

yourhospitals

The quarterly members' newsletter of North Cheshire Hospitals NHS Trust August 2008 Issue 1

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Make a stand!

It's your chance to make a difference and elect our first ever hospital governors

Your hospitals are about to hold elections for the first ever public and staff hospital governors who will help to run Warrington and Halton hospitals in the future and make sure that decisions are made in the interest of the local community.

We need your help. We need people interested in the future of their NHS services to make sure they vote in the elections and help us elect good candidates from members who have stood for election.

A vital part of becoming an NHS Foundation Trust is the ability for local people to become governors of Warrington and Halton hospitals and represent the community in decisions around the hospitals and our long-term future. Governors will work alongside the trust board to help us make decisions about the hospitals and our priorities in the future.

As one of the 6,500 plus members of the public who have joined North Cheshire Hospitals as a member you will soon be asked to vote in our first governor elections in September this year.

A total of 16 public members will be elected to the council to represent Warrington, Runcorn, Widnes and the surrounding areas that we serve. The public governors will be joined by five staff governors - elected by staff members at the hospitals - and nine partner governors who represent key partner organisations we work with such as the local councils, primary care trusts and voluntary organisations. Together, they will form the Governors' Council for Warrington and Halton Hospitals.

You will also have received a nomination form for standing as a governor around now. Anyone who has joined the hospitals as a member before July 11th can stand for election as a governor. Over 150 members came to workshops we staged around standing as a Governor or requested further information from us so we hope to have a strong field of candidates for you to vote for.

"Governors are a key part of our plans and we want to involve the community and ensure that you are represented in decisions that the hospital takes in the future," says **Catherine Beardshaw**, chief executive of the hospitals, "When we consulted on our plans earlier this year we were struck by the interest and the range of ideas that people had on how we could improve services and what we already do that works well and we can build on. We want to harness these ideas and have a Governors' Council that truly represents the local community of the hospitals and can help us improve in the future."

"There is obviously a need for some time commitment from anyone who wishes to stand as a governor and this is the first time we've had governors like this so it will take us time to develop the way we work but it is a fantastic opportunity. We know that people have great ideas and support for the hospitals so we want to make it easy for people to stand for election with us in the future and represent their hospitals, their trust and their NHS. Members need to use their vote so please take part in the elections in September and play your part."



Did you know?

- Everyone who joined the hospitals as a member of the prospective foundation trust before the election cut off point of July 11th gets a vote in the governor elections and can stand as a governor.
- There are governors for different areas that the hospitals serve so people in your areas will be voting for a governor to represent you and the area where you live.

- Voting will take place by postal vote in September 2008 – the elections will be run by the Electoral Reform Services who are experts in running elections of this kind.
- Once the election is complete and results are announced, the elected governors will form a shadow Governors' Council until we receive the decision on our application to become an NHS Foundation Trust which we expect by the end of the year.

Our consultation – what we did and what you said

Firstly thank you to all of you who showed interest in our vision for the future of the hospitals by attending a public consultation and becoming a member of North Cheshire Hospitals.

The public consultation ran for three months from the 16th January to 11th April and the consultation process was extensive and supported by a media campaign.

The consultation process involved around 60 scheduled events plus additional open events to publicise the FT application. Events were held across the full trust catchment area with additional events held in neighbouring areas. Over 8,000 consultation documents were circulated and over 1,000 people attended consultation events. We received in excess of 500 comments to the consultation.

The online survey form available on the trust's website attracted a total of 238 responses. The survey was constructed to develop responses to the seven specific questions asked during the consultation. In addition to the numerical analysis provided below, further commentary was made by participants via the web survey.

Response to key questions.	In favour*	Neutral*	Opposed*
Do you agree that we should change the hospital name to reflect the local area better?	63.6%	9.7%	26.7%
Do you think it is right for local hospitals to be more accountable to the local community rather than the government?	92.3%	4.7%	3%
Do you feel it is right for your hospitals to move to NHS Foundation Trust status?	84.1%	14.2%	1.7%
Do you agree with our vision for the future?	87.1%	11.6%	1.3%
Are you in agreement that membership should be available to people aged 12 and above?	57.7%	19.4%	23%
Do you agree that membership should be available to all our former patients irrespective of where they live?	45.5%	22.1%	32.4%
Do you think our proposals for the Governors Council represent our public, patients, staff and partners fairly?	74.8%	18.8%	6.4%

*Results are correct as of the end of the consultation period on Friday 11th April 2008

From the website survey the responses have been helpful in developing firm indicators that demonstrate the level of support for the consultation questions.

To date we have recruited over 6500 public members and over 3000 staff members (staff are automatically members of the trust but with the option to opt out).

As a member of North Cheshire Hospitals you will have the opportunity to have your say in how the hospitals are run, making the local hospitals of Warrington and Halton your hospitals. The main influence you will have at the start is the right to elect public members onto the Governors Council.

Responding to your feedback!

One key change we made to the ideas we have was to include an extra public governor to represent patients from outside the direct Warrington and Halton catchment areas. This was because we had a higher than anticipated number of people joining as members who live in areas such as Newton le Willows and St Helen's to the north and Frodsham and the surrounding areas to the south who are patients at the hospitals.

We also changed the composition of the partner governors to give a better representation to the mental health sector and to link into the voluntary sector through the new LINKS voluntary forums.

People were very clear that any change of name (the idea of Warrington and Halton Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust as a new name was widely supported as it references both hospitals) should not incur any undue cost to the hospitals which is very sensible and if the name does change we will ensure this happens.



Parts of the old North Lodge building are being demolished.

Just the ticket - major car park plans announced!

