

Latest news for our members and stakeholders

May 2025

This newsletter aims to keep you, our members and stakeholders, updated with the latest news from across the Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust.

In this update

Top stories

- Our progress over the past year: Sam Higginson, Chief Executive Officer at the Royal Devon
- Update on Our Future Hospital programme
- Our Extraordinary People Awards 2025 are now open for nominations
- More tour slots added for new £12.5m Tiverton Endoscopy Diagnostic Unit open day
- Innovative 'one stop' service reducing wait times for patients with suspected cancer

Other news

- North Devon sees launch of Lung Cancer Screening in drive to save more lives
- New research uses AI to help stroke patients
- Changing Places Toilet opens at Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital
- Spring COVID-19 booster programme underway
- Step into a career in health and social care – NHS England South West free virtual event
- Behind-the-scenes with our Trauma and Orthopaedics Admin Teams
- Royal Devon charity news
- News in brief

Top stories



Our progress over the past year: Sam Higginson, Chief Executive Officer at the Royal Devon

As we start our new financial year, I have been reflecting on the progress we have made against [our strategy](#) and how this has enabled us to deliver more for our patients across 2024/25.

Our focus over the past twelve months has continued to be on our recovery for the future. We have approached this by exploring greater collaboration, innovation and use of digital technologies, and through empowering our staff to deliver excellent care to our patients.

As a result of the hard work of our staff across Royal Devon we have been able to:

- Reduce the number of people on our waiting lists by almost 4,000 patients (a reduction of 5%), with far fewer patients experiencing long waits.
- Reduce our cancer waiting times, seeing 74.6% of patients within 62 days, compared to 68.5% the year before.
- Significantly improve long waits in our Emergency Departments, achieving the fourth most improved performance on 12-hour waits in the country this year.
- End the year with our finances in balance, following a significant cost saving programme through the year, which recognised the importance of financially living within our means whilst keeping patient safety as our top priority.



As we look ahead to 2025/26 we recognise the financially pressured national context we are operating in and the significant challenge being set for us. As well as continuing to improve our performance, we know we have to operate within our means. For the Royal Devon, we will need to save £69m in order to balance our books again in this year.

We have been actively working with our clinical leaders to develop our plans to meet this challenge. Read the full update on our [website here](#).

Update on Our Future Hospital programme

Since the national New Hospital Programme announcement in January confirmed North Devon District Hospital will not see building work start until between 2035 and 2039, we have been working to secure investment to manage the most critical areas of NDDH.

Our teams have been developing plans for the clinical areas that need investment most urgently, particularly our theatres and intensive care unit. Whilst these are the critical risks, there are other high-risk issues at NDDH and we are exploring how we might implement a phased build programme over the next 10-15 years to manage this.

We have continued to engage with NHS partners and politicians, both locally and nationally, to share our plans and discuss why they are so needed and how they might be resourced.

With further local MP support, we are expecting a visit from the Minister for Health this summer. We are pleased to have this opportunity to show the Government how critical this investment is for the people of North Devon as the most remote hospital in mainland England, and for the wider NHS in Devon.



Our Extraordinary People Awards 2025 are now open for nominations

Our NHS staff and volunteers deliver extraordinary work every day. The Royal Devon's Extraordinary People Awards recognise the hard work, dedication and amazing care given by both individual staff and teams.

We are asking patients and carers to nominate a staff member, team or volunteer in the 'Extraordinary Care' category. If you've had excellent care from an individual or team and you want to celebrate them, you can [nominate them here](#).



Sam Higginson, Chief Executive at the Royal Devon said: "Our Extraordinary People Awards are such an important way to recognise the hard work and commitment of staff across our services and celebrate the incredible things they do!"

"We had over 800 nominations last year and I want to encourage you to nominate those hospital staff and volunteers who have gone the extra mile in providing care at the Royal Devon. We know how hard they work every day, often in challenging circumstances – this is just one of the ways we can say thank you."

Nominations close on **Friday 30 May** and you can find out more on our [website here](#).

We are looking for corporate sponsorship for our celebration event. If you're interested, take a look at [our sponsorship opportunities](#).

More tour slots added for new £12.5m Tiverton Endoscopy Diagnostic Unit open day

Due to popular demand, we have added more tour slots for our open day on **Tuesday 13 May**.

You can get an exclusive look around our new £12.5m Tiverton Endoscopy Diagnostic Unit before we see our first patients. You'll also get to hear Royal Devon staff talk about the impact the new unit will have.

