

# news at **Medway**

Summer 2026

## “Our **MIRACLE** baby”

- Parents praise neonatal staff

**INSIDE:** Treating more patients safely at home

Cutting edge technology in breast cancer detection

Charity's 30th anniversary appeal

# Strengthening our services and improving long-term sustainability for patients

We are committed to putting our patients first and as you look through this magazine, you'll see that we have lots to be proud of in terms of the work we are doing to improve the care we provide for patients.

Since joining Medway, we have made significant progress in reducing waiting times for cancer care, routine operations, tests and scans – something I am incredibly proud of. We've also expanded our diagnostic services in Rochester and

Sheppey so more people can get the care they need closer to home.

We have achieved all of this despite the growing demand for our services and the financial challenges we face, and we're committed to doing more going forwards.

To ensure we continue to improve we have set clear priorities and targets that we want to reach in key areas and our plans to establish a group model with Dartford and Gravesham NHS Trust will support



us in that journey. We believe this model is the best way forward to help us further strengthen services and improve long-term sustainability for patients and staff. You can read more about this on our [website - www.medway.nhs.uk](http://www.medway.nhs.uk)

*Siobhan Callanan*  
Interim Chief Executive

# Protecting our staff from violence and aggression

The vast majority of patients and families are appreciative of our staff's efforts to care for them and their loved ones, but too often colleagues experience abusive, intimidating and threatening behaviour from those they are trying to help.

This is not an accepted part of anyone's job, least of all someone who is giving care to those who need it most.

Our message is clear, we will not tolerate any violence, abusive or aggressive behaviour or intimidation towards our staff.

To ensure our staff can carry out their work without fearing for their safety while trying to help others, we will use all means possible to protect them, including legal options and yellow card warnings or red card sanctions.

Anyone who behaves in this way, or who damages hospital property, will be asked to leave by our security staff and, if appropriate, we will take legal action, which could result in prosecution.

Please remember to always be kind and understanding to our staff.

For more details about the actions we can take, scan the QR code.



## The News at Medway Team

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# Top marks for liver services

We are the first trust in Kent, and one of only 20 NHS trusts nationwide, to have achieved full accreditation through the Improving Quality in Liver Services (IQILS) programme – the highest level available.



It was awarded to our Hepatology Team following an assessment. Patient experience was a highlighted strength, with assessors noting how patients reported feeling well supported, listened to and actively involved in decisions about their care, how care is aligned with national best practice and that feedback is used to drive improvements.

The team has also reduced the number of patients being admitted to hospital by improving access to services and ensuring they get specialist care earlier through community clinics, supporting patients with alcohol related needs from day one, using a virtual ward so patients can continue their care in the comfort of their own home, moving some procedures to day case appointments to avoid unnecessary hospital stays and getting patients home sooner.

# Achieving 'Gold' standards

## ★ National recognition for patient safety

We've been awarded 'Gold' status for the third year in a row in recognition of our performance in patient safety data audits.

The accolade comes from the National Joint Registry (NJR) Quality Data Provider scheme, which collects information on all hip, knee, ankle, elbow and shoulder replacement operations. The NJR uses this data to monitor how well implants perform and assess the effectiveness of different types of surgery, helping to improve patient safety and raise clinical standards nationally.

To achieve gold status, hospitals must demonstrate 99 to 100 per cent compliance, meaning the number of joint replacement procedures submitted to the NJR must exactly match those recorded on the hospital's Patient Administration System (PAS).

Kerry Cooper, Quality Assurance and Compliance Officer, said: "Improving patient safety through all possible mechanisms and data reviews is of the utmost importance and all staff take this very seriously. We're delighted to once again be recognised as an NJR Quality Data Provider."

# Faster, clearer lung checks for newborns

Our neonatal clinicians have contributed to a major UK study improving how premature babies with breathing difficulties are assessed.

The serial lung ultrasound in predicting the need for surfactant and respiratory course in preterm infants (SLURP) study is investigating whether repeated lung ultrasound scans can help identify which babies born before 34 weeks will need breathing support.

Read more about this work on our website.



## ★ Work experience excellence

We're also proud to have been awarded Gold for the Work Experience Quality Standard.

The assessment praised our strong evidence, clear signposting, and the real-life examples. Reviewers also highlighted the supportive, well-planned experience we offer learners, including how we work with hosts and partner organisations.





# Day surgery explained in new patient videos

Following feedback from patients about their experience before having day surgery, we've created two short films - one for adults and one for children.

Each film takes you step-by-step through the whole process, from arriving at the hospital to going home afterwards.

Jane Westhead, Interim Divisional Director of Nursing, said: "We hope these short films will help prepare patients for what to expect on the day and improve their experience. Please talk to our staff if you have any questions about your surgery."



Scan the QR codes to watch the films, or visit our website where you'll also find additional information about your stay in hospital.

# A greener future

We're carrying out a number of sustainability projects as part of a multi-million-pound investment in creating a greener hospital site.

