

## Latest news for our members and stakeholders

February 2024

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.

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**Top stories**



## **New Chief Executive Officer Sam Higginson reflects on first month at the Royal Devon**

On Monday 22 January, we welcomed our new Chief Executive Officer, Sam Higginson. Sam brings extensive experience to the role, having worked in and around the NHS for the last 20 years across strategy, finance and operational roles.

Sam says of his first few weeks: “I’m really pleased to have joined the Royal Devon and as I settle in the role I’ve been visiting teams across the Trust. I have been struck by how friendly everyone has been and am looking forward to meeting more colleagues over the coming weeks.

“This is always a difficult time of year for the NHS as a whole, as well as locally, with added winter pressures and Devon has been under significant pressure already in 2024. I am incredibly proud of the care colleagues are delivering despite these challenges.

“I know we couldn’t provide the services we do without the support we receive from volunteers, Governors, communities, partners and charities – I very much look forward to working with you all going forward to deliver the best possible care we can for the people of East, Mid and North Devon.”



*Sam Higginson, Chief Executive Officer, attends our apprenticeship week careers fair with Royal Devon colleagues on 6 February*

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## NHS waiting list falls for third month in a row, with huge improvements at the Royal Devon, thanks to efforts of colleagues

NHS England has reported that the national waiting list fell in December for the third month running, while winter pressures continued to hit the health service.

The report also says that NHS staff delivered more elective activity in 2023 than any other year since the start of the pandemic, with more than 17.3 million people treated. You can read more [here](#).

Here's how patients have benefitted at the Royal Devon. Between December 2022 and December 2023:

- Of 166 NHS organisations, **we had the eighth largest reduction in the overall size of our waiting list**
- **We achieved the milestone of having no patients waiting longer than 104 weeks (2 years)**. Of the 33 NHS organisations which achieved this, we had the most long-waiters to start off with and therefore saw **the largest improvement**.
- The number of patients waiting more than 78 weeks reduced by 74%
- The number waiting more than 65 weeks reduced by 53%
- The number waiting over a year reduced by 44%

John Palmer, Chief Operating Officer at the Royal Devon, said: "It's a real testament to the efforts of our colleagues that we are in this vastly improved position for our patients.

"We've been really successful in maintaining flow across our services to ensure we have beds available for planned activity.

"Colleagues at the Trust have been totally focused on getting patients the care they need in a timely way and we are really pleased we've made progress. We know some patients are still waiting too long, so this work continues."

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## NHS to roll out Martha's Rule

The NHS in England will roll out 'Martha's Rule' from April to give patients and families access to an urgent review if they are worried about a condition getting worse.

Martha Mills died in 2021 after developing sepsis in hospital, where she had been admitted with a pancreatic injury after falling off her bike. Martha's family's concerns about her deteriorating condition were not responded to promptly, and in 2023 a coroner ruled that Martha would probably have survived had she been moved to intensive care earlier.

In response to this and other cases related to the management of deterioration, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and NHS England committed to implement 'Martha's Rule'; to ensure the vitally important concerns of the patient and those who know the patient best are listened to and acted upon.

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The escalation process, which formalises access to a critical care team for a second opinion, will be available 24/7 and will be advertised throughout hospitals. Martha's Rule will be rolled out to 100 sites initially, with the aim to expand this further over the coming years.

Find out more [here](#).

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## **New mothers praise Royal Devon maternity services in Care Quality Commission survey**

Our maternity services have been praised by new mothers for listening, explaining and respecting their views and decisions.

A survey carried out by the Care Quality Commission last year showed that areas where service users' experience is best included being given information about where to have their baby during ante-natal check-ups, being able to see or speak to a midwife as much as they wanted during their care after birth, and being taken seriously when raising concerns.

Carolyn Mills, Chief Nursing Officer at the Royal Devon, said: "These results reflect the hard work, effort and dedication of our maternity staff. I am pleased to see their commitment to their patients coming through."

The survey did highlight some areas for improvement, including partners or other carers being allowed to stay in hospital and the amount of health information and advice available during the first six weeks after birth. The Trust will now look at how we can address these areas to improve the care we give to women using maternity services.

The full survey results can be found on the CQC website [here](#).

