment slots and upon arrival, received a personalised, holistic assessment, allowing clinicians to identify and address a range of health needs within a single, coordinated appointment.



Samantha Raistrick and Diane Matthews

Alongside their assessment, patients were also encouraged to access a variety of support services aimed at removing barriers to care and improving overall wellbeing.

They also had the opportunity to take part in rehabilitation taster sessions, sign up for ongoing programmes, and attend educational sessions to better understand how the nervous system interprets pain.

One of those invited to the event was Hartlepool resident, Vanessa Horwood. She said: "The appointment felt very personal. I had one to one time with the clinician in a private setting, and there was no waiting around – I was seen straight away. It was a really positive experience."



A patient using the one-to-one assessment service

While community appointment days have been successfully trialled by a small number of NHS trusts elsewhere in the country, this is the first initiative of its kind in the North East.

Samantha Raistrick, iMSK team lead, said: "The 'one stop shop' approach helps connect patients with the right services at the right time, reducing the need for multiple appointments or referrals and supporting them to better manage their health and wellbeing."

Diane Matthews, iMSK team lead, added: "Going forward, we will use the insights gained from this event to shape future community appointment days and expand our reach across the wider community, ensuring more patients can benefit from timely, accessible care closer to home."

Transforming digital access and saving 1,000 admin hours

We've saved an incredible 1,000 admin hours by using a new electronic patient referral system.

'SystmConnect' enables patients and relatives to self refer or submit requests and contact services online.

Rachel Briggs, service manager for the specialist services admin hub, explains: "SystmConnect has led to faster clinical review and increased productivity as our teams can spend more time focusing on patients.

"Patients like the system, with one service user describing the process as "quick and easy," noting how quickly they were able to book an appointment online after submitting a referral, including having a choice of venues, dates and times.

"It's fast, efficient and saves times for both patients and our teams."

Previously, the administration teams experienced high volumes of telephone calls, leading to long wait times and limited access outside working hours.

Since its introduction in December 2024, more than 18,000 patients have self referred or contacted services:

- Integrated musculoskeletal service advanced assessment – over 16,000 self referrals
- Community paediatrics – more than 2,000 online medication requests
- Podiatric surgery – over 600 self referrals

Ben Ryan, electronic patient records manager for community and neighbourhood services, said: "SystmConnect provides patients with digital access to services, allowing them to complete referrals and make requests at their convenience. It's confidential, secure and integrated into existing IT systems.

"The system also asks specific questions so clinicians receive accurate information from the patient to help plan the best course of action."

The initiative aligns with University Hospitals Tees' digital transformation ambitions which sees clinical and digital teams work in partnership to improve accessibility and modernise service delivery.



Ben Ryan and Rachel Briggs

Trial lung treatment hailed as a 'brilliant success' by patient

A patient living with lung cancer has hailed an experimental lung drainage treatment at the University Hospital of North Tees as a "brilliant success" after it helped him regain his quality of life and return to the activities he enjoys.

The patient, who has asked to remain anonymous, took part in a research trial investigating a new approach to managing cancerous fluid build-up around the lungs.

Rather than requiring a prolonged stay in hospital, the patient underwent a minimally invasive procedure to have a small drainage device inserted into his chest. The fluid was then drained during a series of outpatient appointments before a procedure known as pleurodesis was carried out using medical talc to prevent further fluid build-up.

The patient said: "It's been brilliant, just a brilliant success.

"I had the procedure two years ago and haven't needed any follow-up treatment for the fluid since. I still attend my regular oncology appointments, but the fluid has completely gone, so I can breathe properly and get on with life as normal.

"You wouldn't know from seeing or speaking to me that I'm living with cancer."

The research into the new drainage process was led by respiratory consultant Dr Kevin Conroy in collaboration with colleagues at The Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust.

Dr Conroy said: "We hope to build on this work with a larger study comparing this new approach to our current treatment options to give patients more time at home, more freedom from breathlessness and allow them to get on with their lives."



Dr Kevin Conroy

Newly qualified professionals begin careers at University Hospitals Tees

A group of newly qualified allied health professionals have launched their new careers after successfully completing a degree apprenticeship programme.

The newly qualified cohort includes four diagnostic radiographers, three physiotherapists and one occupational therapist. All existing employees, they have combined workplace learning with university study to gain their professional qualifications.

For diagnostic radiographer Catrina Madden, being able to earn while learning was invaluable. She said: "I'd been a support worker since 2019 and the opportunity to do the course was too good to pass up.

"Having a family means there was no way I could stop working to study, so being able to do a day at university once a week while working made it possible.

