



Pulse magazine

Winter
2025



Welcome to the latest edition of Pulse. Our last edition focused on the future direction of the NHS and healthcare in England outlined in the new 10 Year Plan. This time we're much closer to home, with a range of subjects all about how we can better understand the work of the Trust and how we can get involved.

Read about our Rapid Response Lab and the work it does processing thousands of tests. I was lucky enough to join a recent tour of the lab and learned so much about this critical area of our work.

Attending open meetings is a way we can all hear about and ask questions on the Trust's work and direction. Find out how you can take part.

Everyone has the opportunity to become a member of our Trust and get involved in our work. Find out what it's like to be an elected Governor and what our membership events can offer.

Get a flavour of what goes on at our Annual General Meeting, where the Board reports to members and the public on our achievements and the challenges we face, answers their questions and takes their feedback.

Work experience and placements are a wonderful opportunity for young people to get involved in the NHS and decide if it's for them. Find out more about the opportunities we have at the Trust.

As we move to the New Year, the Trust remains well prepared. We continue to look after all our patients, doing everything we can to ensure that any service they rely on is delivered as smoothly and efficiently as possible. This can be a difficult time of year for many in our wider community, and we will also do what we can to support those in need.

Happy reading!
Mike O'Donovan, Non-Executive Director

Steve McManus, Trust CEO stepping down



Steve McManus, Chief Executive of the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust, will step down next July after nearly a decade leading one of the country's top acute trusts.

During his tenure, Steve has driven transformation, investment and innovation, earning the Trust national and international recognition for world-class research, outstanding patient care and pioneering initiatives such as Call4Concern, the forerunner to Martha's Rule.

Reflecting on his decision, Steve said: "It's been an honour and privilege to lead the Trust. We're now in a strong position, and the time feels right to hand over the baton. I'll leave with a heavy heart but immense pride in our people, culture and achievements."

Our partnerships across health, academia and industry have enabled us to deliver ground-breaking improvements in care. I'm committed to supporting a smooth transition over the coming months."

He added: "I'm looking forward to being in post for another 9 months which should give reassurance to our staff and patients that the Trust's strong performance will continue whilst giving the Board sufficient time to carry out the recruitment process."

Trust Chair Oke Eleazu praised Steve's four decades of NHS service, describing him as "a great leader, innovator and compassionate advocate for continuous improvement." He added: "Steve's leadership has been critical to our success, and we thank him for ensuring a seamless handover next summer."

New Chief People Officer Appointed

We are delighted to announce the appointment of Paul da Gama as our new Chief People Officer, joining the Trust in January 2026. He succeeds Don Fairley, who retired last month after nine years at the Trust and 38 years in the NHS.

Paul will join us from NHS Employers, where he led the national Resident Doctors' 10 Point Plan, improving working conditions and supporting workforce wellbeing. Previously, he served as Group Chief People Officer at St George's, Epsom and St Helier Hospitals, and has also held senior HR roles at West Hertfordshire Hospitals, Hinchingsbrooke Hospital, HSBC and Royal Mail.



Paul said: "I'm thrilled to be joining such a well-respected organisation. My ambition is to build on the Trust's strong CARE values and take staff engagement from good to great." Paul was the standout candidate and brings a proven track record in staff engagement, leadership and development.

Royal Berkshire rated highly by patients in latest CQC Inpatient Survey



The Care Quality Commission (CQC) has released its annual Inpatient Survey, which provides valuable insight into patients' experiences of hospital care. This year, 87% of patients at the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust rated their overall experience 7 out of 10 or higher, reflecting the dedication and compassion of our colleagues in delivering high-quality care.

Patients also reported being treated with respect and dignity, giving the Trust a 94% satisfaction rating - well above the national average of 82%.

The national survey covers areas such as communication, privacy, support with eating and drinking, and discharge arrangements. Of 45 comparable questions, the Trust maintained its strong performance after being named most improved Trust in last year's survey.

- Particular areas of strength included:
- Being treated with kindness, dignity and respect
- Clear information while waiting to be admitted
- Timely access to ward beds
- Support with washing and keeping clean
- Having enough nurses on duty
- Feeling able to discuss worries or fears
- Clear information before discharge and about follow-up care

Patients also highlighted opportunities to improve sleep during hospital stays. The Trust continues to develop its "Shh, Sleep Helps Health" campaign, helping create a calmer night-time environment.