The hospitals have announced details of a £1.4 million programme of parking improvements that will create an extra 209 spaces at the Warrington Hospital site by the end of summer.

Parking has long been an issue on the site and the programme will see an additional storey of parking built over some of the existing car parks at the Guardian Street side of the site and the creation of an extra staff parking facility on an off site car park.

The plan is in three clear stages leading to the building of the extra storey of car parking.

1. In July the trust contracted some off site car parking provision for some of its staff thanks to a lease of 72 spaces from the Basford's car garage site on Guardian Street at the back of the hospital. These spaces will be for use by staff who work 9-5 at the hospital and will also free up space to allow the rest of the developments to take place.
2. As we went to press, the trust was beginning the demolition of the wings of the old North Lodge building at the rear of the site. The building has most recently been used as a home for the hospital's training department and is not fit for purpose anymore due to its age and structure. Staff who used the building have been relocated to renovated office space in the old doctors' residence buildings on the site. The demolition of North Lodge is expected to take 4-6 weeks to complete and visitors are likely to see some diversions on the hospital one way system at key points during the work for safety reasons. The structurally sound central section of North Lodge will however be retained in the plans.
3. Finally, the biggest development is that the trust has applied for planning permission to create a new deck of car parking on top of the car parks at the rear of the site adjacent to the Croft Wing (maternity area) and the Guardian Street entrance. Subject to permission being granted, this facility will create 137 extra spaces on the site. The extra storey

can be constructed in just a matter of days thanks to the steel design which will minimise disruption. It is hoped that this will be built in September if the application goes to plan.

"We're investing heavily in parking at the hospitals because we know it is a bugbear of many patients, visitors and our staff," explains Chris Knights, director of business development at the trust, "When we survey patients, transport and parking at the hospitals is the single most important issue to the majority of people. They want to be able to get to the hospitals and park easily so they can get to their appointment or to visit relatives. We hope that these developments will go a long way towards meeting the ever increasing demand for parking."



The trust is also working closely with Warrington Borough Council to strengthen public transport links to the hospital and is also looking at how it can introduce better drop-off points and even a possible taxi rank to the site.

"Parking is only one part of the picture," continued Chris Knights, "Whilst our parking capacity has been below what we have needed at a hospital of this size we are committed to providing other ways of getting to the us with better public transport links. We've also invested in a bigger and better hospital shuttle bus to take our patients and staff from Halton Hospital to Warrington and vice versa. Overall we're trying to make the hospitals as accessible as possible and improve things for our patients, visitors, staff and local residents."

Digging deeper – car parking

You can see more on how to get to the hospitals and links to public transport and parking information on the 'Getting to our hospitals' section of the trust website www.northcheshirehospitals.nhs.uk You can also give your views on transport and ideas for better links via the chief executive's 'Parking Matters' weblog on the site!

Halton renal unit opens to patients

The new Halton NHS Dialysis Unit at Halton Hospital that will allow 30 Runcorn and Widnes patients to access their care closer to home is opening in August.

Workers have been turning ward C1 at the hospital into a state of the art facility with 12 dialysis units since February this year. It will mean that the hospital will be able to provide vital daily care for patients with kidney failure for the first time. Many patients have to travel to Liverpool or Warrington for their dialysis at the moment. 30 patients will be able to access dialysis at the hospital when it opens.

As well as a hi-tech purpose designed unit for dialysis, the new centre has reserved parking for patients.

North Cheshire Hospitals NHS Trust received the go ahead in January for their bid to create the new renal dialysis unit at Halton General Hospital and expand and relocate the unit at Warrington Hospital as part of a regional plan to expand access to renal services.

At Warrington Hospital an additional six dialysis stations will be opened and the existing unit will be re-located. This will bring the number of dialysis stations at the hospital to 12. The initial plans are to use the site of Guardian House on the hospital grounds and replace it with a new building. It is estimated that the new Warrington unit will open in April 2010. This will allow an additional 30 patients to have their dialysis at the hospital.

Independent sector provider Fresenius Medical Care Renal Services UK will provide the kidney

dialysis service while all patients will remain under the care of their NHS clinicians. It is part of a wider range of schemes to develop new renal dialysis facilities across the North West.

Digging deeper - What is renal dialysis?

1. Dialysis is an artificial process in which waste products and unwanted water are removed from the blood. Normally, this function is performed by your kidneys. However, if your kidneys are not working properly because they have been damaged or have 'failed' for some other reason, you may need dialysis.
2. If the kidneys are not working properly, waste will build up in the blood. Without dialysis, the level of waste products in the blood will gradually increase. In dialysis, blood is circulated outside your body through a machine containing special filters, via a thin, flexible tube (a catheter) inserted into a vein. The filters remove the waste products from the blood. After passing through the dialysis machine, the blood returns to your body via a second catheter. In other words, you are connected to an 'artificial kidney'.
3. A kidney transplant is the most effective treatment for people with established renal failure, but only 50% of people starting dialysis are suitable for transplant and there is a national shortage of kidneys available for transplantation. For further information about kidney transplants and organ donation, please visit www.uktransplant.org.uk

New shuttle bus launches

North Cheshire Hospitals has launched a bigger and better shuttle bus service to help patients, visitors and staff travel between Warrington and Halton hospitals.

A brand new bus with full disabled access and a larger capacity has been provided by the hospitals for the free service which runs seven days a week. The bus already helps around 500 people a week get to their appointments and visits and the hospitals want more people to climb aboard in the future.

The new bus has full disabled access with ramp and lowering suspension. The bus is brand new as part of a new contract to provide the service in partnership with local company Anthony's Travel and is a welcoming shade of metallic pink with full electronic signage on the front.

