

The newsletter of Queen Victoria Hospital NHS Foundation Trust



# Simply the best

**We are delighted that Queen Victoria Hospital has once again topped the list in the latest Adult National Inpatient Survey.**

## Top in the country

The annual survey of inpatients at all NHS hospital trusts in England, run by the Care Quality Commission, asks patients a wide range of questions about the care and support they received. In questions specifically about nurses, we came top in the country. In particular, nurses answered patient questions in ways they could understand, included patients in conversations, and inspired confidence and trust.

We also came top in the country for care and treatment. The results showed our staff gave patients the right amount of information about their condition and treatment, listened to their worries and fears and did everything they could to control pain.

A real testament to everyone working together, our hospital was rated highly on the whole hospital journey from the time on the waiting list before admission, through to choice and quality of food, help with eating, wards being quiet enough to sleep at night, involvement in decisions, and being supported to leave hospital and go home safely.

In the summer, Queen Victoria Hospital also scored highly in the National Cancer Patient Experience Survey, with patients confirming they felt informed, supported and trusted all of the team involved in their cancer care.

**“This achievement is something every member of staff and volunteer at the hospital has contributed to.”**

Steve Jenkin, Chief Executive



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# Introducing...

## Our new theatres

**Thanks to an investment of over £2 million we have been able to open two new operating theatres.**

The modular block – known as Theatres 11 and 12 – replaces our existing day surgery theatres which were reaching the end of their life as a clinical space. Theatre 11 is dedicated to hand trauma and Theatre 12 to procedures needing a local anaesthetic.

As a leading specialist surgical hospital for the South East, theatre capacity is vital. The two modular theatres provide us the ability to treat more patients in a timely way whilst maintaining our high level of patient care. They give us extra flexibility in the types of surgery we can run at any one time.

## And our new apprentices



**Welcome Jake, Rachael and Jasmine who have recently started the operating department practitioner apprenticeship programme.**

They are studying for a BSc in Operating Department Practice at Canterbury Christchurch University whilst getting lots of practical on the job experience here at QVH.

We offer apprenticeship opportunities in different departments as a way of earning and learning at the same time.

 To find out more visit [www.qvh.nhs.uk/apprenticeships](http://www.qvh.nhs.uk/apprenticeships)







# Helping Sammy to smile again



BEFORE



THEN



AFTER

Our plastic surgeons are able to perform a pioneering surgical procedure called facial reanimation. It is a relatively new surgical approach to help manage facial palsy, based on early intervention and surgery which is less extensive than previous techniques. One of our patients, Sammy, shares her story, and how the procedure and ongoing support of our facial palsy team are helping her learn to smile again.

"I had brain surgery in 2019 to remove a pilocytic astrocytoma, a type of slow growing brain tumour affecting the central nervous system. I'd been diagnosed six years earlier when I was 18. Nobody wants to hear they need brain surgery but I'd done my research and the outcomes were positive.

Unfortunately, when I woke from the surgery I was told I'd suffered a stroke which left me with paralysis down my right side, including my face. I was in the 2% of people that have a stroke from this type of procedure. I also developed nystagmus and oscillopsia, a condition where your eyes move involuntarily and it feels like everything is moving. Prior to the surgery I'd always been independent but, although the tumour had gone, the stroke left me needing to relearn how to walk, how to feed myself, and unable to smile. I moved back home to start my rehabilitation journey.

Daily physiotherapy helped me to feel better in myself and then in 2020 my GP referred me to the team at QVH. I was supported by the facial palsy therapists who gave me exercises to help with my facial paralysis. It was Tamsin Gwynn my therapist who referred me to consultant Ruben Kannan to test the nerve activity in the right side of my face and to help guide future surgery. The results showed the nerves were dying so I was referred for facial reanimation surgery within a month. We'd not long come out of the first lockdown when my surgery took place in the September. I couldn't have any visitors so the nurses on the ward would sit with me – they were amazing. Having surgery has given me hope for the future.

I came to an appointment with Tamsin in February 2021 and she asked me to try and smile. I didn't know if the right side of my face was responding, but it was, slowly. Spontaneity hasn't kicked in yet when I smile, but looking at photos I can start to see my smile improving each time. The facial paralysis also affected my ability to blink and my eye to naturally lubricate, making it dry and quite sore. After being referred to the corneoplastics team I've had surgery to try and improve how my eye functions too.

