

# news at **Medway**

**NHS**  
Medway  
NHS Foundation Trust

Autumn / Winter 2025

“Better  
than any  
**MEDICINE**”

Pawsome pooches  
bring joy to patients



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Providing care  
closer to home

Charity launches  
30th anniversary  
appeal

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with research

# Future-proofing our services

I am delighted to bring you our latest edition of news at Medway – my first since joining the Trust back in April.

As well as being Interim Chief Executive at Medway I am also the Chief Executive of Dartford and Gravesham NHS Foundation Trust. As a result, we have been exploring the benefits of closer collaboration between the two trusts which could benefit patients and help us to make better use of limited NHS resources in the long term.

We already work closely with Dartford in some medical and surgical specialties, and at Medway, in particular, I have been impressed by the care and compassion shown by colleagues in every department, as well as the support from our community.

In this edition of the magazine you can read about the progress being made across our services. Notably, the expansion of our Pets as Therapy Team, which now brings comfort to patients, visitors and staff alike at Sheppey Community Hospital as well as Medway Maritime Hospital. You can read more about this on pages four and five.

Elsewhere, we continue to provide care closer to home for patients across Medway and Swale thanks to our Community Diagnostic Centres in Rochester and Sheppey. These centres allow thousands of extra vital tests and scans, such as Computed Tomography (CT) and Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), to be carried out each month. Not only does this help ensure everyone has equal access to services, but it also means patients can receive tests and scans more quickly and receive a diagnosis and start any treatment they may need sooner. You can read more about this important facility on page seven.

You can also read about improvements made by our maternity and neonatal teams, the achievements of our award-winning staff, and other great examples of innovative work taking place across the hospital, and our other sites, every day.

This winter, I would also like to thank everyone for helping to ensure our services are used responsibly, from our patients and their families to our health and social care partners and our teams here at Medway, and Swale. Your continued support is much appreciated.

Regards, Jonathan Wade

## The News at Medway Team

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## Life-saving screening launched

We're one of 50 NHS trusts in England now providing a potentially life-saving treatment to patients who may be unaware they are living with HIV, hepatitis B, or hepatitis C.

The initiative aims to screen patients aged 16 and over, who attend our Emergency Department (ED), for blood-borne viruses (BBVs) as part of their routine blood tests, unless they choose to opt-out.

Visit our website for more details: [www.medway.nhs.uk](http://www.medway.nhs.uk)

## Supporting cancer patients in the community

Two new community support groups have been set up for cancer patients.

The **Metastatic Cancer Support Group** for breast and bowel patients meets every third Thursday of the month from 2.45pm to 4.15pm at Twydall Community Centre in Beechings Way. It offers a safe, welcoming space for patients, who are living well with advanced bowel and breast cancer, to share their experiences with one another and find out about the support available.

The **Haematology Cancer Support Group** is for people living with blood cancers such as leukaemia, myeloma and lymphoma. It meets at Star Meadow Sports Complex in Darland Avenue, Gillingham, between 2pm and 4pm and is next due to meet on Monday 8 December.

## Catering provision extended for visitors and patients



Our **Below Deck Dining restaurant (Level 1, Purple Zone)** is now open to patients and visitors from 7am to 11am and 12pm to 3pm Monday to Friday. It offers a wide range of home cooked meals, drinks, sandwiches and snacks.

Below Deck Galley is open 7am to 7pm and offers a range of salads, sandwiches, wraps, paninis, drinks and snacks.

Both areas are reserved for staff and emergency services use only between 12pm and 2pm on weekdays.



## Mural transforms the walls of children's clinic

Thanks to artist **Mason Cheema** donating 100 hours of his spare time, a nature-inspired mural now greets patients and staff when they walk into **Magpie Outpatients' Clinic**.

The materials were generously provided by our Women, Children and Young People's Division after Mason agreed to create the mural following a conversation with Matron Suzy Dolby earlier this year.



# “Better than any tablet or medicine”

– how pawsome pooches bring joy to patients

By Amanda Crawford

Our Pets as Therapy Team has grown to 11 dogs, all of which help to bring joy and comfort to our patients, visitors and staff.

Most of the pooches visit Medway Maritime Hospital daily with four regularly visiting our Frailty Unit at Sheppey Community Hospital.

Zoe Goodman, Voluntary Services Manager, said: “The dogs make a massive difference to our patients, visitors and staff.

“We work closely with many teams including our Namaste Care Practitioner, Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and End-of-Life Care Team in supporting them with their work.

“Many times, patients have told us that seeing the dogs is ‘better than any tablet or medicine.’ They really do get so much joy from seeing them.”

Volunteer Graham Hill and his Welsh Terrier Jarvis (pictured below) have been visiting our patients and staff for the last 18 months.

He said: “I love volunteering with Jarvis because of the reaction we get from both patients and staff. It shares a little bit of the love around. So rather than me sitting at home with a dog all day having the benefit, we come in and it's just amazing to see the difference he makes.”

Thanks to a generous donation to The Medway Hospital Charity, by the family of Lisa Scott, who sadly died in 2024, the Pets as Therapy Team have been kitted out with a special uniform including named bandanas and leads.

Lisa, who had a learning disability, often found the hospital environment overwhelming. But thanks to our Pets as Therapy Team, in particular Lily, Fred and Jarvis, who supported her to theatre and appointments on many occasions, she overcame the challenges she faced with a smile.

A sunny summer's day saw eight of the dogs meet up, with their owners, for a photo shoot to show off their new attire. Among them was our newest and littlest recruit, one-year old Violet who pops in with owner Kirsty, who works in our Emergency Department, when shifts allow.

- If you would like a visit from our Pets as Therapy Team, please speak to the nursing staff on the ward or visit the Charity and Volunteers' Hub in the main entrance.

## Meet some of the Medway pack:



**Name:** Fred  
**Age:** 7 years  
**Favourite things:** Living on a farm and being the boss.  
Fred is our Head Therapy Dog.



**Name:** Violet  
**Age:** 1 year  
**Favourite things:** Cuddles on the sofa and running round with her house rabbit friend.



**Name:** Barney  
**Age:** 9 years  
**Favourite things:** Cuddly toys, visiting patients and helping mum Hazel around the house.