The shuttle bus service is aimed at patients who need to travel from Halton to get to an appointment at Warrington Hospital or vice versa. People visiting rela-

tives in hospital can also use the bus free of charge.

The bus runs from outside the main entrance on Hospital Way at Halton Hospital and drops off at the main entrance to Warrington Hospital before making its return journey. The journey takes around 25 minutes in total.

Shuttle bus timetable

Seven days a week.

Departs Halton Hospital to Warrington - 6.40, 8.10, 9.10, 10.30, 11.35, 13.10, 14.30, 16.00, 17.10, 18.10 and 19.25.

Departs Warrington Hospital to Halton - 7.40, 8.40, 10.00, 11.00, 12.30, 13.45, 15.30, 16.40, 17.40, 18.40 and 20.30.

Please be aware that the bus can be busy - particularly at key visiting times.

Useful hospital contacts and information

Main hospital switchboard - 01925 635911

Email enquiries - nchweb@nch.nhs.uk

A&E and minor injuries - The accident and emergency department at Warrington Hospital is open 24 hours a day for urgent treatment. The Minor Injuries Unit at Halton General Hospital is open from 8am to 10pm every day for minor injuries.

Visiting times - The main visiting times at the hospitals are 15.30 to 16.30 and 18.30 to 20.00. We have set visiting times to allow the ward staff to care for patients and for patients to have adequate rest during the rest of day. If you do need to visit outside these times, please contact the ward directly or speak to the ward staff on your first visit and they will try to help you.

Foundation Trust membership office - If you are a member of the Foundation Trust at North Cheshire Hospitals and have any questions around your membership, events or hospital governor elections you can contact us by email at foundation@nch.nhs.uk or can

call 01925 275249.

Writing to us or calling the hospitals

Warrington Hospital
Lovely Lane
Warrington WA5 1QG
Tel - 01925 635911

Halton General Hospital
Hospital Way
Runcorn WA7 2DA
Tel - 01928 714567 (outside office hours you can contact Halton Hospital via the main Warrington number 01925 635911)

The trust headquarters address for formal correspondence is:

North Cheshire Hospitals NHS Trust Executive Offices
Kendrick Wing
Warrington Hospital
Lovely Lane
Warrington WA5 1QG

Member events and diary dates

We are looking at organising a range of events and activities to get Foundation Trust members involved in your hospitals and to open our doors to you.

For an updated version of the events diary please regularly check the FT section of our website www.northcheshirehospitals.nhs.uk



= important date for information



= member's event

August 2008



Tuesday 12th - Governor election nomination close

The final date for members wishing to stand for election as public and staff governors to return their nomination forms to Electoral Reform Services. Nomination forms are being sent out in late July.

September 2008



Tuesday 2nd - Election ballot papers out

Ballot papers for the governor elections will be sent out to all members who qualify to vote in the first elections (ie joined before July 11th 2008)



Monday 22nd - Election closes

Final date for return of completed ballot papers to Electoral Reform Services - election results will be made available to members during that week.



Monday 29th 2pm to 5pm - Trust Annual General Meeting and mini-health fair, postgraduate centre, Warrington Hospital

Come along to the postgraduate centre at Warrington Hospital for our annual general meeting and mini-health fair. As well as hearing about how the hospital has performed over the last year in our formal AGM presentation (3pm), you can visit some stands from our clinical teams and meet some of our staff and senior team.

Come along and get a blood pressure check, have a go at virtual surgery on our simulation dummies, take away some dietary advice, learn about our new developments and more!

We also hope to give you the first opportunity to meet some of your newly elected hospital governors at the event.

Check local press and www.northcheshirehospitals.nhs.uk for details or contact chris.horner@nch.nhs.uk or 01925 275249.

October 2008



Thursday 23rd - first proposed shadow Governors Council meeting

November 2008



Saturday 8th afternoon - Behind the scenes tours at the trust pathology laboratory

As part of National Pathology Week 2008 our scientists are throwing open the doors to Warrington Hospital's pathology laboratory for the afternoon. Members can see what happens to the 1,500 plus tests that are carried out each day at the hospitals and the vital role that the laboratories perform at the trust.

Booking may be required for these tours - email foundation@nch.nhs.uk or call 01925 275249 to register your interest and we'll let you know the details nearer the time.

Governors' Council - final make-up

16 elected Public Governors

5 from Halton
9 from Warrington
2 from outside the area.

5 elected Staff Governors

1 nursing and midwifery
1 medical staff
1 support staff
1 scientific and technical
1 admin, estates and management.

9 Partner Governors

2 from the Primary Care Trusts
2 from the GP Practice Based Commissioning Consortia
2 from the local councils
1 from local business
1 from the voluntary sector - LINKS
1 from mental health.

Waiting for surgery is down to around 5 weeks across the trust



Waiting times drop to new low

Patients at Warrington and Halton hospitals are benefiting from some of the lowest waiting times for surgery in the North West region after a massive drop in average waits over the last year.

Latest performance figures for the trust's hospitals - Warrington Hospital and Halton General Hospital - have shown that waits for all major surgical cases are down to an average of just five weeks. Just 12 months ago they were averaging at a 20 week wait.

Patients needing joint replacements, gall bladder removal, hernia repairs, prostate operations and tonsillectomies can now all expect to be seen within a maximum of six weeks thanks to the trust improving the speed of access to surgery across the two hospitals. Extra operating sessions have been put in place across both hospitals as well as more efficient ways of working by hospital staff to maximise theatre time and reduce cancellations.

Patients are also being seen faster after being referred by their GP to hospital. The maximum outpatient waiting time at the trust for a first appointment is now just four weeks with many patients being offered appointments within a few days of being referred by their GP.

