Bleep

George Eliot Hospital NHS
NHS Trust

...including 2010/11 Annual Review
Summer 2011

Looking forward to the challenge

New Chief Executive shares his vision for the Trust

Also in this edition...

...Going for gold: Trust physio has eyes set on London 2012...

...Weighing up the options: Health advice from the Trust's health trainers...

... Awards: Top university recognises Trust doctors.

Chairman's welcome

Welcome to the first edition of our new look magazine for members of George Eliot Hospital NHS Trust. For the first time, this new publication combines Membership Matters, the Trust's original members magazine, with Bleep, the magazine for hospital staff.

The magazine will keep the name Bleep and will be published every six months. It aims to keep all of our members up to date with what's going on at the hospital.

If you are a member of staff and wondering why we've left out the information on starters, leavers, birthdays, weddings etc. don't worry, we will be producing a 'bitesize' issue of Bleep several times a year containing more staff focussed stories.

I hope you enjoy the magazine. We would like to know what you think of the new format and would appreciate any feedback. Please send feedback to our communications department on 02476 865383 or at sam.cook@geh.nhs.uk.

Stuart Annan
Chairman

News in brief...

Over the last couple of months, pressure has been placed on the hospital's services due to unusually high levels of people attending A&E and being admitted to hospital. With the busy winter period approaching, the Trust is appealing to local people to do their bit to help by only attending A&E if they require urgent medical attention.

If it's not an emergency and you don't know who to call, use Warwickshire Healthline 03000 247 111. This local rate number is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and will help you access the right health service for your medical needs.

Patients and staff at the hospital have been benefiting from the introduction of new hi-tech equipment. The new VitalPAC system provides clinical staff with electronic hand held devices that are used to record a patient's vital signs such as pulse, blood pressure and temperature. The system assists ward staff in ensuring patients whose health is deteriorating are quickly identified and treated appropriately. It also helps staff to more quickly identify patients who are well enough to be discharged. The data can be collected and viewed immediately by ward staff.

The system is being trialled for six months on the Emergency Medical Unit as part of a study funded by the University of Birmingham. If it proves to benefit quality of care and efficiency, the Trust will look to roll the system out to other areas.

Bereavement Counsellor Trish Waters was recently honoured with an invitation to meet the Queen at Buckingham Palace in recognition of 17 years of service helping those who have lost loved ones.

Trust maternity staff (*pictured below*) have been successful in passing stage 1 of the UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative. The award recognises the Trust's commitment to ensuring its staff provide encouragement to new mothers to breastfeed their babies and promote the health benefits breastfeeding brings to babies and mothers.

To further support the Trust's commitment, the maternity service has been recruiting a team of women to train as 'peer supporters' who can offer help and advice to women breastfeeding in the hospital and the community. The breastfeeding rate amongst new mothers at the Trust currently stands at 59%; the Trust is committed to increasing this by 2% a year over the next few years.

A recent survey of breast care patients showed high levels of satisfaction for the service they received at the Trust with 97% saying they were treated with respect and dignity by breast care staff, with many of them describing the unit as 'friendly' and 'welcoming'. These were the findings of a survey carried out in partnership with the Breakthrough Breast Cancer charity.

If you would like to help the Trust save paper by receiving this magazine electronically, please e-mail your details to doreen.sadler@geh.nhs.uk

New Chief Executive sets out vision for hospital's future

Chief Executive Kevin McGee joined the Trust in March, replacing Sharon Beamish who left to take up a position at the East Midlands Specialised Commissioning Group. Since arriving, Kevin has been working closely with staff and the local community to set out a vision for the future of health care at the hospital and in the wider community. Here, Kevin talks a bit about himself and the plans for the future.

How did you come to work in the NHS?
I have worked in the NHS for over 25 years. I started as a trainee accountant in the old Mersey Regional Health Authority. I've always supported the principles that underlie the NHS and I think it's a fabulous organisation.

What has kept you here so long?
Passion about the work I do. I feel as though you can make a real difference in terms of improving people's health. I never fail to be amazed by the dedication, the skills and the enthusiasm of people who work in the NHS.

What first attracted you to the Chief Executive's post at the George Eliot?
The fact that I think I can make a difference. I think I've got the right skills, both in terms of understanding how a healthcare provider organisation works and also understanding the commissioning side. I think it will be a really interesting place to work. There are many difficult challenges that need to be faced but I firmly believe they can be met. It feels like an organisation where there is a lot to do but all the goals are achievable. What was clear early on was that the Trust has a dedicated workforce and really strong connections with the local community and it feels like we can make a difference.