"It was hard having to juggle work, home and study but it was definitely worth it."

Fellow diagnostic radiographer Joann Coles has worked at the University Hospital of North Tees for 25 years in a variety of roles.

Joann said: "At the moment, having only been qualified for a few weeks, I just want to be confident and competent in the role and see what happens in the future.

"I feel I'm off to a good start and am enjoying the job."

Advanced radiographer practitioner Marie Bennett praised the achievements of the group and the support provided by colleagues across the department.

She said: "It's been wonderful to see them develop into fully qualified radiographers.

"The whole team has played a part in supporting their training and we couldn't be prouder of what they have achieved."



Diagnostic radiographer Catrina Madden, advanced radiographer practitioner Marie Bennett and diagnostic radiographer Joann Coles

NORTH TEES + HARTLEPOOL TOGETHER

NHS consultants take on mammoth trek to fundraise in memory of fellow colleague

A group of NHS consultants took on the Annapurna Base Camp trek challenge in Nepal to help raise money for charity.

The seven consultants from across University Hospitals Tees are raising funds for charity North Tees and Hartlepool Together to support paediatric diabetes services, in memory of their friend and colleague, Dr David Pitchard. The group included Dr Santhosh Puthuraya, Dr Savin Pokhrel, Dr Subramani Diwakar, Dr Tariq Azad, Dr Valasubramaniam Mahadevan, Dr Raj Mishra and Dr Deepak Mane.

The expedition saw the group cover 30,000ft, trekking over 60 miles across 10 days. The consultants reached Annapurna Base Camp in Nepal at 4,130 metres (13,550 feet), as well as Machhapuchhre Base Camp, which features the iconic 'Fishtail Peak.'

Despite the picturesque surroundings and views of the Himalayan peaks, the group battled through rain, hail and snow to reach the summit areas, as well as taking on the 'never ending steps' of the Annapurna.



Colleagues pose for a picture upon reaching the Annapurna base camp



The group completed the walk in memory of colleague Dr David Pritchard

The team prepared with three months of training, walking hills across Teesside, although nothing could fully prepare them for the challenges of altitude sickness. The consultants spoke of the physical and mental demands of the trek, with one team member continuing despite being unwell.

To round off their trek, the team also delivered a one day regional anaesthesia workshop at Dhulikhel Hospital in Nepal. They are already considering what their next challenge could be.

The group completed the trek in April 2026 and successfully raised £2,350 for North Tees and Hartlepool Together.

Schoolchildren donate to cancer unit that cared for classmate's mam

Pupils at a Stockton primary school have donated to a cancer care unit after being inspired by the experiences of a classmate whose mum is undergoing treatment for breast cancer.

Year 6 children at St Gregory's Catholic Academy in Roseworth raised £717 as part of the school's annual 'enterprise day', with £150 donated directly to the chemotherapy unit at the University Hospital of North Tees – where 46-year old Lisa Dixon from Ragworth has recently received care.

Lisa's son, 11-year old Jude, and his class led the fundraising activities. After using some of their earnings to fund end of year activities, the class decided that they also wanted to support one of the teams who had helped Jude's family.

When asked why he and the class wanted to support the chemotherapy unit, Jude said: "I don't want anyone to end up in the situation that my mam was and I don't want it to be stressful for anyone."

Lisa first discovered a lump in October last year and was quickly diagnosed with breast cancer. Following surgery, Lisa began chemotherapy treatment in March 2026 – and Jude got to watch his mam ring the bell to mark the end of her chemotherapy treatment in July.



Jude and Luca (centre) with their teaching assistants and staff on the chemotherapy day unit

Jude, classmate Luca and teaching assistants Alyson and Joanne recently visited the North Tees chemotherapy unit to hand over the donation and meet the team who supported Lisa during her treatment.

Mates raise more than £2,000 for cancer unit after friend's diagnosis

A group of friends have raised over £2,000 for the haematology ward at the University Hospital of North Tees after their close friend was diagnosed with cancer.

Tom Mackay, Jack Walls, Connor Wilson and Liam Jones undertook the Yorkshire Three Peaks challenge after their close friend, Chey, was diagnosed with non Hodgkin lymphoma aged just 28.

The treatment Chey received from staff at the hospital inspired the group to undertake the 24 mile hike, which took place at the end of May 2026.

The group said: "It's been a huge shock for Chey and for everyone around her. At 28, cancer is the last thing anyone expects to be facing, and the last few weeks have brought a lot of uncertainty.