Diagnostic scan waits have also reduced dramatically. MRI scan maximum waits at Warrington are just one week compared to 25 weeks in April 2007 thanks to the trust taking over the previously privately run MRI service and providing extra evening and weekend sessions. Audiology assessments are provided in a maximum of 3 weeks compared to 33 weeks just over a year ago.

The improvements have seen the trust able to meet the Government's new 18 week wait target ahead of

schedule. The target means that patients get their first appointment, any diagnostic scans and their surgery or treatment within a maximum total of 18 weeks from the day they are referred by their GP to hospital.

More patients are now choosing to go to Warrington and Halton hospitals for their care with large increases in the number of orthopaedic surgery cases in particular over the last couple of months.

"I think one of the key reasons more patients are choosing to come to us are the short waiting times we now offer," said **Simon Wright**, director of operations at the trust, "Outpatient appointments are now provided in a maximum of four weeks so people know they can come to their local hospital and be assessed quickly and then get any surgery or treatment they need rapidly as well. With patient choice in the NHS the money now follows the patient and they can select where they want their care to a greater extent than before so we're delighted that we can provide increased access to services that they want. Our staff are doing a fantastic job in meeting the demand."

One knock on effect of the new low waiting times is that some patients get a little nervous when they are told they can be seen so quickly.

"We are now offering a very rapid service," explains **Gordon Ramsden**, medical director at the hospitals and a consultant in obstetrics and gynaecology, "People sometimes think that because they are being seen quickly there is something urgently wrong, but it's just that we are working better and have brought waiting times down to these new low levels. Some patients still think they are going to wait years for their operation, but actually the NHS has changed massively and they are surprised but pleased that they can be seen within days or weeks now at their local hospital."

Review of the year 2007/2008

A year of real progress

The NHS year runs from March to April and we wanted to let all members know about our performance over the past 12 months.

Meeting our performance targets for the year.

2007/2008 was an incredibly important year for North Cheshire Hospitals and one that has seen us achieve our key performance targets, improve our financial position and dramatically cut waiting times for our patients.

Access for patients

Like all NHS Trusts, we have a series of annual targets that are set nationally to ensure that our patients receive the services they need, when they need them. Known as access targets, these range from ensuring patients do not wait for more than four hours in accident and emergency before being seen, admitted or discharged through to reducing the number of MRSA infections.

The trust's performance against key national performance targets this year was:

Target	Target for 2007/08	Performance for 2007/08	Performance for 2006/07	Performance for 2005/06	Achieved/not achieved standard as at 2007/08
A&E - Patients discharged/admitted within 4 hours	98%	98%	98%	98%	Achieved
Urgent cancer referrals seen within 2 weeks	100%	100%	100%	100%	Achieved
Cancer patients receiving treatment within 21 days of Diagnosis	98%	99%	99%	100%	Achieved
Urgent cancer referrals receiving treatment within 62 days	95%	96%	95%	96%	Achieved
Sexual Health - Patients receiving an appointment within 48 hours	100%	100%	100%	n/a	Achieved
MRSA (number of cases)	12	18	33	n/a	Not achieved

The targets have been challenging to achieve this year. For instance, achieving the 98 percent target in A&E was despite our emergency services coming under increased pressure during the year.

The trust achieved all of our key targets with the exception of the reduction of MRSA. However, we reduced overall cases of the infection by 44 percent during the year and eight of the 18 cases were community-acquired infections identified when a patient came into hospital but already had MRSA. This means that there were only 10 hospital acquired MRSA infections which would have achieved our target for the year.

Looking to the future in financial balance

As well as our improved clinical performance, the trust has also dramatically improved its financial performance over the year. This was a vital strand of our work during the year as we looked to recover our financial position and ensure that the hospitals could move to the future with a sustainable and balanced financial outlook.

The trust has faced financial difficulties for a number of years and was in receipt of financial support from the Strategic Health Authority each year from 2002/2003 to 2005/2006. Without this support our financial duties of balancing the books would not have been achieved. At the end of 2006/2007 the trust reported a £6.7 million income and expenditure deficit. Due to the deterioration in the financial position the trust produced a Financial Recovery Plan. This plan set a challenging target of returning the trust to recurrent financial balance by March 2008 and eradicating the accumulated deficit by 31 March 2009.

We identified plans to deliver savings of £17 million during the year. This level of savings would clear the underlying deficits

brought forward from previous years and cover new financial pressures emerging for 2007/08. This was later revised to £13.5 million.

In addition to delivering £13.5 million savings, during 2007/08 the trust has also earned additional income by treating more patients in response to meeting local demand and national access targets around the 18 week target. Coupled with stronger financial control and management of budgets, a surplus of £7 million was delivered during the year.

Achieving the surplus of £7 million is sufficient to clear the £6.7 million deficit incurred in 2006/2007 - a full 12 months earlier than originally planned. It has also allowed us to invest some of the surplus back in to quality improvements over the last few months, including new beds, ward furniture and other schemes.

This is a fantastic result achieved only by the hard work, commitment and support of all staff and managers throughout the year. The trust is now on a firm financial footing as it moves into the new financial year and is in a strong position to achieve Foundation Trust status in 2008.

60 years of the NHS

Warrington and Halton hospitals celebrated the 60th anniversary of the NHS in July and we want you to get involved as we look at the history at the hospitals going back 60 years and more.

The NHS was formed in 1948 and we have been looking back through the archives at the hospital to give you a chance to see some of the changes that have taken place at the hospitals over the years. The current Warrington Hospital site history goes back to 1877 whilst Halton General is somewhat newer having opened in 1976.

The hospital has created a Looking Back page of the www.northcheshirehospitals.nhs.uk website that features some historic pictures from the sites and also links to some of the national information on the history of the NHS.