What have been your key priorities so far?
This is a very critical time for the hospital so I've had to hit the ground running. It is vital that moving forward we get buy in from all our key stakeholders, especially our staff and local community. With this in mind I've been hosting a serious of listening events aimed at seeking support and involvement from all our stakeholders in developing a future vision for the hospital.

What kind of feedback have you received?
Overwhelmingly positive. There remains a phenomenal level of support for the Trust. What is clear is that we need to adapt to meet the financial challenges we face and this kind of support is vital.

How will the Trust change?
Change is happening across the whole of the NHS and we need to consider how we ensure we develop a model of care and core services that will meet the needs of local people well into the future. This might include deciding that some aspects of care should be delivered elsewhere – in people's homes, in GP practices or in specialist centres. Some of the services that we do really well we will look to expand. I think we have a really exciting future, providing a range of healthcare services, both at the hospital and in the community.

Does the Trust still intend to achieve Foundation (FT) Trust status?
Nationally, there is an expectation that all Trusts become FTs, although the ultimate deadline of March 2014 has been relaxed. The Trust Board believes that achieving FT status as an independent organisation would be the best outcome for GEH, ensuring a sustainable future as a provider of healthcare services for the local community. However, we do have some real challenges to overcome and it is clear that we are going to need strong partnerships to achieve this goal. We are currently working with our commissioners and the Strategic Health Authority to consider what our options are in developing a strategic partnership that will enable us to move forward with our FT application. Although independent FT status is preferable, the most important thing is that we ensure GEH is in a position of strength so that even if we don't get to go forward to FT alone, we are in a strong position to ensure we choose what happens to the Trust in the future and secure local services for local people.

Recognition for Trust doctors

Two George Eliot doctors are celebrating after receiving recognition from one of the country's top universities.

Dr Vinod Patel (*pictured left*) received the university's Award for Teaching Excellence, an award that recognises lecturers who have had an exceptional impact on the learning experience of students and enhanced the profile of the teaching excellence at the university. Dr Patel was one of only four lecturers across the university to receive one of these annual awards.

Dr Ponnusamy Saravanan was recognised at the same award ceremony, receiving a PhD for cutting edge research carried out into thyroid hormone replacement. Dr Saravanan's research saw him have ten research papers published in medical journals.

Medical Director Andrew Arnold congratulated Dr Patel and Dr Saravanan on their achievements saying: "These achievements are significant for them personally. It is also good for the hospital to have two such distinguished clinicians working here. Well done to them both."

Financial challenge outlined

At the end of the 2010/11 financial year, the Trust's Board of Directors set out the scale of the financial challenge facing the organisation.

To meet its financial obligation to break even during the 2011/12 financial year, the Trust needs to make efficiency savings of around £11.2m.

Early indications show that money saving strategies are working, with the Trust making a small surplus for the first quarter of the financial year.

This has been helped by a significant reduction in spending on temporary agency staff. During the first quarter of the financial year, the Trust reduced its temporary staff bill by almost £1m compared to the same period in the previous year.

Despite the need to make efficiency savings, the Trust has shown its continued commitment to patient care with significant investment in recruitment. This has seen over £1m invested in the recruitment of four new A&E consultants and increased qualified nursing numbers.

It is expected that additional work to improve efficiency and reduce admissions and length of stay will allow for a reduction in the number of beds required to treat patients.

A reduction in posts at the Trust is currently being managed through vacancy control and redeployment. At the present time the Trust is not planning redundancies.

Chief Executive Kevin McGee said: "I have been extremely impressed with the way staff have pulled together to address the financial challenges we face. They fully understand the scale of the challenge and that we can only be successful if we all do our bit.

"We will need to make a lot of tough decisions but I am confident that we have the right personnel in place to ensure we make the necessary changes that mean we can continue to provide the highest quality of patient care that meets the needs of the local community."

Nationally, MRSA bloodstream infections in the NHS have reached record low levels with fewer than 100 infections recorded in a single month for the first time, according to official statistics.

The Health Protection Agency has published the monthly data for MRSA for June 2011. Compared with June 2010, the statistics show MRSA bloodstream infections have fallen from 134 to 97.