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## **100,000 patients now signed up to MY CARE – join them!**

We celebrated a significant milestone in January as 100,000 Devon patients are now signed up to MY CARE, a digital service that makes it easy for patients to access their hospital information.

Accessible on a computer, phone or tablet, MY CARE brings information about hospital appointments, test results and other medical details together in one convenient place, and makes it easier and more secure for patients and their clinical teams to share vital information.

"It was great when I was pregnant," says MY CARE user Ellie Manning. "Everything is on MY CARE, so when you are busy you have all your appointments in one place. You also have the write up letter on your phone, so any recommendations are easy to find. It helps me feel like I'm in control."

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This has been made possible because the Royal Devon uses a digital electronic patient record system called Epic. While paper records are still used in many hospitals in the UK, the Royal Devon became one of the country's digital pioneers when it introduced Epic in 2020.

“We are at the forefront of a revolution in how care is offered to patients. And it makes me extremely proud to think of all the hard work that has gone into allowing the people of Devon to be among the first in the UK to benefit from this technology,” says Professor Adrian Harris, Chief Medical Officer at the Trust.

To find out more and join the 100,000 people already using MY CARE visit our [website](#).



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## Digital by default: reducing the number of letters we send to make your NHS more sustainable

We have moved to a 'digital by default' approach to outpatient appointment letters to respond to patient feedback and reduce the Trust's environmental impact.

Patients who use MY CARE will now receive their outpatient appointment information through MY CARE and not through the post. This update is a response to patient feedback; however, we do recognise digital communication methods won't work for everyone and so existing services will remain in place for those who need it.



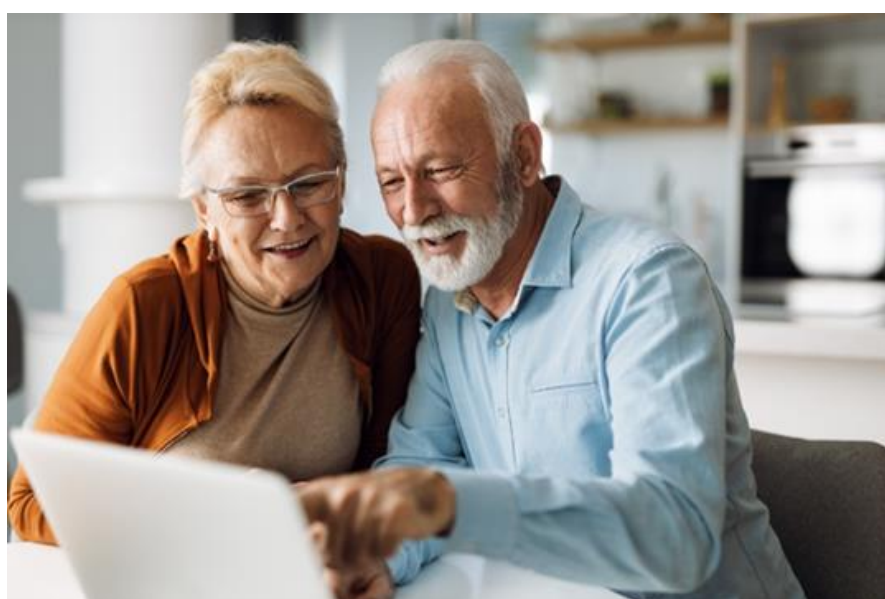
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We send out approximately 2 million letters to patients every year. Phil Luke, Director of Transformation, explains: “There will be huge benefits to giving patients choice about how they want communications about their care.

“By switching to digital letters through MY CARE we can dramatically reduce the amount of paper waste and cut down on carbon emissions, which will lessen our environmental impact and is a step towards our goal to achieve net zero carbon emissions.”

This change will also make care more cost effective. It is estimated that the reduction in print and post will save £967,000 over two years, which means more money to spend on direct patient care.

To find out more about this change go to our [website](#).



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## **Royal Devon Charity launches two new fundraising appeals**

Our charity has launched two fundraising appeals to help the Trust provide new facilities at the Royal Devon & Exeter (Wonford) Hospital (RD&E) and North Devon District Hospital.

The charity is hoping to raise £250,000 to help create a special waiting area for children and young people within the new Emergency Department at the RD&E. Money raised will fund ocean-themed wall murals and light panels, interactive digital equipment, and comfortable seating with USB charging points.

