



Latest news for our members and stakeholders

May 2026

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.

Top stories



Introduction from our Chief Executive Officer, Sam Higginson

Spring is finally here, and with it comes a sense of fresh starts and new energy. With that in mind, I'm pleased to share our latest updates in May's newsletter and extend my thanks to you for your continued support of the Royal Devon.

Across the organisation our focus remains firmly on what matters most – providing safe, high-quality, sustainable care for you and your families.

One of the most important ways we are responding to the challenges impacting our financial sustainability is by reducing avoidable demand for our services, while ensuring that those who need care can access it quickly and safely.



Demand for healthcare continues to grow, and not all of it requires hospital-based or specialist care. We know that not all patients who are in a hospital bed actually need to be – or want to be there. Too often we are caring for patients in spaces that aren't meant to be used that way, such as corridors on wards and our Emergency Departments, when our hospital-based services are really busy and we have

difficulties discharging patients who are ready to leave us. Part of our three-year plan to ease this pressure on our services and turnaround our waiting times is to reduce demand by strengthening out-of-hospital care and reducing avoidable admissions to hospital.

Over the next few months we will be sharing the different ways we are trying to do this. In this issue, you can learn about our virtual fracture clinic, which is an example of how we're using new technologies and approaches to deliver services to patients, so they receive care more quickly and get the right care in the right place at the right time.

We're continuing to invest in our facilities using external funding and I'm really pleased to see progress with construction starting on two major projects. Our new Taw View residences at North Devon District Hospital (NDDH) will deliver much-needed short-term accommodation for our clinical colleagues and our new surgical hub at the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital (Heavitree) will help us reduce waiting times. You can read more about these below.

I'm delighted to share we've hit our £1.4million Super Theatre appeal fundraising target. This is a fantastic achievement and testament to the phenomenal support of the local community and our staff. Personally, I want to say thank you on behalf of the Royal Devon to everyone who donated – it will make a huge difference for patients across Devon.

I'm also pleased to share that our Extraordinary People Awards are now [open for nominations](#). I'm always grateful for the dedication and compassion our staff show every day, and I know many of you see that in your own experiences with us. I encourage you to nominate an individual or team who has made a difference to the care you or a family member have received.

I would like to end by saying we are truly grateful to our patients, members and partners for the part you play in all that we do.

Sam

What is a virtual fracture clinic and how does it work?

Over the next few months we are sharing the ways we are reducing demand on our services by strengthening out-of-hospital care, supporting people to live well in their communities and helping patients to access the right care in the right place at the right time.

As part of our plans to see more patients, meet increasing demand and reduce delays for patients, we are using new approaches to deliver services to patients and improve outcomes.

One example of this is our virtual fracture clinic which supports patients after first presenting at a Minor Injuries Unit (MIU) or Emergency Department (ED).

Traditionally, all patients with fractures were seen face-to-face in our fracture clinics, which are held at RD&E (Wonford), North Devon District Hospital and some community hospitals. To help us manage increasing demand and reduce waiting times, we introduced virtual fracture clinics in our Eastern services in November, which run alongside our face-to-face clinics.

How does it work?

Patients with a fracture or soft tissue injury that meet specific clinical criteria are offered a telephone appointment instead of a face-to-face appointment to discuss the fracture with the clinical team. Patients are given advice and information resources.

All virtual clinic patients are provided with clinical guidance within 72 hours of their referral. Most patients are contacted within just 24 hours.

Find out more and the benefits to patients on [our website here](#).



Colleagues from our virtual fracture clinic

Construction begins on vital staff and student accommodation at North Devon District Hospital

Construction has begun at NDDH to create urgently needed new accommodation for staff and students that will help attract and retain the workforce that is critical in delivering patient care.

It is part of Our Future Hospital (OFH), our programme to build a better, more resilient hospital for northern Devon that meets the needs of local people for years to come.

To mark the start of construction, the Trust has revealed the official name for the new residences as 'Taw View'.

Professor David Sanders, Associate Clinical Director/OFH Estate Redevelopment, said: "The start of construction work is an important moment to celebrate, but there is still much to do. The OFH team continues to work hard to secure the further funding needed to deliver vital improvements across the hospital site.