The national picture

MRSA rates at new low

George Eliot Hospital was one of 25 acute trusts that recorded no trust-acquired MRSA bloodstream infections between June 2010 and June 2011.

Reacting to the figures, Secretary of State for Health Andrew Lansley said: "MRSA bloodstream infections in the NHS are at their lowest level since records began with fewer than 100 infections in a single month for the first time.

"What's more, 25 trusts have been MRSA-free for more than a year, proving that with tough infection control measures we can eradicate avoidable infections from the NHS altogether.

"This sustained pattern of falling infections across the health service is good news. However, the variation between the very best in the country and the very worst is still unacceptably high. So while progress has been made, we must do better to shrink this gap and improve standards for all."

Annual Review 2010/11

A Pull-out review of the last financial year

Chairman's welcome

Over the last year we have faced some growing challenges, achieved some real successes and experienced some significant changes here at George Eliot Hospital NHS Trust.

The growing challenges we face include the need for the Trust to address a sizeable financial challenge by finding efficiencies within what we do, whilst ensuring we are able to provide the quality of care that local people rightly expect and deserve.

Change is expected and needed across the NHS. We recognise this and we are committed to working with our staff, our members and local people to define what those changes might look like over future months and years. In many ways, the George Eliot is already one step ahead having taken clear steps to providing care out in the community, closer to people's homes, and in some cases in our patients' homes.

Particular successes during the past year have included the measures taken to improve the experience our patients have when they access care from our teams both on and off the hospital site, including much reduced infection rates, increasing the number of people treated as 'day cases' to allow them to go home as soon as possible and increasing the services we provide through GP surgeries, such as physiotherapy.

It has also been a year of change at the George Eliot Hospital with several new faces on our senior management team. This includes new Chief Executive Kevin McGee, new Director of Operations Kath Kelly and new Medical Director Andrew Arnold.

It's a new era for the Trust and I look forward to working with all my colleagues to ensure we continue to meet the healthcare expectations of the communities we serve.

Stuart Annan
Chairman

In January 2011, the Trust achieved an entire year without a single case of hospital acquired MRSA bloodstream bacteraemia, the first time this has happened since records began. The Trust finished the 2010/11 financial year without reporting a single incident.

In October 2010, the Trust went an entire calendar month without reporting a single case of hospital acquired Clostridium *difficile* (C *diff*), again the first time this has happened since records began. C *diff* rates for the year fell to a total of 40 (an average of less than four a month), a vast improvement from a few years ago when it was not unusual for the Trust to be reporting a new case every day.

In January 2011, the Trust's Board of Directors pledged to strengthen qualified nurse ratios to enhance frontline patient care. This would see qualified to unqualified ratios rising to 60:40. The decision recognises the improvements that can be made to the quality of patient care by increasing qualified nursing levels.

The Trust's Board of Directors adopted a zero tolerance approach to pressure ulcers and introduced a new way of tackling and recording such incidents. In future, incidents of pressure ulcers will be reported as 'harm events' in a similar way that serious healthcare associated infections such as C *diff* and MRSA are. It is hoped by giving this level of prominence for pressure ulcers, similar reductions will be seen.

"The staff on Melly Ward were excellent and a credit to the nursing profession, well done ten-out-of-ten. Thank you."
Melly Ward patient

Patient care

During the financial year the Trust provided 35,231 episodes of inpatient care, 159,269 episodes of outpatient care and 64,733 episodes of accident and emergency care. There were 2,392 births at the hospital.

This service was provided by 1,826 members of staff and with 336 beds (excluding day procedure beds).

The Trust met the four-hour maximum waiting time target for accident and emergency treatment.

The 18 week referral to treatment target was met for both admitted and non-admitted care.

All cancer waiting time targets for the year were met.

From 1 April 2011, George Eliot Hospital NHS Trust became responsible for providing community dental services, smoking cessation services and TB nursing across the whole of Warwickshire, an out of hours service based at Leicester Royal Infirmary and health trainers in Nuneaton and Bedworth. In addition, it will also be responsible for running three more GP practices; in Water Orton, Attleborough and Bedworth. 100 members of staff currently providing these services have become employees of George Eliot Hospital NHS Trust. This is all part of a government-led initiative to Transform Community Services (TCS), the proposals for which were set out in a 2009 White Paper. The paper stated that all primary care trusts should separate the commissioning of community services from their provision.

