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Partnership News

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Introduction - Anu Singh

Hello

Welcome to the November 2024 edition of Healthier Futures News.

As I reflect on my first few months in post, I'm filled with gratitude for the warm welcome and support I've received from so many of you. It has been an incredible start, and I am excited about the future which we are building together.

One of the most striking experiences has been witnessing the strength of collaboration across our system. The commitment from each of our place-based partnerships and collaboratives to working together for the benefit of our communities has been inspiring. Your work to date shows that by combining expertise and resources, we can achieve so much more for the people we serve. I see my role as Chair of the NHS Black Country Integrated Care Board and the Black Country Integrated Care Partnership as integral for creating the right environment for these strong partnerships to thrive.

In just a few weeks since starting, I have seen the NHS open two new facilities that are set to transform the way we deliver care. In this edition, you can read more about these state-of-the-art centres which will not only allow us to offer more improved, person-centered services but will fuel local regeneration, employment and learning opportunities too. They represent our collective ambition to continually improve and innovate in healthcare, and I want to thank the teams that have worked tirelessly to bring these projects to life.

During my first few weeks, I have also had chance to think about the future and I'd like to share some key opportunities emerging from the **Darzi Review**. Whilst the review largely reflects on the state of the NHS, I think it offers us some areas for focus as an Integrated Care System (ICS) to support our purpose which is to:

- improve outcomes in population health and healthcare
- tackle inequalities in outcomes, experience and access
- enhance productivity and value for money
- help the NHS support broader social and economic development.

The review reaffirms the importance of integration, urging us to deepen collaboration across health and social care, ensuring our patients receive seamless, coordinated support. This presents a clear opportunity to enhance patient outcomes, especially for those with complex needs, by breaking down silos and providing care that meets the needs of local people and communities.

A central focus of the review is on prevention and improving population health. This is a clear call to shift our approach from reactive to proactive care, supporting healthy lifestyles and early interventions that will help our communities thrive.

Alongside this, embracing technology and innovation will be essential. Furthering our work on digital tools, data-driven decisions, and remote care options will help us deliver more accessible, responsive services to local people. I want to explore how we do this together with a focus on citizens rather than individual service users and I am clear that we must continue to close the digital inequality gap.

Finally, the review underscores the importance of person-centered care and a drive to harness the power of people, to build prosperity and strengthen communities. As an ICS, this should be our guiding principle—ensuring that we place people at the heart of everything we do, responding to their needs with understanding, dignity, compassion, respect and ambition for them to thrive.

Now, as we embark on a **refresh of our ICS and NHS Joint Forward Plan**, I think we have an opportunity to create an integrated, sustainable and person-focused system to achieve improved life chances in the Black Country.

I look forward to continuing my listening and working closely with all of you.

With best wishes

Anu Singh
Chair



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Midland Metropolitan University Hospital now open

New hospital at centre of regeneration ambition opens in Smethwick

The Midland Metropolitan University Hospital has opened its doors to the people of Sandwell and West Birmingham.

Speaking on Sunday 6 October, the day that patients moved into the multi-million-pound healthcare facility, Chairman of Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust Sir David Nicholson commented: "It takes a village to raise a child, and for us a community to raise this hospital. We are so proud of what everyone has done, and today as we treat our first patients in this building, it is testament to what can be achieved when we are all focussed on a single aim.

"The Midland Met was conceived almost 20 years ago, and the development is more than a hospital, encompassing education through our Learning campus, enrichment through our art gallery and extensive arts programme and empowerment as we provide opportunities for our local population to improve their circumstances and through the regeneration of the wider area. The NHS today delivers care where it is needed. We have been at the forefront of innovation in integrating care in order to ensure every patient receives the treatment they need appropriately. The Midland Met replaces some aging hospital estate which was exhausting in upkeep and not pleasant for our staff to deliver care in. Today this changes as we start to move patients in and close old facilities. I am confident that our patients and staff will appreciate the new environment with a resulting upswing in their wellbeing."



The accident and emergency staff at Midland Met on the morning of the opening

Chief Executive Richard Beeken added: "This is the beginning of a new chapter for the Trust as we look forward to the benefits the Midland Met will deliver. As the NHS was designed to care for our health needs from the cradle to the grave, this hospital will provide emergency care for our population for many years to come. Today we are making history, and as our predecessors opened City hospital over 135 years ago, I cannot help but think they would approve wholeheartedly of what we have done."

Anu Singh, Chair NHS Black Country Integrated Care Board said: "Today marks an historic moment as we open the doors to the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital. This is more than just a hospital – it's a vital step towards improving the health outcomes and life chances for our local communities. By enhancing access to urgent and emergency care, we are building a healthier future for everyone. We're incredibly proud of the dedication and effort from the entire team who made this moment possible."

Changes to services across Sandwell and West Birmingham

Changes to services are now in place after the opening of the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital in Smethwick. The new hospital welcomed the first cohort of patients on 6 October and provides emergency, maternity, children's, and adult acute inpatient services for a population of over half a million.



The winter garden on level 5 at the Midland Met

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Sandwell Hospital's accident and emergency (A&E) department is now closed and all patients normally using this facility should go to the Midland Met's A&E.

Meanwhile, City Hospital's A&E will close on 10 November and all patients will use the new emergency department from that date.

Maternity services will open from 6 November.

An expanded hours Urgent Treatment Centre is operating at Sandwell Hospital for people with non-life-threatening injuries.

Both the existing Sandwell Hospital and City Hospitals sites will offer outpatient appointments, short stay surgery and rehabilitation services. The Birmingham and Midland Eye Centre will also remain at City.

For more information about the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital and health campus, please go to the [Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust website](#).

Over 170 patients transferred to new hospital

A total of 175 patients were transferred safely over to the UK's newest hospital – Midland Metropolitan University Hospital – in a meticulously planned operation.



Patient Jia Cheong, with staff nurse Nisha

The healthcare facility opened on 6 October in Smethwick, West Midlands, receiving inpatients who were being cared for at Sandwell Hospital.

Speaking after the final patient had been received at the Midland Met, Richard Beeken, Chief Executive for the Trust, said: "Everything has gone superbly well. All of the patient transfers from Sandwell Hospital to the Midland Met are complete and we are extremely proud owners of this fantastic new building."

And he reminded residents in Sandwell about the changes to services following the closure of the West Bromwich A&E.

Sandwell Hospital is now known as Sandwell Health Campus and will still operate outpatient appointments, short stay surgery and the UTC. Also on site is the Lyndon Primary Care Centre, a GP practice run by Your Health Partnership and the Trust.

Meanwhile on 10 November, City Hospital will become City Health Campus. The Birmingham Treatment Centre will offer outpatient appointments and short stay surgery, whilst the Birmingham and Midland Eye Centre will continue to provide specialist care. The Sheldon Block will operate rehabilitation services.

City Hospital A&E will close on that date and inpatients will again be transferred to the Midland Met.

NHS 10-year health plan

NHS, Local Authority and third sector staff are working harder than ever to get services back on track, to get waiting lists down and consistently deliver the best care.

We know change is needed. But we also know that many of the solutions we need are already here, working somewhere in the NHS today. In the Black Country, we are already doing great work in this area and are supporting the NHS to tackle these challenges head.

We also know there is much more to do, which is why we are playing our part in the launch the consultation for the 10-Year Health Plan alongside the government, and we want to hear from you – patients, their families and the wider public – about your NHS story.

Whether you have a little to say or a lot, your views, experiences and ideas will shape immediate steps and long-term changes: a new 10-Year Health Plan for the NHS.

This is a once in a generation opportunity to make the NHS fit for the future. Together we can fix it. We need your voice.

Go to change.nhs.uk to find out how you can take part.

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Health & Care Key Messages/Campaigns

Get vaccinated and protect yourself this winter

Eligible people in the Black Country are being invited to come forward for a flu, COVID-19 and RSV vaccine as winter approaches.

Similar to last year, those eligible for a COVID-19 and flu vaccine include:

- all adults aged 65 years and over
- people who live in a care home for older adults
- people aged 6 months to 64 years with health conditions that make them more vulnerable
- frontline health and social care staff, including in care homes for older adults
- pregnant women.

Those eligible for an RSV vaccination are pregnant women over 28 weeks and people aged 75 to 79.

The flu vaccine is also available to children aged 2 to 3 years, school-aged children (Reception to Year 11) and children with certain long-term health conditions.

Eligible people can book an appointment via the NHS website, on the NHS App or by calling 119. Pregnant women can also receive their vaccines through their local maternity clinic.

Community pop-up clinics are also being hosted at a range of locations in the Black Country, with flu and COVID-19 vaccines available for eligible adults on a walk-in basis, with no appointment necessary. **To find your nearest pop-up clinic, visit the NHS Black Country Integrated Care Board (ICB) website.**

Sally Roberts, Chief Nursing Officer for NHS Black Country ICB, said: "It's vital that everyone prepares for potential winter illnesses, especially those who are at higher risk. It can be easy to become complacent, however it's important for those who are eligible to top up their protection, even if they have had a vaccine or been ill with flu or COVID-19 before, as immunity fades over time and these viruses change each year.