Solar panels installed on the roof above the Green Zone are already producing renewable energy, marking an important step towards reducing our reliance on traditional power sources. Around 70 per cent of the installation is complete, with the remaining installations expected to go live in April 2026. Once completed the 1,850 solar panels will generate nearly 900 kilowatts of clean solar power - enough to power around 900 washing machines at once.

Emma Cooper, Carbon Zero Delivery Manager, said: "The solar panels play an important role in supporting our long-term sustainability goals. By generating clean electricity on site, we can reduce energy costs and free up more resources for patient care. It also helps to lower our carbon footprint, contributing to a healthier environment for the community."

Our window replacement programme, which is nearing completion is a significant step towards us creating warmer, quieter and more energy-efficient buildings.



Initial feedback has been positive, with areas already feeling warmer and noticeably quieter. Once fully installed, the new windows in Brown Zone alone are expected to save around 158 tonnes of carbon each year, supporting our goal to be net carbon zero by 2045.

# Families join genetics study

More than 500 families have now joined the Generation Study we are running as part of a national programme led by Genomics England and NHS England.

The study uses a painless cord-blood sample taken immediately after birth to screen newborns for more than 200 treatable rare genetic conditions.

Phoebe Maloney (pictured with her daughter), who took part after giving birth last October, was sent her results within a few weeks, which confirmed that no conditions were detected.

She said: "As a parent participating in the study, I found the communication clear, comprehensive, and reassuring. The explanation of the

procedure was particularly comforting, as it ensured the test was completely safe and caused no pain or disruption to our baby. As a family we would recommend this study to other families."

If you are expecting a baby in the next few months and would like to know more about what is involved, speak to your midwife or contact the research midwives on **01634 976714**.



# Expanded diabetes study opens to local families

More than 430 children, aged three to 13, have already been recruited as part of our involvement in the ELSA (Early Surveillance for Autoimmune diabetes) study, which aims to identify children who may be at risk of developing Type 1 diabetes.

As the largest project of its kind in the UK, the study has now entered its second phase, widening eligibility to children aged two to 17.

Taking part is quick and simple. Children receive a small finger-prick blood test that can help assess their future risk of developing Type 1 diabetes.

To join the study, visit the ELSA website - [www.elsadiabetes.nhs.uk](http://www.elsadiabetes.nhs.uk) - and select 'Medway Maritime Hospital' to book an appointment.

For further information, contact Laura Adams, Senior Clinical Research Nurse, on **01634 976750** or email [lauraadams3@nhs.net](mailto:lauraadams3@nhs.net)



# Helping to create smokefree homes for newborns

Our Maternity Tobacco Team, made up of three members of staff, might be small but it's certainly mighty.

**Award winners:** The Maternity Tobacco Team were presented with their 'Team of the Month' award by Interim Chief Executive Siobhan Callanan.

Thanks to their efforts to support pregnant people quit smoking during their pregnancy, we've seen a significant increase in the number of successful quit smoking rates over the last few months and an overall decline in the number of pregnant people smoking at delivery.

Their work was recently recognised when they were crowned Team of the

Month after they were nominated for our Monthly Staff Awards.

The nomination read: "Sophie, Sue and Emma are able to engage with pregnant people from the start of pregnancy (usually around 10 to 12 weeks following booking appointment) and continue to support them up to three months postnatal to ensure they remain quit and for babies to go home to smokefree homes."



# Parents praise our neonatal staff for their 'miracle' baby

Parents Hannah and Craig James have paid tribute to our Oliver Fisher Neonatal Unit staff for saving the life of their daughter, Jemima, who was born at just 23 weeks and four days.

At 20 weeks pregnant, Hannah was told she was six centimetres dilated and at high risk of losing her baby.

Against the odds, Hannah did not go into labour overnight and was able to have a cervical stitch placed to try to prolong the pregnancy. But at 23 weeks, her waters broke and she was rushed to hospital.

Hannah said: "It quickly became clear that the only chance our baby had was to be born at a Level 3 neonatal intensive care unit. The Oliver Fisher Neonatal Unit had been full the day before, but miraculously a space became available."

Two days later, Jemima was born weighing just 1lb 4oz (575g). With no detectable heartbeat, a team of four resuscitated and intubated her before placing her in a plastic bag on heat pads to stabilise her temperature and transferring her to the neonatal unit.

"Seeing her in the incubator covered in tubes and wires was heartwrenching," Hannah said.

"We were terrified of losing her, but being able to visit 24/7 meant we could be with her as much as possible."

Over the next 109 days, Jemima faced chronic lung disease, renal failure, anaemia, infections and more. The most critical challenge

was bullous emphysema – a rare, life-threatening lung condition that caused a large airfilled cyst to compress her heart and lung, making transfer for surgery impossible. Incredibly, while fully sedated and on 100 per cent oxygen, the cyst resolved on its own.