**Name:** Daisy  
**Age:** 18 months  
**Favourite things:** Walks on the beach, day trips in the car and making patients smile.



**Name:** Yazzy aka 'Dr Cuddles'  
**Age:** 9 years  
**Favourite things:** Lots of cuddles and helping his little brothers and sisters settle in at home.



**Name:** Lily  
**Age:** 7 years  
**Favourite things:** Squeaky toys, meeting people and visiting patients on the wards.



**Name:** Jarvis  
**Age:** 4.5 years  
**Favourite things:** Cuddles, tickles, treats and squeaky balls!



**Name:** George  
**Age:** 2.5 years  
**Favourite things:** Swimming, his pineapple toy and annoying his cousin Fred.



Interested in volunteering at our hospital?

Visit our website to find out how you can get involved:

[www.medway.nhs.uk/volunteer](http://www.medway.nhs.uk/volunteer)

**WATCH:** Celebrating our Pets as Therapy Team during Volunteers' Week 2025.



# Mum's plea for people to talk about organ donation after honouring son's wish

By Hayley Pierre

A mum whose son saved the lives of four people after he died, is urging others to have open conversations with their family about organ donation.

Following his death, James Decker's kidneys were donated to two patients and his liver was split between an adult and a baby. Many other people's lives were also transformed due to his eyes, skin, and bones being donated too.

James was just 27 years old when, in June 2024, he suffered a cardiac



• **The gift of life:** Angela and Tim Decker honoured their son James' wish to be a donor.

arrest and collapsed in the garden of the family home in Strood. Sadly, five days after he was placed on life support at Medway Maritime Hospital, James was pronounced dead.

His parents, Angela and Tim, made the decision to honour their youngest son's wish to be a donor, something he had expressed during a family discussion the year before, following a compassionate conversation with our Specialist Nurse for Organ Donation, Katy Collins.

Angela said: "We are absolutely heartbroken to lose James but knowing that while we were saying goodbye to him, others were receiving life-changing phone calls helped bring us comfort. We even received a letter from one of the recipients, which meant the world to us.

"Throughout the organ donation process we were deeply grateful for the care and compassion shown by Katy and the rest of the hospital staff."

Due to a change in the law around organ donation back in 2020, it is now assumed that when someone dies in the circumstances where they could be a donor, that they agree to donate if they haven't officially opted out. However, no-one is automatically added to the Organ Donor Register. People still need to confirm their decision and their family will be consulted before donation goes ahead.

"Please think about it. Talk to your loved ones. Register your wishes. You never know whose life you might save," Angela added.

Thanks to the generosity of nine donors and their families, 27 patients were able to receive life-saving transplants facilitated by Medway Maritime Hospital between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025. In the same period, 20 corneas were donated by patients to NHS Blood and Transplant's (NHSBT's) eye banks.



## Vital centres helping more people get the care they need closer to home

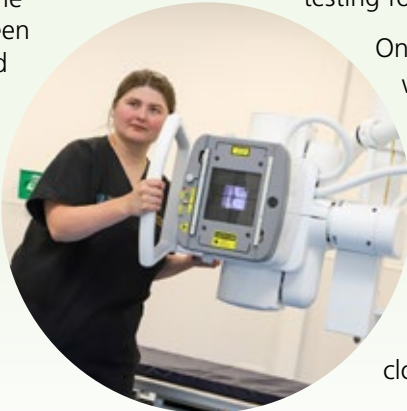
The continued growth of our Community Diagnostic Centres (CDCs) sites in Sheppey and Rochester are helping to improve patient access to a range of vital tests and scans.

At Sheppey Community Hospital, patients are benefitting from both a Computed Tomography (CT) and Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scanner. The MRI unit, which was launched in spring 2025, now works alongside the CT suite that opened in December 2024. Together they are delivering hundreds of extra scans every week, cutting waiting times and reducing the need for patients to travel to Medway Maritime Hospital.

Our skilled and caring teams, made up of radiographers, imaging support workers and other colleagues, are at the heart of running these important new centres.

Patricia Burton, one of the first local residents in Sheppey to use the new MRI scanner, said: "The staff couldn't have been kinder. They explained everything clearly and made me feel completely at ease. It's wonderful to have this service so close to home."

Lorraine Becconsall, Head of Imaging, said: "Our staff have



shown real commitment and pride in developing these services. They've helped design the patient pathways, supported each other through training, and built a new service from the ground up that is genuinely making a difference for local people in Medway and Swale.

"Every scan represents a person whose care can move forward more quickly – and that's what encourages us each and every day."

Progress is also continuing at the Rochester Healthy Living Centre where a new CT scanner began operating in autumn 2025. The next stage will see an MRI scanner installed in winter 2025, creating another full suite of diagnostic testing for patients across Medway.

Once finalised, both sites will offer a wide range of tests and scans, including CT, MRI, ultrasound, and cardiology and respiratory investigations — bringing faster, more convenient diagnostic care closer to people's homes.

**Two Community Diagnostic Centres** now open — on the Isle of Sheppey and in Rochester.



More than **5,000 scans** carried out at Sheppey since the service began.

**Seven days a week** extended opening hours to support patients who need flexible appointments.



**15 radiographers, imaging support workers and other colleagues** form the core imaging team.

**One new MRI scanner** for Rochester due to go live this winter.



**Thousands of patients** set to benefit each year from faster access to vital tests and scans.

Register your decision on the NHS Blood and Transplant website: [www.nhsbt.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsbt.nhs.uk)



# Neonatal unit honoured with prestigious award

The Oliver Fisher Neonatal Unit's work and ongoing commitment to increase breastfeeding rates, and improve care for families and babies on the unit, has been recognised.

Following a thorough assessment process, which included interviews with parents, families, colleagues, and managers, a tour of the unit and a review of its resources, the unit was awarded Level 3 accreditation under the UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative (BFI).

- In order to achieve the milestone, the unit had to evidence how it:
- supports women to recognise the importance of breastfeeding and to continue breastfeeding for as long as they wish
  - helps women to make informed decisions regarding the introduction of food or fluids other than breastmilk
  - improves the care mothers and babies receive on the unit
  - helps families build close and loving relationships with their baby.