Places need to be booked in advance due to limited capacity in the unit and car park (free). Places are allocated on a first come, first served basis.

Tours at 3pm and 4pm have now been added. Book your place here:

<https://forms.office.com/e/dE1GYGjqtD>

We hope to see you there!

If you have any questions about the event, please email rduh.engagement@nhs.net or call 01392 403977.



Innovative ‘one stop’ service reducing wait times for patients with suspected cancer

A new one-stop service introduced at the Nightingale Hospital Exeter is helping patients with suspected sarcoma get a diagnosis more quickly and with fewer visits to hospital.

Patients now benefit from access to specialist diagnostic, surgical and cancer nurse support services all in one day. This has reduced the number of individual hospital visits for patients. In some cases, patients have gone from having four appointments to only one.

The service is based at the new Buttercup Unit, which opened in 2024. Find out more about this innovative [one-stop service](#) here.



Staff at the Nightingale Hospital Exeter

In this month's [patient story](#), we hear from three patients who attended the Buttercup Unit at the Nightingale Hospital for outpatient appointments. The story explores what patients think of this approach and what receiving a diagnosis more quickly means to them.

You can watch the film by clicking on the image below:



You'll see more stories in future issues of this newsletter and you can view other patient stories [on our website](#).

Other news



North Devon sees launch of Lung Cancer Screening in drive to save more lives

Royal Devon teams are working with the Peninsula Cancer Alliance, and InHealth to deliver a lung cancer screening programme in Northern Devon to eligible patients, improving earlier diagnosis of lung cancer to help save lives.

From April, North Devon patients aged 55-74 years old who are current or ex-smokers, or those with a known history of exposure to occupational hazards, will be invited in phases by InHealth for a lung health check.

Dr Kate Cockcroft, Respiratory Consultant at Royal Devon said, "Lung cancer is the third most common cancer in the UK and is often diagnosed at advanced stages when treatment options are

limited. If you're invited for a lung health check then I really recommend that you attend. Patients have told us that the screening is straightforward and we know that it can be lifesaving".

You can find [out more here](#).



New research uses AI to help stroke patients

We've launched cutting-edge research designed to make a big difference to people who have a stroke.

The research is in partnership with the NIHR Applied Research Collaboration South West Peninsula (PenARC) and the University of Exeter.

It uses Artificial Intelligence and machine learning to personalise stroke care for patients who have been identified by their doctors as most likely to benefit from clot-busting treatment. This treatment, known as thrombolysis, can reduce disability caused by stroke when given early.

Find out more about this innovative research on our [website here](#).



Pictured above: Professor Martin James, Consultant Stroke Physician and Honorary Clinical Professor at the University of Exeter Medical School

Changing Places Toilet opens at Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital

We have officially opened a new Changing Places toilet facility in the main entrance at Royal Devon and Exeter (RD&E), along with another accessible toilet and a new breastfeeding facility.

The Trust Board of Directors heard a [patient story](#) from Ruth and her disabled daughter Rosie, who explained the need for this essential facility at the hospital.

In response to this and as part of delivering our Patient Experience Strategy, the Trust has improved the accessibility of our sites to all visitors by installing the Changing Places toilet. There are now two Changing Places toilet facilities across our sites, with the first opening at North Devon District Hospital in 2022.

The official opening was performed by Rosie and Ruth, who cut the ribbon with members of Royal Devon (pictured below) who have been involved in the project. You can read more about the opening on [our website](#).



Photo of the official opening of the Changing Places Toilet at the RD&E with: Richard Tomlinson, Consultant Paediatrician; Tracey Godbeer, Paediatric Health Care Assistant; Rosie and Ruth; Andrea Bell, Deputy Director of Nursing (Patient Experience); Adrian Harris, Chief Medical Officer; Dave McMorrow, Manual Handling Trainer; Catherine Kinsey, Voluntary Services Manager; Sharifa Milford Al Hashemy, Inclusion Lead.

Spring COVID-19 booster programme underway

The national COVID-19 spring booster programme began in April. COVID-19 is more serious in older people and in people with certain underlying health conditions including:

-
- Adults aged 75+
 - Those in care homes
 - Those aged six months+ with a weakened immune system

This year you should come forward rather than waiting for the NHS to contact you.

The [National Booking System](#) is now open to book appointments or you can book by calling 119 free of charge.

Find out more on [our website](#) here.