Jemima was discharged home on oxygen on 19 February 2025, just a week after her due date, and was off respiratory support four months later. She celebrated her first birthday on 21 October 2025 – an emotional milestone her parents once feared they'd never reach

Craig added: "Jemima wouldn't be here without the consultants, doctors and nurses who cared for her and supported us. They helped us celebrate the good days and supported us through the worst of times. They always gave us hope, even when things seemed bleak."

Neonatal Consultant Dr Helen Gbinigie said: "Jemima's journey is one of extraordinary resilience. Her story reminds us of the fragility of life, the strength of families and clinical teams working together, and how miracles can unfold even in the darkest hours."



“  
Jemima wouldn't be here without the consultants, doctors and nurses who cared for her and supported us.”





## Specialist wheelchairs enhance patient support

Patients receiving neurotherapy are benefiting from four new Tilt-in-space wheelchairs, funded by the Medway League of Friends.

Tilt-in-space wheelchairs are designed for people with neurological conditions who cannot safely balance in a standard chair. By offering greater postural support, the chairs help patients breathe more easily, strengthen core muscles, sit comfortably at a table for meals, and spend time outdoors with relatives and staff.

Michael Zaremba, Team Lead and Neuro Physiotherapist, said: "We're really

pleased to have these wheelchairs, which will significantly enhance the quality of neurotherapy services we provide to our patients.

"Even a relatively small change like introducing this new equipment can make a meaningful difference to their comfort and care."

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

## Patient safety initiative extended

Call 4 Concern (C4C) has been extended to cover our neonatal unit and children's wards.

The patient safety initiative, which has covered our adult inpatient wards since January 2023, enables inpatients, and their friends and family, to call a dedicated number, 24/7, for immediate help and advice, directly from a member our Acute Response Team, if they still have ongoing concerns about their own, or their loved one's clinical condition despite raising their concerns with the nurse in charge or doctor.



A member of the team will then discuss any concerns with them or their family or friends, and assess the situation before liaising with the patient's medical team, and other healthcare professionals, to discuss further treatment options, if needed. A note of the C4C intervention will then be logged in the patient's notes summarising the concern raised and any actions taken.

Find out more about Call 4 Concern on our website - [www.medway.nhs.uk](http://www.medway.nhs.uk)

Contact Call 4 Concern on **07799 348608**

# Diagnosics tests now available **closer to home** for Swale patients

One of the first patients to benefit from a range of vital diagnostic tests, which are now available at the Community Diagnostic Centre based at Sheppey Hospital, helped mark the formal opening of the service.

Paul O'Connor, who was able to visit the centre for a Computed Tomography (CT) scan during his lunchbreak while working from home, cut a ribbon during a special ceremony which was attended by Kevin McKenna, MP for Sittingbourne and Sheppey, and representatives from Swale Borough Council and Healthwatch. Mike Billingham, a member of the Trust's Council of Governors, was also there on the day in his capacity as Medway Town Crier.

Since opening, people on the Isle of Sheppey, Sittingbourne, and the surrounding areas, are able to access diagnostic tests such as CT and Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scans, ultrasounds and other services, closer to home instead of having to travel to our Gillingham-based hospital.

By reducing the need for patients to travel, the centre is helping to ease pressure on the main hospital site and improve access to timely tests. It also forms part of the national programme to expand diagnostic capacity and improve early detection and treatment.

Lorraine Beconsall, Head of Imaging, said: "Our staff have helped build a new service that is genuinely making a difference for local people in Swale. Every scan represents a person whose care can move forward more quickly, and that's what encourages us every day."

As part of our commitment to expanding the diagnostic services we offer, the Community Diagnostic Centre in Rochester, which opened in August 2023, delivers a similar range of important tests closer to home for Medway patients.



Paul O'Connor prepares to cut the ceremonial ribbon.



Medway Town Crier Mike Billingham with Kevin McKenna, MP for Sittingbourne and Sheppey.



• Hospital team in the community: Members of the Imaging Team who work at Medway Maritime Hospital as well as the CDCs in Sheppey and Rochester.

# Cutting edge technology boosts breast cancer detection

The ability to detect breast cancer has been boosted thanks to two new pieces of diagnostic equipment being used by our Breast Care Unit.

Our clinicians can spot abnormalities and identify early signs of breast cancer more accurately and quickly thanks to the installation of a GE Pristina Mammography Machine and the introduction of Contrast-Enhanced Spectral Mammography (CESM).

Using the lowest levels of radiation, the GE Pristina Mammography Machine (pictured below) can generate detailed, high-quality images, to look for breast cancer, changes and benign breast disease making breast imaging safer, quicker and more comfortable.

The same machine can also be used to perform imaged guided biopsies by inserting a needle into the breast to take a small tissue sample to check for cancer.

Meanwhile, CESM (pictured above) provides an enhanced type of mammogram. Using a small amount of dye injected into a vein, the dye travels through the bloodstream highlighting areas that may be difficult to see using traditional mammograms or ultrasounds. This helps our clinicians make more informed decisions and can reduce the number of unnecessary biopsies. CESM can also be used if an MRI is unsuitable, for example, if patients are claustrophobic or have implants that aren't safe for MRI scans, such as some cochlear implants.