"Vaccines remain our best defence, keeping people from developing serious illnesses and helping to minimise hospitalisations during busy winter months. So, I would encourage anyone who receives an invite for either vaccine to please get booked in as soon as possible."

Calls to 119 are free from mobiles and landlines and the booking service provides support in 200 different languages. Those who have difficulties communicating or hearing or are a BSL user can use textphone 18001 or the NHS 119 British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter service.



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Think which service this winter

As temperatures drop and nights draw in, it is important to remember that winter conditions can seriously affect your health. The NHS is here and waiting to help you.

Think which service is right for you:

- For less urgent health needs, think pharmacy first, contact your GP or visit www.nhs.uk for advice
- If you need urgent medical help but it's not an emergency, contact NHS 111 online (111.nhs.uk) or by dialling 111 for clinical advice, assessment and signposting to the right service
- Call 999 for life-threatening emergencies.

Take control of your health this winter:

- Get vaccinated – find a local pop-up flu and COVID-19 vaccine clinic near you at blackcountry.icb.nhs.uk
- Follow good hand hygiene
- Attend your GP appointments and let your practice know if you need to cancel

- Think pharmacy first - get advice early from your local pharmacist if you feel unwell and get prescribed medicines for seven common conditions
- Keep yourself and your home warm – heat your home to 18°C if you can, and if you need any support or guidance visit gov.uk
- Check and stock your medicine cabinet
- Get your repeat prescriptions before your GP practice and pharmacy close for Christmas
- Download the NHS App to access a range of NHS services
- Look after your mental health – keep active, talk to family or friends and access support if you need it
- Look out for others – check in on vulnerable neighbours, friends and family.

Visit blackcountryics.org.uk/think for more information.



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Cancer bus tour reaches out to more people than ever before

In September, the Black Country Integrated Care System's cancer programme team organised a bus tour of five sites across the Black Country. The buses were staffed by clinicians and Community Cancer Champions, with a range of other staff for support to educate and encourage uptake of screening opportunities for breast, bowel and cervical cancer as well as learning how to spot cancer early.

The bus visited Park Street in Walsall and then New Square Shopping Centre in West Bromwich, before moving onto Queen Square in Wolverhampton, Princes End in Tipton and finally stopping at The Fountain in Dudley Town Centre.

More than 1100 people attended the cancer bus throughout the week and over 400 people also received health checks, including blood pressure and blood sugar tests, with a number of people signposted to their GP for further investigation.

Attendees were given information on the three main NHS cancer screening programmes of breast, bowel and cervical, including when people will be invited and what's involved in the screening. Macmillan Cancer Support, including Community Connectors, also attended and offered support for people living with and beyond cancer.

Several attendees presented with visible signs and symptoms of cancer and staff on the bus were able to help with fast-track referral appointments to their own GPs. They also received clinical counselling to support them.

Dr Mona Sidhu, Medical Director of Primary Care for the NHS Black Country Integrated Care Board, said: "Early detection is the best form of defence against cancer and it's vital that people know the signs and symptoms to look out for. That's why initiatives like the cancer bus tour are so important. They give us the opportunity to have one-on-one conversations with people who may not realise they are at risk, who may not recognise potential symptoms or may feel unable to act on them or are too fearful to. It was fantastic to see so many people come forward so thank you to everyone who paid us a visit. And please remember, if you notice something that isn't normal for you or isn't going away, it's important to speak to your GP. It probably won't be cancer. But if it is, spotting it early can make a real difference."

More information about cancer support available can be found on the NHS Black Country ICB website.



At the Black Country Cancer Bus in Queen Square were, left to right, Lesley Thorpe, Macmillan Personalised Care Project Lead, Councillor Jasbir Jaspal, Cabinet Member for Adults and Wellbeing, and Kassie Styche, Engagement Lead, Black Country Integrated Care Board

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Don't forget to check this Breast Cancer Awareness Month

October was Breast Cancer Awareness Month – and people were reminded of the importance of breast screening and of routinely checking their breasts for any changes.

Statistics show that around one in seven women in the UK will be diagnosed with breast cancer at some point in their lives, making it the most common cancer in the UK. It leads to around 11,500 deaths each year – but the NHS breast screening programme is helping to reduce breast cancer mortality by around 20% in women who are regularly screened.

Anyone registered with a GP as female will be invited for NHS breast screening every three years between the ages of 50 and 71. Those over 71 can request screening.

As well as screening, the NHS recommends that people check their breasts once a month. This will help with what is normal for your body therefore it will be easier to detect any changes that may need further examination from a health professional.

Key symptoms that you should be looking for include a lump or swelling in your breast, chest or armpit, any changes to the skin of your breast, a change in size or shape, nipple discharge if you're not pregnant or breastfeeding, a change in the shape or look of how your nipple usually looks, including a rash on it, or sores or ulcers on your chest.

Some of these symptoms are very common and can be caused by other conditions, but if you do notice anything unusual, make an appointment with your GP as soon as possible.

For help, visit www.breastcanceruk.org.uk/check-your-breasts. You can also

sign up to a monthly text reminder to check with Breast Cancer UK.

John Denley, Wolverhampton's Director of Public Health, said: "Cancer screening and routinely checking your breasts for any changes is essential for early detection, which is critical in improving treatment outcomes and survival rates. Early-stage cancers are often more treatable and have a better prognosis than those detected at a later stage, and almost all women diagnosed with breast cancer at the earliest possible stage in England survive their disease for at least five years after diagnosis. Screening can also identify precancerous conditions that can be treated before they develop into cancer, further reducing the risk of cancer development. By catching cancer early, screening programmes can reduce the overall burden of cancer, decrease healthcare costs, and improve the quality of life for patients."

The graphic features the NHS logo at the top right. Below it, the text "Breast screening saves lives" is displayed in a large, white, sans-serif font. To the right of the text is an illustration of a woman in a purple dress, seen from the side, with her right arm raised to her chest. To the left of the illustration, there are three stacked white boxes with black text: "The test only takes a few", "minutes and can help", and "detect breast cancer at an earlier stage".

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Cancer Board update

Since my last update to you in July, partners across the Black Country have continued to work together to improve performance across many areas of cancer care.

A key cancer priority still for us is delivery against the 28-day faster diagnosis standard (FDS). The national standard set, was that by March 2024, at least 75% of patients received such a notification within this timescale. Since my last update we have moved up in our national ranking from eleventh, to now seventh (August 2024 data) nationally (national performance 75.5%), with 79.3%. I am really pleased with all of our partners and their work to achieve this.

This is not without its challenges though, we still have work to do to support our Black Country Pathology Service (BCPS), as current turnaround times in histopathology could adversely affect each Trust meeting its FDS and 62-day targets. Improvements continue in performance at BCPS for urgent and routine work. Outsourcing of work continues as demand remains high – urology work has doubled in past 12 months. Last three months has seen vast improvement in urgent referrals. Breast, head and neck urgent turnaround times have improved.

So what are our challenges?

Urgent referrals to BCPS for urgent histology remain high at circa 50% - with a target of 30%. Urology and skin remain low for histology performance for 10 days and labelling of samples is still problematic. BCPS continues with its action plan with support from the Black Country ICS Cancer Board.

The Royal Wolverhampton Hospitals Trust remains a Tier 1 Trust and is on trajectory to achieve the 62-day performance standard in November 2024. NHSE is pleased with progress to date which has included plans

to improve appointing to staff vacancies, mutual aid across the Black Country to support capacity and work to reduce backlogs. However, this requirement remains red on the risk register for the Cancer programme and will be closely monitored.

The future

Work has begun on unexpected bleeding pathways for women receiving HRT development for completion by end of Q3. These pathways will be overseen by a Task and Finish Group.

After a successful delivery of Targeted Lung Health Checks in Sandwell in February earlier this year, we have seen roll out of this service in Dudley during August. The focus is now on Walsall and Wolverhampton to enable roll out in these areas in the coming months.

There is a plan to support Direct Enhanced Services (DES) in Primary Care now developed. Local pathways are being worked up and PCNs are working on referral practice, including early diagnosis, improving screening uptake and reducing health inequalities.

Psychosocial care agenda for cancer patients and their families is a new programme of work including West Midlands Cancer Alliance. (WMCA). The recommendation is to establish an integrated model of psychosocial support.

We have shown in the past few months how we can deliver better and more efficient care by working together to meet the challenges head on and improve our performance. I will continue to keep you all informed of the progress we make.

Thank you, Diane



Diane Wake, Chief Executive, The Dudley Group Foundation Trust, Chair, Black Country ICS Cancer Board

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Out of Hospital Board update from Sally Roberts

Keeping people well and out of hospital this winter

The NHS is always under considerable pressure over the winter period, as demand for services increases with the onset of cold weather and seasonal illnesses such as flu.