The report said:  
"The Oliver Fisher Neonatal Unit has met all of the criteria relating to Stage 3 accreditation and the staff are commended for the efforts made. It was clear to the assessment team that parents with a baby on the neonatal unit receive a very high standard of care."



## Celebrating our Medway stars!

Earlier this year, our staff and volunteers were presented with awards at our annual Medway Star Awards.

The awards recognise and reward those who have gone the extra mile or shown great passion and commitment to making our services the best they can be for our patients.

Eleven awards were presented, including the Hospital Hero Award, sponsored by

the Kent Messenger, which went to Liz McClaren, a Children's Oncology Clinical Nurse Specialist, who was nominated for her work for looking after children with cancer.

Interim Chief Executive Jonathan Wade said: "Our annual Medway Star Awards recognise the great work which goes on every day, across all areas of the hospital, both on the frontline and behind the scenes.

"Well done and congratulations to all of our nominees and winners."



• Read more on our website [www.medway.nhs.uk/news](http://www.medway.nhs.uk/news)



# Recognition for staff working behind the scenes

Two members of staff who work behind the scenes at Medway Maritime Hospital have had their work recognised.

Library and Knowledge Services Manager Richard Pemberton (pictured below) was honoured with the Student Representative Award at the Canterbury Christ Church University Student Voice Awards.



Alongside his role at Medway, and studying for his senior leader Level 7 apprenticeship, Richard is the representative for the other people who are also on the university course, supporting them with any induction issues, getting their bearings and sharing useful information.

Richard is also a workplace mentor for four apprentices at the hospital, who are all on different courses.

Work Based Learning Manager Lucy Mason (pictured above) was honoured with the Special Stakeholder Award, the first of its kind, at MidKent College's stakeholders' event. Lucy was recognised for her dedication to supporting students during their work experience placements and employment at the hospital and supporting T-Level industry placement career events. In addition, her work has transformed how the hospital, and others in Kent, work with colleges, and helped to change views and stereotypes while also supporting connections between staff and students.



## Congratulations to our doctors and midwives

Two of our doctors and three of our midwives have received awards for their work.

Dr Gavin Guy was crowned Obstetrician of the Year, Dr Helen Gbinigie was awarded Neonatologist of the Year, and Meye Bevor-Sami – Recruitment and Retention Preceptor Lead, Fiona Drayton – Student Practice Development Midwife (PDM), and Samantha Burton – Clinical Facilitator Maternity Support Worker Lead, won the Education and Development category at this year's Kent and

Medway Local Maternity and Neonatal System (KMLMNS) Awards. They were among 110 healthcare professionals working across Kent and Medway to be nominated by their peers and line managers for 21 categories.

Dr Guy was nominated for focusing on personalised care and developing tailored care plans for high-risk pregnancies as well as his ability to explain complex medical information in an understandable way.

Dr Gbinigie was nominated for her commitment to making a positive difference in the lives of women

and infants by ensuring everyone, regardless of background, has access to the quality healthcare they need. Her work to create a toolkit to help clinicians diagnose jaundice in babies with darker skin tones was recognised in particular – more about this can be read on page 10.

Meye, Fiona and Samantha were nominated for their work to continually improve the maternity unit by educating and developing staff and ensuring they feel supported and part of the team.



## Team helps to expand mental health service across Kent

Our specialist midwives are helping more women and birthing people across Kent get the help and support they need for mental health issues during and after pregnancy.

Team Lotus, which provides perinatal mental health support, created and launched the Helping You Grow Stronger (HUGS) group in 2022 following an increase in referrals for pregnant women suffering with anxiety, low mood and social isolation.

Due to its success, Midwife Tamsin Knott, a former member of the team, helped set the service up at Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust the following year. To ensure an equitable service is offered across the county, Team Lotus and Tamsin were asked to support midwives Sally Densham and Maisie Attree at East Kent Hospitals

University NHS Foundation Trust to launch HUGS.

HUGS, which consists of four 90-minute self-help sessions on MS Teams, aims to support women and birthing people who are experiencing difficulties with their emotional wellbeing, by educating and helping them to develop the tools to identify and manage their needs during challenging life experiences. This can include birth art, journaling, breathing techniques, grounding, five senses, mindfulness, meditation, guided imagery, poetry, and peer support as women supporting women is a very powerful tool.

To date more than 300 people living in Medway and Swale, 117 people in west Kent and 17 people in east Kent have accessed HUGS.

### The benefits of HUGS are:

- shorter waiting times for support
- improved signposting to other services
- higher quality advice and practical mental health tools
- enhanced peer support that contributes to a strong sense of community and connection among participants.

## Maternity vaccinations walk-in clinic

Vaccinations help to protect you and your baby from infectious diseases during pregnancy.

Our maternity vaccinations walk-in clinic offers the following vaccinations free of charge:

- **FLU** (available until March 2026)
- **RSV**
- **Whooping cough**

The walk-in clinic, which is located in the Antenatal department (Level 2, Green Zone), is open Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm and Saturdays from 9am to 4pm. No booking required.

Speak to your midwife to find out more.

## Did you know...

The midwives in our Diabetic Team hold a weekly online session for women and pregnant people to meet with others who are living with gestational diabetes?

Details on how to join on the day can be found on our website

[www.medway.nhs.uk](http://www.medway.nhs.uk)



## Doctors create guides to recognise jaundice in babies with darker skin tones

A guide to help parents and clinicians recognise jaundice in babies with darker skin tones has been created by two of our doctors.

Jaundice is a common newborn condition which affects six in 10 term infants and eight in 10 babies born prematurely before the 37th week of pregnancy. It presents as yellowing of the skin in babies with paler skin tones and is easily treatable if detected early. However, jaundice can appear differently in babies with darker skin tones, making it harder to detect and increasing the risk of delayed diagnosis and treatment.

Following the success of creating a toolkit to help healthcare professionals identify jaundice in Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) newborns, Consultant Neonatologist Dr Helen Gbinigie and Dr Oghenetega Edokpolor (pictured), who work on the Oliver Fisher Neonatal Unit, coproduced a guide to help families recognise the signs. The guide also includes information on where and how to seek help.