"Throughout it all, the care Chey has received from the haematology ward at North Tees has meant so much. The staff have gone above and beyond for her, and we really can't fault the care and support they've given.

"We wanted to do something to say thank you for everything they've done, and to give something back to the ward that has supported Chey so well.

"If this fundraiser can help in any way, whether it's through equipment, patient support, or helping improve care on the ward, then it will be worth every step."



Tom Mackay, Jack Walls, Connor Wilson and Liam Jones reach the summit of their challenge

NORTH TEES + HARTLEPOOL TOGETHER

Pharmacy team shortlisted for HSJ patient safety award

A project aimed at reducing missed doses of critical medicines has seen the pharmacy team at the University Hospital of North Tees shortlisted for a prestigious award.

The team has been named as a finalist in the HSJ Patient Safety Awards 2026, in the 'Improving Medicines Safety Award' category.

Their entry, titled "TIMELY' approach: redesigning frontline workflow to reduce avoidable harm from time critical medicines', has been effective in improving how time critical medicines (TCMs) are managed when patients are admitted into hospital.

Time critical medicines, such as those used to treat Parkinson's disease and insulin-dependent diabetes, must be administered at specific times to avoid serious harm and support patient recovery.

The pharmacy team developed a structured, workflow redesign tool that enables frontline staff to proactively identify, prioritise and secure TCMs, called 'TIMELY.'

Medication safety officer, Jun Saw, said: "'TIMELY' was introduced as a structured workflow intervention which could be embedded into daily practice.

"The implementation of this safety initiative involved system-wide collaboration including multidisciplinary teams and senior leadership. This collaborative approach ensures the safety solutions are practical, evidence-based and strategically sound."

Supporting tools, including a clear medication availability flowchart, practical checklists and visual prompts displayed on medication boards and trolleys, were also developed and introduced. They help to give a structured step-by-step guide staff can follow, to ensure they are providing the best possible care for patients.

Jun continues: "Staff feedback has been really positive. We've also seen a 50% or more reduction in omitted TCM administration incidents after introducing TIMELY approach, with improvement continuing over later quarters.

"TIMELY tool delivers high impact at minimal cost – a scalable safety intervention with returns that can be measured."

Medicine management lead, Stacey Smith, said: "We are absolutely thrilled to have been nominated for this award. It's been a fantastic team effort and would not have been possible if not for the incredible support of all the multi-disciplinary teams involved across the organisation.

"Most importantly, this project has made a real difference to patient safety. By keeping the approach simple and focused, staff feel more confident to act quickly and ensure patients receive the medicines they need on time."



Stacey Smith and Jun Saw

From placement to purpose: Hartlepool student finds her calling in children's nursing

A Hartlepool student is pursuing her dream career as a children's nurse, thanks to a college partnership with a local NHS hospital.

18-year-old Lucy Skedd is a second-year student at Hartlepool Sixth Form College, currently undertaking a T Level qualification in healthcare. Equivalent to three A Levels, the course combines learning with industry placement – an opportunity to put learned skills into action in a real work environment.

Lucy spent much of her placement on the children's ward at the University Hospital of North Tees. She has now set her sights on becoming a children's nurse and has since begun her degree at Teesside University.

Lucy said: "I'd never been on a children's ward before my placement so I wasn't too sure what to expect. It gave me valuable experience and an insight into working with children and their families and really confirmed that children's nursing is the career I want to pursue.

"Healthcare offers the opportunity to support individuals during some of their most challenging moments – it's been a very meaningful and rewarding experience."

As part of her placement, Lucy has worked closely with nurses and healthcare assistants on the ward to develop practical skills and confidence in readiness for her exams.

Alyson Thompson, manager of the children's ward, said: "Lucy has been amazing to have on the ward. From day one, you could see that she wanted to be a children's nurse. She came on the ward with a big smile, already very passionate and keen to learn. She's been brilliant with all members of the team, and with children and their parents.

"I can't thank Lucy enough for coming and joining us at North Tees on her journey and we hope she'll be with us again soon on her uni placements.

"She's truly been a treasure to have."

Lucy continued: "I would definitely recommend the T Level programme. The placement allows you to develop skills, explore different healthcare careers and provides experience that can support applications for university, apprenticeships or healthcare jobs.

"I've had a very positive T Level experience."

Find out more

To find out more about University Hospital Tees' T Level healthcare programme, scan the QR code to visit our website.



Lucy Skedd with Alyson Thompson, manager of the children's ward

Liver service celebrates national accreditation success

A liver service based at the University Hospital of North Tees is celebrating achieving Level 1 'Improving Quality in Liver Services' (IQILS) accreditation, as part of its commitment to providing quality care for its patients.