Across the Black Country, we have a number of interventions in place aimed at helping people stay healthy at home and avoiding admission to hospital this winter.

This includes virtual wards, which is playing its part in keeping Black Country patients out of hospital and enabling those who are admitted to hospital to return home quicker. The Black Country has led the way in the expansion of virtual wards and was the first system in England to introduce virtual wards for children at Dudley Group Foundation NHS Trust (DGFT).

Last winter, from November through to March there were 5,376 admissions to the virtual wards across the Black Country. This year, we have 302 virtual ward beds, including an additional 20 at DGFT to help people stay well from the comfort of their own home. Each of our four Trusts are working to maximise the utilisation this winter and due to the nature of these pathways, providers can flex their provision in line with demand.

Our urgent community response teams continue to provide urgent care to people in their homes which helps to avoid hospital admissions and enable people to live independently for longer. Through these teams, older people and adults with complex health needs who urgently need care, can get fast access to a range of health and social care professionals within two hours in their own homes. In the Black Country, the Urgent Community Response (UCR) national two hour standard of min 70% is being maintained. UCR services are vital because they can prevent unnecessary A&E attendances and hospital admissions by delivering care quickly in people's homes. In turn, this can contribute to improved patient flow through the whole health and care system and help to tackle wider capacity challenges such as discharging patients from hospital.

We also continue to work closely with partners at West Midlands Ambulance Service on the 'call before you convey' scheme. This is a focused approach to support the right care for patients over the age of 60. Ambulance clinicians are encouraged to access the Urgent and Emergency Care (UEC) Single Point of

Access (SPOA). A dedicated hotline connects them with a clinician who can help them decide if the patient does need hospital attention or could be treated elsewhere in the community. By linking ambulance crews with the right teams and services, people get the best care for their concern, avoiding unnecessary attendances at A&E which can often be a stressful experience for patients.

Where possible, we know it is best for people to be looked after in their own home, and this is what we are prioritising this winter.

Thank you,

Sally Roberts



Sally Roberts, Chair, Out of Hospital Board and Chief Nursing Officer for the NHS Black Country ICB

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Digital Download

Latest news from One Health and Care in the Black Country

One Health and Care (OHC) continues to support care delivered to Black Country residents and patients through quicker access to joined up health information. This access allows clinicians and care providers to deliver better, safer, more timely care which supports improved outcomes for the patients and service users we serve.

Throughout September, we saw continued growth of the OHC system demonstrating the importance of accurate and complete clinical data to deliver care of the highest quality. With over 130,000 records accessed each month, work is now underway to identify the areas

where use of the system is delivering the greatest benefit to patients.

Following the opening of the new Midland Metropolitan University Hospital, we are pleased to announce that OHC is live and delivering the benefits of the shared care record. This follows on from our local authority colleagues in Walsall, who are also now able to utilise the OHC system for the benefit of their service users.

For more information on One Health and Care, visit the Black Country Integrated Care System website.

Success at NHS App events

To encourage utilisation of the **NHS App**, our ICB Digital First Primary Care (DFPC) Programme team has been working with GP practices, Primary Care Networks (PCNs) and organisations across the Black Country to provide NHS App support at health and wellbeing events.

The events have included the Wolverhampton North Network PCN Diabetes Bus at Bushbury Church, where the team were able to promote the NHS App and give demonstrations to patients attending for diabetes screening, as well as two events at the Bradley and Bilston



One of our Digital First Project Support Officers with an attendee at the Beacon Centre for the Blind's Digi-Day

Urban Village Health and Beyond Practices. Members of staff were based at both practices to support patients and provide information on the NHS App, with more than 175 patients being registered over the two days.

We are seeing consistent increases in the number of NHS App registrations from these events, as participants tell their friends and family, and the practices involved embrace the benefits and continue to register patients.

Encouraging utilisation of the app enables patients to access the healthcare services and information they need easily and securely, empowering them to take control of their health and helping them to have improved access to primary care. Utilisation also supports GP practices, as patients are able to order their repeat prescriptions, book appointments, nominate pharmacies and more.

To ensure that we are also supporting those of our Black Country population who have a sensory impairment, the team also worked with Beacon Centre for the Blind to host its first Digi-Day. This day was put in place to support attendees with NHS App registration and primary care access, as well as to provide an opportunity for those who don't have access to a digital device or connectivity to learn more about our **Black Country Connected Programme** and be allocated a Geobook laptop. The team are now in the process of planning their second Digi-Day for the deaf and hard-of-hearing community, in addition to Train-The-Trainer Days to help share accessibility advice and best practice to those who support our Black Country communities.

If you work in primary care and would like the DFPC Programme team to support your patients with registering to and using the NHS App at one of your practice events, please contact your DFPC Place Project Manager or email bcicb.digitalfirstteam@nhs.net.

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Positive Partnerships in Place



Dudley Health and Care Partnership

Connecting communities and coordinating care to help citizens live longer, safer and healthier lives.

Life in Lye

The Life in Lye programme is going from strength to strength. For more than 18 months the partnership between residents, businesses, voluntary and faith groups, the council, NHS and the police has worked to improve residents' health and increase community spirit. Health and community cohesion are linked. In areas where people don't talk and connect with others, residents' health is usually poorer. The project aims to improve both in Lye.

The re-started Lye multicultural festival and carnival was a recent success. It brought the diverse community together, encouraged people to visit the high street and helped boost morale.

There is a high Romanian population in Lye and to understand the wishes of this community, staff gathered opinions from Romanian residents. Their feedback has helped shape the Future Primary Care Transformation Programme, to improve people's experiences at local GP surgeries, pharmacies, opticians, dentists and other health facilities.

From the insight gathered through the Life in Lye programme, a new way of working is being developed in Lye, where organisations such as the council, NHS, police and community groups will work more closely together as one system.

For more information, please contact Jody Pritchard, Public Health Manager, at joanna.pritchard@dudley.gov.uk. Plus you can follow **Life in Lye on Facebook**.



Lye carnival

Supporting residents through winter

Cold weather can be challenging for health and wellbeing, especially for older people and those with health concerns. To help residents prepare for whatever is to come during the colder months, Dudley Council is working with partners to share information, advice, signposting and support on keeping safe and well this winter.

Dudley Council's website has been updated with the latest information on subjects including keeping warm, money advice, safety and security, looking after your health, staying connected and top tips and resources.

The comprehensive **winter wellbeing** booklet has been revised and is available online, and hard copies will be given to appropriate residents. Information will be shared with partners to communicate onwards. Plus, this year the council is teaming up with local pharmacies to give information directly to relevant residents when they visit in store.

Visit the Dudley Council website for more information.



Screen capture of Winter Wellbeing leaflet

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Dudley Health and Care Partnership

Connecting communities and coordinating care to help citizens live longer, safer and healthier lives.

Dudley Freshers Fayres - teaching the new generation about the future of health services

Dudley College hosted several Freshers Fayres to introduce their students to the local businesses and services they can access. A number of health and wellbeing partners joined the event to help students understand what NHS services are available to them and how they can start to manage their health. They also helped the new students find out about NHS careers as they prepare for adulthood.

Hundreds of students attended both events, held over two days at Dudley Colleges Broadway Campus, Dudley, and Inspired Campus, Brierley Hill.

Across the many stalls, students and teachers were able to meet experts from across the health and care sector and receive health guidance around:

- Black Country Integrated Care Partnership Wellbeing Survey
- Pharmacy First Campaign, including new services provided by pharmacies
- Choose Well Campaign. Which services students should access for different types of ailments
- Health feedback services
- NHS App guidance
- Dudley Group Foundation Trust Charity aims and membership

Kat Rose, Director of Integration at the Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust said "Freshers Fayres are such an important event at the start of the new term and an ideal opportunity to share useful information on the services available to younger people. I am pleased the team were able to support the events and hopefully inspire the next generation of NHS staff."

Dance to health

Dance to health, the free dance class for over 50s in the Dudley borough, has expanded the number of sessions it runs to cover 11 locations.

The music-based course, commissioned by Dudley Council, has run for nearly two years. In that time more than 250 residents have danced, chatted and laughed their way to better fitness.

As well as having fun and learning new moves, people who attend benefit from the classes being a falls prevention programme. It combines strength and balance exercises with the creativity and energy of dance. Each class lasts 90 minutes, which includes 30 minutes' social time and a free cuppa.

Anyone who cannot attend in person, or prefers to exercise alone, can access 22 online videos to follow routines at home. Dance to health DVDs is also available to loan from Dudley, Stourbridge, Kingswinford, Sedgley, Halesowen and Brierley Hill libraries.

Recent quotes from people who attend classes, include:

"My memorable moment was the very first time I came, and I didn't have pain in my right hip after that."

"My balance and coordination is certainly a lot better."