- Parents and families can download a copy of the guide from the **NHS Race and Health Observatory website** at [nhsrhc.org](http://nhsrhc.org)



By the sea: Hospital Chaplain Reverend Clare Van Den Berg, Ward Manager Hollie Bennett and Frailty Matron Haley Parmar in the new room.

## Special new space for end-of-life patients

A new room for patients requiring end-of-life care has been created by staff at our Sheppey Frailty Unit.

The team have turned a vacant side room into a dedicated area to provide a calm setting where friends and family members can spend time with their loved one away from a ward setting.

To reflect the unit's seaside surroundings, and add a sense of tranquillity, the room has been decorated with blue walls, seaside artwork, and soft lighting, while a handmade blanket, plants, and a boat-shaped shelf have also been installed.

Ward Manager Hollie Bennett, who led the project with her team, said: "We wanted families to have somewhere that feels personal and comforting at such an important time. We are located on the Isle of Sheppey, just around the corner from the nearest beach, so the sea felt like the right inspiration – something peaceful

and familiar for our patients. All of our staff and volunteers contributed so many ideas to this project, and we are very proud of the room."

Volunteers from NHS Property Services helped decorate the room, while the ward team supplied added touches including a Bluetooth speaker, television on wheels, a memorial book, and specially themed artwork.

It was officially opened by Hospital Chaplain Reverend Clare Van Den Berg who led a short service in memory of former Sheppey nurse Yvonne Ofori Mmerah, a much-loved colleague who sadly passed away in March 2025.

Hollie added: "It means a lot that we've been able to dedicate the room to Yvonne. She will always be part of our team, and this space is her legacy to the unit."

## Award recognises team's health inclusivity work

Staff from our Sheppey Frailty Unit have been recognised for their outstanding contribution to improving health inclusivity and equal access to services.

The team was presented with a certificate honouring their success at Healthwatch Kent Awards, with Ward Manager Hollie Bennett receiving the prize from Healthwatch Volunteer Lyn Gallimore (both pictured below).

The award celebrates the unit's commitment to making care accessible, compassionate and inclusive for every patient since it opened in January 2023 – values that are clearly reflected in their recent work to create the new end-of-life room.



# Help our charity get the wheels in motion

By Donna Law

To celebrate its 30th anniversary, The Medway Hospital Charity is rolling out its Thirty at 30 campaign to raise £30,000 to buy 30 new wheelchairs for Medway Maritime Hospital - and we need your help to keep it moving!

Wheelchairs, which cost £1,000 each, make a huge difference in helping patients get to appointments comfortably and on time.

Following feedback from the hospital's Patient Experience Team that a shortage of wheelchairs was causing delays and stress for patients and their loved ones, the charity funded 30 wheelchairs earlier this year. But with rising demand and a bustling hospital environment more wheelchairs are needed at more entrances across the site so patients can access them easily.

Donna Law, Head of The Medway Hospital Charity, said: "Being able to easily find and use a wheelchair can make a huge difference - not just for patients, but for their loved ones and our staff. Every donation, no matter the size, helps us move closer to our goal and improves the experience for everyone who walks through our doors."



“  
EVERY DONATION,  
NO MATTER THE  
SIZE, HELPS US  
MOVE CLOSER TO  
OUR GOAL. ”



Whether you're a business, school, community group or generous individual, donating means you can suggest a name for one of the new wheelchairs.\* Once the £1,000 target is reached for each chair, a panel will shortlist the names for a Facebook poll, with followers of the charity's page voting for their favourite.

If your name is chosen it will be proudly displayed on the chair and featured across the hospital charity's social media. Plus, you'll be invited to pose for a photo with your named chair - a lasting legacy of your support.

Donna added: "Whether you give £5 or £500, your gift to this campaign will have a real and long-lasting effect on patient experience."

\*Any name considered inappropriate will not be entered into the competition.

## Thank you!

Over 30 years, our incredible community has donated more than **£6million to support patients, staff and volunteers** at Medway Maritime Hospital.

Thanks to your generosity, The Medway Hospital Charity has purchased state-of-the-art medical equipment and funded many 'extras' that fall outside of the NHS budget.

Donna said: "I'd like to thank everyone who has supported our charity over the last 30 years, for playing a pivotal role in enhancing our hospital environment."

## HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT OUR CAMPAIGN:

To donate, please scan the QR code or visit:

[www.justgiving.com/campaign/30wheelchaircampaign](http://www.justgiving.com/campaign/30wheelchaircampaign)

Local business, school or community group?

Please get in touch for more information:

01634 825398 medwayft.charity@nhs.net

[www.medwayhospitalcharity.org.uk](http://www.medwayhospitalcharity.org.uk)



Registered Charity Number: 1051748

# Preparing for winter: Help us care for you

This winter we're ready to help patients across Medway and Swale requiring care, but there are some important things you can do to take care of yourself and stay well too.



If you get flu and COVID-19 at the same time, research shows you're more likely to be seriously ill. For those eligible, getting vaccinated against flu and COVID-19 will provide protection for you and those around you.

During winter and periods of cold weather it's also important that you look after yourself if you start to feel unwell, particularly if you're 65 or over, or in one of the other at-risk groups.

## VACCINATIONS

You can book your winter vaccines online by downloading the NHS App, or by calling 119 for free if you can't get online.

## GET ADVICE IF YOU FEEL UNWELL

The sooner you get advice, the sooner you're likely to get better.



### PHARMACY

Pharmacists can give treatment advice for a range of minor illnesses and can tell you if you need to see a doctor.



### GP

You may be able to speak to a GP online or over the phone, or go in for an appointment if they think you need to.



### NHS 111

Go to 111 online or call 111 if you have an urgent medical problem and you are not sure what to do.

**In an emergency, always go to your nearest Emergency Department (ED) immediately or call 999.**

Thank you for choosing well and helping us care for you this winter.

## New look for clinical staff

Our clinical staff are sporting a new look as part of a national roll-out of standardised uniforms.

The uniforms will make it easier for staff and patients to identify them thanks to different specialisms wearing different colours.



Posters are on display in public areas to help you understand who's who. Keep a look out for them!