"We have been so impressed today with the care that has been taken of our daughter and granddaughters. We have met lovely people who have done everything they can at this stressful time."
Relative of maternity patients

Service delivery

The Trust has been working in partnership with MacMillan Cancer Support to build a new cancer information centre on the hospital site. The centre will be located next to the main entrance to the hospital and will offer cancer patients, their family and friends and members of staff the latest advice, support and information regarding the illness.

The Trust joined other hospitals in the area in expanding the age range for its breast-screening service on a permanent basis following a successful pilot scheme. The expansion of the service means that local women between the ages of 47-73 will now be offered this potentially lifesaving service every three years. Previously, in line with the national programme, breast screening had been offered to women between the ages of 50-70.

Trust midwives were recognised for their commitment to promoting the health benefits of breastfeeding with the award of Certificate of Commitment from the UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative. To receive the certificate, the Trust had to demonstrate that all midwives have received breastfeeding training and stay up to date with modern breastfeeding techniques.

"During my stay, all the nursing staff have been perfect. They do everything possible to care for each patient."
Bob Jakin Ward patient

£30k of funding from the Kay Kendall Leukaemia Fund will be used to develop a complementary therapy service for patients; paying for a part-time qualified complementary therapist and for the development of a dedicated complementary therapy room. The therapist will be able to offer a range of therapies including aromatherapy, massage and reflexology, all of which have been shown to help patients relax and promote a feeling of wellbeing.

Service developments

In September 2010, the Trust's Board of Directors approved a new strategy aimed at ensuring the experience it provides to its patients is amongst the best in the country. The 'Best Care, Best Outcome' patient experience strategy aims to pull together a range of methods already in place to measure patient satisfaction in one streamlined initiative. The ultimate objective is to be amongst the best acute Trusts in the country in relation to patient satisfaction.

The Trust has been working in partnership with North Warwickshire and Hinckley College to run an innovative training programme aimed at improving the 'patient experience'. The 'Enhancing the Patient Experience' programme is underpinned by national customer care occupational standards that have been adapted for use in an NHS environment and specifically looks at improving the way staff communicate with patients and improving the information they provide them with.

"May I say, that all the personnel who attended to me did so in a courteous and caring manner and I cannot praise them all enough. Had I paid £10,000 for my treatment privately I could not have had a better service."

Day procedure patient

In January 2011, the Trust launched a new initiative aimed at providing instant feedback on patient satisfaction. The survey is carried out by a team of volunteers who visit patients on the ward to quiz them on aspects of their care. This feedback can be promptly fed back to ward managers who can make necessary changes.

Patient experience

The Trust's membership currently stands at over 10,300, a small increase from the same time last year, which reflects a reduction in proactive member recruitment in 2010/11.

In April 2010, the Trust established a Members Advocacy Panel (MAP), a group set up to mirror some of the roles of a future Board of Governors, something that will be implemented when the hospital becomes a Foundation Trust. The group consists of 6 members of staff, 15 public members and 11 representatives from local partner organisations. The MAP is seen as a key way of building robust relationships and two-way communication channels between the members they represent and Trust staff. As ambassadors for the Trust, their work will be vital in relaying positive messages, feeding back views and opinions from the Trust's membership and sharing informed and accurate information in a timely manner.

"I found all the staff to be kind and attentive at all times. They could answer any questions I asked of them with good knowledge."

Patient on Nason Ward

Once again the Trust received amazing levels of support from the local community. Donations to its charitable fund exceeded £95k in 2010/11. The Trust is extremely grateful to everyone who has raised money or made a donation.

Mayor of Nuneaton, Councillor Don Navarro selected the Trust's Special Care Baby Unit as the beneficiary of his civic appeal for the year. It is expected that this will have raised in excess of £10k.

The Trust's League of Friends raised more than £120k and purchased in excess of £62k worth of equipment for the hospital.

The Trust currently has over 150 volunteers assisting in areas such as meeting and greeting, supporting the patient satisfaction survey programme, administration and patient care.

Stakeholder involvement

Specialist health trainers have been working with residents from less affluent areas of the region to offer advice and support in improving health and wellbeing. This includes advice on healthy eating, weight management and exercising. They also offer support to help residents attend medical appointments.

In 2010, the Trust was awarded contracts to provide hospital based smoking cessation services to people in Coventry and Warwickshire. This service is now well established, receiving 160 referrals since it began in September 2010. The service supports people attempting to quit smoking using a 12-week programme of behavioural support and medication, both at the hospital and through outreach clinics. The current success rate (patient still not smoking after four weeks) is 40%. This figure rises to 75% for patients participating in group sessions.