"I consider it a bit of an amazing thing for a workout, for body and soul."

"If you hear music that we had in class, you actually start to smile... It's so nice to see a group of people all enjoying themselves and it makes you feel good."

To find out more, including how to book a place, visit the [Healthy Dudley website](#).



Image of dance to health

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Sandwell Health and Care Partnership

Sandwell Council launches mental health strategy

To mark World Mental Health Day on Thursday 10 October, Sandwell Council launched the 'Sandwell Better Mental Health Strategy 2024 - 2029'.

Developed by the council's Better Mental Health Partnership and with extensive consultation with the public and partner organisations, the strategy outlines 12 recommendations aimed at improving the mental wellbeing of Sandwell residents.

The council is committed to enabling everyone to have the best mental health they can, at every stage of their life. It recognises that for someone to have good "wellbeing" means more than just the absence of mental health difficulties and promotes a state of positive wellbeing, helping individuals recognise their abilities, manage normal stresses, work productively and contribute meaningfully to their community.

Sandwell Council's Cabinet Member for Adult Services, Health and Wellbeing, Councillor Jackie Taylor, said: "There is still a lot of stigma, a lot of cultural stigma around mental health, but there is a lot of stigma around a lot of things. It's for us to break that down and one of the best ways of doing that is this consistent talking about it, presenting it and making it a normal conversation because I firmly believe that if we do that then we will break the stigma, but not only that we will make it easier for other people."

Watch the video of councillors sharing their mental health stories on World Mental Health Day. For mental health support and to keep up with the implementation of the strategy and recommendations, [visit our Healthy Sandwell healthy minds webpage.](#)

Knife Angel visits Sandwell

A sculpture raising awareness of the impact of knife crime arrived in Sandwell in October.

The Knife Angel sculpture was located in Oldbury Civic Square near to Sandwell Council House in Oldbury town centre. Standing 27-feet tall and weighing 3.5 tons, it is comprised of 100,000 blunted knives received from 43 police forces across the UK. It took two years to create and has toured many UK towns and cities since November 2018.

Standing as a powerful reminder of the devastating impact of knife crime, the Knife Angel also symbolises the resilience of communities working together to combat violence and foster lasting change.

Leader of Sandwell Council, Councillor Kerrie Carmichael, said: "Knife-related crime is a concern across the UK, and it is important that we do all we can here in Sandwell to make sure people choose life, not knife. Most people do not carry knives; most young people do not carry knives. But we need anyone who does, or is tempted to carry a knife, to turn their back on a choice that could cost their or another person's life. This thought-provoking Knife Angel is a reminder of the real and tragic consequences of knife crime and will hopefully start conversations within families, among friends and in the community."

The Knife Angel sculpture was brought to the borough by Sandwell Council and the Safer Sandwell Partnership working together with British Ironwork Centre, West Midlands Police and the West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP).

You can read more about the Knife Angel on the Sandwell Council website.



The Knife Angel outside Sandwell Council House

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Stories of recovery to encourage others to get help for alcohol and drugs

Staff and service users at a Walsall-based alcohol and drugs service have shared their experiences about recovery as part of a local campaign to encourage residents to get help and support, either for themselves or family and friends.

Steve, SMART Recovery Facilitator, and service users Laura and Angela from The Beacon – Change Grow Live, shared about recovery in a video series as part of International Recovery Month which took place in September.

The Beacon, provided by Change Grow Live is commissioned by Walsall Council's Public Health team. It provides a range of specialist treatment services to individuals struggling with drug and alcohol addiction, including SMART Recovery - a judgment-free approach to recovery, providing individuals with a structured path to overcome addiction.

The council has worked with The Beacon at Change Grow Live to share these inspiring stories of residents who have successfully overcome challenges and achieved lasting recovery.

Councillor Gary Flint, Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing at Walsall Council said, "Substance misuse is a serious issue, but recovery is possible, and it is important for individuals to make the first step on that journey of change. Recovery is for

Everyone: Every Person, Every Family, Every Community. SMART Recovery provides valuable tools for individuals to determine whether they have a problem, builds up their motivation to change and offers a set of proven techniques to support recovery. It also helps individuals be part of a community. If you or someone you know needs support, please do reach out to The Beacon. We're here to help you every step of the way."

Anne Brunozzi, Service Manager at The Beacon - Change Grow Live said, "SMART Recovery has seen over 200 service users in Walsall to date. It's important that we all talk about our journeys and recoveries in a safe environment, as well as our experiences. For people like Laura, community has played a

big part in her recovery journey and has been able to change her life around with the right tools and support. Whatever you may be going through, please don't be afraid to access the support that is available. We can guide and support you through the process. Recovery is possible and it begins with you and the change you want to make in your life."

The ambition as part of We Are Walsall 2040 is for people in Walsall

to live healthier, more active lives and have accessible health services that meet the needs of our residents. Initiatives like SMART Recovery at The Beacon not only support individuals in overcoming addiction, but also contribute to building a stronger, healthier community. As organisations work towards becoming a borough where all residents can thrive, stories like Laura's and Angela's stories serve as a powerful reminder that with the right support, recovery is possible.

For more information about SMART Recovery and the services offered by The Beacon, please contact thebeacon.walsall@cgl.org.uk or call 01922 669840.

You can watch [Steve, SMART Recovery facilitator](#) and [Laura's and Angela's](#) stories.



From left to right – Steve, SMART Recovery Facilitator and service users Laura and Angela.

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Working together for better health and care

City marks World Mental Health Day 2024

Wolverhampton marked this year's World Mental Health Day with a series of events at local libraries. World Mental Health Day takes place every year on 10 October. This year, the theme was 'prioritising mental health in the workplace'.

John Denley, Wolverhampton's Director of Public Health, said: "Talking about our mental health can help us cope better with life's ups and downs. So, on World Mental Health Day and beyond it, why not check in with your friends, family, or colleagues? For many of us, work is a significant part of our lives. Having a fulfilling job can be good for our mental health and general wellbeing. However, a negative working environment can be a source of stress and anxiety and contribute to developing or worsening mental health issues. A mentally healthy workplace can make a huge difference to how we feel.

Wolverhampton Libraries' friendly Know Your Neighbourhood groups invited people to join them at special sessions covering activities such as painting plant pots, walking, board games and coffee mornings.

Find out more at <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/get-involved>

Smokers offered free support so they can Swap to Stop

Smokers in Wolverhampton are being encouraged to 'Swap to Stop' and take advantage of free vaping kits and behavioural support on offer to help them quit.

The Government recently announced a number of measures to ensure that the country achieves its ambition of becoming Smokefree

by 2030, including the provision of a million 'Swap to Stop' kits as a way to support people to quit smoking. The City of Wolverhampton Council is working to make these kits available at a range of community venues, including the city's eight Family Hubs, the three WV Active leisure centres and Bilston, Warstones and Wednesfield libraries.

The service will be delivered by trained members of staff, who will offer free vape starter kits alongside support and weekly 'check-in' sessions delivered from the convenience of local community venues to help people on their quitting journey over a period of 12 weeks.

The new service was officially launched in September. **To sign up for free, visit the City of Wolverhampton Council's website.**

Councillor Jasbir Jaspal, the City of Wolverhampton Council's Cabinet Member for Adults and Wellbeing, said: "Stopping smoking is the best thing you can do for your health and the health of those around you. Smoking is still the single largest preventable cause of death in England, accounting for around for 64,000 deaths annually. Almost every minute of every day someone is admitted to hospital with a smoking-related disease – but, when you stop smoking, there are almost immediate improvements to your health. Nicotine vaping is substantially less harmful than smoking and is also one of the most effective tools for quitting, so we are delighted to deliver this Swap to Stop support in the community in Wolverhampton. If you want to quit, please sign up today."

For more help and support to stop smoking, please visit www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/besmokefree.



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Working together for better health and care

Quit smoking for good

Smokers were encouraged to try and stub out their cigarettes during Stoptober – and quit

smoking for good. The annual Stoptober campaign called on smokers in Wolverhampton to join the millions of people across England who have made a quit attempt since Stoptober launched over a decade ago.

John Denley, the City of Wolverhampton Council's Director of Public Health, said: "Stopping smoking is the best thing you can do for your health and the health of those around you, on both a short-term and long-term basis. When you stop smoking, good things start to happen – you can begin to see almost immediate improvements to your health.

Stoptober offered a range of free quitting tools including the free NHS Quit Smoking app, available from the App Store and Google Play, which allows you to track your progress, get daily support and see how much money you are saving. There is a Quit Smoking Support Group on Facebook, or you can sign up for daily email support.

For more information about Stoptober, visit www.nhs.uk/stoptober. For more help and support to stop smoking, please visit www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/besmokefree.



New virtual breastfeeding support group launched

A new virtual breastfeeding support group launched in Wolverhampton in September.

