



Connect

THANK YOU NHS



Mid and South Essex
NHS Foundation Trust

October 2020

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COVID-19 special issue

In this special issue of Connect, we celebrate our staff, recognising all of their hard work during the pandemic.





Many people outside the Trust, from government ministers to people who stop me on the street, tell me they think we did an outstanding job during the weeks when COVID-19 cases were at their peak. They ask me why I think the hospitals have done so well.

I think there are two answers:

Firstly, our absolutely brilliant staff. Your creativity, energy and can-do attitude came together and we worked as a united team to address any difficulties crossing our path. I don't underestimate the emotional toll it has taken, but everyone has remained steadfast. We were able to keep vital services running, even at the most intense peak.

This edition of Connect focuses on your fantastic work over the past few months.

Secondly, we're an organisation that embraces improvement, innovation and research, and that culture gave us a definitive advantage. We were able to quickly introduce an ambitious programme to test our patients and staff for the virus.

Now we must look ahead to the next phase. New and unexpected challenges will, no doubt, arise in the coming months but we are working hard to get all of our services back on track, while keeping our staff and patients safe.

This has been the most challenging year ever for our NHS. Our staff at every level have gone above and beyond to respond to COVID-19 in truly remarkable ways. You have adapted your ways of working and looked after each other as well as caring for friends, families and loved ones. Thank you.

Clare Pariker

Junior doctors respond to the COVID-19 call

Twenty-four newly-qualified junior doctors responded to the challenge of COVID-19 by starting their roles at our hospitals several months early.

Final year medical students saw their exams and planned overseas placements disrupted by the pandemic. The General Medical Council agreed alternative forms of final assessment and said that many students could begin work as junior doctors three months before the traditional start date in early August.

Doctors Kate Ledbury and Kati O'Brien, who both studied at Barts and the London School of Medicine and Dentistry, are working in Basildon Hospital's stroke unit. They are among six year one doctors who started at Basildon, along with ten at Southend and eight at Mid Essex.



Although students at Barts managed to complete their exams, Kate missed out on a three-month overseas placement in Australia, where she would have worked in helicopter and emergency medicine. Kati planned to work for three months with ophthalmology services in Australia and the Philippines.

Instead the pair responded to the challenges facing the NHS during the COVID crisis by starting their

first year of training early and practising as junior doctors.

Kati said: "When the lockdown happened I just really wanted to start using all the skills I had spent years learning while the knowledge was still fresh."

As the doctors could not attend their actual graduation, they were given a special ceremony at Southend Hospital.

Keeping our services going

The COVID-19 pandemic brought many challenges and affected people in different ways. Many of our services were suspended, some were moved to other locations, new models of care were brought in and some services are in the process of re-starting. Even in a pandemic there are things that simply cannot wait like emergency care, cancer services or trauma clinics. A key factor in keeping our patients and staff safe is 'zoning'; a system for clearly identifying areas of the hospital as COVID-free zones, where non-COVID patients are treated, with separate areas for symptomatic and COVID patients. We spoke to some of our leaders who are at the forefront of this balancing act, keeping patients and staff safe whilst maintaining essential services.

Clare Burns, director of elective care at Southend Hospital:

"It was very important that we kept our chemotherapy services for cancer patients going pretty much as we would have done before COVID. The teams dealt with an awful lot. The chemotherapy team at Broomfield moved the unit in one weekend. I'm really proud of the work they put into this. At one point our chemo units at Broomfield and Southend had to deal with staff sickness but they carried on working, making sure that patients were seen. We've also been working closely with the pharmacy department so that we can deliver a home care chemo service; it's a nicer environment for patients to be treated at home rather than in hospital and it reduces the risk of contracting COVID-19.

Ophthalmology is another service that I have responsibility for and our eye surgeons did remarkable jobs too. Before COVID, we operated at Southend, Orsett and Broomfield Hospitals. During the pandemic we have been operating at Southend BMI Hospital, Spa Medical in Chelmsford and at



Springfield Hospital in Chelmsford as well so that as many patients as possible can be treated. The team's flexibility has been really outstanding."