"Taw View marks the first phase of the OFH programme. Not only will it deliver much needed short-term accommodation for our clinical colleagues, it also paves the way for relocating the staff car park and unlocking the site for the major, much-needed clinical build that will follow. The next phase will deliver new, fit-for-purpose operating theatres, intensive care unit, expanded diagnostic facilities and enhanced women's and children's services."

Read more on [our website](#).



Staff reveal the new name of staff and student residences at NDDH



CGI shows how the new Taw View residencies will look

Groundworks start on new surgical hub at Heavitree Hospital

Members of our construction partner team scrubbed in for a different kind of procedure recently – starting to lay the structural foundations for our brand-new Centre of Excellence day surgery hub for children and adults at our Royal Devon and Exeter (Heavitree) Hospital.

The hub will include new theatres and recovery space and has been funded through a £20m commitment from NHS England.

The surgical hub is just one of the ways we're investing in our facilities over the next three years using external funding. A number of schemes totalling over £80m are underway to modernise our estate and help us deliver high-quality and efficient care to our patients.



Other news



Introducing our refreshed Patient Experience Strategy

Patient experience strategy 2026-2029

Delivering compassionate care experiences wherever patients are on their healthcare journey



Patient experience remains at the heart of everything we do; through the clinical care we provide, to our physical estates, and through our innovations across digital, research and people development.

We are therefore pleased to introduce our refreshed [Patient Experience Strategy](#), which demonstrates our commitment to deliver positive experiences of care for every patient at the Royal Devon.

This strategy has been guided by what we have heard from patients, families, carers and staff, and recognises that every person's healthcare journey remains unique to them, defined by their own individual needs, experiences, and circumstances.

View the strategy and find out more on our website [here](#).

Torbay's Epic go-live helping streamline patient care across Devon

Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust [went live](#) with our now shared Epic electronic patient record (EPR) system on Friday 3 April.

This marks a major milestone for the One Devon EPR programme, which has been working to bring all Devon trusts under the same Epic umbrella over the past year.

With both ourselves and Torbay using the same digital system there are new opportunities for closer working and more streamlined patient care.

Patients receiving recent care at both trusts will notice the difference straightaway. Using [MY CARE](#), patients can now see selected information from both trusts in one place making it easier to monitor their healthcare journey.

We have also benefited from improved Epic features. For dialysis patients a new digital system brings efficiencies and allows patients to enter their own data at home digitally, so they can provide live up-to-date blood pressure and other observations.

In our community services we have new features that allow us to better track health trends across the region, and in cardiology we have new tools to share imaging across sites which is helping with safer patient transfers.

Cancer care is delivered across Devon's trusts, with some patients receiving specialist care at multiple hospitals with clinical teams working together across trusts. With the Torbay go-live also comes a new Epic module for cancer services, providing a comprehensive understanding of the whole cancer care journey, all in one place, which will better support clinical teams to work together.

University Hospitals Plymouth goes live with Epic on Thursday 23 July 2026.



Royal Devon innovation makes an impact across the region

It has been an active few months for health research and genomics at the Royal Devon. Here, we share our recent highlights, as well as the achievements delivered in partnership with colleagues across the region.

- Our research teams have recruited the [first participant in Europe](#) to a new international study for Alport syndrome, a rare genetic kidney condition.
- Royal Devon researchers led important work to tackle [antimicrobial resistance](#). Working with University of Exeter and National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) partners, their findings are now published in British Medical Journal Open.
- As part of the South West Genomic Medicine Service, our teams contributed to an [award-winning project](#) which aims to build a stronger cancer research workforce across the region.
- The University of Exeter's alumni magazine has shone a spotlight on our award-winning NHS Rapid Whole Genome Sequencing Service and the impact it is having for families across the UK. [In the article](#), we hear more about how our partnership with the University of Exeter is transforming research, diagnosis and care through genomics, improving outcomes for children with rare genetic conditions.

Discover more about our research and genomics work by visiting [our website](#).



The RILD (Research Innovation Learning & Development) Building

New accessibility guides helping patients visit Royal Devon with confidence

We've worked in partnership with AccessAble to create detailed access guides for our sites. If you have an upcoming visit and need extra support, see the accessibility guides on our website [here](#).

The guides provide clear, reliable information to help patients, visitors and colleagues with disabilities or additional needs plan their visit with confidence. They include photographs and details about features such as level access and entrances.