It meets on Mondays via Microsoft Teams from 7.00pm 8.30pm. To take part, please email familyhubs.infantfeeding@wolverhampton.gov.uk.

It joins a series of regular in-person support groups which meet across the city, including at:

- Bingley Family Hub, WV3 0JE, on Tuesdays from 12 noon to 2pm
- Children's Village Family Hub, WV11 1PE, on Wednesdays from 10am to 12 noon
- Bilston Library, WV14 7LU, on Thursdays from 12 noon to 2pm
- and Whitmore Reans Family Hub, WV1 4AL, on Fridays from 10am to 12 noon.

All groups are drop in, with no need to book. New parents, pregnant people and toddlers are always welcome and free refreshments are provided.

Councillor Jasbir Jaspal, the City of Wolverhampton Council's Cabinet Member for Adults and Wellbeing, added: "Breastfeeding has long-term benefits for mother and baby and so we're keen to encourage it. These support groups, including the new virtual group which has just been launched, give new and expectant parents the help and guidance they need around feeding, and to support and develop their relationship with their baby. They also have the chance to meet other new parents."

Poppy Davies, Breastfeeding Support Co-ordinator at The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust, said: "We know how difficult breastfeeding can be, especially in the early days, so we hope that parents and parents to be will come along to one of our regular breastfeeding support groups to find out more about feeding their babies and see what help is on offer for them."

There is also lots of advice available on the [NHS website](http://www.nhs.uk) or by calling the Infant Feeding Team directly on 01902 695578.



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Working together for better health and care

Embracing technology enhanced care

OneWolverhampton hosted its first Technology Enabled Care Independent Living Week in early September, bringing partners together to celebrate the impact of digital technology in improving health and empowering independent living in the city.

The week kicked off with a half day event giving health and social care colleagues, who support people through technology enabled care (TEC), the opportunity to share best practice and learn from each other, as well as have their say on how a more joined up approach to providing such care can be taken in the future.

A marketplace of TEC suppliers gave attendees the chance to find out more about the latest technology available to help people access to the tools they need to live independently and manage their health and well-being at home.

Andrew Wolverson, Director of Adult Social Care for Wolverhampton Council, welcomed attendees highlighting the important role TEC is playing in delivering health and social care in an ever-changing environment. He said: "Making TEC a priority isn't just about keeping up with the latest gadgets—it's about making real, positive changes in how we deliver care. Technology is no longer just an extra; it's a key part of a modern, effective social care system. By focusing



Event attendees

on TEC, we're committing to giving everyone access to the tools they need to live independently, safely, and with dignity."

Diane Vukmirovic, a participant with lived experience, said: "I really enjoyed the day. I have a lot of opinions on older people's care, and the way older people are treated as they get older, which has been great to share. I have loved the TEC I have seen and it's going to be helpful for me. I have started to think about how I can future proof my home after having a fall to make it simpler to get around."

Throughout the week over a 120 people joined a series of webinars covering topics including compliance with data protection legislation, funding for digital care records, digital support for mental health care, digital switchover, behaviour science and tips on practical improvements in the use of digital health technologies as well as digital inclusion and finishing the week with a live example of how advanced technologies are being used to support over 300 adults with care needs.

All the feedback collected over the week will now be used to look at how we can make the best use of technology across



Wolverhampton to meet the challenges ahead, improving the experience for those we care for, support our staff, and ultimately enhancing the quality of life for everyone.

Marketplace attendees



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Faster, Better, Safer care

Gold standard accolade given to multiple wards at Dudley NHS Trust

Celebrations took place at Russells Hall Hospital in Dudley during September as two clinical wards have both received Gold Standard Framework (GSF) accreditations, which is an esteemed recognition of the high level of care being delivered by those departments.

Ward C5 which specialises in Respiratory Care and Ward C6 which specialises in Urology have successfully managed to achieve the accreditation for the very first time.

Ward sister on the Urology Ward Leanne McKeown said "As a team we are so passionate about palliative and end of life care, so we are thrilled to receive GSF accreditation. This achievement acknowledges all the hard work the team put in to make a difference to patients"

In addition, wards providing care in the areas of Renal, Oncology and Frailty have cemented Gold Standards Framework re-accreditation, another huge achievement for the Trust.

The Gold Standards Framework (GSF) is the UK's leading training provider for frontline healthcare staff, caring for people in their last years of life. GSF is a practical and evidence-based end of life care improvement programme, which aims to enable a 'gold standard' of care for everyone, with any condition, in any setting, given by any care provider, at any time in a person's last years of life.

When hosting an external assessor, staff on the Respiratory Wards took the opportunity to debut their new 'Sunflower Suite' which



Ward C6 staff

was funded by generous donations through the Trust's charity. The room is a calm and peaceful space for both patients and their loved ones, as well as staff to take a moment of respite whenever they need it.

The hallmark lasts for a period of three years before it can be re-applied for. In order to obtain the accreditation, the areas have to clearly show how they are supporting both families and patients to discuss end of life care planning and what



Ward C5 staff

matters to them. To gain accreditation the wards have undergone an inspection from the GSF national team to review their practices against the evidence submitted by the ward teams.

Diane Wake, chief executive for The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust, said "I am thrilled that our Respiratory and Urology teams have successfully achieved the accreditation from GSF for the first time. Having this accolade further demonstrates the hard work and dedication our staff show every day to their patients to ensure the highest standard of care is being given to the people of Dudley. I'm equally proud of our Oncology, Frailty and Renal teams who have achieved re-accreditation!

"It's brilliant for our staff to see their hard work being recognised to a national standard and that they can proudly say they work on a ward that is delivering such high-quality care."

The Gold Standard Framework supports healthcare staff to enable a 'gold standard' of care for people nearing end of life, supporting both families and patients to discuss end of life care planning and what matters to them the most. Securing the accreditation solidifies that The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust are providing a high standard of care consistently.

The awards will be presented at the GSF Conference and Awards Ceremony.

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Mum becomes first patient to have op at new hospital

Harbans Kaur underwent hip surgery at the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital on Sunday 6 October, the same day the healthcare facility opened.

She said: "I've seen them building the hospital over the years so to be the first person to have an operation is a proud moment."

Mrs Kaur, aged 78, suffered a fracture at home on Friday and was taken to Sandwell Hospital. She was then transferred to the Midland Met on Sunday morning in a meticulously planned process by Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust which runs both hospitals.

Around 175 patients were moved from Sandwell Hospital through the morning and into the early afternoon.

"It was originally planned to have the operation at Sandwell but then they brought me here," Mrs Kaur added. "I didn't know that I would end up having the operation at the new hospital, but it's a real privilege to be the first person to have surgery. The ward is very nice and spacious."

Daughter Charanjit Kaur, visited her mum on Monday morning. She said: "It's reassuring to know that my mum had her operation in the new hospital which has all these new facilities. It was unexpected and of course it's never nice to be in hospital. But at least she is being cared for in an improved environment. The new hospital is very nice."

Mr Saad Elashry, who carried out the operation, said: "The operation went very well and was completed safely. We try and prioritise patients who've come in with this type of fracture which is treated by replacing the hip. Being able to do this in the Midland Met means a better patient journey as the facilities are closer together. It was a great feeling to know that the team and I were the first to be operating in the new hospital."



Harbans Kaur who became the first patient to be operated on at the Midland Met

International bowel training group

The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust (DGFT) has become one of the first Trusts in the country to have been awarded training status from the International Bowel Ultrasound Group (IBUS).

Dr Shanika De Silva, consultant gastroenterologist, established the Bowel Ultrasound Service at DGFT following successful training and accreditation. Since then, Dudley has become one of the first active training centres for Bowel Ultrasound within the UK. Training is organised through the IBUS for trainees interested in applying. IBUS aims to advance intestinal ultrasound research, education and clinical applicability in the area of inflammatory bowel disease (IBD).

The ultrasound procedure is non-invasive for managing patients with inflammatory bowel disease, this offers an alternative to Colonoscopy and MRI scans with no need for bowel preparation.

The patients attend for a one stop shop where they can have their outpatient appointment and bowel ultrasound in one visit. This is a quicker diagnostic and helps to expedite IBD patient pathways. There is also the potential to undertake the procedure as an inpatient.

Lucy Ford, directorate manager for GHOPE said "This is a fantastic new service that we are offering to our IBD patients at the Dudley Group. These patients will receive a consultation, their bowel USS and results in one outpatient appointment. We are very proud of what Dr De Silva has achieved and look forward to welcoming the trainees to the Trust."



Dr Shanika De Silva, consultant gastroenterologist at The Dudley Group, pictured next to a bowel ultrasound machine

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New service to combat disease outbreaks in the Black Country

The NHS Black Country Integrated Care Board (ICB) is proud to announce the launch of the Community Outbreak Response Service (CORS), a new initiative designed to support the management and contain outbreaks of infectious diseases.

This service will provide critical diagnostic, treatment, and post-exposure care directly in the community, ensuring timely and effective responses to health threats.