Alongside these technological improvements, the unit has undergone an extensive refurbishment to create a more modern, spacious, environment to improve the patient experience.

#### Works include:

- A third ultrasound room and a fourth mammography room, increasing capacity and helping to reduce waiting times.
- Upgraded patient changing areas to improve comfort and privacy.
- Improved toilet facilities, now fully accessible and including baby-changing provision.
- A dedicated recovery area with comfortable seating, television, and privacy options for patients following biopsies or contrast-enhanced procedures.
- Redesigned reception and outpatient areas, now more open and accessible to improve flow and better support wheelchair users and those with mobility challenges.
- A new nurse call system installed throughout the unit, enhancing safety and communication.

Rachel Merrett, Superintendent Mammographer, said: "The transformation of the unit ensures the comfort, dignity, and experience of every patient who walks through our doors."



• Bereavement Support Midwife Dannii Burnett with the Rainbow Boxes

## Supporting families through pregnancy after loss

Thanks to a fundraising challenge, 50 Rainbow Boxes have been donated to our Maternity Bereavement Team to support families through their pregnancy after the loss of a baby.

Dan Graham, from Gillingham, raised the money for the boxes by using only public bus services to travel from the Gillingham-based hospital to the Royal Victoria Infirmary in Newcastle, a journey that took more than 18 hours.

Speaking about the reasons for the journey he said: "I wanted to replicate that long and winding road of pregnancy after loss.

"It was difficult and a tough journey and I hope that I have done people proud."

The boxes, created by Dan's wife Amneet after their own experience of

pregnancy loss in 2018, are designed to help reduce anxiety. Inside each box is a journal, affirmation and mindfulness cards, creative and calming activities, partner information, and a communication card that families can use to let healthcare professionals know that they may need additional emotional support during their pregnancy.

*"They make such a big difference to our families, and we are so thankful to everyone who supports them."*

Earlier in 2025, 25 Rainbow Boxes funded by the charity Abigail's Footsteps were also donated to the hospital.

Bereavement Support Midwife Dannii Burnett said: "They make such a big difference to our families, and we are so thankful to everyone who supports them."

## Findings of our 'Maternity survey 2025'

We're pleased to reveal our 'Maternity survey 2025' results showed we have improved in 32 areas in comparison to the previous year.

The annual survey by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), captures the views of people who gave birth during February 2025 and asks about their experiences of antenatal care, labour and birth, and postnatal care provided following the arrival of their baby.

Scan the QR code to find out more.



## Promoting our maternity vaccination walk-in clinic



Our Maternity Vaccination Team have partnered with Medway Council's Public Health Team to create a new video to help highlight the importance of getting vaccinated during pregnancy. It also promotes our walk-in vaccination clinic service for those who are expecting.



Scan the QR code to watch the video, or visit the Medway NHS Foundation Trust website.

# From hospital to home

Treating more patients safely at home with the help of technology



• SMART Senior Clinical Support Worker Nicky talks through remote monitoring technology with virtual ward patient Elliot in his home.

“ Just feeling more relaxed at home was a great help for my recovery and mental health. What a great service. ”

## Significant investment in new technology and service expansion is enabling more of our patients who need acute care to recover safely at home rather than in hospital.

Many patients are now able to leave our wards sooner, and in some cases avoid admission altogether, thanks to the growth of our virtual hospital ward which provides a range of nursing, therapy care and remote monitoring using state-of-the-art technology as well as video and telephone calls.

Previously the virtual ward operated from 8am to 8pm, which limited the types of conditions and levels of acuity that could be safely managed by the Surgical, Medical and Acute Recovery Team (SMART). Now the service, which is made up of nurses, consultants and therapists, runs 24 hours a day, the number of virtual beds has increased from 80 to 120, and the range of conditions the team can monitor remotely has expanded.

A key development has been the introduction of a dedicated team working directly with clinicians in our Emergency Department (ED) to identify suitable patients for virtual admission. This has significantly increased the number of patients referred directly from ED, helping to reduce delays, ease pressure on our staff, and minimise overcrowding.

The enhanced virtual ward service is also enabling patients to return home sooner. Average time spent under our care has reduced from nine days to eight days, reflecting both improved flow and better patient outcomes.



Elliot Hall, from Gillingham, who was admitted to the virtual ward due to double vision, said: “I thought it was so much better for my recovery being in the comfort of my own home and I had security in the knowledge that the team were just on the other end of a phone should I need them.

“Just feeling more relaxed at home was a great help for my recovery and mental health. What a great service.”



Not all virtual ward care happens remotely. SMART Nurse Practitioner Precious Chukwuma (pictured left) regularly visits patients to administer antibiotics

using portable containers that release medication at a controlled rate.

“It means they can stay mobile,” she explained. “Some of my patients even go to the shops with their containers, otherwise they’d spend up to six weeks in a hospital bed.”