"All aspects of the practice were superb... The nursing team and health care staff made sure my needs were met which helped my comfort considerably. We cannot praise the practice enough."
Camp Hill Health Centre Patient

The Trust has hosted a series of health awareness events examining specialties such as bowel, breast care, cardiology and respiratory. A prostate awareness event offering free prostate checks attracted more than 80 local men.

Health improvement

Trust staff continue to show their commitment to patient care by achieving improved attendance. Attendance levels improved in 2010/11 with 4.1% of working days lost to sickness absence compared to 4.5% in 2009/10.

A new 'Health Passport' initiative has offered all staff the chance to receive a comprehensive health check at the hospital. The health check will help to identify those who are at risk from some of the country's biggest killers such as heart disease, strokes, diabetes and kidney disease.

The Trust received its highest Staff Satisfaction Survey Response (67%) in 2010/11. This was followed by a series of focus groups which looked to involve staff in developing a vision for the organisation moving forward.

The Trust works in partnership with a range of organisations to offer educational opportunities to staff. Over the past year, this has included a management development course with NHS Elect, dementia awareness courses with Staffordshire University and a range of NVQs with North Warwickshire and Hinckley College. The Trust remains an accredited centre for the delivery and assessment of NVQs.

"The treatment my mother received was second to none... She was able to build good relationships with other patients and all the staff. Whenever she requested help, it was given promptly and efficiently."
Dolly Winthrop Ward patient

Staff experience

The year has been challenging for the Trust largely due to the significant reduction in referrals and approvals for treatment of elective patients implemented by commissioners half way through the year, together with the Trust's own cost pressures. As a result, the surplus achieved by the Trust in the first half of the year turned into a significant deficit in the second half.

Because of the scale and timing of these events, the Trust received financial support from NHS West Midlands Strategic Health Authority. This has allowed the Trust to report a break-even position for 2010/11.

Moving forward, reductions in demand for acute services will continue. The Trust is working closely with its commissioners to ensure these reductions are managed in a way that allows for clinical and financial sustainability.

The financial pressures meant that the Trust failed to achieve two of its key objectives:

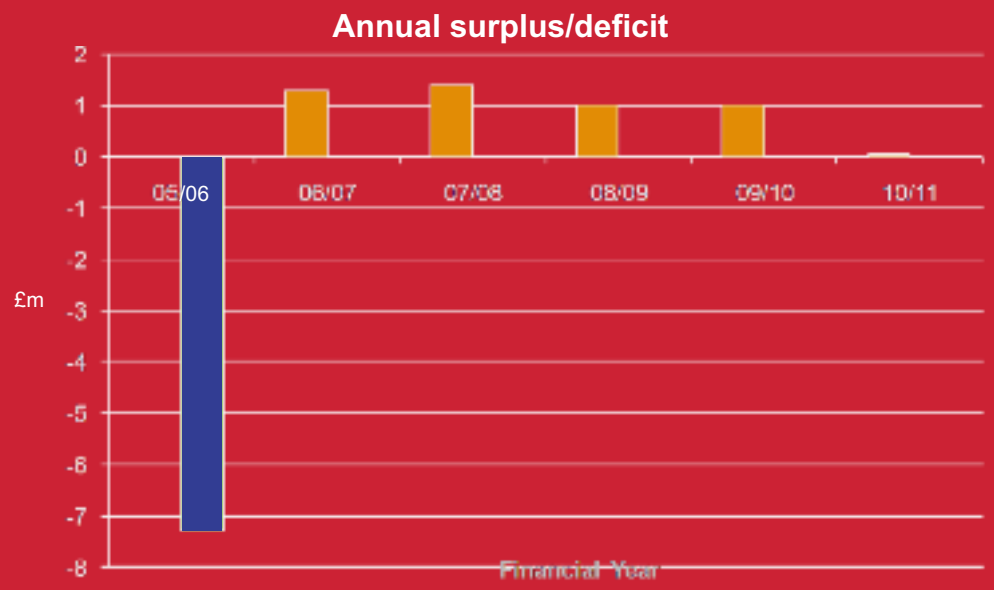
- To reduce the historic deficit. In previous years this had been achieved through making between a £1m-£1.4m surplus.