Diseases managed by the service includes:

- seasonal and avian influenza
- measles
- mpox
- scabies
- hepatitis A, B, and C.

CORS will be available to all patients registered with a Black Country GP, including those in care homes and migrant and homeless populations, following referral from a healthcare professional.

The service will operate Monday to Friday, from 8am to 6pm including Bank Holidays, ensuring swift action within 24 hours of receiving a referral. If a referral is received after 6pm on a Friday or at any time over the weekend, this should be enacted at the earliest opportunity on the next service operational day.

Sally Roberts, Chief Nursing Officer for the NHS Black Country ICB, said: "With CORS, we aim to reduce the spread of infectious diseases by providing quick and efficient care to those in need. Our team is equipped to handle various diseases such as influenza, measles, scabies, and more."

For more information about CORS, please visit the NHS Black Country ICB website.

New service to combat disease outbreaks in the Black Country

Dudley residents aged 55 to 75 who smoke or have a history of smoking, now have access to a vital new health service aimed at improving the early detection of lung cancer. The Targeted Lung Health Check Programme (TLHC) launched across Dudley in late August to improve outcomes for those at risk of lung cancer in the

area following successful launches in Birmingham, Solihull and Sandwell.

The new service targets individuals who are:

- between the ages of 55 and 74.
- have a history of smoking.
- are registered with a Dudley GP.

Eligible residents will receive a letter from their GP inviting them to a lung health check, which includes an assessment of their risk of lung cancer. The programme is starting with practices based in Kingswinford and will be rolled out to more practices across the borough over the coming weeks. Dudley now has an opportunity to improve early detection of lung cancer, as currently, a higher proportion of cases are diagnosed at later stages. The TLHC Programme aims to address the disparity by providing accessible and proactive screening for eligible individuals.

Dr Mazhar Chaudri, clinical director for Targeted Lung Health Checks/ consultant respiratory physician, said: "Early detection saves lives. By identifying lung cancer at an early stage, we can significantly improve survival rates and provide timely treatment. The introduction of the Targeted Lung Health Check Programme in Dudley is a significant milestone in our ongoing efforts to reduce cancer mortality rates. I encourage all eligible individuals to participate in this vital programme."

To encourage participation, an awareness campaign is being launched, including adverts on buses, social media, and Black Country Radio. Additionally, a mobile screening van is stationed at locations across Dudley to provide convenient access to the lung health check for residents.

For more information about the new lung health check service visit: www.dgft.nhs.uk/targeted-lung-health-checks/



Pictured Health Care Assistants, Asifa Arif and Targeted Lung health Nurse, Samikshya Pandey at the mobile scanning van at Morrisons, Kingswinford.

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Double hip surgery patient praises 23-hour stay

A mum has praised surgeons at Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust after undergoing two hip operations which saw her admitted and discharged within 23 hours on each occasion.

Margaret Jones, aged 64, first underwent surgery in March to her left hip and was given a low dose spinal block during the hour-long procedure. Her remarkable recovery led to surgeons booking her in for her right-side hip operation – taking place just four months later.

Retired civil servant Margaret, who first experienced hip pain whilst on holiday in 2022, said: "The whole experience has been amazing. I met the criteria, and I was given the spinal block. I was awake throughout the procedures on both occasions but didn't feel a thing. My recovery has been remarkable. I was walking around in the ward with a physiotherapist less than three hours after the operation. I definitely feel that a shorter stay in hospital has led to a better recovery. I can't thank everyone enough for what they have done. The pain has completely disappeared."

The 23-hour admission aids streamlining the service.

Mr Manoj Sikand, Trauma and Orthopaedic Consultant who carried out the surgery, said: "Margaret fell under our enhanced recovery pathway as a 23-hour admission. In this pathway the patient is educated right from the time from when they are listed for the operation and will need to fit criteria of being relatively fit, willing and having family support at home. But this will be extended very soon, benefitting lots of other patients already on the waiting list for other types of surgery."

Dr Latha Murali, Consultant Anaesthetist, added: "We use low dose spinal anaesthetic to facilitate early physiotherapy and mobilisation and a supported discharge programme."

Mr Sikand continued: "This is a relatively a new process and it will see significant savings of around £400 per day per patient. It can, in the future show a reduction in waiting times as more patients can be admitted and operated on."



Margaret Jones who had a 23-hour stay hip operation, with surgeon Mr Manoj Sikand

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Health and Wellbeing

Mental Health, Learning Disabilities and Autism

State-of-the-art mental health unit for older adults unveiled at celebration event

A new state-of-the-art unit providing mental health care for older adults in Walsall has been unveiled at a special celebration event.

Attendees were able to take a look around the new Dorothy Pattison Older Adult Unit during a celebration of the facility on Friday 4 October. The Lord-Lieutenant for the West Midlands, Derrick Anderson CBE, led the unveiling, where he was joined by members of staff from across the Trust who have made the ambitious project a reality. Along with a ribbon cutting ceremony, speeches and tours, the event included a presentation of art work from current patients at nearby Bloxwich Hospital and a poetry reading from local poetry winner Connor Hill.

The new unit, which is based alongside the existing Dorothy Pattison

Hospital, has two ground floor wards with en-suite accommodation, flexible therapy space and an outdoor garden area.

Many of the patients cared for at the hospital will have dementia, so dementia-friendly elements have been integral to the design to support people in a sensitive and safe way during their stay. As well as providing a modern, safe environment, the build has a focus on energy-efficient design and will have a small number of electric car charge points, a first for the Trust.

Jeremy Vanes, Chair of Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, said: "We are delighted to celebrate this wonderful new facility which will make a real difference to mental health care for older adults in Walsall and the wider Black Country. I would like to thank staff across our Trust who work around the clock to serve patients. The unveiling of this facility marks a new chapter for older adult mental health care in the Black Country, but it also demonstrates the continuation of our commitment to provide the best possible experience for people in our care. It was wonderful to celebrate this new facility with the Lord Lieutenant and to share with him the hard work and dedication of our staff who are committed to providing the best possible care for our communities across the Black Country."

Derrick Anderson CBE, the Lord-Lieutenant for the West Midlands, said: "I was delighted to unveil the new Dorothy Pattison Older Adult Unit and to learn more about how it will enhance the quality of care provided to the Black Country community. Dementia is a challenge faced by many families across our community, and the journey for those living with the condition is often a deeply personal and difficult one. This unit will provide personalised, specialist care for people with dementia which will make a significant impact on patients, their carers and families.

"I would like to thank those who have worked tirelessly to bring this project to life. It is through their dedication that some of the most vulnerable in our society, older adults with mental health needs, are provided the dignity, care, and support that they need."



The Lord-Lieutenant for the West Midlands, Derrick Anderson CBE, leading the ribbon cutting.

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WorkWell pilot officially launches across the Black Country

A new pilot set to support thousands of people across the Black Country with health conditions and disabilities to find or retain employment to boost their wellbeing has officially launched.

The Black Country is one of just 15 places around the country chosen as a pilot area for the WorkWell scheme which will provide early intervention to people who are experiencing barriers to gain or retain employment due to health conditions or disabilities.

Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (BCHFT) are leading the development, bringing together partner organisations across the system to provide knowledge and shared learning to develop the service, as well as opportunities to provide holistic and personalised support to individuals to help them achieve their goals.

Partnership working across the NHS, local government, job centres, social housing, education, the voluntary sector and wider employers was integral to the success of the bid as organisations have worked together to gain the £3.7 million of government funding to make the scheme a reality.

Work and Health Coaches will be on hand to meet with participants to gain an understanding of their needs, areas of work they are interested in pursuing and what help they need to overcome barriers to achieve their goals. The participant will be offered support and referred to other services if longer-term help is required.

BCHFT has a strong record of delivering successful employment and health schemes. The Thrive into Work service, which helps people with mental and physical health needs find and retain work, last year supported 867 people who accessed this service towards this goal. Meanwhile, the IPS Employment Service which helps people who are receiving secondary mental health care to gain and retain work, helped 1106 people who accessed this service.

How to refer into the service?

Please contact the team to make your referral – they will then work with this individual to support them to remain or regain employment. We are working on an electronic referral system which will be up and running by the end of October.

Email: bchft.workwellteam@nhs.net

Telephone: 0800 952 6955

Website: <https://www.blackcountryhealthcare.nhs.uk/our-services/workwell>



Meet the WorkWell team - (L-R) Naz Ahmed (Work and Health Coach), Lindsay Hill (Senior Work and Health Coach), Richard Mettrick (WorkWell Manager), Claire Thomas (Work and Health Coach), Peta Cutrera (Senior Work and Health Coach).

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A new approach to involving people and communities

From listening, to acting together. Co-creating digitally enabled futures

We know that conversations can create health. By listening more – instead of broadcasting and trying to ‘fix’ – we can better understand what’s important and what really matters to our people and communities. The involvement team from the NHS Black Country Integrated Care Board, recently visited social groups hosted by the Macular Society in Dudley, Sandwell, and Wolverhampton and Walsall Society for the Blind.