Nagen Kumar, director of operations for elective care at Basildon Hospital:

"We wanted to make sure that Basildon was capable of dealing with COVID patients and we made infrastructure changes to provide the best possible intensive care facilities with excellent oxygen systems. We made a number of workforce changes as well, meaning we were able to continue to provide emergency care and elective cancer services in a different way by expanding and delivering services from Nuffield Hospital. Overall we managed to provide essential emergency and cancer services at the height of the pandemic while keeping patients safe."

Fiona Ryan, director of operations for urgent and emergency care at Basildon Hospital:

"In relation to cancer care, we took an early decision to move our chemotherapy unit off-site so that the most vulnerable patients didn't have to come into hospital. We re-established the haematology day unit and our chemotherapy service over at our Orsett site and this created an extra layer of protection for those patients. It worked really well and is an example of good practice. We also moved the fracture clinic completely into our



therapies area so that we have enough space in A&E. If people have fractures you have to deal with them promptly so that they don't suffer any avoidable long-term impact. At the height of the pandemic, the focus was on cancer patients and urgent referrals. Now we are working on routine referrals - non-life threatening conditions."

Joe Hayward, director of operations for planned and scheduled care at Broomfield Hospital:

"The key priority for us was how to keep patients safe. We had to suspend some services, going from having 26 theatres down to five. Routine care was put on hold and staff were released to support emergency services, but this pandemic shows what extraordinary staff we have. I can't thank them enough. The biggest cohort was theatre staff who rose to the challenge and did things differently. We had to mobilise staff very quickly and the focus was on time-critical patients. Our focus now is on how we re-start services and continue to keep patients and staff safe."

A Pathologist's view - by Dr Seema Ali



The COVID-19 pandemic led to changes across the Trust. Although it's been a difficult time, we've seen the tenacity and excellence of our staff. The Pathology department have been working hard throughout the pandemic. They are often overlooked but are the unsung heroes supporting frontline staff.

Like every department, the Pathology directorate has undergone rapid changes including training staff to respond to the needs of the service. We have been sending Blood Sciences staff to the Mortuary, Biochemistry and Microbiology to run a seven-day service across the Trust.

In response to the rapid development of technology, Microbiology introduced swab testing for COVID-19 on new equipment which reduced the turnaround time to within 24 hours. Microbiology have now released over 38,000 swab results. There are now three platforms for testing, including a rapid test for emergency cases. Over 100,000 COVID-19 swab packs have been compiled in the Blood Sciences department and distributed to Broomfield, Basildon, Southend and Essex Partnership University Trust.

In addition, COVID-19 antibody testing was introduced in Biochemistry, and almost 10,000 patients and staff were tested within four months.

Both Microbiology and Biochemistry have also assumed the extra responsibility of processing hundreds of SIREN study samples each week to contribute to the UK COVID-19 research effort. In other areas of Pathology, the Blood Transfusion team rose to the challenge of supplying blood products to the day therapies patients who moved off site. Haematology also changed their criteria to perform clotting studies on COVID-19 patients.

The Mortuary team changed patient flow to make sure all patients still received the highest level of dignified care, while always keeping staff safe. The hard work of our volunteers has meant we were able to do so without the need for additional external fridge units.

This has all been achieved while maintaining an excellent service for routine pathology work so that the Trust could continue to provide exemplary care.

Midwives go the extra mile for families

Our midwives have received glowing feedback from families they supported during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Rebecca and Phil Townsend had a son, Joshua, at Basildon Hospital at the end of March.

Dad Phil was so grateful for the care the family received he gave the maternity staff 50 bunches of flowers on Mothers' Day as a thank you, describing them all as "heroes".

"The pressure and uncertainty in the country throughout the six days we were in hospital was noticeable, but staff stayed professional throughout," said Phil. "One particular lady on the labour ward, Ilaria Di Pierro, was caring for us on the Sunday through the night into Monday. She was unbelievable in the way she supported my wife through some challenging obstacles that we were not prepared for.

"Ilaria's compassion, personality and knowledge kept us both at ease. Coming into Basildon Hospital and seeing what the team does is absolutely outstanding. All these midwives are my heroes but especially Ilaria."

Blogger Jade Gande gave birth to her son, Alfie, at Broomfield Hospital on Easter Sunday after being transferred from the birthing centre at St Peter's in Maldon.