**I'm doing much better now and regaining my independence – I've even been on a paddleboard!**

I've started my own business and want to write a book to inspire others. I'm focused on the person I've grown to be on the inside and the exciting new opportunities I'm faced with, as a result of this challenge."

## What is facial reanimation surgery?

Ruben Kannan, consultant plastic surgeon, explains:

"Facial reanimation surgery is used to try to **restore voluntary movement to a person's face**. It uses a precision surgical technique called microsurgery to transfer very small nerves (less than 1mm diameter) or muscles from another part of the body, to restore facial expressions and function to patients. This is very important for emotional communication.

At QVH the team uses an advanced technique called super microsurgery which involves nerves and vessels up to 0.15mm and using incision techniques from inside the mouth for scar-less healing and quicker recovery. This is revolutionising patient reanimation surgery, with **Sammy being the first recipient in the world** of this particular technique. Preliminary results from patients since have been encouraging and it provides better results with minimal, albeit technically demanding, surgery. This is in line with QVH's specialist legacy of maximising results with the least risk to patients."



## Community Diagnostic Centre investment

Queen Victoria Hospital is set to benefit from a significant investment of £8.4m to enable us to offer a range of diagnostic services for people in and around East Grinstead. The funding will be used for a new building on our site, opening in 2024, focussed on providing a 'one stop shop' for diagnosis.

In October 2020, NHS England published a report by Professor Sir Mike Richards, recommending that community diagnostic centres should be created across the country, so that patients can receive life-saving checks close to their homes. Through investment in existing facilities, we are already working with a small number of local GPs practices to provide pathways of relevant tests and investigations for their patients. The results are sent to the GP electronically for discussion of next steps.

As the pathways are separate from urgent diagnostic scans and tests offered by other hospitals, it will mean shorter waiting times and a reduced risk of cancellation which can happen when more urgent cases take priority. This will help improve patient experience and reduce waiting lists for diagnostic tests.

By being able to invest in more staff and equipment, this QVH service will be available to patients from a wider area. The tests provided will include imaging (CT, MRI, X-ray), physiological measurements (echocardiography, spirometry) and pathology (phlebotomy and point of care testing).

QVH has been a pioneer in the development of the Breathlessness Pathway for patients requiring both respiratory and cardiology diagnostics. This work is now set to be rolled out to other providers across Sussex.



### What are diagnostics?

- Diagnostics are tests or procedures used to identify and monitor a person's disease or condition, allowing a diagnosis to be made.
- The NHS carries out more than 1 billion diagnostic tests each year.
- It plays a key role in clinical decision-making. Access to timely and effective diagnostic services is critical to providing high-quality care, reducing waiting times for treatment and improving health outcomes.
- Demand is rising.





# Psychological support for people with cancer

Thanks to NHS Charities Together and QVH Charity we have been able to provide additional psychological support for our people with cancer.

Dr Ruth MacQueen, a clinical psychologist, joined us specifically to support patients and staff around the impact Covid-19 has had on cancer services. She is now working with our wider cancer team and is a much valued addition as one of our patients, Olivia, explains.

**"Before I had a mastectomy, I knew that having a breast removed would be difficult to live with, but the focus was on my physical health and removing the tumour. After surgery, I had a phobia about the missing breast which spiralled. I couldn't look at myself in the mirror. Removing the prosthetic made me feel disgusted, I couldn't touch myself and I wanted to pretend it was all normal.**

The lockdown due to the pandemic made it feel like there was no support. When I met with the team at QVH to talk about having reconstruction, the nursing team referred me to the psychological therapies team.



At the start of my work with Ruth, I thought it wouldn't work, that there was no way I could change how I think and feel about my body. Things did change. It helped to be able to speak every week to someone who was not shocked or judgemental about what I told them. It was good to have someone who understood that the small steps I was making were really big steps for me. I felt there was a target and that I was making progress.

**Therapy helped me to be able to look at my body again. I was able to move forward and I couldn't have done that without Ruth. She helped me to face my fears and to realise that I was stronger than I thought."**

## Health and wellbeing tips for people with cancer

We have been working with our colleagues at NHS Surrey and Sussex Cancer Alliance to help them produce health and wellbeing videos for patients undergoing cancer treatment.