There they heard from group participants with visual impairments about their appetite to learn more about digital technology and embrace digital tools like the NHS App and other digital services. However, there are challenges that people with sight loss face when making bookings and accessing healthcare online and over the phone, and anxieties about being “left behind in the digital world”.

“Everything seems to take so much longer now regarding booking appointments and if I can quicken the process by improving my IT skills then I will.”

It was clear that there was an opportunity and energy from all involved to act on what we’d heard. Work quickly began on the co-creation of ‘Digi-Days’. Collaborating with local people, trusted voices, voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) sector leaders, colleagues from the ICBs involvement and digital first teams set to work co-designing an event plan for digital themed workshops. Key to the development of the plan was ensuring that the events responded to what was harvested during community conversations: support available at places people recognised and felt safe, provide support/skills, knowledge and confidence of how to use digital equipment and the NHS App.

“I don’t use the NHS app, I don’t know what it is, and feel I need some additional help and support in person on how to set the app up and use it effectively within an environment, where I am welcome, safe, and comfortable”

At our first Digi-Day, hosted at the Beacon Centre for the Blind in October 2024, hosts supported ten attendees. Everyone was helped to download and set up an account on the NHS App and how to navigate the app as well as being shown how to contact their GP and access their health information via the NHS App/GP website.

Through the Black Country Connected Programme hosts were also able to provide five Beacon residents access to a Geobook laptop and internet connectivity.

Andy Billingham, Strategic lead for Beacon, said “The Digi-Day went very well, the feedback I received from people who attended said that the hosting team was amazing on the day, supporting them in setting up the NHS App and showing them how to use it.”

Andy also received some feedback on the impact that being able to access laptops has had for the five Beacon residents who received them. One attendee said: “It was really helpful, as they only had their mobile phones to access the internet, and said the addition of a laptop would help them use the internet more and connect with other people and services.”

The hosting team are finalising plans for a second Digi-Day, this time with trusted voices and people with lived experience of hearing impairments. The workshops continue to be co-created with people and communities by listening to their wants and needs, and working collaboratively on how we can respond and support from a digital perspective.

To learn more about Digi-Day workshops, the ICB Black Country Connected or Digital First programmes, contact Bcicb.digitalfirstteam@nhs.net. You can also watch this [short video](#) to learn more about how we’re collaborating with people, communities and partners to transform digital access.



ICB Digital First Project Support Officer helping a Digi-Day attendee to register for the NHS app at the Beacon Centre in October 2024

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Our people

Making the Black Country a great place to work

In my role as Chief People Officer, working in the second most deprived system in the Country, I often have to remind myself that long-term cultural change takes time. Changing culture and winning hearts and minds is part of our cultural transformation journey, and I am cognisant of the responsibility of ensuring that our People Programme of work benefits both our workforce and patient population.

This is why our 'one workforce' approach is so important. It will support us in our ambition to ensure the Black Country is a great place to work, and it serves as a powerful reminder that we all have a part to play in creating real and lasting change when it comes to improving the experience of our staff and tackling the health inequalities prevalent in the Black Country system. We can only accelerate the pace of cultural change by truly embracing our 'one workforce' approach and tackling the inequalities together.

Our People Programme of work isn't a quick fix, nor is it a "one-size-fits-all" approach to tackling workforce and health inequalities, and that is why it is crucial that we continue to work in partnership with our system partners. Having their input will help ensure that our work has tangible outcomes, such as improved retention, improvements in staff experience and wellbeing, and ultimately, a positive impact on patient care and the residents of the Black Country.

In my previous updates, I have shared our ambitions to develop a culture across the whole of health and care where we have a shared vision and where our colleagues

understand their role in contributing to the priorities of the Black Country. Developing this collective approach to 'one workforce' has begun by engaging with our partners with the objective of learning more about each other, including our successes, challenges and what we are collectively most proud of. We are now planning on engaging partners to contribute to a system workshop to understand our purpose, which in turn will drive our key areas of focus of collaborative exploration.

Diversifying our leadership pipeline is a key priority for our People Programme, and we are excited to be developing a number of programmes that aim to increase the number of leaders from a diverse background. Reflecting on national challenges, we have designed a Chief Allied Health Professional (AHP) programme, and we are about to use evidence to create a localised Black Country programme that incorporates an improvement methodology.

I am pleased to share that we have partnered with the West Midlands Combined Authority to implement an evidence-based health and wellbeing app for colleagues across health and care. The app, EasyChange, provides a diagnostic for colleagues with recommendations to focus on a health improvement, for example, sleep, diet and smoking cessation, amongst others. This app provides another resource to the extensive provision, demonstrating our commitment to supporting our workforce.

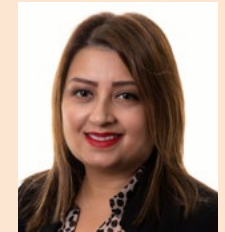
I was also privileged to be invited to a round table event with Richard Parker, Mayor of the West Midlands Combined Authority, to discuss youth unemployment. The event brought industry partners together to discuss the challenges within the local labour market for young job seekers and recruiting

employers offering accessible opportunities for this cohort of job seekers. The event also aimed to identify areas where system partners could collaborate to support the Mayor's pledge to increase training placements by 20,000 over the next 12 months. We know that people are six times more likely to have a chance of securing employment through training placements. As an anchor employer, we are committed to supporting this target and will be working across the system to identify how we can work with our system partners to support this ambition.

I recently attended the Hereford and Worcester ICS Big Inclusion Conference to share good practice and information about our equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) programme of work in the Black Country. There is great work being done by so many places and it is always beneficial to listen, learn and share with wider colleagues as our challenges are so similar.

My final update for this edition is to report on the positive involvement of our system Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) who took time out of their busy schedules to participate in our National Inclusion Week celebrations from 23-29 September. It was really uplifting to hear from our system CEOs about their pledges and commitment to improving our approach to EDI within the Black Country.

I look forward to continuing to work with our system CEOs and partner organisations to enhance and embed our EDI pledges in support of our ambition to make the Black Country a great place to work.



Shajeda Ahmed,
Chief People Officer

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New Chief Executive to start in January

We are pleased to announce the appointment of Joanne (Joe) Chadwick-Bell as the new Group Chief Executive for The Royal Wolverhampton and Walsall Healthcare NHS Trusts following a competitive and open recruitment process. Joe will take over from Interim Group Chief Executive, Caroline Walker, who stepped into the role in May this year, following the retirement of long serving Chief Executive Professor David Loughton CBE.

Joe is currently Chief Executive at East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust (ESHT), an integrated acute and community provider, and will start her new role early in January 2025.

Joe has more than 30 years of experience in the health sector. She began her NHS career working in the Pharmacy Department at Eastbourne District General Hospital back in 1989 and has worked in both ambulance and acute provider Trusts as well as spending a period of time in a Strategic Health Authority.

She progressed to senior leadership roles in the provider sector, before moving to the independent sector in 2013 to become a Regional Director for Care UK, responsible for the delivery of primary care services, including out of hours, 111, GP practices and Walk in and Urgent Care Centres.

She returned to the NHS in 2016, becoming the Chief Operating Officer at East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust (ESHT), an integrated acute and community provider. She became Deputy Chief Executive in 2019, was appointed acting Chief Executive in 2020 and in 2021 was substantively appointed to the Chief Executive role.

She is looking forward to working in the Black Country and will relocate to this area to take up her new role.

She said: "I recognise this role is a huge privilege and I am really looking forward to meeting and working with Wolverhampton and Walsall colleagues and stakeholders across the Black Country system. Every part of the NHS is under significant pressure at the moment and Wolverhampton and Walsall are no exception. When I join the Trusts in January, I'll be focusing on making sure that we look after our patients and our staff to the highest standards against this challenging backdrop."

Caroline Walker will stay in her role as Interim Group Chief Executive until Joe joins the Trusts next year.



Joanne Chadwick

New local authority Board member for the Black Country ICB

Local leader, Emma Bennett, has been appointed to the Board of the NHS Black Country Integrated Care Board (ICB) as local authority partner member.

Emma Bennett is the Chief Executive of Walsall Council, following her appointment to the role in October 2023. Prior to this, she was the Executive Director of Families for the City of Wolverhampton Council.

She has a professional background in children's social work, having undertaken a wide range of frontline practitioner and management roles across children's social care, and has over 26 years' experience in local government. Emma brings with her extensive experience in system leadership, with a belief in a co-production approach to enable resilient communities and more sustainable public services.

Emma has now joined the NHS Black Country ICB as local authority partner member, replacing Kevin O'Keefe, Chief Executive of Dudley Council, who retired earlier this year.

Emma said: "I am thrilled to be joining the ICB board as the local authority partner member. Our shared commitment to the wellbeing of Walsall aligns perfectly with the ICB's priorities.