Alfie was delivered in theatre with staff wearing full PPE but Jade said that, despite not being able to see the midwives' smiles, "they were so reassuring that it didn't really matter".



Jade, who has over 7,000 followers on Instagram, added: "I will be forever grateful to the midwives working during the current pandemic. My labour went on for over nine hours at my birth centre so I had two different midwives while there, who were both lovely.

"I then ended up being transferred to the main hospital so I had a new midwife there who was also very friendly and supportive, guiding me through each contraction. "I was there for another five hours and then ended up being taken to theatre for a forceps delivery.

"My midwife in theatre was amazing. She held my hand while getting the spinal block done and supported me throughout every contraction and push. I couldn't have done it without her.

"I'm grateful to all the midwives that were there throughout my labour and birth, and also to my midwife post-birth who has been so supportive and helpful."

Katharine Perry said:

"I had my 36 week scan at Southend Hospital and just wanted to say what a fantastic and brilliant experience it was. Like everyone else in the world the thought of going to a hospital scared the life out of me, but it was far from frightening.

"I was met by a friendly midwife who took mine and my husbands temperature. He was then asked to wait outside while I waited in the waiting room. We were called in later for my appointment.

"The gentleman who did our scan was probably one of the nicest men we had met. I didn't get his name but he was friendly, funny and an absolute credit to Southend Hospital. He answered all our questions and not once during the scan was I unsure what was going on.

"The midwife I saw afterwards was also brilliant and answered all my questions and took her time with me and I didn't feel rushed.

"Everyone we came into contact with couldn't have been nicer, but especially the man who did my scan."



Exceptional times, exceptional staff

In this special issue of Connect, we are celebrating all of our staff. Not just frontline clinical staff, but admin, estates, domestics, gardeners, medical secretaries, volunteers, security, parking wardens, and the countless others who are vital to the running of our hospitals. We put out a call for staff to nominate colleagues who, in their opinion, have been exceptional during these difficult times and the response was so overwhelming that we just don't have the space to feature them all! We also have comments from some of the nominees. Thank you to everyone who took the time to nominate their colleagues.



Amanda Fife, Nurse Consultant, Critical Care, Basildon Hospital, said:

"We never lost our sense of humour. The gifts of food, children's pictures and toiletries from the public sometimes brought tears to my eyes. Our local community have been amazing. Within the Critical Care Unit we had a lot of student nurses approaching the end of their training. A significant number of them have now chosen the CCU as their first qualifying post, showing just how well they were supported and developed by the wonderful CCU staff. The team stepped up beyond our expectations."

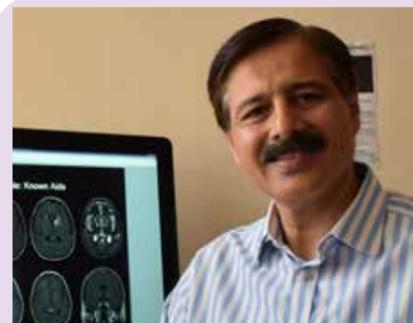
Matthew Ashdown nominated Shirley the domestic cleaner, at Southend Hospital. "She has worked like a trooper cleaning as fast as possible and delaying her breaks when we were pushed for beds. All the bed cleaning team also deserve a mention."

Michelle Palmer nominated respiratory consultants Dr Powrie, Dr Amran and Dr Ahmed at Southend Hospital who she said have been more than amazing during the pandemic. Ward managers Lisa Cubitt and Anne Groome were also mentioned by Michelle. "The staff here wouldn't have got through without their support and guidance."

Melanie Hood nominated Duncan Powrie, clinical director for medicine. "Duncan demonstrated exceptional leadership throughout the pandemic and I believe this is what got us through. He was up-to-date with the latest guidance and research, and ensured this was put into practice and shared with colleagues in the Trust. He is well respected by his colleagues and this showed through the teams' engagement with short notice rota changes, redeployment of staff, changes to roles and more."



Sandra Hayes, Clinical Nurse Specialist, said: "My whole team, the HIV service at Broomfield Hospital, have been exceptional during lockdown. The team have been instrumental in ensuring that all new policies and procedures in the ever-changing COVID situation were implemented in our clinic. We have all supported each other with care, humour and cups of tea."