Tracy Stocker, Director of Operations (pictured right), said: “Research shows that patients recover quicker and better in familiar surroundings. Our virtual ward has been designed to reduce stress, improve recovery times, and lower the risk of hospital-related complications. This expansion is the first step toward growing the service to a 200-bed virtual hospital later this year.”



• **A SMART team effort:** Nurses, doctors and therapists work together as part of the Surgical, Medical and Acute Recovery Team (SMART), providing at-home care to patients on our virtual wards.





# Reducing anxiety for children undergoing surgery

Children arriving for day-case surgery are now being welcomed by arcade-style games and sensory tools designed to ease anxiety and create a calmer experience before their procedure.

The initiative, shaped by paediatric research funding and family feedback, is already making a meaningful difference.

Dr Samantha Black, Consultant Paediatric and Perioperative Anaesthetist, said: "Anxiety around hospital admission is very common, with around 75 per cent of children feeling worried in the anaesthetic room. Their fears can include the mask or cannulation, feeling a loss of control, and being separated from their parents."

Eight-year-old Jacob, who is neurodiverse, was among the first to benefit. Both Jacob and his mum, Lisa, who live in Strood, were

understandably nervous ahead of the procedure but the games made a real difference.

Sharing his experience Jacob said: "When I got to the hospital I had butterflies in my stomach, but the first thing I saw on the ward was the racing car game. I really enjoyed playing it, especially because I was able to be a top scorer. Before I knew it, it was time to go and have my operation. I was allowed to carry on playing before I went home too."

Lisa added: "Being able to play the arcade games while waiting really helped Jacob take his mind off what was going to happen. He walked into the anaesthetic room without any issues. After the operation, playing again helped him focus on beating his score rather than any pain. We're so grateful for the support — it made a real difference."

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



• Paediatric Clinical Sister Donna Oldham with Dr Samantha Black

# 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
- Medway\_NHS\_FT
- MedwayNHS
- Medway NHS Foundation Trust

What a difference the Urology Team has made to my journey. **I cannot praise them all enough.** They have been with me every step of the process, from prehabilitation, through surgery and into recovery.

I had **one of the best experiences** with a member of staff in Nuclear Medicine. She has been the best! So friendly, reassuring and just lovely. I suffer with anxiety and she helped me. **She's a credit to your hospital. She's a star.**

**The pre surgery support is unlike anything I have experienced,** and the team's input has ensured I was in the **best place physically and mentally** for the surgery ahead.

Every member of staff on Pearl Ward, Delivery Suite and Kent Ward **went above and beyond to provide support, reassurance, and guidance** that felt truly personal to me.

During moments when I felt traumatised from childbirth and struggled with breastfeeding, the staff offered sensitive, tailored guidance that **helped me regain confidence** as a new mother.

*In July 2025, I was elected as Interim Lead Governor. I am now very pleased to be writing to you as the newly elected substantive Lead Governor.*

*I would also like to congratulate Sue Plummer, who was appointed as Deputy Lead Governor in January 2026.*

*Governors represent patients, members and local people. We help to ensure that your views are heard and shared with the Trust. One of the ways we do this is by holding regular Coffee and Chat sessions at the hospital. These are informal drop-in sessions where you can speak with us about your experiences while enjoying a hot drink.*

*Your honest feedback is extremely important. It helps us to understand what is working well and where improvements may be needed. This enables us, as Governors, to ask the right questions on your behalf.*

*Details of our upcoming Coffee and Chat sessions are available on the Trust website: [www.medway.nhs.uk/about-us/leadership/governors](http://www.medway.nhs.uk/about-us/leadership/governors)*

*Please feel free to contact us at any time by emailing [medwayft.governors@nhs.net](mailto:medwayft.governors@nhs.net). We look forward to hearing from you.*

*Tina Rowe, Lead Governor*



Tina



Sue

In this edition of News at Medway, we're shining a light on two members of staff who began their careers with the UK's armed forces before moving into the NHS.



# From Army Nurse to Maternity Matron

Karen Fegan, who works as Matron in our maternity department, began her nursing training in June 1985 when she joined the Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps (QARANC).

During her training, she spent six weeks working in a maternity department during an 18-month posting in Germany. It was after she witnessed her first birth there, that she knew she'd found her calling to be a midwife.

She said: "I was in my uniform with brass buttons and highly polished shoes. The membranes ruptured during a birth, and I got covered in amniotic fluid. It went everywhere and it took ages to repolish my shoes."

When her posting in Germany ended, Karen was based at Woolwich where the next stage of her training saw her caring for patients on a burns unit. Among the patients were those recovering from injuries sustained in the Falklands War, and musicians injured in the Deal bombing.

**“It's great to get together with other veterans and talk about our experiences.”**

After qualifying as a registered nurse in 1988 and spending a year working as a staff nurse on a ward with Chelsea Pensioners, the next chapter of her career began in September 1989, when she started her midwifery training.

Karen qualified as a midwife in March 1991 and took up a post at the Louise Margaret Hospital in Aldershot. A few years later, she was posted to Hong Kong.

