

## CEO Board report

April 2024

### National

- **NHS England:**
  - **Rollout of same day emergency care allows hundreds of thousands to return home quicker:** New data shows there has been an 11% increase across the country in number of people who were admitted to hospital as an emergency complete their care and be discharged on the same day, meaning hundreds of thousands more patients received the urgent care they needed in a matter of hours, freeing up wards beds for others who needed them.
  - **NHS appoints first ever national clinical director for women's health:** In her new role, Dr Sue Mann will help implement the Women's Health Strategy alongside supporting the roll out of women's health hubs across England. The new position has been announced alongside six other National Clinical Directors who have been recruited on three-year tenures or part-time secondments and will carry out their national role alongside their clinical duties.
  - **Drive to recruit armed forces veterans:** Running until March 2025, the drive is within the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan and aims to encourage serving and retired armed forces personnel and their families to consider a career in one of the 14 allied health professions on offer in the health service.
  - **Purdah guidance:** With local elections taking place in May and a general election due to take place before the end of 2025, NHS England Chief Strategy Officer Chris Hopson has written to chairs and chief executive officers across the NHS to remind us of the responsibilities of all colleagues of public bodies during pre-election periods. The pre-election period is designed to avoid the actions of public bodies distracting from or having influence on election campaigns. More information is [here](#).
- **Progress in 2023/24:** We have received letters from NHS England (included as annexes to this report) recognising the strong improvements our teams have made in reducing our elective and cancer waiting lists, and in seeing patients more quickly in our urgent and emergency care pathways, including in the community.

In 2023/24 we:

- were recognised as one of the fastest improving Trusts in England for how we've reduced elective waiting times
- reduced the number of cancer patients waiting longer than 62 days for treatments to 5%
- responded within two hours in more than 90% of cases needing urgent care response in the community
- saw 80% of people in our emergency departments within for hours (March)

We have shared these achievements with staff and encouraged teams to take a moment to reflect on the positive impact their hard work has had on the lives of patients. We will be sharing through our external channels soon.

We were also recognised by NHS England for how well we responded to the financial challenge, delivered more than £13m of recurrent savings through transformation, and met our revised deficit plan of £27m.

We continue to develop our plans for 2024/25 and we will use the great foundations we laid last year to continue our improvement and transformation of our services.

- **Paediatric audiology services:** As part of a review of paediatric audiology services across the UK, the CQC have requested that NHS boards consider the assurance they have about the safety, quality and accessibility of children's hearing services and confirm by 30 June accreditation or plans to become accredited. Work is underway to prepare the relevant information and this will be brought to Board for consideration in June.

## Royal Devon

- **OSIG:** We have concluded the first phase of our Operational Services Integration, which has focused on finding the best, integrated structure for our operational services and the leadership roles needed to deliver the benefits set out in the integration business case. We have moved to five Trustwide, integrated care groups: Medicine, Surgery, Community, Clinical Specialist Services and Women's and Children's Health. This gives us the platform to maximise the benefits of our integration and address any inequity across our services. Phase 1 saw us appoint to the leadership structure and align services to the care groups. We will soon move to phase 2 which will focus on how best to integrate services within the care groups to provide the best care for our patients.
- **Health Inequalities Strategy:** We published our first ever health inequalities strategy following its approval at Board last month. It's on our website with our suite clinical and other enabling strategies [here](#). There is a report on this agenda which sets out our progress in tackling health inequalities as an NHS provider, partner and anchor organisation in our community.
- **Patient comms policy:** We are launching our new patient communications policy this month, which outlines the core principles, guidance and legal obligations for all forms of communication with and about patients. At the heart of the policy are our general principles for all patient communication, which have been developed with the help of over 300 patients. We are working to embed the policy across the Trust and support staff with training requirement. The policy also supports the delivery of our patient experience strategy, which sets out our vision for all patients to feel welcome, included, safe, supported and valued.
- **Cardiac Day Case Unit:** We celebrated the opening of our new CDCU at RD&E Wonford on Friday 19 April with a visit from Professor Tim Briggs, National Director for Clinical Improvement and Elective Recovery. The new unit will significantly increase the number of cardiac patients we can treat each day and will play an important part in helping us reduce waiting times for cardiology treatment. It will also improve the experience for our patients, as the unit has been designed to be a

relaxing environment to minimise stress and maximise comfort and dignity. It's a great example of how we are making the best use of investment to improve care and performance.

- **World Admin Day** – it is world admin day on 24 April. Colleagues who support our patient and business services are our second largest workforce group and we will be taking a moment to recognise and celebrate their contribution to the experience of patients accessing care and their continual efforts to improve staff experience.
- **Experience of Care Week:** 29 April – 3 May marks experience of care week, and we've invited Dr James Munro, CEO of non-profit Care Opinion which we use to gather feedback, to lead a webinar for colleagues. He'll be joined by Trust colleagues April Brooks (lead nurse, Devon Sexual Health) and Lisa Beasant (Cancer Services Support Manager in Haematology and Oncology) to discuss the benefits of gathering online patient feedback.
- **Earth Day** on 22 April focused on the effects of plastic pollution, and we took a moment with staff and on social media to talk about the work we've been doing to reduce single use plastic in our cafes and improve our recycling. Our [Green Plan](#) sets out our commitment to supporting sustainability, minimising our impact on the environment and becoming net zero by 2040.
- **Meeting teams:** I've been continuing to get out and about around the Trust meeting teams. Of more than 60 teams and services who have invited me, I've visited over 30 so far. In April this has included teams at Honiton, Exmouth and Tiverton community hospitals, as well as lots of teams and specialties at the Royal Devon and Exeter (Wonford) and North Devon District Hospitals. I'm always struck by how patient-focused our teams are and how well they work together.