Dr Sami Khan, Consultant Radiologist, Basildon Hospital, said:

"At first, it felt like a tsunami. We did not know what had struck us. But I must say that for this hospital, I feel so proud – we really did rise to the challenge and went beyond the call of duty. We knew that we had to do whatever we could to help our patients, and by developing new processes, we made history here. Many other Trusts followed our lead."

Anne Giles nominated Sarah Gates, Medical Secretary "At the start of COVID-19, almost all of the secretarial staff in DOME and Stroke were either shielding or unwell themselves. Sarah almost single-handedly kept both the DOME and Stroke teams going by supporting 18 consultants and their teams as well as seven other secretaries, and supporting all of the patients for over three months. She is a complete star. Although all of my teams have been covering gaps and have faced many challenges during the last few months, I think Sarah has got to get the prize for covering the most clinical staff for the longest period and always with the biggest smile on her face. She is a remarkable secretary and we are very fortunate that she is part of the Central Medical Secretarial Service team."

Kerri Legg nominated Hayley Steadman, Pathology Services. "Hayley was an absolute champion during the Trust's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Hayley took control of leading the mortuary teams at Southend. She represented Southend mortuary at the COVID-19 incident daily meetings, liaised with local funeral directors to encourage prompt service, recruited more staff and helped set up reporting mechanisms to inform others of capacity available at all times of the day. Alongside this incredible COVID response, she also reduced length of stay in mortuary from 15.32 days to 10.86 days and arranged for an archaeologist to come and pick up the 'unknown skeleton' which will be used for new Crime Scene Investigation trainees. Faced with an exceptional amount of challenge, pressure and expectation, Hayley greeted this with enthusiasm, determination and an incredible spirit. Everyone should know what an incredible job she did."



Andy Butler, Electrical Engineering Manager, Basildon Hospital, said:

"The Estates and Projects teams worked really well together. We were all under immense pressure to adapt and overcome the challenges we faced. The team went above and beyond, giving up their free time to make sure the hospital was ready for what was to come."



Dr Kirsten Wadsworth, COVID-19 clinical director and respiratory consultant, Basildon Hospital, said:

"During the surge of the pandemic, so many staff not only got on with the job, but really went the extra mile – working extra hours and additional shifts. Everybody responded brilliantly, doing tasks they would not normally do, but also caring for patients throughout. As the COVID-19 Clinical Director, it was incredible to see staff supporting each other through such an intense period."

Staff spotlight Sarah Charlton

Sarah Charlton, clinical lead for tissue viability, has been recognised as a ‘super nurse’ by ConvaTec Wound Care for her work in developing a new device for preventing pressure ulcers in patients who need oxygen therapy.

This work became urgent as the COVID-19 pandemic began. We saw increasing numbers of patients admitted to our hospitals who were at high risk of developing pressure ulcers associated with the use of oxygen masks and tubing.

Sarah said: “It was great, unexpected and overwhelming to be recognised as a ‘super nurse’ after such a busy period for everyone. Pressure damage associated with use of medical devices, such as oxygen masks, is a real risk for many of our patients and especially for patients with COVID-19.”

“I have worked closely with ConvaTec on this project as we use their products across our



hospitals, so it means a lot to me professionally to be recognised in this way.”

Nurses reflect on intensive care redeployment

Reorganising our services to deal with COVID-19 has resulted in many members of staff being redeployed away from their regular departments.

Orthopaedic scrub nurse Mariusz Wojtak and Billericay ward’s senior sister Shiny George at Broomfield Hospital both volunteered to support the team in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU).



For Shiny it was a return to the department she first worked in when she joined Broomfield as a bank nurse, whereas it was an entirely new experience for former soldier Mariusz.

“Some of my orthopaedics friends and I were among the first to go to ICU,” said Mariusz, who has worked at Broomfield since 2009. “I still remember my first shift. It was scary but it was helpful for us that there were only five patients then and we had experienced ICU nurses with us. Nora, the senior sister, helped me a lot.”

“After so many years of orthopaedics, going into ICU was a shock. I think people who said they weren’t scared going in there for the first time were lying a little!”

Mariusz spent two months in the department and was full of praise for the team he worked with.

“I like to think I adapted quickly but I appreciate how difficult the job is and how different it is to what we do in theatres. I really admire the team; they are amazing and do a great job.”