In North Devon, a £50,000 appeal has been launched to buy two new birthing pools for the maternity unit. The existing pools at the hospital are now more than 30 years old and in need of replacement.

You can find out more about these appeals and how to donate [here](#).



## Other news



### **Royal Devon now managing Exmouth Minor Injuries Unit**

We are now managing the Minor Injuries Unit (MIU) at Exmouth Community Hospital.

The previous provider, Claremont Medical Practice, made the decision to not continue running the MIU service in Exmouth to allow them to focus on their busy general practice.

MIU services will continue to be delivered by a highly skilled and experienced nursing team, providing a high-quality, easily accessible alternative service to the Emergency Department (ED).

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Andy Burgess, Divisional Director – Medical Services (Eastern) at the Royal Devon, said: “We are happy to be taking over the Exmouth Minor Injuries Unit. The Exmouth MIU is an important public facility, offering greater convenience for local people and relieving pressure on our main ED in Exeter.”

Find out more [here](#).

The MIU is open 8am-8pm, seven days a week including bank holidays. Please check our [website](#) for any changes to these opening times.

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## Successful remote monitoring pilot at the Royal Devon featured in The Guardian

In June 2023, our heart failure team based in Northern Devon launched an exciting remote monitoring service for selected patients with heart failure. The pilot aimed to improve outcomes for those patients and avoid unnecessary hospital admissions, and has now been featured in [The Guardian](#) in an article exploring the use of remote monitoring in the NHS.

Patients identified as suitable for the pilot were given equipment that directly connects to the heart failure team, allowing patients to record and send the team daily information about their symptoms including their blood pressure, heart rate and weight, all without leaving home.

Patients are already reporting the benefits of remote monitoring including improvements to their conditions, feeling in control of their health and reducing the need to travel to and from hospital for appointments.



*Pictured above Harold Chugg*

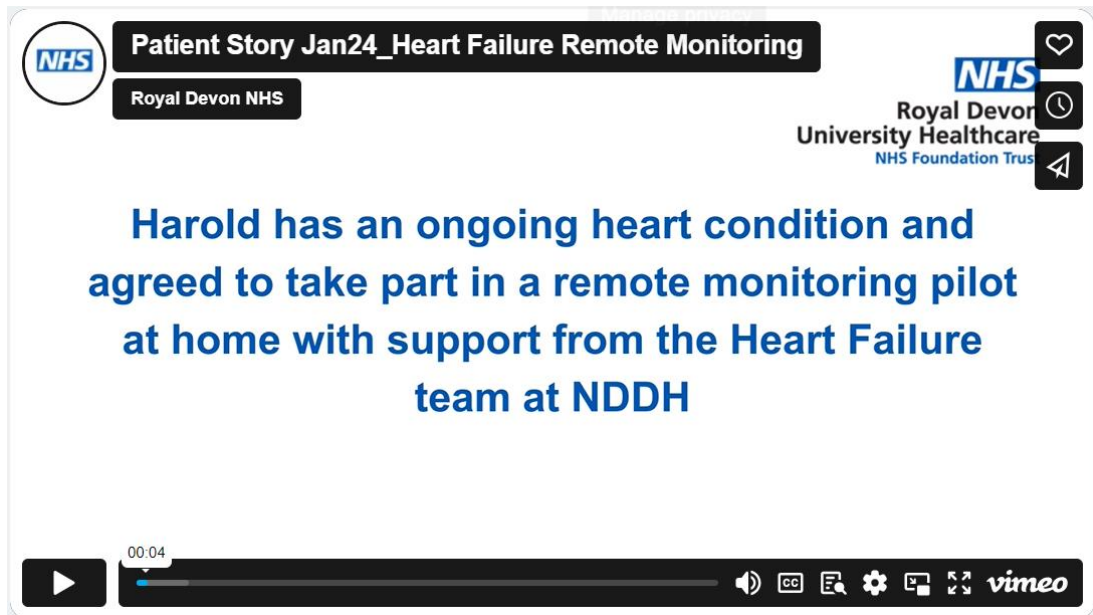
75-year-old Harold Chugg from South Molton was one of the first patients to take part in the remote monitoring pilot. His heart condition had deteriorated which had resulted in multiple visits to the heart failure team at NDDH. Once his condition was stable, the nurses introduced Harold to

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remote monitoring and set him up with the necessary equipment to monitor his condition from home. He describes his experience and the difference it has made in a short video.