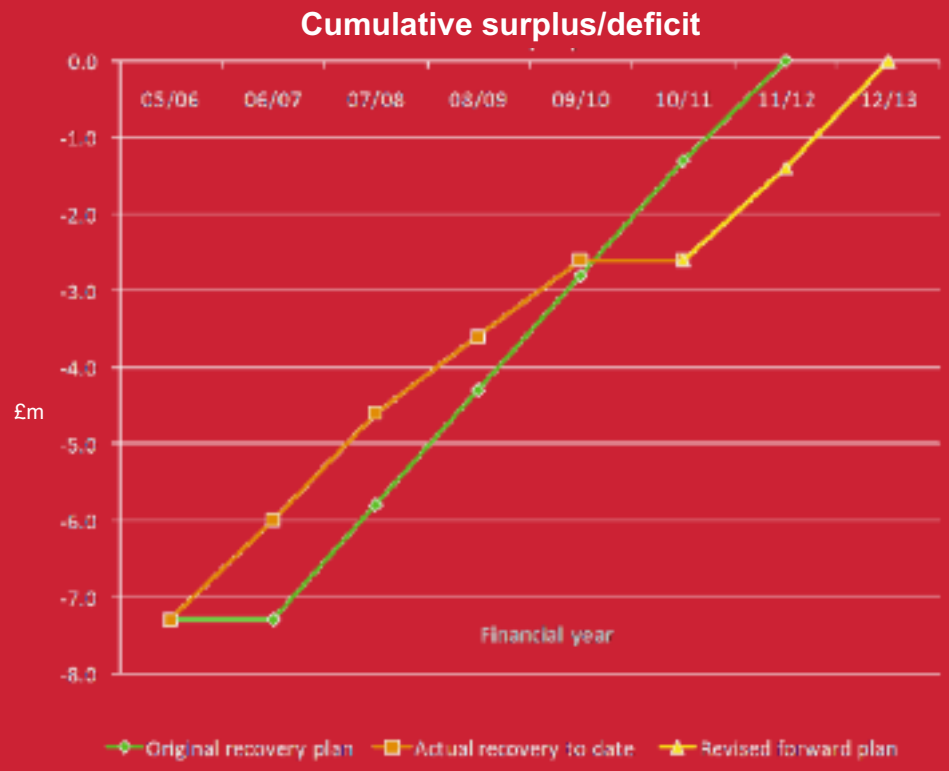
- To ensure repayment of the working capital loan made to the Trust in 2005 by the Strategic Health Authority are made from surpluses rather than reducing cash balances.

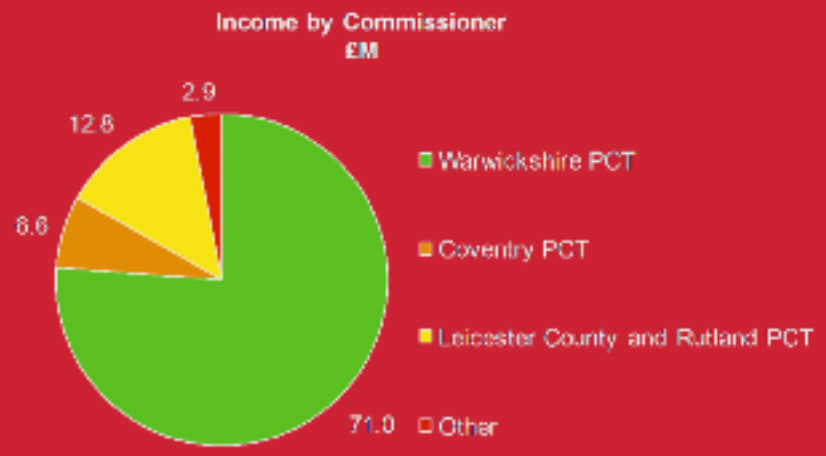
"The service, help, treatment and assistance I have received during my hospitalisation has been first class and I cannot speak highly enough of all the staff."

Patient on Alexandra Ward

Health improvement







Income and expenditure

For a more comprehensive review of the year a full copy of the Trust's Annual Report and Accounts can be accessed at www.geh.nhs.uk. This is where you will also find a copy of the Trust's Quality Accounts which outline the quality agenda for the coming year.

Hard copies of these documents can be obtained by calling 02476 865380.