We need your help and your history!

We've reproduced some of the pictures here for you to take a look at and we also need your help. Following the comments, stories and feedback we received when we displayed the material at the hospitals we're considering pulling together a history book of people's stories and photos relating to the hospitals.

If you worked or trained at the hospitals, used them or their predecessors in the early days or have any other interesting stories, let us know by contacting Janine Fozard, communications officer on 01928 753451 or at janine.fozard@nch.nhs.uk

Looking Back photo gallery



This is a view of the **Kendrick Wing** of Warrington Hospital that we believe was published in 1977 as part of a booklet marking the centenary of the hospital site but was taken some years earlier judging by the cars! At the time it was the main block of the hospital – it is now the main administration and management block and home to the breast screening and ophthalmology departments.



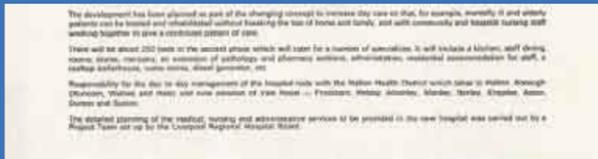
This aerial view of the **Warrington site** shows the current hospital site in the top centre - just above the railway line that runs through the centre of the picture and the huge Greenings wire factory. We're not sure of the exact date of this photo and wonder if anyone can shed any light on it for us?

And this view from pretty much the same angle in **April 2008** shows just how the hospital and the surrounding areas have changed over the recent years and since the

birth of the NHS in 1948. You can still see the nurses home (post graduate centre) and Kendrick Wing areas clearly. The light blue building is the main entrance to the hospital which includes the retail outlets and pharmacy department.



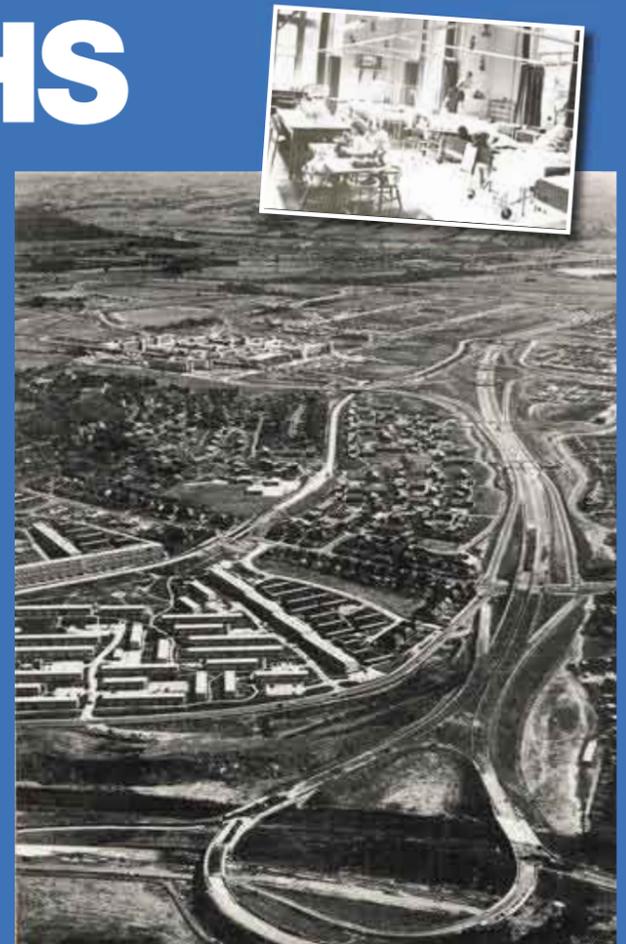
This photo is from the booklet of the opening of Halton Hospital showing the **phase 1 entrance** side of the hospital in September 1976.



This picture shows the **original reception desk** in the phase 1 entrance at Halton. Before outpatient clinics had their own reception areas everyone checked in here. The architecture is very much in the 1970s style!



Before Halton General was built following the creation of the new town there were several smaller cottage style hospitals around the district. This picture shows a ward from the **Runcorn Victorian Memorial Hospital** in the Old Town.



This aerial view shows the **area in 1969 just before Halton General was built**. You can see the cleared area of land where the hospital now is in the top left hand corner - with the modern buildings of the already built Shopping City complex just below it.



This is a picture of early **radiology equipment** being used by staff. In a complete coincidence, when the hospitals displayed some of the material at the Disability Awareness Day event in July we met the family of the staff member photographed in this very picture.

This view shows the early incarnation of a purpose built **A&E and casualty unit**. This was actually located near the old infirmary where the Crown Court is now in Warrington. One of the terraced houses behind was the general office for the Infirmary.



These two pictures are taken in 1975 during the final stages of construction of phase 1 of **Halton General Hospital** showing the main entrance from different angles.



New beds for old!

The hospitals took a special delivery of 300 new beds in March as part of new investment in improvements on the wards.