Step into a Career in health and social care – NHS England South West free virtual event

Are you based in the South West and interested in a career in health or social care? On **Wednesday 21 May at 10am**, join NHS England South West for a free virtual event focused on entry-level opportunities within the NHS and care sectors.

With over **350 roles** to explore, this event is perfect for those looking to start or change careers. In this event, you'll have the chance to:

- Chat with careers advisors
- Attend live webinars
- Get tips on making your application stand out
- Learn about voluntary and paid positions

Register [here today](#) and don't miss this exciting opportunity to take your first step into a rewarding career.



YOUR FUTURE IN HEALTH & CARE BEGINS HERE

- EXPLORE OVER 350 DIFFERENT CAREERS
- OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL AGES, FROM 16 TO 67
- CHAT WITH CAREERS ADVISERS & ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT HOW TO GET INTO HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE



JOIN OUR VIRTUAL HEALTH & CARE CAREERS INFORMATION EVENT

WEDNESDAY 21 MAY 10AM – 2PM
IT'S ALL FREE AND ONLINE – NO NEED TO TRAVEL

[REGISTER HERE](#)

Behind the scenes with...



Trauma and Orthopaedics Admin Teams

Admin Professionals Day took place on Wednesday 23 April, an opportunity to celebrate and raise the profile of admin professionals across the NHS. This month we sat down with Gemma Beer, Admin Service Manager in Trauma and Orthopaedics at Exeter Spinal Unit, to find out more about admin teams and their important role in supporting patients and staff at the Royal Devon.

Why is the team so important?

Our admin teams are extremely important. Their support enables the clinical teams to focus on patient care. The admin teams are specialist in their individual roles and as a manager I rely on their knowledge to support new service developments.



To me, they are often unsung heroes who go above and beyond on a daily basis and the work they undertake to support patients and clinical staff makes a huge difference.

Read the [full article here](#).

Royal Devon Hospitals Charity news

Find out how you can support the Royal Devon Hospitals Charity [here](#).

Major fundraising milestone for hospital's Super Theatre Appeal

Our [fundraising campaign](#) for a new state-of-the-art operating theatre at the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital (RD&E) has hit the half-a-million pounds mark.

The major milestone comes just six months after the Royal Devon Hospitals Charity launched the Super Theatre Appeal.

We hope to raise £1.4m to buy the specialist equipment that will revolutionise surgery for thousands of patients, and we now need continued community support to raise the £900,000 still needed to complete this vital project.

The theatre will revolutionise the type of procedures we can carry out, providing care for more patients across the region.



Surfer Eric praises cancer wellbeing centre

After 73-year-old surfer, Eric Davies, had surgery to remove his prostate gland in 2023, recovering from cancer and getting back on his beloved surf board were both top of his to-do-list.

Eric from Braunton was determined to keep going and his journey to recovery – and back into the ocean – has been helped along with regular yoga sessions at the Royal Devon Hospitals Charity Fern Centre.

Eric says he can't imagine a life without surfing and that the sessions at the cancer wellbeing centre at North Devon District Hospital have helped him to regain the physical flexibility and mental agility he needs to ride the waves. Read [Eric's inspirational story](#) here.



News in brief



Royal Devon to provide specialist audiology services to patients in Eastern Devon

We are now providing specialist audiology services for patients in Eastern Devon aged 54 and under. Find out more on [our website](#) here.

Important changes to the way we deliver clinical research

We've announced some [important changes](#) to the way we deliver commercial clinical research at the Royal Devon. These changes will increase opportunities for patients to access life-changing clinical research.

Dr Vanessa Purday appointed as Chief Medical Officer for Service Strategy and Operations

We are delighted [to announce](#) the appointment of Dr Vanessa Purday as Chief Medical Officer for Service Strategy and Operations. She will join the Trust on 1 September 2025.

Share your experiences of cancer treatment and care

Research team Picker on behalf of NHS England is looking for help to redevelop its National Cancer Patient Experience Survey. Find out [how you can get involved](#) here.

Follow the Trust on social media

Follow our Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram and LinkedIn pages for all our latest updates as they happen!



You have received this email because you are important to us as either a member or stakeholder of the Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust.

If you would like to stop receiving this newsletter, please email rduh.comms@nhs.net and ask to be removed from the newsletter mailing list.

Would you like to receive this news direct to your inbox? [Click here](#) and complete the online form to become a member and receive our newsletter!



NHS and CARE working with communities and local organisations to improve people's lives
