



We continue to experience huge pressure across Blackpool Teaching Hospitals to care for a very high number of patients.

Our staff have worked flat out, for a very long time indeed, whilst also managing the implications of the pandemic and restrictions in their own lives. There were times – and still are – when staffing has been very fragile and colleagues have worked extra hours, extra shifts, extra days and through holidays and rest periods. It has been the most monumental effort and something I am so proud to have been part of.

We describe ourselves as part of a family here at Blackpool Teaching Hospitals and we have pulled together through this crisis like never before. We have lost colleagues and seen things that can never be unseen, but we have done so with integrity, grace and the most inspiring personal resilience. It is right that now, as we look towards recovery, we take a moment to rest and see our families too. We are encouraging all staff to take leave and breaks and rest wherever possible and that includes everyone – right up to the Chief Executive.

It is true that community infection rates are reducing across Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre and we are starting to see the impact of this in the number of people coming into hospital with Covid each day. But I want to be honest too and put the numbers into perspective. We currently have on average over 100 Covid-positive patients, which is still a huge group of people needing care and support.

My message to everyone reading this is that no matter how hard lockdown has been this winter, the evidence is that it is working. Please continue to stay at home wherever possible. Don't meet up with people outside of your household unless in your support bubble. If you need to go out maintain social distancing and wear a face mask. Keep washing and sanitising hands. This is the most effective way you can support the NHS. This is the way we will get back to normal and be able to restore our services.

We have been working with colleagues from BTH and across the healthcare system in Lancashire and South Cumbria to ensure the vaccination programme is as effective as possible as quickly as possible and we have now vaccinated over 13,000 people through our hospital hub at the Vic.

In addition, the team has been at Blackpool's iconic Winter Gardens providing vaccines to the most vulnerable groups.

The team has worked incredibly hard to get the vaccination centres up and running so quickly and effectively and I want to pay tribute to them for everything they continue to do. I know this is acknowledged within the community and thank you to everyone who has sent kind comments of thanks and support, they really are appreciated.

I know there are some arguments suggesting the vaccine to be neither safe nor effective. This narrative is particularly forceful in Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities



where the take up is still very low, despite research clearly indicating this group of people can be more affected by the virus than others.

I want to encourage everyone who is called to have their vaccine to do so. It is safe and effective and it is the only way to get out of this nightmare that has affected so many people in the most terrible way. Please, when you are called come forward and have the vaccine.



Lastly, it would be remiss of me not to mention and pay tribute to one of the most incredible and inspiring people to ever champion the NHS. It was with such huge sadness that everyone at BTH learned of the passing of Captain Sir Tom Moore. What an amazing man, leaving such an amazing legacy. We have been fortunate to have received some of the £39million raised last summer and we are very grateful indeed. RIP Captain Sir Tom – you will be forever in our hearts.

Please do catch up on the headlines from the Trust below –if you have any feedback, anything you would like to hear about or any questions please do get in touch.

Nicki Latham

Deputy Chief Executive, Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Positive

FAREWELL FROM PEARSE

The Trust said farewell to chairman, Pearse Butler, this week.

Pearse, who joined the Trust in 2018 after previously serving the University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay as Chairman, praised staff for their support and passed on his best wishes for the future.

He said: “I want to say a massive thanks to everyone at the Trust and all the partners I worked with.

“I have loved doing this role. It has been a delight every day and I will always remember how nicely people have talked to me and how warm people have been to me over the years.”

Chief Executive, Kevin McGee, praised Pearse saying: “I would like to say a massive thank you to Pearse.

“He will not be forgotten and will be a hard act to follow. We wish him all the very best for the future.”

Non-Executive Director, Mark Beaton, added: “I’ve worked with a lot of chairman and Chief Executives but in terms of warmth and compassion and a way of being direct but compassionate at the same time Pearse was made for the job.

“I would like to thank him for everything he has done for the Trust and for me personally.”

Steve Fogg will take over the reigns as Chairman next month.



STEVE TAKES UP STANDARDS ROLE



THE Trust's continued drive to improve standards has been boosted by a new senior appointment.

Dr Steve Wiggans, who celebrates 15 years of working at the Trust this week, has been appointed to the new role of Director of Professional Standards and Deputy Medical Director, a position designed to further develop the Trust's focus of delivering the highest standards of care to patients.

Steve, who is currently the Divisional Director for Scheduled Care, said: "I'm delighted to have been appointed to this new role and really looking forward to starting. It is an exciting role and will cover a wide range of areas that can make a positive impact such as education, revalidation, training, job planning, HR and organisational development.

"The fact that the role has been created is a really positive sign and fits in well with the Trust's improvement journey."

He added: "I have always looked to develop my skills and areas of knowledge and I hope I can bring those experiences to this role."