## Improving the patient experience

We are very thankful for the generosity and support of the Medway League of Friends in helping us to put patients first.

From April 2024 to March 2025, the charity funded items totalling £268,772. These items included recliner chairs, patient monitors, bladder scanners, electrocardiogram machines (ECG) and electrolarynx machines.

Since April, further bids have been agreed for equipment including cardiac monitors, a TULA laser system for urology (pictured above), paediatric ventilators and replacement defibrillators totalling £143,510.

The charity, which has supported Medway Maritime Hospital since 1961, runs the First-Rate Café and Shop in the hospital's main entrance and a small shop at Montgomery Court in Wainscott. It is also planning to open a shop in Sheppey Community Hospital. Profits from the shops, alongside any donations received, go towards supporting patients by helping to purchase equipment which have been bid for by hospital departments.

If you're interested in volunteering for the Medway League of Friends, you can find more details at [www.medwayleagueoffriends.org.uk](http://www.medwayleagueoffriends.org.uk) or email Scott Belcher, Operations Manager, at [scott.belcher@nhs.net](mailto:scott.belcher@nhs.net)



**Medway League of Friends**

## Hospital Radio Medway

Patients, staff and visitors can enjoy listening to our very own hospital radio 24/7, for music, news and information.

Led by Chair Eunice Norman MBE, Hospital Radio Medway (HRM) was set up in 1970 and is still going strong.

More details can be found on the HRM website at [www.hospitalradiomedway.co.uk](http://www.hospitalradiomedway.co.uk)

## Recognising our volunteers' long service

As part of Volunteers' Week in June, the work of our volunteers was recognised with a long service awards and cream tea event.

More than 60 volunteers attended the annual event which gives them a chance to get together and celebrate the support they provide to our staff and patients.

Recognised for her 10-years' service, Anne Whitehead said: "Keen to help out, Tuesday mornings I help the Cardiac Coordinators Team in their clinics making sure the paperwork is ready for each patient."



Wendy Aldrich, who received an award for 15-years' service, said: "I enjoy meeting people, so I come in one afternoon a week to be on the desk of the Charity and Volunteers' Hub and help people with their queries."



Read more on our website [www.medway.nhs.uk](http://www.medway.nhs.uk)

• Anne and Wendy pictured with former Interim Chief Nursing Officer Sarah Vaux.

**There are four easy ways to listen:**

- 1 Tune into 97 FM.
- 2 Visit [www.hospitalradiomedway.co.uk](http://www.hospitalradiomedway.co.uk) and choose 'Listen' to HRM-FM in the navigation bar and select an app to use.
- 3 Ask your smart speaker to 'play Hospital Radio Medway'.
- 4 Connect to Medway NHS wifi (available in the hospital), go to [www.medway.nhs.uk](http://www.medway.nhs.uk) and find the link to listen.

# Two new rooms created to deliver alternative holistic treatment

Dementia and end-of-life patients can now receive an alternative holistic treatment away from a ward setting thanks to two dedicated spaces that have been created at Medway Maritime Hospital.



• A quiet space: Donna Law, Head of The Medway Hospital Charity, with Emily Brown, Namaste Care Practitioner.

Our Namaste Care Rooms, based on Tennyson Ward and Byron Ward, offer a quiet space for Namaste Care Practitioner Emily Brown to deliver Namaste care to patients following a referral from nursing staff.

Namaste care, which means 'honouring the spirit within,' aims to help the person feel calm and safe by surrounding them with familiar things and stimulating their senses with physical, sensory and emotional activities and interactions, all of which are carried out with a loving approach. This can include playing music the patient enjoys for sound, putting on their favourite perfume for smell, giving them a drink they like for taste, or a hand massage or hot towel shave for touch.

To help Emily deliver this care, the rooms feature a sofa, framed artwork, a water fountain, humidifier, and star projector, as well as blankets and a

cupboard for patient's items to be stored while they receive treatment. There is also a dining table and chairs in the room on Tennyson Ward which patients can sit at to enjoy lunch or take part in activities. The Medway Hospital Charity funded the furnishings while a record player with a built-in radio was donated by a member of staff who works on Tennyson Ward.

Emily, who is the UK's first Namaste Care Practitioner in a hospital setting, said: "I'm extremely grateful to The Medway Hospital Charity for supporting my vision.

"As well as allowing me to deliver Namaste care to patients, the rooms can be used by clinical staff to talk to relatives about their loved one's condition or to help calm patients if they become upset or overwhelmed while they are in a ward setting. Families of our patients are also

welcome to enjoy the rooms with their loved ones when they visit them."

Steph Gorman, Acting Chief Nursing Officer, said: "Our clinical staff ensure those who are living with dementia or receiving end-of-life care, get the very best care, but Emily's work helps us go one step further when providing quality of life until the end-of-life for those who are sadly dying."



# New sensory resource box launched in memory of doctor

By Sophie Cawsey

A new sensory resource box has been introduced into our Emergency Department (ED) to support patients with learning disabilities and autism who may need emergency care.

The Dr Conway Sensory Resource Box was named in memory of Dr Brendan Conway, Emergency Medicine Consultant and learning disability champion. It includes items such as fidget toys, plushies, and noise cancelling headphones to help reduce anxiety and improve comfort during a hospital visit. All of the items in the box have been kindly funded by The Medway Hospital Charity, with plans to add tablets in the future with further support.

As a parent of a child on the autism spectrum, Dr Conway deeply cared about patient safety and understood

the challenges faced by patients with autism and learning disabilities. He worked tirelessly to ensure patients received the care and adjustments they needed and advocated for patients who could not always communicate their needs or feelings.

More than 28,000 people living in Kent have a learning disability, many of which may attend our ED. Patients with learning disabilities are more likely to have unmet health needs, which can sometimes lead to delayed discharges, readmissions, or, in the most serious cases, poorer health outcomes. Families and carers have

also shared with staff how stressful it can be to come into a busy, noisy ED.

The resource box is managed by nurses and matrons on shift and can be requested by patients, families, or carers whenever they feel it might help during their visit to our ED.

Leanne Whymark, Lead Nurse Manager, came up with the idea of the sensory box after speaking to a family member who had a difficult experience at our ED.