The guides are part of delivering our [Patient Experience Strategy](#) and our commitment to reducing uncertainty, promoting independence, and ensuring accessibility is not an afterthought, but a core part of how we deliver care.

We launched the guides at a special event in April. The event was well attended by service users, Royal Devon Governors, partners and colleagues.

The group was given a demonstration of how the guides work, a chance to meet with the patient experience team, and the opportunity to learn more about the patient experience, accessibility and support services provided at the Royal Devon.



Reminder to look out for meningitis symptoms

There have been a small number of cases of meningitis B (MenB) in England over recent months. However, the overall risk of getting it remains low.

The [NHS website](#) has all the information you need, including what to look out for and when to get medical help.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms can include:

- A rash that does not fade when pressed with a glass
- Sudden onset of high fever
- Severe and worsening headache
- Stiff neck
- Vomiting and diarrhoea
- Joint and muscle pain
- Dislike of bright lights
- Very cold hands and feet
- Seizures
- Confusion or delirium
- Extreme sleepiness or difficulty waking

Get involved



Our Extraordinary People Awards 2026 are now open for nominations

Our NHS staff and volunteers deliver extraordinary work every day and our 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, or someone you know received excellent care from an individual or team at the Royal Devon, you can [nominate them here](#).

Sam Higginson, Chief Executive Officer at the Royal Devon, said: "Our Extraordinary People Awards are such an important way to recognise the incredible people who make our organisation what it is."

“It’s so important that we take the time to recognise and celebrate the dedication, resilience and achievements of our colleagues and, above all, say thank you.”

Patients and carers can [make their nomination here](#), or to request a paper copy of the nomination form email rduh.employee.experience@nhs.net.

Nominations close on **Sunday 31 May**.



We are looking for corporate sponsorship for our celebration event. More information is available [here](#).

Find out more about this year’s award on [our website here](#).

Have you shared your views on this newsletter?

Thank you to everyone who has already shared their views on this newsletter and provided helpful suggestions on how we could improve it.

There’s still time to [share your views](#) and let us know what’s important to you.

Thank you.



Royal Devon Hospitals Charity news

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

We've hit our Super Theatre fundraising target – thanks to your donations!

Our fundraising appeal for a new state-of-the-art operating theatre at Royal Devon and Exeter (Wonford) Hospital has hit its £1.4million target in less than 18 months.

The money raised has paid for ultra-modern imaging technology set to revolutionise surgery for thousands of patients across Devon for generations to come.

The new theatre, known as a hybrid theatre, is already delivering safer, faster and more precise surgery at the hospital.

The technology reduces the need for open surgery, multiple operations and travel out of area. It is estimated that it will enable the hospital to treat around 1,200 extra patients a year, reducing waiting times for everyone, including cancer and urgent surgery patients.

Lucy Ashton, RDHC Head of Charity, said the charity was proud to have made such a vital contribution to make the project a reality.

“We can’t thank the local community enough for rallying behind this appeal and helping us to deliver an incredible new facility that will do so much to enhance patient care for generations to come,” she said.



News in brief



Research backs 90-second test for early colorectal cancer detection

A team based at the Royal Devon has helped lead [ground-breaking research](#) that could revolutionise testing for colorectal cancer.

New pathology consolidated services laboratory programme underway

We’ve started work on phase one of our [Pathology Consolidated Services Laboratory](#) at Gadeon House, Exeter - to deliver resilience and fit for the future services that ensure patients receive the right care, in the right place, at the right time.

More people to be offered protection from RSV vaccinations in the South West

The RSV vaccine is now [available for free](#) on the NHS for adults aged 75 and over, adults living in a care home for older adults, and pregnant women.

Quarter of a million consultations take place in Devon as people choose their local pharmacies

Last year, Devon's community pharmacies delivered 231,000 consultations for a range of common conditions and minor illnesses. The [Pharmacy First](#) service, available in most local pharmacies, frees up GP appointments for patients who need them most and gives people quicker and more convenient access to safe and high-quality healthcare.

Gut feeling something's not right? Request your free test kit

If you're 16–49 and living in an EX postcode, you can receive a free, confidential [home test kit](#) for ongoing abdominal pain, diarrhoea or blood in your poo.

Follow the Trust on social media

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



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