Dr Ruth MacQueen shares her top tips about managing anxiety and fear and Elizabeth Moore, senior clinical dietitian, shares her advice on how to improve your appetite.

You can watch these and other short films on the Cancer Alliance website.



<https://surreyandsussexcanceralliance.nhs.uk/patients-and-public/health-and-wellbeing>



# Celebrating our stars

The QVH Staff Awards are a celebration of the amazing work that takes place at our hospital, and most importantly, the wonderful people who work here.

When we asked our patients (past and present) to nominate staff that had shown them exceptional care and compassion, we were overwhelmed with the response. These nominations were for our 'Outstanding Patient Experience' award which was this year presented to two very worthy winners, Sarah Bailey, consultant anaesthetist, and Kim Foster, staff nurse on Peanut ward.

Sarah was nominated for being reassuring and supportive by one of our patients. They described her as kind, approachable and very honest, who helps patients feel at ease and they value her opinions and advice.

Kim was nominated for her ability to listen to patients and their families with real compassion and care. Her nominee commented on how professional and compassionate she was, treating each person as an individual and taking account of their needs.

Speaking about the award Sarah said:

"It was a lovely surprise to be nominated for this award and very touching to win. This represents the great teamwork I am part of in theatres – it is not just down to one individual but the whole team who put the patient and their care at the centre of what we do."

This was echoed by Kim who said:

"To have been nominated by a family is a humbling experience. Myself and my colleagues on Peanut ward strive to deliver gold standard care every day. To be recognised for this and to have made a difference to a child's experience is why I came into nursing."



## Outstanding Patient Experience award winners

Sarah and Kim receiving their awards from Liz Blackburn, deputy chief nurse



## Other winners recognised at the staff awards were...

### The innovation award

Community diagnostic centre pathway team (see page 4)

### Care and compassion award

Addy Katandika, Cancer clinical nurse specialist

### Making a difference to our services award

Main outpatients reception team

### Best newcomer award

Nikki Goodall, play leader on Peanut ward, and Philip Connor, general manager, plastics, burns and trauma

### Hidden hero award

Victoria Worrell, head of access and performance and health inequalities lead, and Ben Davis, IT support technician

### Leading and inspiring award

Julia MacAlpine, clinical coding and data quality team leader

### Sustainability award

Graham True senior healthcare assistant, theatres

### Chair's Cup

Ben Davis, IT support technician.





# Digital distraction gets the thumbs up

Did you know that it is possible to swim with whales in the ocean while lying in a hospital bed? Or explore a scenic landscape without walking anywhere?

For some of our patients the anxiety or worry about an upcoming procedure, or the pain of a dressing change, particularly for those with a burn injury, can be overwhelming. That's where virtual reality (VR) comes in.

QVH Charity has funded two VR headsets, one for Peanut ward for our youngest patients, and one for our burns unit, at a cost of £17,040. They use audio and 360° simulated views to immerse and help relax the patient taking their mind off their treatment. It works by producing an overwhelming amount of stimulation and information that it reduces the brain's ability to process pain and anxiety. The more immersive and interactive, the more effective it is.

Patients using the headset for dressing changes had lower pain scores and needed less pain relief – particularly beneficial to our burns patients who need repeated procedures.

We asked some of our youngest patients what they thought about using the VR headset:

**"It really helped to stop me thinking about what was happening. Especially as my mum has Covid and couldn't be with me."**

"The VR headset is such a brilliant idea. I couldn't even see the needle if I tried, and distracting my vision was super beneficial in stopping my usual resisting when it comes to blood tests. It takes your mind off it so well, and I'd love to see it introduced in more hospitals."

## How does your garden grow?

Thanks to supporters of QVH Charity, we are also able to create beautiful outdoor spaces like this one in our burns unit, where patients can sit, relax and enjoy being out in the fresh air. It is a little haven of escapism.



➔ [www.supportqvh.org](http://www.supportqvh.org)



## Help make a difference

You can make a donation to QVH Charity in a number of ways:

### by post

Please make cheques payable to 'QVH NHS FT Charitable Fund' and send to QVH Charity, Queen Victoria Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, Holtye Road, East Grinstead RH19 3DZ.

### online

You can make a donation via JustGiving using this link:  
<https://www.justgiving.com/qvh-nhs>

### by phone

Please call the cashier 01342 414416 to make a card payment.