“They welcomed us and not only had to deal with patients but also had to help us (the redeployed nurses) as well.”

“I’m happy with what I’ve done but a little disappointed we couldn’t do more for some patients. It was a stressful time but the whole team did really well together. It was an excellent life experience.”

Shiny George spent three weeks in the intensive care unit, managing patients’ airways, and worked alongside her husband, nurse Saju Varghese.

She said: “I have a background of ICU experience, and knew they were busy, so I volunteered. I am used to the atmosphere there and my husband said that they are so supportive of the staff it wouldn’t be difficult to re-join.”



“They are a wonderful team. I can’t mention everybody’s names because they were all fantastic. I don’t have enough words to praise each and every one of them.”

Wellbeing Hubs are a huge hit



Health and wellbeing hubs created earlier this year across the Trust have continued to be a huge hit with staff. Following a recent staff survey, these dedicated spaces came out as the most recognised source of wellbeing support throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

The hubs at Basildon and Southend hospitals have been comfortable and quiet spaces for staff to relax and reflect throughout the challenging months of COVID-19, providing an “oasis of calm” (Dr Khan, Basildon Medical Consultant). The hub at Broomfield was well used and appreciated by staff, and we’re now working to find it a permanent home.

Staff are able to recuperate in these dedicated spaces and can get information to support their health and wellbeing, such as counselling services.

Creating the hubs has been a huge undertaking and has only been made possible thanks to the hard work of estates staff from across our sites, turning the spaces around in a matter of days.

Fixtures and fittings were kindly donated by local companies or paid for by donations from the public. These have transformed the areas and given a huge morale boost to the staff using them.

Gavin Wright, Consultant Hepatologist and Gastroenterologist, said: “The wellbeing hub is an excellent idea for staff. The space provides an environment which is very open for discussion and gives staff the opportunity to wind down during peak periods.”

In Southend, a temporary space was created in just two days by Maldon Building Services, donating both

labour and materials, and the Hub comes with its own specially created mural by local artist Danny Bench. He said: “It was such a privilege to be able to paint this for everyone connected to the NHS. Giving up my time to do this is nothing compared to the amazing work they are doing for this country at the moment.”

Top tips for staying well

Get Active

Daily activity of any kind, recreational or competitive, is beneficial for both our physical and mental wellbeing.



Sleep Well

Sleep is a key contributor to our overall wellbeing and essential to combat fatigue in our busy roles.



Mental Wellbeing

It’s OK not to feel OK. We all need support sometimes. Encourage self-care and reach out for support if you need it.



Healthy Eating

Like a car, our bodies need fuel to function. Top it up with high quality fuel for optimal performance.



Social media posts



Ian Parker
Thank you to all of the NHS staff from the doctors, nurses and everyone else who helps to save lives and to keep Basildon hospital running. You are the pride of Britain, your bravery and heroism during this dark and difficult time is outstanding, may God bless you all and keep you all safe. #NHS #ThankYouNHS #Coronavirus #StaySafe



Exceptional bravery to help save lives, each #NHS worker deserves the fullest support possible #NHSThankYou so much you are the stand out heroes of this century bar none.

Absolute angels, every single one of you, including, paramedics, porters, and all medical staff. God bless you all.

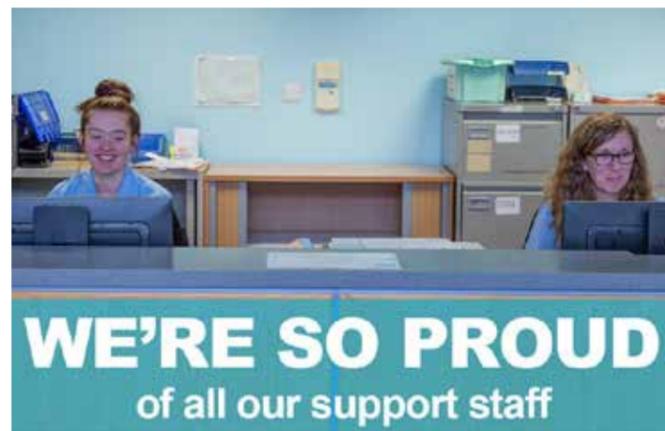
Shout out to our amazing MEMS and Estates teams and all of the contractors involved, working all hours to equip new ITU areas at blistering pace.