After leaving the Army in January 1998, Karen began working at a standalone birthing centre in Petersfield, providing one-to-one midwifery care and supporting water births.

Since 1999, she has been part of our Maternity Team, starting as a specialist midwife, and more recently becoming a maternity matron.

As well as being a Staff Governor she is also an active member of our Armed Forces Network. She said: "It's great to get together with other veterans and talk about our experiences. It gives me a real sense of belonging and the network is so supportive."

"I'll be retiring in 18 months, after 42 years in healthcare, with only a six-month break for maternity leave."

# Sailing into healthcare

Sarah Bingham began her career at 19 when she joined the Royal Naval Reserve (RNR) in September 1988 after leaving the Air Cadets.

First based at HMS Wildfire, near Chatham Brompton Barracks, Chatham, Sarah joined as a Radio Operator but within a year she became a writer, a role more aligned with her interests and skills.

She said: "I initially did my training in unit, and then went to HMS Raleigh in Torpoint, Cornwall. In May 1989 I completed two weeks of basic training and then passed out and continued my service. When I left the RNR in 2003, I was a leading writer based at the Medway Division of HMS President."

Alongside weekly drills, Sarah devoted many weekends to additional training across naval establishments. One highlight was her time working in the Royal Navy Communications Centre, handling and routing signals and messages.

Sarah added: "As I was a writer, my job was based in a unit



personnel office and would involve handling payroll matters, providing administrative support to personnel and issuing travel warrants. I went to various locations such as HMS Nelson in Portsmouth, HMS Drake in Plymouth and HMS Heron in Somerset."

Her fondest memories include standing in the Guard of Honour at the November Remembrance Service at the Great Lines in Gillingham, attending the commissioning ceremony of HMS Chatham in 1990,

and receiving her Volunteer Reserves Service Medal in 1998 in recognition of 10 years of dedicated service.

In 2008 Sarah joined us as a Reporting Secretary in our Imaging Department, and in 2011 became a Pathway Coordinator in our Ear Nose and Throat (ENT) Department.

Reflecting on her time in the RNR, Sarah said: "The skills I learnt in the RNR have stayed with me throughout my career, such as teamwork, leadership, problem-solving, and communication."

## DID YOU KNOW?



Medway Maritime Hospital was originally a Royal Naval Hospital, opened by King Edward VII in 1905.



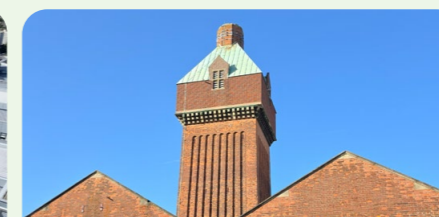
Until 1950, Royal Marines police guarded the entrance to the hospital, and visitors and tradesmen had to show a pass to gain access.



The hospital changed its name to 'Medway Maritime Hospital' in 1999, reflecting the hospital's proud naval tradition.



The iconic hospital clock tower cost £100 and was built from funds left over from the plastering budget for the main hospital building.



The laundry water tower is a Grade II listed building.



The main corridor was almost 1,000 feet long. In an emergency, hospital staff used to travel on bicycles from one end to the other.



## Fresh patient menus launched at Medway and Sheppey

It was created thanks to our Catering Team working closely with ward hosts and patients in line with NHS England's "plants first" approach. This means more sustainable, healthier options that still deliver on flavour and comfort while meeting a wide range of dietary needs.

Simon Clark, Senior Facilities Manager for Catering, said: "I am confident we have put in place the best selection of

meals that we have had in many years, with lots of new dishes and a great variety of choice.

"We will continue now to develop menus for the specialties – paediatrics, frailty, maternity and emergency medicine – to further make our menus more appropriate for different patient groups."

Our inpatients are now enjoying a new menu that offers greater choice, improved nutrition, and a more inclusive dining experience.

## Celebrating 50 years of continuous service

"I wouldn't change a thing." Those are the words of Denise Short as she celebrates 50 years of continuous service with us.

Denise, known affectionately as Den to colleagues (pictured right, centre), joined the hospital in 1975 at just 16 years old. Over the decades she has taken on a wide range of roles, including becoming one of Medway's first female porters.

Den now works as a Ward Clerk on the Pre-Operative Care Unit, a role she has held for the past eight years. Renowned for her warm welcome and calm efficiency, she is often the first friendly face patients meet as she guides them through the booking process, ensures their paperwork is complete, and helps them feel supported ahead of their procedures.



Reflecting on her five decades at Medway, she said: "I love working here. Every day is different, and I'm proud to play my part in helping patients feel supported from the moment they arrive. I never expected to still be here 50 years later, but I wouldn't change a thing."

Interim Chief Executive Siobhan Callanan, who presented Den with

flowers and a card to mark the occasion, said: "It is an absolute pleasure to recognise Den's 50 years of continuous service. Reaching half a century of dedication is a truly remarkable achievement. On behalf of staff and patients, I want to thank her for her commitment, hard work, and the many contributions she has made over the years."