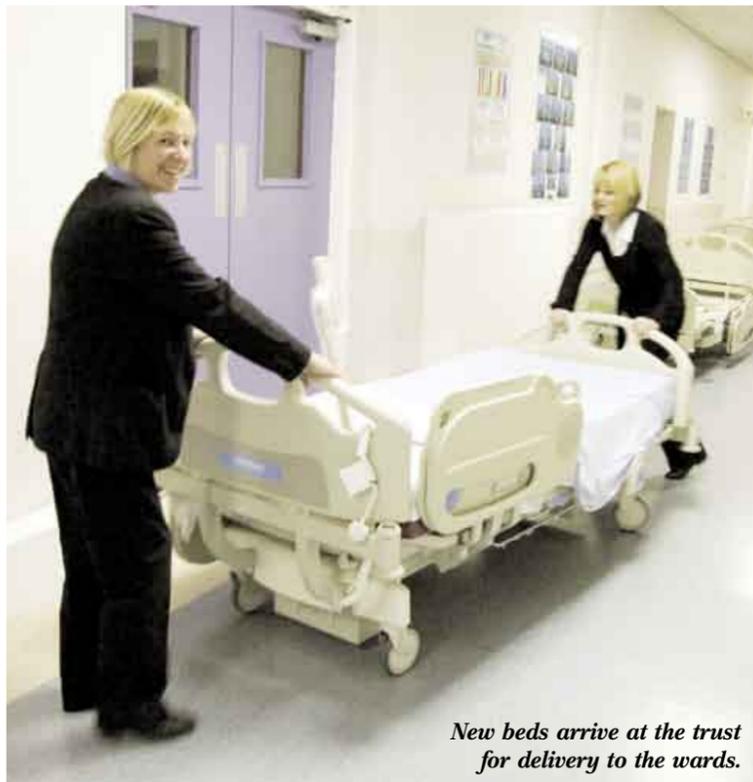
The trust has used some of the money from improving its financial position over the last year to invest in new equipment. The new beds have replaced older versions on the wards at both Warrington and Halton hospitals and are fully electric.

The beds have arrived 30 a day and were unloaded, taken to a preparation area in the hospital and made up with mattresses and sheets

so they could be used straight away on the wards. New and improved patient lockers have also been provided.

A number of very specialist beds have also been imported as part of the new stock that can be lowered to ground level and also cope with heavier patients.

The trust has invested almost £500k in total in the new beds which have come from leading manufacturers. Some of them came from America – getting slightly held up due to the stormy weather in the Atlantic on route to the wards at Warrington.



New beds arrive at the trust for delivery to the wards.

Seeking views on home birth

We're asking for the views of local women about home birth as we look to provide better information and access to a birth option that is growing in popularity nationally, but is seemingly not as popular for women in Warrington and Halton.

Home birth rates in the area are traditionally lower than the national average with less than 1 percent of local mothers opting to have their children at home compared to a national average of around 2.5 percent. Some areas of the country have home birth rates of up to 11 percent.

We are looking to find out the reasons why and what information mothers need about the options available to them when planning child-birth. A home birth group has been established to bring together local people to discuss the issue.

There is a national push to increase the number of home births as part of a new strategy for maternity services called Maternity Matters. All mums to be will be offered the chance to have a home birth.

When home birth is selected as choice, midwives from the hospital work with the mother and family in advance to look at setting up the room and the environment. The midwifery team are specially trained to deal with birth at home and any issues that arise and can call on help from the team at the hospital so safety is a key priority.

"Home birth can be a wonderful experience for mothers," said Gill Parsonage, midwife at North Cheshire Hospitals NHS Trust, "It's very relaxed, even to the extent that the evidence shows that less pain relief is required. The midwifery team are highly trained to look after and examine newborns at home and we have all the support of the hospital behind us as well.

"It's an option that is available for everyone and in many areas of the country it's growing in popularity and hospitals are having to provide more home based services, but for mums from this area it's never been a popular option. We have around 3,200 births a year at Warrington Hospital and our birth rate has risen by around 5 percent in the last few years but the numbers of home births remain the same. It is obviously the choice of the individual family on what they decide to do but we need to look at what plays a part in that decision and if people are getting the right information."

The home birth group will meet regularly and anyone interested in taking part to share their experiences or views can contact 01925 662092 or email gill.parsonage@nch.nhs.uk

Handwashing is a key priority for our staff.



Patients rate our wards

The 2007 Healthcare Commission patient survey has rated North Cheshire Hospitals as one of the best performers in providing single sex wards in the NHS.

Concerns about mixed sex wards were one of the national highlights of the annual survey of NHS patients. However, Warrington and Halton hospitals featured in the top 20 percent of NHS Trusts when it comes to ensuring patients are in single sex ward areas in hospital. The hospitals also scored well on

the quality of wards and admission procedures and offering patients a choice of hospital care. However, patients expressed worries about how well staff explained the treatment they were giving and whether doctors and nurses were washing their hands properly after treatment.

The commission provides the largest survey of healthcare in the country, with 76,000 patients quizzed nationwide. 419 patients who have used services at Warrington and Halton responded after being randomly selected.

The trust has already taken action in all the key areas of the survey. A new patient information group has been set up that is reviewing the information provided to patients with a range of new leaflets and patient information booklets about to be launched at the hospital which will also be available on the trust website.

Handwashing has also been a top priority and MRSA rates have fallen by 44 percent in the last year thanks to new hygiene procedures and other measures put in place.

We are smoke free

Smokers outside Warrington and Halton General Hospitals will be in for a verbal warning from new talking signs designed to help hospital staff remind visitors, patients and staff not to smoke on the hospital grounds.

Smoking has not been allowed on any part of the hospital sites since the national smoking ban came into force just over a year ago. Although the ban has dramatically reduced the number of people smoking on site, hospital staff and volunteers still have to politely remind some people to put out their cigarettes.

10 of the new talking signs have now been installed at key areas

such as main entrances and outside departments where smoking is still a problem. They issue a timely reminder every few minutes so people are left in no question as to the policy at the hospitals.

As part of a relaunch of the ban, any remaining smoking bins are also being replaced on the sites and new signage put up to take away any contradictory information that it is still fine to smoke outside the buildings.