Service is a smoking success

Staff from the Stop Smoking Service, managed by George Eliot Hospital, have helped over 3,700 people in the county quit smoking in the past year, their highest rate of success since the service began in 2000.

Of the 7,606 people who accessed the community based service in the 2010/11 financial year 3,760 were still not smoking after four weeks, well above the team's target of 3,077.

The service operates out of GP surgeries and pharmacies across the county and offers a range of treatments and support that can be tailored to individual needs.

This success was backed up by overwhelmingly positive feedback from patients as part of a satisfaction survey; with 97% saying they were 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with the service and 98% saying they would recommend the service to a friend.

Smoking Cessation Manager Jane Wright said: "If you are a smoker, becoming smoke free is the single best thing you can do in terms of improving health and wellbeing and adding years to your life. It is very satisfying to the team that we have made such a significant difference to the lives of so many local people and their families.

"Research has shown that smokers who access an NHS Stop Smoking Service are up to four times more likely to quit successfully than if they go it alone. We have a range of options for anyone looking to stop smoking and we can create a tailor made package to suit everyone."

To find out more about the Warwickshire Stop Smoking Service or to make an appointment to see a Stop Smoking Advisor, call 0800 085 2917, text 'LIFE' free to 80800 or visit www.smokefreewarwickshire.org

Weighing up the options

Health trainers at the Camp Hill Health Centre (run by the George Eliot Hospital) are offering a new service to help local people lose or maintain a healthy weight and bring about all the benefits associated with a healthy lifestyle. Their aim is to help you to understand how to make small changes to your lifestyle that can make a big difference to your health. Anyone can access the FREE weight management and healthy lifestyle service and other services offered by the Health Trainers at Camp Hill Health Centre. For more information, please call 02476 390008. Here Health Trainer Lynne Lewis offers some advice on loosing or maintaining a healthy weight.

There are many benefits to losing weight including reduced blood pressure, lower levels of bad cholesterol, increased energy levels and increased life expectancy. Research has shown that on average, being moderately obese decreases life expectancy by three years and being severely obese by ten years.

The first question you need to ask is 'do I need to lose weight?' and if so, 'how much?' Body Mass Index (BMI) is a good place to start in establishing whether you are a healthy weight or not. There are plenty of BMI calculators available on the internet including at www.nhs.uk. Alternatively, speak to your GP or make an appointment to see one of the health trainers.

Losing weight involves changing habits; eating a healthy balanced diet and getting active. Don't bother with fad diets and drastic exercise regimes because these are rarely maintained and once you stop them you are likely to return to your old habits and regain weight. Goals need to be realistic and easily incorporated into your daily routine.

There are plenty of simple things you can do to get started. For example, swap your regular snack for something healthier. Snacks such as sweets, chocolate, biscuits and crisps are high in fat and sugar and supply calories we don't need. Try a piece of fruit instead. Try keeping a food diary to help you to see what you eat and when; eating regularly is an important part of eating healthily.

You should also think ahead when planning your weekly shop. Meal planning will help you to consider what you eat and help to save you money by only buying what you need. Eating healthily starts at home and a balanced diet is key to maintaining a healthy weight. Try to buy more fresh foods and lower fat alternatives.

A combination and balance of healthy eating and increasing physical activity is key. Again, make sure you set realistic goals. Start off by trying to fit in a brisk walk for 10 minutes a few times a week and build up from there. The NHS recommends that adults get a minimum of 30 minutes physical activity at least five days a week. This means any activity that raises your heart rate and makes you warm. Remember, anything you can achieve in 10-minute chunks counts towards the 30 minutes a day. The NHS Choices website contains a great nine-week 'Couch to 5k' programme to help you get started. Perhaps think about getting involved in a local sports group; this is a great way to stay fit and socialise.

My final piece of advice is don't be too hard on yourself. When you don't meet your goal, have a think about what changes you need to make to help you achieve it next time and have another go and when you do meet your goal reward yourself; you did it, you deserve it.

The contribution volunteers make to the care provided at George Eliot Hospital was recognised with the second of a series of special events.

The Trust currently has more than 300 volunteers working as part of the Trust's volunteer programme or as part of support groups such as Anker Radio, the chaplaincy and the League of Friends. 90 of these volunteers attended the event to have a cup of tea and cake with members of the Trust's Director team.

Trust Chairman Stuart Annan praised the dedication of the volunteers saying: "Our volunteers are a great asset to the organisation fulfilling many roles and functions and bringing invaluable benefits to the experience of our patients. This is just a small way for us to say thank you to them."