Nathalie Claire
From my dad, you are his heroes #ThankYouNHS

Heroes don't wear capes, they work for the NHS. Thank you for everything you do. Stay safe.

Thank you so much @BasildonHosp and especially the nurses and #FrontLineHeroes on Marjory Warren Ward Jubilee Wing #MarjoryWarrenWardJubileeWing Nurse Matt please thank everyone.



More than £500,000 raised for hospital charity

In total, the Trust's COVID-19 Appeal has raised more than £565,000, and has been making a real impact for NHS staff in Mid and South Essex. The money raised is being used to rapidly fund projects which can make a difference and give continued mental health and wellbeing support to staff.

Some of the projects that have benefitted from these donations include wellbeing resources to help alleviate stress while staff are working under constant pressure. We have created fully equipped rest areas as places for people to take a break and provided alternative transport to work when public transport is not available.

Staff and volunteers at Basildon, Southend and Mid Essex hospitals will also be provided with mental health and wellbeing support thanks to a £50,000 donation to the Mid and South Essex Hospital Charity.

The money will also be used to support Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) staff who have been heavily affected during the pandemic. This money takes the total donated through NHS Charities Together to £228,000.



Some of the donations have also helped to provide care packages for patients including toiletries, puzzles, colouring books and dignity clothing as well as specialist communication devices in high risk areas to limit face-to-face contact.

Lucy Thomas-Clayton, Director of Charities and Voluntary Services, said: "The charity is grateful to every supporter of the NHS. Whether you've backed our local appeal, or got behind NHS Charities Together's national fundraising, we really appreciate your support. It's been a huge boost to our NHS staff and the way the community has responded with such generosity during the COVID-19 pandemic has been incredible."

How we have used the money

Our COVID-19 Appeal has raised over £500,000. Here are some of the projects this money has funded.

- Additional monitors for ITU
- Kindles and iPads for patients on restricted ward visits
- Staff care packages and wellbeing hubs
- Renovation of staff rooms across the Trust
- Creation of and renovation of staff gardens across the sites.

Work is also underway on various staff wellbeing initiatives including mental health support for front-line staff, the creation of serenity gardens as well as the development of a woodland retreat in the Broomfield Hospital gardens, which is due for completion at the end of the year.



Amazon delivery!

Our staff were surprised and delighted by a very special delivery from Amazon UK. Six thousand care packages were donated and shared across our sites, to the value of a whopping £120,000.

The Surprise and Delight care package scheme has been supporting hospitals throughout the country in recent months and we were thrilled to be a recipient.



Thank you from Broomfield Critical Care Team



The first reports of a new virus making people and healthcare workers in China sick was enough to set off alarm bells in most intensive care teams' minds.

Many of us have had the experience of looking after very sick patients with strange conditions of unknown origins, and some have had patients with potential SARS-CoV, Bird Flu or Swine Flu.

To tackle this new virus, we needed three things: personal protection, as many beds as we could muster, and staff.

We had planned how to expand our bed base and procured more PPE ahead of government guidance. We then looked towards our nursing and medical colleagues from outside of Critical Care to ask if any of them were willing to step into the storm with us – and to our eternal gratitude many were.

What followed was a huge drive by a large multidisciplinary team to get as many colleagues as ICU-ready as they could be in a time frame that was quickly getting smaller as the progress of the virus marched through Europe. But people got on board.

The prospect of coming into the closed world of an intensive care unit is extremely daunting for most people. You don't transition to working comfortably in an ICU overnight.

We trained many that had never been onto an ICU before and some that were coming back after years of being in other roles, but all were willing to stand beside us and face this challenge together. We will never forget you and we will be forever grateful.

It wasn't always easy; at times it was frightening and could be tremendously sad. At other times it was amazing and joyful which had us clapping and cheering. Throughout we did something that we can be very proud of – we supported each other and we all pulled together as one team.

So to every one of you, from wherever it is you usually work - there are too many to name you all - who came into our world and pulled on a mask, a gown and sometimes even a full boiler suit, to help us look after our patients when they needed you most, the critical care family want to say a huge thank you.

You have been amazing and brave and we are so hugely grateful; there is no doubt we could not have done it without you.”