"Visitors, patients and staff found smoking on the site are politely requested to put out their cigarettes by us on a regular basis," said Catherine Beardshaw, chief executive of North Cheshire Hospitals

NHS Trust, "The new talking signs will hopefully make our job easier. We don't want people to take offence at the ban - it is a decision made on health grounds to keep our sites clear of smoke and as an NHS organisation we feel it is entirely the right thing to do. Most people understand our decision to be smoke free and have been very supportive and we hope this will be a final reminder to those who still think it is fine to smoke on site."

The hospital has a programme in place to support patients who do smoke and offers smoking cessation advice and support to help them use their stay in hospital as a spur to quit smoking.

Fooled about fats?

The hospitals' nutrition and dietetic team give you some advice on fats in the diet and how choosing the right fats can help you lead a healthier lifestyle.

The hospital's nutrition and dietetic team work with patients to help provide advice on sensible diet that can support their care, meet individual needs around a condition or reduce the risks connected with a poor diet. Their advice is also relevant to all of us. Most people know that we should be cutting down on fat, but did you know it is even more important to try to replace the saturated fat we eat with unsaturated fat?

We do need fat

It is important to have some fat in our diet because fat helps the body to absorb some vitamins. It is also a good source of energy and a source of the essential fatty acids that the body can not make itself.

However, all types of fat contain a lot of calories (energy) and a diet high in fat may result in us gaining too much weight. So if you want to eat healthily and keep a healthy weight look out for lower fat alternatives wherever possible, and try to eat fatty food only occasionally.

'Good' and 'bad' cholesterol

Cholesterol is a fatty substance within the body that plays a vital role in how every cell wall works. However, too much cholesterol in the blood can increase your risk of developing coronary heart disease.

In this article we will be referring to 'bad' and 'good' cholesterol:

- 'Bad' cholesterol = LDL (low density lipoproteins), which carry cholesterol from the liver to the cells. A lipoprotein is a combination of cholesterol and protein. High levels of LDL can be harmful to your heart
- 'Good' cholesterol = HDL (high density lipoproteins), which return the extra cholesterol that isn't needed to the liver. Higher levels of HDL compared with LDL can reduce risks of heart disease.

DIFFERENT SOURCES OF FATS

Saturated fat

Having too much saturated fat can increase the amount of 'bad' cholesterol in the blood. This can increase the risk of developing heart disease. Foods high in saturated fat include meat products like meat pies and sausages, hard cheese, butter and lard, pastry, cakes and biscuits, cream, coconut oil and palm oil.

Trans fats

Trans fats have a similar effect on blood cholesterol as saturated fats (they raise the type of bad cholesterol in the blood). Trans fats can be formed when liquid vegetable oils are turned into solid fats. Trans fats may be found in biscuits and cakes, fast food, pastry and some margarines.

Unsaturated fats

These types of fats provide essential fatty acids and can actually reduce cholesterol levels. Foods high in unsaturated fat include oily fish, avocado, nuts and seeds, sunflower, rapeseed and olive oil (including their spreads).

Tips to make a healthy choice

- Choose oily fish instead of sausages or meat pie

- Use unsaturated oils instead of butter, lard and ghee in cooking
- Snack on some unsalted nuts instead of biscuits
- Make your mashed potato with olive oil and garlic instead of butter and milk for a change
- Choose a fat spread that is high in unsaturates instead of butter.

Omega 3 fatty acids

Oily fish is one of the best sources of omega 3 fatty acids and may have a protective effect against coronary heart disease. They may also be beneficial for some children with learning difficulties. Some omega 3 acids are also found in oils such as linseed, flaxseed, walnut and rapeseed.

Oily fish include salmon, herring, sardines, mackerel, trout and tuna (fresh not tinned). Aim for one to four portions (one portion = 140g) per week. These recommendations vary depending on age and sex and you should discuss with a dietitian for further advice.

Confused by what is a lot or a little amount of fat?

If you want to cut down on your fat intake you can compare food labels of different food products and choose the ones with less total fat and less saturated fat. The following is a rough guide to help with understanding food labels...

Total fat

- high is more than 20g fat per 100g
- low is 3g fat or less per 100g

Saturated fat (or saturates)

- high is more than 5g saturates per 100g
- low is 1.5g saturates or less per 100g

Remember that the amount you eat of a particular food affects how much fat you will get from it so watch your portion sizes.

Tips for reducing your overall fat intake

- Choose lean cuts of meat and trim off visible fat.
- Grill, bake, poach or steam rather than frying and roasting.
- If you do choose something high in fat, such as a meat pie for example, then pick something low in fat to go with it eg. baked potato instead of chips.
- Compare labels when choosing ready meals.
- Put some extra vegetables, beans, or lentils in casseroles or stews and add a bit less meat.
- Measure oil for cooking with a spoon rather than pouring it straight from a container or try using a low kcal spraying fat.
- Have pies with only one crust rather than two.
- When making sandwiches try not using any butter or spread if the filling is moist enough.
- Choose lower fat versions of dairy foods eg. Low fat yoghurt, skimmed milk, light cream cheese
- Try using yogurt or fromage fraise instead of cream or soured cream in recipes.

Newsflash - Application update

Warrington Hospital and Halton General Hospital's application to become an NHS Foundation Trust has been supported by the Secretary of State for Health, Alan Johnson MP.

It means that the trust will now be working with the independent regulator of NHS Foundation Trusts - Monitor - on a further assessment of its fitness for purpose to move to the new status later this year.

Since the end of the consultation in April, the hospital has worked on preparing its formal application and long term business plan for investing in its services. This was submitted to the NHS North West strategic health authority and to the Department of Health for consideration. The Secretary of State's approval in late July means that the application progresses to the final stage where Monitor will spend time with the trust over the coming weeks looking at all aspects of the hospital's work - from top level finances through to quality standards on wards. If successful, the trust hopes to move to NHS Foundation Trust status by the end of the year.