Contribution of volunteers recognised

The hospital is always looking to recruit new volunteers. There are range of roles open to people of all ages including meeting and greeting patients, administration and carrying out patient satisfaction surveys.

Anyone interested in getting involved should contact Christine Longstaff on 02476 865550 or at christine.longstaff@geh.nhs.uk

Members Advocacy Panel

Update

The Member's Advocacy Panel (MAP) is a group of 32 members who represent the whole membership base, mirroring some of the functions of a board of governors, something that will be implemented when the hospital achieves Foundation Trust (FT) status. The MAP is seen as a way of building robust relationships and two-way communication channels between the members they represent and Trust staff.

The group has been running for over a year now and have been involved in many areas of the hospital including the production of the Trust's Quality Accounts document, the Equality and Diversity Group and various inspections and reviews.

There are currently vacancies on the MAP. Any members interested in applying should contact Membership Manager Doreen Sadler on 024 76153476. Doreen can also provide information on how to contact MAPs should you wish to discuss any issues or concerns you have regarding the hospital.

The Trust recently unveiled a mural (*pictured below*) near the hospital's main entrance. This mural recognises the support the whole membership has given to the hospital over recent years since the launch of the Foundation Trust application. The mural contains a selection of staff and public members.

Going for gold

A member of the Trust's physiotherapy team will have gold on his mind next summer as he heads to the 2012 London Paralympics as part of the support team for the Great Britain blind football team.

Mat Jones performs the same kind of duties a physio would at any football match as well as running clinics and providing post match first aid.

Mat explains how he got involved in the set-up: "I used to play and manage Witherley Football Club who play in the Coventry Alliance Premier League. Once I achieved my physiotherapy qualification I was approached by the Football Association a few years ago about working with Great Britain blind and cerebral palsy football teams. With my background in football and physio they felt that it would be straightforward enough for me to adapt my skills to working with disabled sportsmen."

It is not just the Paralympics that Mat is looking forward to. He also went to the Cerebral Palsy Football World Cup in Holland at the end of June and then to Madrid for the Blind European Championships.

The fundamentals of blind football remain the same... get the ball in the goal. So that players can locate the ball it contains ball bearings to make it audible. The goalkeeper is the only sighted person on the pitch and the other four players wear eyeshades to account for differing degrees of eyesight. A guide stands behind the goal to instruct players where to shoot. Spectators must remain quiet at all times.

"I never really dreamed that I would ever walk out at an Olympic or Paralympic opening ceremony," says Mat, "so it will be a very proud moment for me and I'm sure for my family as well.

"We are currently ranked fourth in the world so we are definitely in with a shout of bringing home a medal; we're aiming for gold."

His work with the GB team has also had benefits for George Eliot Patients. Mat explains: "The FA invest a lot in our professional development. The experience has helped me to modify my skills to cope with different situations. Working so closely with the blind and visually impaired has also helped to greatly improve my communication skills. Over the last couple of years I have been constantly presented with new situations, it's been a big challenge but very fulfilling."

When asked what his colleagues at the George Eliot think about his 'other job', Mat just laughs and says: "You will have to ask them. Let's just say some of them are trying to sign up to do some volunteer work with the team."

Bleep will of course keep you updated with Mat's progress in the build up to the Olympics and the main event itself. Along with the rest of the team and staff, Mat will feature in a fly-on-the-wall Channel 4 documentary focussing on the build up to the Paralympics which will be aired in September.

Dates for your diary

Wednesday 21 September

Breast care, gynaecology and HRT Awareness evening
Includes guest speaker Ann Johnson from charity Paddlers for Life
GETEC building, 6.30pm, free parking

Wednesday 19 October

Awareness evening - Heart complications/how the A&E department works/the workings of Mary Ann Evans Hospice
GETEC building, 6.30pm, free parking

November (date TBC)

Free health checks in the community. Dates and venues to be announced.

For more information, or to book a place at these events, please call Jean Whittaker on 024 76865400.

Also, at 1.30pm on the last Wednesday of each month (with the exception of August and December) everyone is welcome to attend a public Board of Directors meeting in the Raveloe's Conference Room.

Plus, If you would like a member of the Trust's executive team or a Members Advocate to attend one of your **community forums**, please contact Doreen Sadler on 02476 153476.