## Positive feedback for Breakfast Club

A Breakfast Club to support the wellbeing of our elderly inpatients has been launched thanks to Enablement Team Lead Physiotherapist Luke Arnold.



It was created so patients can eat breakfast together in a communal setting to encourage social interaction as well as mobility, and independence. The sessions currently run weekly on Byron, Tennyson, Harvey and Milton wards, from 8am to 9.30/10am with plans to expand further.

The initiative has received excellent feedback from patients, families, and staff. One patient's relative said: "Breakfast club is a great idea and it's fantastic to see Medway doing something positive. It's great to see everyone at the table looking well and talking to one another. Everything is presented well and is definitely something that should be shared with other hospitals."

• **Ready for breakfast:** Luke Arnold, Enablement Team Lead Physiotherapist with the table set on Milton Ward

## New shop opened at Sheppey Community Hospital

Medway League of Friends has strengthened its support for local patients and staff by taking over the shop at Sheppey Community Hospital.



Run by dedicated volunteers, the shop provides convenient access to hot drinks, sandwiches, cakes, ice creams, and everyday essentials such as stationery, making life a little easier for patients, visitors, and staff.

All profits are reinvested directly by the charity into essential equipment and resources that enhance patient care at the hospital.

To help extend its opening hours and continue improving services, the charity is appealing for additional volunteers.

Anyone interested can email [enquiries@medwayleagueoffriends.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@medwayleagueoffriends.org.uk)



## CHARITY'S 30TH ANNIVERSARY CAMPAIGN *making a positive difference*

Thank you to our incredible supporters for helping our Thirty at 30 campaign get off to a 'wheely' great start.

Fifteen wheelchairs have already been pledged because of your generosity, meaning we're already halfway towards meeting our target.

We launched the Medway Hospital Charity's 30th anniversary campaign last October with the aim of raising £30,000 to buy 30 wheelchairs for the hospital.

Nine wheelchairs are already on site for patients to use and we have enough money to buy another six.

Recently we welcomed some of the donors to meet their wheelchairs. The Medway Sunlight Rotary Club met 'Sunlight Express', Apex Contractors met 'Stan, Beryl, McCann and Cathy', Civil Service Insurance Society met 'Michael Sentinel', Elancial Limited met 'Wheel Meet Again' and members of Queenborough Town Council, who have the town council's logo on the wheelchair, all got to see their chair in action.

Masons from the Manor of Gillingham Lodge were also invited along so we could thank them, in person, for their £1,000 donation to our appeal. The Lodge donated £500 and this was matched by Cornwallis Charity. The masons will

be welcomed back once their wheelchair is on site.

Donna Law, Head of Charity, said: "It was wonderful to thank our donors and to meet the families who named the chairs. Stan, Beryl, McCann and Michael Sentinel were named in memory of loved ones. Cathy, who's now retired, worked at the hospital for 30 years, and she is continuing to support us with a wheelchair named after her."

• **Pictured above:** Apex generously donated four wheelchairs. Managing Director Steve Haines named a wheelchair after his wife Cathy (right), who worked at Medway Maritime Hospital for 30 years. Chloe Hopper (left) named McCann after her grandad and brought along her gran Mary (front left) and aunt Catherine McCann (front right) to see the wheelchair. Beryl was named by Lewis, in memory of his nan who passed away at Medway, and Stan was chosen by Nicola, her father-in-law, who was cared for by Lawrence Ward.

Helen Wiseman, owner of Elancial Limited, with Wheel Meet Again.



Colin Hudnott, who made an incredibly generous £500 donation via our Just Giving Page, Wheelchair Campaign - The Medway Hospital Charity, said: "My brother Kevin is currently being cared for at Medway. He has difficulty walking even short distances, so a wheelchair was invaluable when he got admitted and moved to another department."

It's so wonderful to hear that our wheelchairs make a positive difference to our patients and their families.

Please keep our campaign moving and help us reach our £30,000 target by donating or taking part in one of our fundraising events. These include a giant inflatable course, packed with huge slides, bouncy obstacles and unforgettable fun. Running events include, 5k, 10k, half and full marathons. If you're seeking an adrenaline rush, you might want to experience the thrill of an 160ft bungee jump.



Deputy Mayor Paula Telford, Cllr David Ingram and Mayor of Queenborough Town Council Paul Buckingham visited the hospital to see their chair with the town council logo on it.



Donna Law, Head of Charity, welcomed Worshipful Master Bryan Tyler along with fellow masons Terry Perkins and Richard Darby from The Manor of Gillingham Lodge to a cheque presentation.



Bill Parkinson and Steve Gerry from Medway Sunlight Rotary Club joined Donna Law, our Head of Charity, to meet Sunlight Express.



Spencer Barden works for insurers CSiS. He brought his mum Marion and sister Rebecca along to meet Michael Sentinel. Michael is his dad's name. He was a firefighter and the word sentinel means someone who stands to protect others and is a fitting tribute to a man who served his community.