Dr Jim Gardner, Medical Director, said: "We want to drive the highest professional standards for all of our staff.

"My initial focus is on Doctors so by establishing the role of Director of Professional Standards with a real interest in appraisals, job planning and building support for doctors we are really developing capacity and leadership at the top of the Trust."

People Centred

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE WEEK MARKED AT TRUST

Readers of this bulletin may not know about all the many specialist services offered to patients and staff at Blackpool NHS Trust.

This week was Sexual Abuse & Sexual Violence Awareness Week, which used the hashtag #itsnotok on social media.

The Trust joined the many organisations raising awareness of the issue – one which the lockdown has reportedly made worse in many cases.

To mark the awareness week, the Trust's Health Independent Domestic Abuse Advisor, Donna Wade, and Health Independent Sexual Violence Advisor Co-Ordinator, Julie Vigo-Saunders, were on hand to help.



Staff were offered virtual drop-in sessions to learn more about how to contact and refer to the service.

Donna and Julie are always available to offer advice on a range of services including offering immediate support and advice to

patients, linking patients and families to longer-term support, providing staff with training, supporting staff themselves and coordinating pathways of support.

To find out more about the work of these specially trained advisors, contact them on bfwh.idva.isva@nhs.net

The National Domestic Abuse Helpline can be contacted on 0808 2000 247.

TUNE IN FOR DR GARDNER'S WEEKLY VIDEO UPDATE

The Trust's well known Medical Director Dr Jim Gardner is building quite a following on our YouTube and social channels with his weekly video blog, which have been viewed hundreds of thousands of times by people looking for the latest local news on our response to Covid.

You can view the latest episode [HERE](#) and please do subscribe to the Trust's popular YouTube channel for all our latest digital content.



Compassionate

TRUST TRIALS HIV TESTING PROGRAMME

Blackpool Victoria Hospital's Emergency Department is trialling a testing programme to help reduce the number of people living with undiagnosed HIV in the community.

Trainee Advanced Clinical Practitioner, Peter McKiernan and Suzan Potts, HIV Clinical Nurse Specialist, have secured funding for six months to enable opt out HIV screening in the department alongside routine blood tests.

Through his research for a Master's degree in Advanced Clinical Practice, Peter discovered that Blackpool has the second highest HIV rates per 1,000 people in the North West of England, and felt the option of screening in ED would be beneficial.

Peter said: "In light of my research I contacted Blackpool's HIV Nursing team, which is part of Sexual Health Services, to discuss the options of implementing routine HIV testing in ED.

"A similar project had been run in the acute medical unit (AMU), so this was an opportunity to move the focus to ED and embed HIV screening earlier in the patient journey."

Delayed by Covid, the project launched in November 2020 and is now in its third month of screening. After the initial six month period, the project will be assessed for further funding.



Through the HIV Prevention England Programme, Terrence Higgins Trust, Britain's leading HIV and sexual health charity, is supporting this project during National HIV Testing Week in February.

National HIV Testing Week is a campaign to promote regular testing among the most affected population groups in England.

Peter added: "There has never been a better time to get tested for sexually transmitted infections, including HIV in helping to 'break the chain' of transmission. If everyone got tested during this time, infections could be lowered, and the impact on NHS services reduced."

LOCAL SUPPORT FOR WORLD CANCER DAY



Join us on 4 February

Staff across the Fylde Coast NHS have shown their support for World Cancer Day, and they were joined by one very special guest – pop star Linda Nolan.

As in previous years, staff at the Trust and the CCG have been making pledges for how they can make a difference when it comes to cancer.

With the COVID-19 pandemic continuing to add strain to the lives of everyone, there has been a noticeable drop in the number of referrals to local cancer services.

And videos have been circulated across the social media channels of both the Trust and CCGs, including of Miss Nolan, encouraging people to access both primary and secondary care services as soon as they need to.

Excellent

NEW ACCREDITATION SCHEME LAUNCHED TO IMPROVE STANDARDS

Clinical areas across Blackpool Teaching Hospitals Trust are being encouraged to 'Go for Gold' with the launch of the Collaborative Organisational Accreditation System for Teams (COAST), with the aim of raising standards and celebrating the best practice of teams across the hospital.

The framework is designed around the Chief Inspector of Hospitals, 5 Key lines of enquiry (KLOE) of: SAFE, EFFECTIVE, CARING, RESPONSIVE and WELL LED.

The accreditation framework also focuses on being able to demonstrate what constitutes the 6 C's, Compassion in Practice Values: CARE, COMPASSION, COMPETENCE, COMMUNICATION, COURAGE and COMMITMENT as well as National PLACE standards.