## Want to find out more about QVH Charity?

Visit [www.supportqvh.org](http://www.supportqvh.org) and sign up for the charity's own newsletter.





# Janet, what's it like to be... a governor

We spoke to Janet Haite, QVH public governor, and asked her why she enjoys being involved.



## Tell us a bit about your background?

I worked in the NHS for 48 years, starting at 18 as a biomedical scientist, taking blood samples from patients before testing them. I loved the contact that I had with the patients and it made me appreciate what was important to help with their recovery. I worked my way up to running a big service, managing staff both in the hospital and in the community. It was very long hours but I loved the sense of purpose, the people, the fact I was helping people. And alongside that I brought up five children; never a quiet minute.

## What inspired you to become an NHS governor?

When I retired, after just a few weeks at home I knew I wanted to carry on contributing to and being connected to the NHS. I've always been busy so I have taken on quite a few volunteering roles, and I signed up as a QVH governor in 2017 and was elected for a second time in 2021.

## What have you found most rewarding about the role?

Being a governor at QVH has been a real eye opener for me because a small, specialist hospital embedded in its community is so different from a big, multi-site general hospital. Pre-pandemic, governors used to take part in the annual PLACE inspections (patient-led assessment of the care environment) and the chief executive is always open to listening to what we have seen. I have really enjoyed being a governor alongside people from such varied backgrounds too; when I started there was a tree surgeon and an electrician amongst my fellow governors and we were all able to contribute from our different perspectives.

## Would you recommend becoming an NHS governor?

If you are interested in your local hospital and want to understand how it works then I definitely recommend the role. You need to have the time to give to the role and you need to be involved in your community so you can bring more than your own views. It is very interesting and you will learn a great deal. I really hope we will soon be able to get back to meeting face to face; being a governor has been a very sociable role and virtual meetings haven't been the same at all.

## What do you want to tell members about QVH?

QVH has very caring staff, and if you need care in one of the hospital's specialisms then it is fabulous. I know how much local people value the minor injuries unit and there is work going on to make more diagnostics available. The hospital really needs investment in its buildings and the leadership team are working hard on challenges like that.

## QVH in three words?

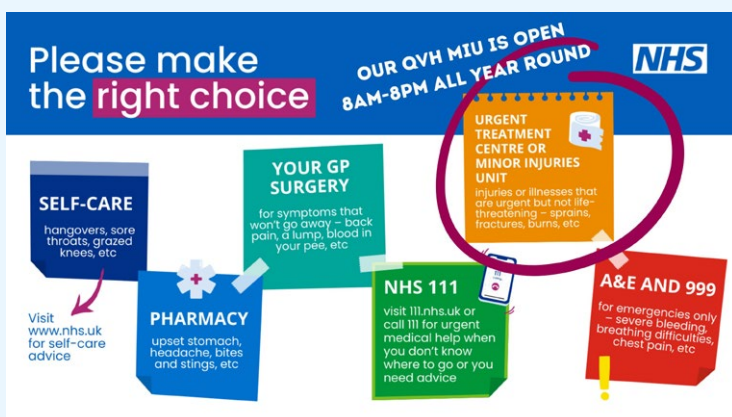
**Supportive. Friendly. Caring.**

## What is an NHS foundation trust governor?

The Council of Governors is a body made up of, and elected by, the Trust's members, stakeholders and staff. The role is voluntary with key duties including holding the non-executive directors to account for the performance of the Board and representing the interests of the foundation trust members and the public. This includes attending meetings at least four times a year plus the annual general meeting.

Find out more here [www.qvh.nhs.uk/council-of-governors/](http://www.qvh.nhs.uk/council-of-governors/)

We will be holding our next governor election next year – details will sent to members when nominations open.



## Help when it's not an emergency

Did you know our minor injuries unit (MIU) is open **8am-8pm**, 365 days a year? Run by emergency practitioners who are well-trained and experienced specialist nurses and paramedics, they can assess, diagnose and treat a wide range of minor injuries and ailments for both adults and children over one year old. **No appointment needed.**

You can find out more about whether MIU can help you here:

[www.qvh.nhs.uk/minor-injuries-unit/](http://www.qvh.nhs.uk/minor-injuries-unit/)