"By working together, we can enhance health and social care outcomes, address inequalities and ensure that every person in our community has the best start in life.

"This partnership will be key in meeting the needs of the Black Country population and building a healthier and happier future for all."

Anu Singh, Chair of the NHS Black Country ICB, said: "We're delighted to welcome Emma as our newest local authority partner member. She brings a wealth of experience to the role, which will undoubtedly add further quality to the work we do as a Board.

"It's vital that we have local authority representation in our leadership team to share knowledge and experience of the sector and to ensure that we continue to work collectively to help improve health outcomes for local people.

"We also thank Kevin O'Keefe for his support over the last two years and wish him a very happy retirement."



Emma Bennett

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Awards

NHS leader receives top accolade

A leader from the NHS Black Country Integrated Care Board (ICB) has been awarded an Honorary Fellowship by the University of Wolverhampton.

Hemant Patel, Associate Director of Medicines and Clinical Policy at the NHS Black Country Integrated Care Board (ICB) was presented the award for his role in improving health outcomes for people living in Wolverhampton and the Black Country.

Honorary awards are presented by the University of Wolverhampton to people who have made a significant contribution to their field of expertise.

Hemant first qualified as a pharmacist in 1999 and since then has worked for Boots the Chemist, The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Hospital Trust, Wolverhampton City Primary Care Trust, NHS Wolverhampton Clinical Commissioning Group, Walsall Primary Care Trust and NHS Walsall Clinical Commissioning Group.



Hemant Patel receiving his honorary fellowship

In his current role as Associate Director of Medicines and Clinical Policy, Hemant helps to commission medicines and clinical policies for local people in the Black Country and has also recently been awarded a Fellowship from the Royal Pharmaceutical Society.

Hemant said: "I am overwhelmed with gratitude to have my work recognised in this way and to receive such a prestigious honour from the University of Wolverhampton. I'm not completely sure how this all came about, after all you don't come to work and serve your local community to receive awards. However, it's a wonderful feeling to know that others are looking at what you've done and achieved in the field of pharmacy and prescribing.

"I have worked with the university for more than ten years now and I'm incredibly grateful to all those that have supported me over the years, in particular Professor Ruth Edwards, who is head of school of pharmacy, the Board of Governors and the Vice Chancellor.

"Ever since I was a young boy, I always aspired to work in healthcare and even back then pharmacy had a special appeal to me. It has been a privilege to be able to help improve the safety of prescribing, supply and administration of medicines for local people and I'm always encouraging our fellow pharmacy professionals to work to the very best of their ability to help maximise the benefits for our patients."

Mark Axcell, Chief Executive Officer for the NHS Black Country ICB, said: "Hemant plays a vital role in improving patient care in the Black Country and it's brilliant that he has been recognised with such a prestigious award by the University of Wolverhampton.

"He embodies commitment and dedication to the field of pharmacy and works tirelessly to help improve the safety of prescribing, supply and administration of medicines for our patients.

"He is a fantastic leader and colleague and is a brilliant ambassador for pharmacists in the Black Country, so on behalf of the ICB I'd like to say a huge congratulations to Hemant."

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NHS staff commended at university apprenticeship awards

Two healthcare workers from Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust are celebrating after scooping awards at a prestigious university awards event.

Nurse Associate Educator, Aaron Bertram-Miller picked up the Embracing Inclusion and Diversity in the Workplace accolade, whilst Jewlee Robinson, an Apprentice Midwife, won the Celebrating Apprentice Success gong in the Wolverhampton University Apprenticeship Awards.

The pair attended the ceremony, hosted at the National Brownfield Institute – which was the first of its kind.

Aaron said: "I am overwhelmed and honoured to receive this award. None of this would have been possible without the help of the Nursing and Midwifery Education Team who have helped me on my journey. In my opinion, they are truly the best team in the Trust."

The judges, made up of senior lecturers and key personnel from the university, added: "Aaron has taken a proactive approach to his learning, shown courage and worked hard. He is also a champion of diversity and always happy to share his journey with other student groups, thereby inspiring and motivating others, particularly those individuals from the Global Majority."

Lead Nurse in the Education Team, Theresa Morris also commended Aaron. She said: "He has always put others needs before his own and is truly a kind, caring and compassionate individual. He deserves the award as he really goes above and beyond to ensure inclusivity and diversity."

Meanwhile Jewlee was commended for her dedication.

Senior Lecturer, Olivia Ursell said: "Jewlee has shown evidence of excellent commitment and dedication since the beginning. She was keen to talk to new apprentices about the programme and offered excellent advice. She has also had the honour of representing the University at the National Royal College of Midwives Conference."

Aaron has already achieved his Nursing Associate Foundation Degree and now continues on the Nursing Degree Apprenticeship route to become a Registered Nurse. Jewlee is set to qualify as a Midwife this September but is already showing enthusiasm for returning to support the next intake of students.

Apprenticeship team recognised for career opportunities

The apprenticeships team at Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust have scooped the Industrialist of the Year award following their efforts in providing work experience placements for local schools and colleges. Hosted by Sandwell Academy, those in attendance came to recognise the vital role the Trust plays in the partnership between education and industry.

Maxine Griffiths, Widening Participation Manager and Apprenticeship Lead at the organisation, said: "I am very proud of all the work the team undertakes to enhance knowledge around NHS career opportunities and choices for our local students. Having recognition from one of our local schools for this work is truly amazing. We were honoured and delighted to receive the trophy at Sandwell Academy's prestigious awards evening for our partnership with them."

The team at the Trust have been keen to discuss and encourage a variety of entry routes for all roles, offering apprenticeships from level 2 to 7. As a result, it provides local students with the opportunity to see 'inside' the NHS.

Nikki Smith, Work Experience and School Engagement Lead, said: "It is a privilege to provide local students with work experience placements at the Trust and hope many of them will become part of our future workforce."

Karen Whitehouse, Apprenticeship Coordinator added: "October will see us holding our second annual 'insights into NHS careers at SWB'. Students from local schools and colleges will be invited to discuss with expert panels covering specific areas that include medicine, nursing, midwifery, and wider healthcare teams – along with a career marketplace where students can find out about different careers in the NHS.

"As the largest employer in a very diverse area, we have social responsibilities to support our local population, encourage them to join our workforce, support the local economy, and help to raise standards of living."



The Apprenticeship team pick up an award from Sandwell Academy



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Events

NHS leader receives top accolade

A leader from the NHS Black Country Integrated Care Board (ICB) has been awarded an Honorary Fellowship by the University of Wolverhampton.

The first Black Country Health and Housing conference was held at The Molineux stadium in September, with over 150 professionals from across the Integrated Care System coming together to explore the opportunities of health and housing working together in order to improve health outcomes of our local population.

Organised jointly by The Black Country Integrated Care Board (ICB) and whg, a housing association based in Walsall, the conference is part of the work of the Black Country Strategic Health and Housing Forum. This brings social housing providers and health together to tackle health inequalities, drive prevention and ensure that people living in social housing have equitable access to health services.

Attendees heard from a range of guest speakers including Sir David Nicholson who talked about the importance of the NHS doing things differently and harnessing the capability and reach of our Social Housing partners in connecting with our underserved communities emphasising that this work is groundbreaking within the Black Country and beyond.

Tapiwa Mtemachani, Director of Transformation, Partnership and Population Health Academy for NHS Black Country ICB set the scene sharing key data to demonstrate the need to work in partnership with social housing. He said: "I believe if we understand the correlation between deprivation, demand, social housing and prevalence it will allow us to work together to tackle housing inequalities, as well as health inequalities also."

Connie Jennings Director of Social Housing for whg and Viv Marsh, Clinical Lead for Children and young People's Asthma Transformation, Black Country ICB, shared the ACEing Asthma programme as an example where genuine partnership work is leading to improvements for children with asthma. The work has been shortlisted for a HSJ award and is one of a number of evidence-based initiatives that are being delivered across the Black Country.



Sir David Nicholson, chair of the four Acute Trusts within the Black Country, sharing the strategic challenges we are facing,

Dr Katriona O'Sullivan, Keynote Speaker and Author, travelled from Ireland to join the conference and share her lived experience, as detailed in her bestselling novel, 'Poor'. She commented: "This conference has been very beneficial and shows how we can work together as a system to make even small changes which will make a huge difference to people's lives." Katriona shared the power of one person intervening and believing in her had made the difference to her.

To close the day, a conversation was hosted with whg Community Champions who use their lived experience and natural connections with the Core20 population to provide a human bridge between living in social housing and health services. Champions described the importance of having that one person reaching out had benefitted them which mirrored the comments from Katriona.

Mark Axcell, Chief Executive of NHS Black Country ICB said the event demonstrated the power of partnership, and the data demonstrates the need for health and housing to collaborate and work together to make a difference to people who may have the worst health outcomes.