Assessments commenced on the 5 January 2021 and to date nine areas have been assessed. The aim of the unannounced visits from the COAST team is to help standardise approaches to care, to help teams recognise and share best practice and to ensure that the Trust, as a whole, is prepared for CQC visits.

Wards are assessed with each of the 12 standards given a Gold, Silver or Bronze grade, before receiving an overall COAST Accreditation for the ward. Wards are then given the opportunity to improve their grade, with the goal of achieving a Gold Accreditation.

Emily Carter, COAST Lead at Blackpool Teaching Hospitals is keen to see the Accreditation System as cause for celebration and improvement across the Trust.

“Accreditation is a supportive assessment, we are the wards critical friend; the passenger on your drive to work, pointing out things you may not see,” said Emily.

“We are highlighting areas of good practice and encouraging staff to celebrate these and also identifying areas which may require improvement and supporting teams on their improvement journey.”

The assessment team will include colleagues from all divisions and all grades. Initially, the COAST team will be assessing adult inpatient areas with plans to assess all of Blackpool Teaching Hospital services including ED, Theatres, community services and maternity services.

“By identify good practice we can encourage colleagues from across the trust to visit other areas where good practice has been identified. Rebecca Billington, the COAST’s deputy lead said: “Already colleagues from across the Trust are talking about the environmental cleanliness seen on Ward 26, following their recent COAST assessment, and have been ‘Pinching with Pride’ some of the changes that ward manager Gemma Smith has made.”

The COAST assessments will continue twice a week and all staff are encouraged to attend. The COAST team will also be hosting weekly learning forums, following assessments, which will enable shared learning with the attendees and Matrons.

Going forward, Emily and Rebecca will be hosting a socially distanced or teams monthly COAST and COFFEE, a forum for all staff to attend and discuss any aspect of the assessment.

TRUST’S LABORATORY STAFF SEAL RECOGNITION

The Trust’s Covid testing facilities have been awarded international accreditation following rigorous assessment from one of the industry’s key performance and protection bodies.

The Trust’s medical laboratories at Blackpool Victoria have seen their standards and practices scrutinised over the past few weeks, with areas such as microbiology, biochemistry, blood transfusion, haematology and the quality management systems all under the microscope.

The United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) is a government appointed body, which assesses and certifies organisations in the areas of testing, inspection and calibration services. With an international set of standards, the UKAS accreditation is widely recognised as the benchmark for the high standards within laboratories around the world.

This year’s inspection at Blackpool Victoria, took the form of a virtual assessment due to COVID restrictions, but was also the one of the first which saw a Trust’s COVID testing facilities scrutinised.

Following the UKAS inspection, the Trust are delighted to confirm Virology’s in-house diagnostic Covid tests along with the Covid antibody test are now accredited to the ISO 15189 standard. In particular the assessors commented on our strong and committed Microbiology consultant team as well as the quality of biomedical science training.

Clare Ellis, the Trust’s Acting Pathology Directorate Manager, said: “This is a real achievement that we have managed to retain the UKAS accreditation. Particularly at a time when due to the pandemic, like all areas of the NHS, we have had a high volume of work

and challenges with staffing. We are one of only a handful of laboratories in the UK that have received UKAS accreditation for their Covid testing.”

The Trust’s Pathology laboratory is comprised of Blood Transfusion, Haematology, Cellular Pathology, Mortuary, Microbiology, Virology, Phlebotomy, Point of Care Testing and our Anti-Coagulant Dosing Service.

With approximately 250 staff the laboratory tests thousands of samples a day and operate a 24/7 service.

POSITIVE COMMENTS

One of our Haematology Research Nurses received this lovely note this week:

“Dear Gill, I hope you and your team are safe and well, think of you all often and lucky I have been put into your care.”

“My husband had a stroke but once again the staff at Victoria Hospital put him back on track. We are doing good; you are all amazing at Victoria Hospital.”



Mum-to-be Rachael sent us this message...

‘The women in the ultrasound and maternity day units today were amazing.

“During my 36 week growth scan, I mentioned to the sonographer I hadn't been able to get in contact with my community midwife for a while and was due an iron blood test. She directed me over to the day unit and said they would be able to squeeze me in.

“I could tell on arrival to the maternity day unit desk that they were very busy but it didn't stop them from caring. They did my blood test and a full maternity check over without much of a wait at all and even tried to get me an appointment with my community midwife, the doctor found out where I would be able to contact my midwife tomorrow.

“Anyway, without too much more waffling, I'd just like to say thank you and what a great team of staff there are!”

Bernie sent us this message:

‘I attended BVH for my first Covid-19 vaccination on Tuesday. As a nurse myself (about to start vaccinating) I would like to say how well organised everything was.

“Special mention to Karl, staff nurse, who gave me mine - what a helpful, cheerful and informative man! Top marks to him and all the team.’