She said: "I felt something was missing. With support from my colleague Learning Disability Liaison Nurse Eloise Brett, and The Medway Hospital Charity, the idea for a sensory box became a reality. It felt right to name it after Dr Conway as he had such a strong passion for championing patients with learning disabilities and autism.

"As a parent of an autistic, nonverbal son with severe learning difficulties, I know the struggles these patients face in hospital. The Emergency Department is bright, busy, and overwhelming 24/7. With small adjustments, like the resources in this box, we can make a big difference to their experience."

• **Thumbs up:** Katie, Rick and Moya took part in a focus group to try out some of the resources. They are pictured with Eloise Brett, Learning Disability Liaison Nurse, and Leanne Whymark, Lead Nurse Manager.

With small adjustments, like the resources in this box, we can make a big difference to their experience.



# Interested in being part of research?

We have three exciting research programmes open to people living in Medway and Swale.

**We are the first hospital in Kent to offer patients the opportunity to take part in the Generation Study, a world-leading study to screen babies for 200 plus rare genetic conditions.**

The study looks at whether the DNA of newborns can help clinicians find and treat genetic conditions earlier. It will test for conditions such as sickle cell, cystic fibrosis and hypothyroidism that can be treated by the NHS in early childhood.

Once consent is received, the test involves a blood sample taken from the umbilical cord or a heel prick after the birth which is sent off for review with

parents receiving the results shortly after.

Alison Herron, Director of Midwifery and Deputy Chief Nurse at Medway NHS Foundation Trust said: "We know many parents worry about their baby's health and that new parenthood is a worrying time.

"We are excited to be able to offer the Generation Study to our patients at Medway Maritime Hospital. By taking part in this study you can help babies and new parents like you in the future to help us unlock early treatment and offer vital research in the hope of improving outcomes and healthier lives for children."

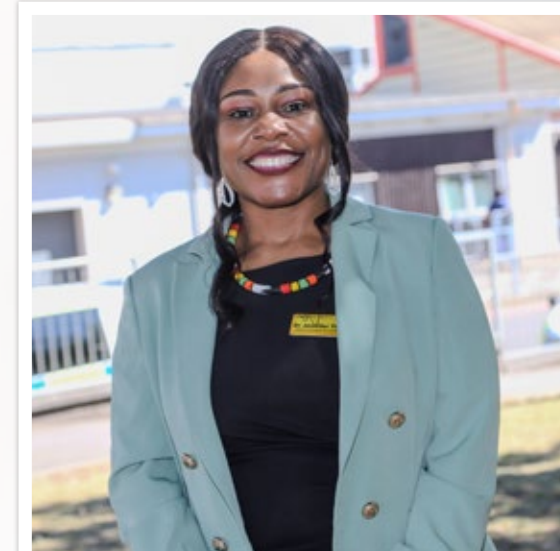


**Members of black communities are encouraged to take part in a new research programme aimed at tackling health inequalities and improving healthcare outcomes.**

Improving Black Health Outcomes (IBHO), led by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) BioResource, aims to improve understanding of how health conditions uniquely affect black communities across the UK.

To take part, participants need to consent to providing a blood or saliva (spit) sample and completing a health and lifestyle questionnaire.

Dr Jennifer Teke, Head of Research and Innovation (pictured left), said: "We're proud to be one of 46 NHS trusts involved in this important programme, which has already seen more than 4,000 people sign up across England."



**The DNA, Children + Young People's Health Resource (D-CYPHR) programme involves the child or young person donating a saliva (spit) sample and answering a health and lifestyle questionnaire.**

Contributions by young volunteers could provide clues for diabetes, mental health conditions, heart disease, rare diseases, immune conditions and many more.

Laura Adams, Senior Clinical Research Nurse, said: "With 1.7 million children and young people in England living with long-term health conditions, research is vital in helping to reduce this number in the future."



**Find out more about the study and how to sign up on our website, or speak to your midwife.**

[www.generationstudy.co.uk](http://www.generationstudy.co.uk)

Find out more about these studies and how you can get involved with research on our website [www.medway.nhs.uk](http://www.medway.nhs.uk)



• **Spreading the word:** Senior Library Assistant Benedict Horohan takes the book trolley out on the wards with volunteer Teresa Cambell.

## Library trolley service revived after 25 years

A library trolley service to help support the wellbeing and recovery of inpatients has made a comeback at Medway Maritime Hospital, 25 years after the original service was last seen on the wards.

Inspired by a photo of when the service used to run, the hospital's Library Team saw an opportunity to revive it and help support the wellbeing and recovery of inpatients.

Richard Pemberton, Knowledge and Library Service Strategic Manager, said: "Volunteers used to run the original patient library back in the 90s with all of the books loaned by the local library.

"Reading offers a lot of therapeutic benefits that complement medical

treatment, it helps to reduce anxiety, and stimulates cognitive function. Books can also help patients maintain a sense of normalcy by sparking conversations with others, combat isolation, and support emotional healing. There really are lots of wellbeing benefits to reading which is why we decided to bring the service back after discovering the photo in our archives."

Thanks to a dedicated team of volunteers from the Enhanced Care Team, and Library staff, the trolley operates in the Brown Zone every Thursday and Friday. Patients can borrow books for as long as they wish, with returns collected during

the next trolley visit. If a patient is discharged mid-read, they're welcome to take the book home.

The Medway Hospital Charity funded the trolley with books donated by the charity and the public, as well as volunteers and staff who work at the hospital.

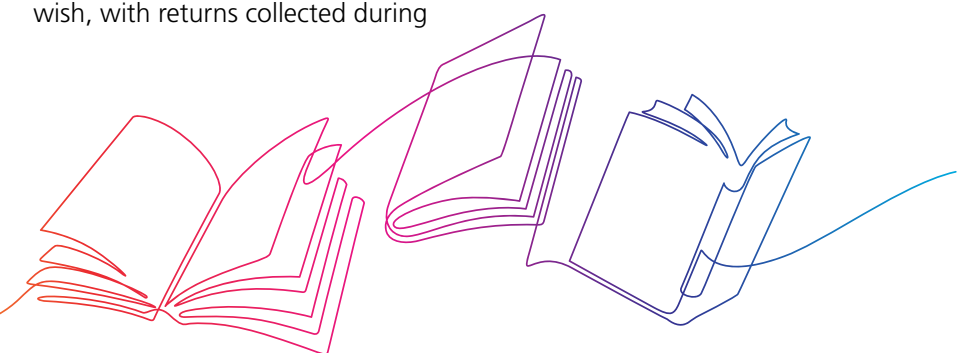
Richard added: "The feedback since launching the service has been overwhelmingly positive. Patients express their appreciation for the distraction, comfort, and connection the books provide.