NCH on the web!

New website provides better information for patients

The trust has launched a new look internet site to provide better information for patients. www.northcheshirehospitals.nhs.uk launched in April with it's new look and a range of new information on the hospitals, how we work and more news and interactive features for the public.



As well as guides for patients and visitors, all the latest information on the trust is posted live on the site and we will be running surveys, polls and getting you more involved by using the site.

Chief executive Catherine Beardshaw has also started a regular 'blog' on the site to get the public's views on topics of interest.

"Although there is a range of information already up and running, the site will continue to develop over time with the next step being the creation of a service guide," said Chris Horner, head of communications, "We eventually want profiles on each of our services and key staff so that patients can learn more about us before they come for their care. We have some patient and visitor guides already up there and we can put surveys up to get patient views. We also have sections for GPs where we can provide them with new information and the beauty of the site is that we can update and change things as and when we want to."

Check out the site for yourselves – it's a good starting point for information on the trust.

Take a closer look at your hospitals at our AGM

Foundation Trust members are being given the opportunity to take a closer look at your hospitals at our annual general meeting and health fair in September.

The AGM is our annual public meeting where the hospitals present the annual report and accounts for the previous year (2007/2008) to the public and give you the chance to meet the executive team and have a question and answer session.

For the first time, the trust is extending the event to have a mini health fair on the day where you can come along and learn more about the work we do. There will be a number of stands and exhibitions on the day for you to look at. We're currently organising the full details of the fair but they will include interactive displays so you can get a free blood pressure check, see how clean your hands really are with our infection control team and even have a go on some of our training devices that use hi-tech dummies with a range of 'conditions' to train our staff!

The event takes place at Warrington Hospital post graduate centre (the building located near the entrance to the hospital on Lovely Lane) on Monday September 29th.

The stands and exhibition area open at 2 pm with the formal AGM starting in the lecture theatre at 3pm. You can hear the review of the last year from the chairman, chief executive and director of finance at the meeting and pick up a copy of the annual report. After the meeting (which should last around 30-40 minutes), the health fair will be running until 5 pm to give you plenty of time to have a look around and meet some of our staff. We're also looking at other talks and presentations which we can run on the day.

We're also hoping that you will be able to meet some of your newly elected Foundation Trust public and staff governors on the day as the elections will have been completed the week before.

The AGM is the first of our regular FT members events programme – we're looking at hosting an event every month of the year so you can learn more about the hospitals and get involved. Check out our events calendar on page 3 for information on other events at both hospitals.

For further information on the AGM contact chris.horner@nch.nhs.uk or call 01925 662296.



NOTICE OF ELECTION

Notice is given that the Trust will be holding elections to the Governors Council of North Cheshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

Elections are to be held for the following positions; there is one seat per area or class:

- Public Area 1: Daresbury, Windmill Hill, Norton North, Castlefields
- Public Area 2: Beechwood, Mersey, Heath, Grange
- Public Area 3: Norton South, Halton Brook, Halton Lea
- Public Area 4: Appleton, Farnworth, Hough Green, Halton View, Birchfield
- Public Area 5: Broadheath, Ditton, Hale, Kingsway, Riverside
- Public Area 6: Lymm, Grappenhall and Thelwall
- Public Area 7: Appleton, Stockton Heath, Hatton, Stretton and Walton
- Public Area 8: Penketh and Cuerdley, Great Sankey North, Great Sankey South
- Public Area 9: Culcheth, Glazebury and Croft, Poulton North
- Public Area 10: Latchford East, Latchford West, Poulton South
- Public Area 11: Bewsey and Whitecross, Fairfield and Howley
- Public Area 12: Poplars and Hulme, Orford
- Public Area 13: Birchwood, Rixton and Woolston
- Public Area 14: Burtonwood and Winwick, Whittle Hall, Westbrook
- Public Area 15: North Mersey
- Public Area 16: South Mersey
- Staff Class A: Medical
- Staff Class B: Nursing and Midwifery
- Staff Class C: Support
- Staff Class D: Clinical Scientist or Allied Health Professionals
- Staff Class E: Estates, administrative and managerial

Want to receive your own copy of Your Hospitals and join us as a member?

This newsletter is sent to all people who have become members of North Cheshire Hospitals NHS Trust.

We currently have over 6.500 public members and if you want to join us please visit our website www.northcheshirehospitals.nhs.uk, pick up a membership form at the hospital receptions or call us on 01925 275249 and we'll send you a form.

Membership is completely free of charge and means you can find out more about your hospitals, have your say and get to vote and stand in elections for our hospital governors.

Nominations

A Nomination form to stand for election to these positions can be obtained from the Returning Officer at the address shown below.

All Nomination papers should be received by the Returning Officer, Tom Colling, at the address as detailed below, by 12 noon on Tuesday 12th August 2008.

Electoral Reform Services

The Election Centre

33 Clarendon Road

London. N8 0NW

Tel 0208 889 9203

If candidates do submit a nomination and subsequently decide to withdraw, this must be done in writing, and witnessed, to the Returning Officer no later than noon on Friday 15th August 2008.

Please note that nominations that are faxed or emailed will not be accepted, although Electoral Reform Services strongly encourages candidates to email their election statements to nominations@electoralreform.co.uk. Please use the name and title of the election you are standing in as the 'Subject' of your email and attach a printed copy of your election statement to your nomination form.

Elections

Ballot papers will be distributed to qualifying members on Tuesday 2nd September 2008.

Completed ballot papers must be received by the Independent Scrutineer (Electoral Reform Services) by noon on Monday 22nd September 2008.

The constitution and regulations governing this election can be obtained from Electoral Reform Services at the address above.

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