## Thank you to all our donors

Sunlight Rotary Club, Apex Contractors, CSiS, Elancial Limited, Queenborough Town Council, Manor of Gillingham Masons' Lodge, Cornwallis Charity, St Augustine's Church, The Old Roffensian Society, Colin Hudnott, Peter Rampling, Helen Webb, Tiffany, Gill Rudman, Margaret Rosher, Graham Smith, Brenda Moss, Steve, Stuart Waterman, Thomas Steward, Pamela Sinclair, Apple Pie, plus our quiz night supporters and anonymous donors.

**We couldn't make this difference without your support!**

## 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)



**Business, school or community group?**

**Please get in touch for more information:**

01634 825398 ✉ [medwayft.charity@nhs.net](mailto:medwayft.charity@nhs.net)

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



# Inspiring the next generation

Fifteen years after she left, Amy McKinnon has returned to the nursery that cared for her as a child to inspire the next generation of children.

Fond memories of her time at Tiny Tugs Day Nursery, coupled with experience gained at a private nursery and childcare studies at MidKent College, inspired Amy to apply for the Level 3 Early Years Educator Apprenticeship delivered by HIT Training. Her successful application made her the nursery's first ever apprentice.

The course allowed Amy to learn and earn while working alongside some of the staff at our onsite nursery who cared for her as a child while her mum Ann worked as a Hospital Play Specialist.

Fast forward 15 years, and after completing the course Amy

has become the nursery's first homegrown early year's educator. She now works full-time at the nursery providing care and educating hundreds of children aged 0 to five while their parents work at the hospital.

Amy, from Chatham, said: "I have such lovely memories of being at the nursery, and it means a lot to now work with some of the staff who cared for me when I was a child. They really helped shape my path, and I hope I can give that same encouragement to the children who attend the nursery today."

In her role, Amy supports children's learning and development through play-based activities designed to help nurture their curiosity, creativity and confidence.

Reflecting on her apprenticeship journey Amy said: "I want to say a huge thank you to everybody at the nursery for their support during my apprenticeship."

*"... I hope I can give that same encouragement to the children who attend the nursery today."*

"Their experience and support helped me grow in confidence and turn my passion for childcare into a career."

Nursery Manager Amanda Richards, said: "Amy's journey is a great example of what can happen when we nurture talent from within our own community. Watching her return as an apprentice and flourish has been a joy. She is a real asset to the nursery."

"We hope to be able to support more apprentices in the future."

## How a T-Level student's hospital placement sparked a new career

When Kelly Ochonogor became the first student to undertake a T-Level placement here at Medway Maritime Hospital, little did she know it would set her on an entirely new career path.

At the time of her placement, Kelly was studying a T-Level health course at MidKent College and was focused on pursuing a career in clinical psychology. But that all changed when a new interest was sparked in the Operating Department Practitioner (ODP) role after she shadowed staff working in the operating theatre.

ODPs are vital members of the theatre team, combining technical skill, clinical knowledge and compassionate care to keep patients safe before, during and after surgery.

The 21-year-old, from Chatham, said: "I didn't know much about the ODP role at the time, but seeing the teamwork, the practical skills, and the level of patient support involved made me realise this was exactly where I wanted to be."

After finishing college, Kelly worked at the hospital as a Clinical Support Worker for a year to help strengthen her clinical experience before applying for a three-year ODP apprenticeship. Combining academic study with hands-on experience, Kelly gets to learn in a clinical environment working alongside anaesthetists, surgeons and theatre teams to help deliver safe, high-quality care at every step of a patient's surgical journey.

Reflecting on her career, she added: "At first, theatre felt like a completely different world. But as I gained experience, I began to understand the significance of every task. Each placement has helped me grow in confidence, and seeing theory come to life in practice has been incredibly rewarding."

"The staff have been so welcoming and generous with their time too. My practice facilitators have guided me through every step. Having that support has made a huge difference."

Looking ahead to when she completes her apprenticeship in June 2028, Kelly said: "I hope to be a confident, experienced ODP, maybe even specialising or pursuing further studies."

"This apprenticeship has opened so many doors for me. I've always been quite shy, but this environment has pushed me out of my comfort zone. I feel like I'm growing into the best version of myself and also put the opportunity and growth I have experienced so far down to my faith."

Lucy Mason, Work Based Learning Manager, said: "Kelly's journey demonstrates the important role apprenticeships play in creating accessible routes into clinical careers and strengthening our future NHS workforce."

To find out about apprenticeship opportunities with us, visit our website [www.medway.nhs.uk](http://www.medway.nhs.uk)



# DID YOU

# KNOW?

Medway NHS Foundation Trust offers the option of **Patient-Initiated Follow-Up (PIFU) appointments** for some clinically appropriate outpatients.

It can save you time and put you in control of making an appointment when you need it the most.

For more information ask your consultant during your appointment or speak to a member of the nursing team.