"We're hoping to expand the service to Red and Blue Zones, with the long-term ambition of offering the service hospital-wide, five days a week."

• **If you would like to volunteer for the service, please email [trust.library@nhs.net](mailto:trust.library@nhs.net)**

**BOOK DONATIONS NEEDED!**

To help grow its book collection the Library is appealing for donations of popular adult fiction, biographies or children's picture books that have been published in the last five years and are in good condition. Donations can be dropped off at the Library in the Education Centre at Medway Maritime Hospital, Monday to Friday between 8.30am and 5pm.





## Cancer patient returns to golf course to help raise £1,000 for cancer services

A cancer patient returned to the golf course for the first time since his diagnosis two years ago to help raise money for our cancer services.

Gary Ager, who works as a Project Manager at Apex Lifts, played alongside colleagues, contractors, and friends during the charity fundraiser, which was held at Birchwood Park Golf and Country Club. As well as raising £1,000 for Galton Day Unit and Lawrence Ward, the event also marked the 25th anniversary of him organising the company's annual golf day.

The father of two's cancer journey began in 2000 with a diagnosis of laryngeal cancer, a type of cancer that affects the voice box, which resulted in surgery to remove his voice box. Then in July 2024 he was diagnosed with incurable metastatic colon and liver cancer and has been undergoing chemotherapy on Galton Day Unit every 14 days since.

Gary, 62, from the Isle of Grain, said: "I've not been able to play golf since my second diagnosis of cancer last July

so this year's golf day was really meaningful. Not only did it mean I was back on the course for the first time in a year, it also allowed me to give something back to the hospital and the staff as a way of thanking them for their support during my cancer journey.

"Every single person in cancer services works so hard for cancer patients – I've seen it first-hand. They are absolutely fantastic. They are so caring and can never do enough for you.

"At the start I thought I'd raise just a couple of hundred pounds but that amount quickly grew thanks to the generosity of those who took part on the day, plus a raffle with many of the prizes donated by Apex staff and contractors."

Louise Farrow, Macmillan Lead Cancer Nurse and Head of Nursing Cancer Services, said: "A huge thank you to Gary for organising the fundraiser for Galton Day Unit and Lawrence Ward. Thank you also to everyone who took part in the golf day and helped to raise a magnificent amount of money."

• **Pictured above:** Karen Hills, Metastatic Colorectal Cancer Nurse Specialist, Gary Ager and Donna Law, Head of The Medway Hospital Charity.



## Patient's eye mask donation

One of our generous head and neck cancer patients, and their friends, have donated a box of single use eye masks to our Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) department.

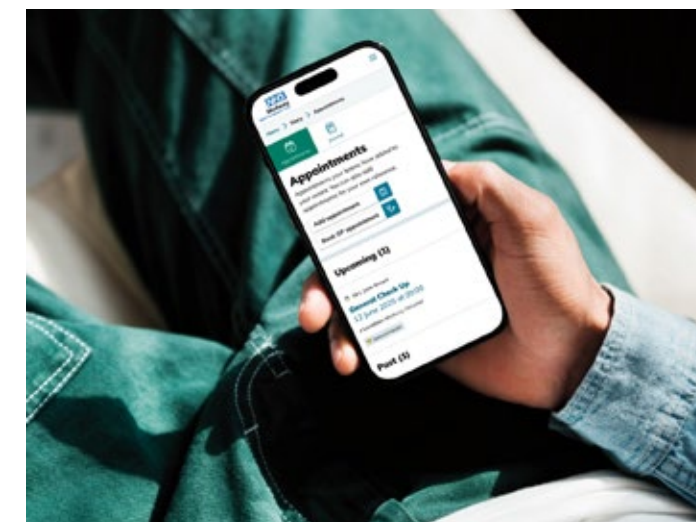
The patient, who found the use of an eye mask helped them when having an MRI, used the money raised at the coffee mornings they hold to buy the eye masks which will be made available to any patient who would like to use them during their scan.

## Patients Know Best turns two

Since launching in 2023, our online patient portal Patients Know Best is helping more than 225,000 people access information about their hospital treatment quickly and securely. And because they can access appointments, hospital discharge letters, and clinic letters through the portal we've seen a major reduction in our printing and mailing, which in turn is helping us meet our green targets.

In addition, patients can now access their radiology reports with more than 12,000 uploaded, and those booked for knee and hip replacement surgery no longer need to attend pre-surgery appointments, instead they are offered the opportunity to complete online questionnaires, resulting in fewer hospital visits and a better patient experience.

Medway resident Nuala Brady-Murphy said "I have been having hospital treatment since January and received notifications that I had documents available to read through the online patient portal.



"Although I had the NHS app on my phone, Patients Know Best was new to me. I did need some help to register initially, but now it is a very straightforward process to see my appointments as they come in as well as reading any letters about my hospital treatment."

Find out more on our website: [www.medway.nhs.uk](http://www.medway.nhs.uk)

## Your say Tell us about your experience!

Patient feedback is really important to us. Listening to the views of patients, and their friends and family allows us to understand what is working well, and what we need to do to improve our services to ensure we deliver the very best of care to patients at all times. It also allows us to improve the hospital environment for everyone.

**Find out more about our Friends and Family Test on our website: [www.medway.nhs.uk](http://www.medway.nhs.uk)**

Medway NHS Foundation Trust
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 Medway NHS Foundation Trust

I commend the teams of your C Testing and Rapid Assessment Emergency Departments on my recent visit. From the onset I was greeted by the receptionist in Eliot Ward and introduced to the whole team taking on my case.  
 Unfortunately, I rather exerted myself on the cycle machine and went onto faint. The assistance and expertise from that point went into overdrive. The attention, care and commitment were truly an exceptional experience which I will never forget.  
 My heartfelt thanks to the department managers and all those who participated in my care.