Click on the below image to view Harold's story.



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## Research: vaccine could cut RSV-related hospitalisations

A leading study supported by the Royal Devon has demonstrated a significant decrease in hospital admissions for respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), in a triumph for vaccine research.

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) usually causes mild, cold-like symptoms, but can lead to bronchiolitis and pneumonia. More than 30,000 under-fives are hospitalised with RSV in the UK annually, resulting in 20 to 30 deaths.

The Harmonie study recruited 8,000 children under the age of 12 months, and half received a single dose of a specialised vaccine. The trial involved children from across the UK, France, and Germany, and the Royal Devon was one of the sites selected to run the study within the UK.

The results showed that RSV-related hospitalisation was reduced by 83% in those receiving the jab, and admissions for all chest infections were cut by 58%.

The study was delivered at the Royal Devon by the paediatric research team and our dedicated colleagues from the National Institute of Health and Care Research (NIHR) Patient Recruitment Centre, both based in Exeter.

You can read more in [this article from BBC News](#).

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## National Apprenticeship Week: How we're supporting new apprenticeships

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During National Apprenticeship Week, which took place 5 to 11 February, we held an Apprenticeship Careers Fair at the RD&E Wonford. The event was really busy and it was a great opportunity to share information about the types of apprenticeships that are available.

If you would like to find out more about apprenticeships and other training and development schemes at the Royal Devon, visit our career pages [here](#).



Petroc College held an apprenticeship awards event during the week, where two Royal Devon colleagues were recognised. Phil Lowe from our Vocational Education Team was awarded the Apprentice Employer Mentor of the Year award. Ed Barker from our Clinical Training Team was awarded the accolade for Outstanding Contribution to the Development of Apprenticeships.



*Left to right: Helen Daly, Vocational Education Lead; Phil Lowe, Vocational Education Team; David Matthewman, Director of People (Northern Services); Ed Barker, Clinical Training Team; Julia Fuery Clinical Training Manager*

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**Measles cases are on the rise – protect yourself and those most at risk**

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Measles cases have risen across the South West. Measles can be serious at any age and we need to protect those at risk from becoming seriously unwell.

The best method of protection is vaccination. If you or your child have not had both doses of the MMR vaccine, contact your GP surgery to book an appointment as soon as possible and catch up.

You can find out more about NHS vaccinations and when to have them [here](#).



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## Updated NDDH parking information now available on our website

Following patient and visitor feedback, we have made a number of changes to make our parking arrangements at North Devon District Hospital clearer. We have updated our website information, and clearer signage is now in place at NDDH with information on what to do.

### Did you know?

- Parking is free for Blue Badge holders across all our sites. To get this at NDDH, you need to scan your badge or input the last seven digits of your badge number at the payment machine **just before** you leave. To get this at our Wonford and Heavitree sites take your Blue Badge to a reception desk on entering the hospital, and your vehicle registration will be registered for free parking. You will not need to do anything further on leaving the car park.
  - If you are a Blue Badge holder and frequently need to park at NDDH, you can provide your details to the team at the Information Desk on Level 2, main entrance. They will log your details so that you don't need to routinely input your Blue Badge details into the payment machine.
  - Free parking is also available for registered carers, and for parents of children staying in hospital overnight – [see our website](#) for more information.
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- Help with parking costs is available for those in receipt of benefits or on low income – application forms are available at the general office.

To find out more about parking across all of our sites, please visit our [website](#).



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## Have you undergone treatment for shoulder pain? Share your experiences with NHS England

Have you seen a specialist or undergone treatment for shoulder pain? If so, would you be willing to share your experiences of the care you received?

The South West Clinical Improvement team at NHS England are gathering feedback from patients to understand the variation in shoulder pain pathways and the treatment and outcomes that patients experience.

The team would like to speak to patients who have been involved in the shoulder pain pathway. This could be seeing your GP or a physiotherapist about your shoulder pain, being referred to a specialist or even undergoing treatment or surgery.

If you would like to find out more and share your experience with NHS England, please contact, Mohammed Ramzan, Project Manager [mohammed.ramzan9@nhs.net](mailto:mohammed.ramzan9@nhs.net)

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