**ENDS**

To: Sam Higginson, Chief Executive  
Royal Devon University Healthcare  
NHS Trust  
Via email: [sam.higginson2@nhs.net](mailto:sam.higginson2@nhs.net)

Wellington House  
133-155 Waterloo Road  
London  
SE1 8UG

12 April 2024

Dear Sam

### **Progress against elective targets**

I want to thank you and your teams for all the fantastic efforts that have gone into reducing the number of elective waits of over 78 weeks.

Over the past year your teams have gone that extra mile to ensure our longest-waiting patients get the care and treatment they need.

It has been a real team effort to get to this point. From those behind the scenes in Integrated Care Systems (ICS) who have supported providers in identifying additional capacity, admin and booking teams have ensured those slots are filled and of course those on the frontline who delivered the care – everyone has come together to ensure patients were seen.

Your achievements are even more impressive given they have been delivered against the backdrop of another challenging year that saw the longest period of industrial action in the history of the NHS and increased demand on services. Despite this, your teams have made great strides in reducing the backlog and we hope everyone takes some pride in that.

I look forward to working with you in the months ahead to build on your achievements as we continue to reduce the elective backlog and deliver the best-possible care for our patients.

Please ensure my thanks is cascaded to those within your organisation and those who you worked with across your ICS.

Yours sincerely



**Sir James Mackey**  
**National Director of Elective Recovery**



To: • Sam Higginson, Chief Executive,  
Royal Devon University Healthcare  
NHS Foundation Trust

cc. • John Palmer (Chief Operating  
Officer, Royal Devon University  
Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust),  
Martin Wilkinson (Director of  
Performance and Improvement,  
NHS England – South West), Sunita  
Berry (Managing Director, Peninsula  
Cancer Alliance)

NHS Cancer Programme  
Wellington House  
133-155 Waterloo Road  
London  
SE1 8UG

11 April 2024

Dear Sam,

## **62 day urgent suspected cancer backlog reduction**

On behalf of the NHS Cancer Programme team, we are writing to congratulate you and your teams for the fantastic progress you have made on reducing your 62 day backlog over the past year and improving Faster Diagnosis performance.

Since the beginning of April 2023, your 62 day backlog has reduced to 151 patients (an improvement of 39.6%), which is below your Fair Shares target for 2023/2024. This is some of the most positive progress we have seen anywhere nationally, and has been a significant contributor to the overall national position – where we have now reduced the backlog to pre-pandemic levels.

I know this has been an incredibly difficult year for the NHS in many ways, not least contending with the disruption from Industrial Action, and this makes the kind of progress you have been able to make all the more impressive.

We have no doubt that with this strong foundation and your continued dedication you will start 2024/25 in an excellent position to continue to make improvements for patients. But for now a huge thank you again for all you have done, and please do pass on our thanks to your teams.

Yours sincerely,



*Cally Palmer*

**Dame Cally Palmer**

National Cancer Director  
NHS Cancer Programme  
NHS England

*Peter Johnson*

**Professor Peter Johnson**

National Clinical Director for Cancer  
NHS Cancer Programme  
NHS England

Email: sam.higginson2@nhs.net

To: 

- Sam Higginson
- Chief Executive
- Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

Wellington House  
133-155 Waterloo Road  
London  
SE1 8UG

14 April 2024

Dear Sam,

### **Local 4 hour performance exceeding 76% across March 2024**

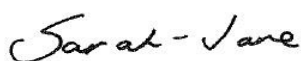
I want to say a huge heartfelt thank you to you, your teams and your partners that supported the drive towards the national ambition that at least 76% of your patients in ED attendance were admitted, transferred, or discharged within 4 hours by the end of last year, providing timely access to care for the population you serve.

I know this has required significant focus and dedication, including increasing bed capacity within hospitals and expanding same day emergency care, changing ways of working with a greater focus on streaming, re-direction, direct access and clinical decision-making, and working with system partners to support the expansion and consistent utilisation of urgent treatment centres, virtual wards and urgent community response, as well as transfer of care hubs.

I have visited many organisations since I commenced in my national role, and I am very aware that much of this achievement has occurred as a result of the incredible drive and determination from everyone across the emergency care pathway. A key focus for the year ahead is to work to put this improvement on a sustainable footing, whilst continuing to deliver on the wider ambitions of the [Urgent and Emergency Care Recovery Plan](#).

Thank you again for your hard work, and when you are thanking your teams in your own unique ways, please ensure mine are added. I see beyond the numbers into the experiences of the patients you have treated, when care and compassion are what matter most.

The year ahead will inevitably be more challenging, I look forward to working with you and supporting in any way I can.



**Sarah-Jane Marsh**  
**National Director of Integrated Urgent and Emergency Care and Deputy Chief**  
**Operating Officer NHS England**