– from a letter sent to Jonathan Wade, Interim Chief Executive



Had my second hip replacement operation done in September by Mr Bawale and was home the same day. **Fantastic team**, very professional and I was as impressed as my first surgery a year ago.



Having had quite a complex and invasive surgery in October, I just want to say how amazing every single member of staff I encountered was!

The **whole team is a credit to the hospital** and despite the pain and discomfort I was in, they made my stay more comfortable.

I will be forever grateful. **Thank you all.**



# How your feedback helped improve our visiting hours

We know patients recover better if they are surrounded by family and friends. As a result most of our inpatient wards are now open to visitors from 8am to 8pm meaning relatives, friends and carers can visit their loved ones for longer and become more involved in their ongoing care if they want to. There are some exceptions though for patients receiving end-of-life care and those in our maternity and neonatal areas.

The change was in response to a national requirement to make visiting arrangements as accessible and flexible and possible. Before introducing the longer hours, we engaged with our staff, patients and local residents about how this could work for them and what challenges it may bring.

We did this through a survey and by speaking directly to patients and visitors on the wards. Thank you to everyone who gave us their views which helped to inform our decision.

To help make the longer hours work for everyone, and to address some of the concerns raised by our staff, we introduced a Visiting Charter which is clearly on display in our wards for all to see. It sets out expectations of behaviour and conduct for everyone on our wards to ensure we can continue to provide the best levels of care for patients while maintaining standards of cleanliness, privacy and dignity.

The charter was created with feedback from colleagues and the public and we are grateful in particular for the support provided by a focus group of members of the public who reviewed our draft charter and gave us useful feedback about how its language and design could be improved to make it easier for people to understand.

If you cannot see the charter on the ward you are visiting please speak to the ward manager.



# Annual Members' Meeting: Review of the year

More than 50 people joined us in the hospital's restaurant, Below Deck Dining, and virtually on MS Teams, to reflect on our achievements and challenges over the past year, and to hear about our plans for the year ahead.

The meeting was chaired by our Chair John Goulston and included updates from Interim Chief Executive Jonathan Wade, the annual Quality Report from Acting Chief Nursing Officer Steph Gorman, and a summary of the 2024/25 Annual Accounts by Interim Chief Financial Officer Simon Wombwell.

Trauma and Orthopaedic Consultant Rajesh Bawale also shared details of our latest advancements in same-day hip replacements which have improved patient care, and outlined the future of orthopaedic services.

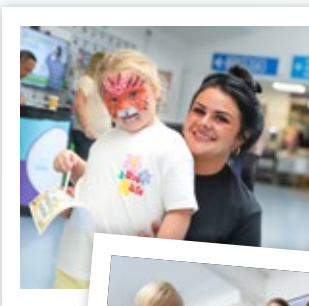
Sharon Clare, Mr Bawale's first same-day hip replacement patient, also spoke about her experience of having two successful hip replacements at Medway last year. She shared her appreciation for the teams involved in both of her surgeries and her recovery journey, describing it as 'life-changing'.

The meeting also gave attendees the chance to ask questions and share their views. We would like to thank everyone who took part in these conversations, which are vital to helping us make improvements for the benefit of our patients, staff, visitors and volunteers.

# Summer highlights

This summer, we came together to celebrate with our community while supporting important causes.

Staff, patients, volunteers, and local residents joined us for our fourth annual Summer Fun Day, organised by the Engagement Team. Despite the rain, visitors enjoyed live music from Hospital Radio Medway, performances by All Star Performers, face painting, activities from Gillingham Girlguiding, our Research and Innovation Team, and a special visit from Barney, one of our Pets as Therapy dogs. The event also supported three of our wonderful hospital charities; The Medway Hospital Charity, The Medway League of Friends, and The Oliver Fisher Special Care Baby Trust, all of which play a vital role in supporting patients, staff, volunteers, and babies on our neonatal unit.



Our staff also proudly joined the LGBTQIA+ Medway Pride Parade in Rochester to show support for the community. Seven colleagues, including members of the Executive Team and our LGBTQIA+ Staff Network, took part. The streets were filled with music, dancing, and celebration, with the parade ending in Castle Gardens, where the festivities continued. By taking part, we highlighted our commitment to being an inclusive and supportive employer and a safe, respectful healthcare provider to the LGBTQIA+ community.

Thank you to everyone who supported these community events!



Find out about upcoming events on the Engagement page of our website [www.medway.nhs.uk](http://www.medway.nhs.uk)

# Coffee and chat

This year our Governors successfully re-launched their Coffee and Chat engagement session.

The event proved to be popular with Governors and the patients and visitors who came to chat with them and grab a free hot drink. Some of our members even made a special trip to the hospital to share their thoughts and experiences, which our Governors are truly grateful for.



Our Staff Governors have also introduced designated sessions for our staff to chat with them over a drink in the hospital's restaurant, Below Deck Dining.

These conversations are important as they help our Governors to better represent staff, patients and the local community. Feedback gathered at these sessions helps them to identify any issues, themes and trends which they can then seek assurance on as a Council.

Thank you to everyone who made these sessions such a success.

● Sheppey resident Helen chats with Christine Palmer, Public Governor for Swale.



# Are you concerned a patient's clinical condition is getting worse?

Our **Call 4 Concern (C4C)** service is here to support you and ensure patients receive the clinical care that they need.

The service covers adults, children, young people, and babies on the Oliver Fisher Neonatal Unit.

## You can contact C4C if:

- You are an inpatient, or a relative or a carer of an inpatient, and you have concerns about your/their clinical condition.
- You have noticed a change or decline in your/their clinical condition and you feel that the ward team have not addressed your concerns.

Contact the **Acute Response Team** directly with your concern on:

 **07799 348 608**

You should only call after you have spoken with the nurse in charge or doctor responsible for the patient.



Visit [www.medway.nhs.uk](http://www.medway.nhs.uk) for more information.