The liver service team

Led by the Royal College of Physicians (RCP), IQILS was first established in 2017, to ensure equality in the standards of care delivered to patients with liver disease across the country.

The liver service team has long demonstrated strong clinical practice, with clear pathways and responsibilities for liver care. This existing structure placed the team in a strong position when they began the formal accreditation process in 2023.

Dr Rebecca Dunn, consultant gastroenterologist, said: "We're thrilled that our liver service has been successful in obtaining its Level 1 accreditation following the hard work of everyone in our team to strengthen some key areas of our service delivery.

"As part of the process, we have worked to improve access to online patient resources, introduced quarterly meetings to review care and formalised quality assurance processes."

The service has already begun the next stage of its journey, working towards its Level 2 accreditation within the next 12 months.

Rebecca continues: "I think its important this progression is part of a wider ambition to ensure we hold Level 2 across the University Hospitals Tees group.

"The James Cook University Hospital was already successful in its Level 2 accreditation and reaching the same standard will help us to ensure patients receive the same high quality care, regardless of where they are treated."

Achieving Level 2 would place the University Hospital of North Tees amongst only 18 other liver services in the country.

From volunteer to valued team member: Mehtap reflects on her first year of employment

Almost a year after turning her dream into reality, former volunteer Mehtap Durmus, from Hartlepool, is celebrating a successful milestone in her role at University Hospitals Tees.

Mehtap's inspiring journey first began as a hospital volunteer on ward 40 at the University Hospital of North Tees and as a welcomer in the main outpatients in the University Hospital of Hartlepool, while she pursued her ambition of returning to a career in healthcare.

In October 2025, she secured a paid role within critical care at the University Hospital of North Tees, fulfilling a dream of working within the NHS.

Now, almost 12 months on, Mehtap is reflecting on how far she has come and the opportunities her role has already provided.

Mehtap said: "I am learning so much every day on the unit. Since starting my role, I have progressed into a healthcare assistant role and it has really helped me grow in confidence.

"I have to say that my family – especially my husband and daughters – have been a huge help throughout this journey and I wouldn't have been able to do this without their unwavering support.

"Working here has also made me think about what the next steps could be for me, whether that is progressing into nursing or midwifery in the future."

Mehtap credits her volunteering experience as being a key part of her journey into employment.

Before securing her role, she spent several years volunteering at the hospitals, gaining valuable insight into hospital life, supporting patients and developing her confidence.

She continues: "Volunteering really helped me with the transition into employment. It gave me experience of helping on the wards and the opportunity to see how a ward operates within the NHS.

"I was able to observe staff, interact with patients and understand more about working in a hospital environment. It reassured me that I could work within the NHS as an employee and helped me return to doing what I love most – caring for others.

"Caring for others has always been my passion, I have done it all my life and I feel very fortunate that I can continue doing something that means so much to me."



Mehtap outside of ward 20 critical care where she now works

CLIFTON HOUSE

RESIDENTIAL AND DAY CARE HOME FOR ELDERLY PEOPLE



We are a 28 bed Residential Care Home situated on a quiet residential street, and pride ourselves on the quality of care that we deliver. We offer long and short stays, as well as respite care.

As a family-owned business, we are committed to providing the highest possible standard of residential care* in a safe, supportive and friendly environment, where both residents and staff achieve fulfilment in their life.

We offer a warm welcome, serve home cooked food, and as you can see from our Facebook page, we have lots of fun and laughter along the way!

94-96 Clifton Avenue, Hartlepool TS26 9QP
Email jlc.cliftonhouse@outlook.com
Tel 01429 223399
Clifton House Residential Home
*Over 65 years of age

Inspected and rated Good
Care Quality Commission

North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust has not vetted the advertisers in this publication and accepts no liability for work done or goods supplied by any advertiser. Nor does South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust endorse any of the products or services.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information given in this publication is accurate. Whilst the publisher would be grateful to learn of any errors, it cannot accept any liability over and above the cost of the advertisement for loss there by caused. Octagon Design & Marketing Ltd has not vetted the advertisers in this publication and accepts no liability for work done or goods supplied by any advertiser. Nor does Octagon Design & Marketing Ltd endorse any of the products or services. No reproduction by any method whatsoever of any part of this publication is permitted without prior written consent of the copyright owners. **Octagon Design & Marketing Ltd. Tel: 01302 714528**



Published by Octagon Design & Marketing Ltd, Rossington Hall, Great North Road, Doncaster, South Yorkshire DN11 0HR Tel: 01302 714528