Chief Nursing Officer Katie Prichard-Thomas said: "I'm so proud of colleagues across the Trust. Their compassion and commitment are reflected in these results. Maintaining and improving standards amid rising demand and complexity is a real achievement."

Launching our refreshed Trust Strategy: 2025-2030

We have launched our refreshed Trust strategy – shaping our future through to 2030. Thank you to all our patients, community members, colleagues, volunteers, and partners who helped shape this vision.

Together, we are committed to:

- delivering care and improve the health and wellbeing of our community by empowering patients
- supporting preventative health programmes in our communities
- delivering more care closer to home, and embracing innovation.

Our strategy reflects who we are, and who we aspire to be, and how we will get there, and we are delighted to share it with you. <https://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/about-us/our-strategy>.

Royal Berks Charity Christmas Appeal



As we move through the final weeks of our Christmas Appeal, we want to say a heartfelt thank you to everyone who has supported us so far. Your generosity is already making a meaningful difference to the care and comfort we can provide for our elderly patients at the Royal Berkshire Hospital.

But we're not finished yet.

With just over a month to go, we're still working towards our £50,000 target – and every single donation, no matter the size, brings us one step closer.

If you haven't had the chance to give yet, or you're able to share our appeal with friends, family, or colleagues, we would be incredibly grateful. Your support helps us create a kinder, more compassionate hospital experience for some of our most vulnerable patients.

You can donate online by visiting our website www.royalberkscharity.co.uk/nhschristmas or by calling us on 0118 322 8860.

Looking ahead to 2026...

Next year marks a major milestone for Royal Berks Charity – our 30th anniversary. Three decades of supporting patients, families, and staff across our hospital. Throughout 2026 we'll be celebrating this special year with new events, stories from our community, and exciting opportunities to get involved with. Your support today helps lay the foundation for an even brighter anniversary year ahead!

Royal Berkshire Stroke Team Welcomes Nigerian Healthcare Professionals

The Stroke Department at the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust recently hosted seven healthcare professionals from Nigeria as part of a knowledge-sharing initiative to improve stroke care in developing countries.

During their 4-week visit, the group of doctors, nurses, and physiotherapists worked alongside teams in the Stroke Unit, Emergency Department, Radiology, and Physiotherapy, exchanging best practices and observing the Trust's pioneering approach to treatment.



With stroke mortality rates in Nigeria twice as high as in the UK, this collaboration offered valuable insights to help improve patient outcomes.

Dr Kiruba Nagaratnam, Clinical Lead for Stroke Medicine, said: "It has been a great privilege to share how we care for our stroke patients here at the Trust.

"The Frederick Foundation has played a vital role in facilitating and sponsoring this partnership, helping us to work towards better stroke care for communities in Nigeria."

Chief Medical Officer Janet Lippett, added: "We are proud of our partnerships with local and global organisations. Sharing knowledge and expertise not only strengthens healthcare in our region but also contributes to improvements around the world."

The Trust's Stroke Department, recognised as a Centre of Excellence for thrombolysis and accredited as a University Department of Excellence by the University of Reading, continues to lead the way in advancing stroke care.

Smartphones in Action: Helping Our Staff Deliver Better Patient Care

Our healthcare teams have recently replaced their traditional bleep devices with Alertive, a secure internal messaging system.

Alertive enables our healthcare professionals to communicate instantly at the point of care, helping them make faster, better-informed decisions and improve patient outcomes.

You may notice our staff using their mobile phones as part of this system — please be assured they are using the Alertive app for clinical communication and patient care purposes.



A Governor's glimpse into the Rapid Response Lab

Governors and Non-Executive Directors were recently welcomed for a guided tour of the Rapid Response Lab. Hosted by the lab's expert team, the visit provided a closer look at the facility's vital role in supporting urgent care across the Trust.

The Rapid Response Laboratory (RRL) stands as a cornerstone of the Trust's pathology services, delivering high-quality diagnostics across a broad spectrum of Blood Sciences. From Biochemistry and Haematology to Coagulation, Blood Transfusion, Clinical Trials, and specialist Send-away testing, the RRL contributes a vital role in supporting both urgent and routine patient care.

As the Trust's sole on-site pathology lab, the RRL ensures swift turnaround times for critical tests, while Microbiology and Histopathology are processed off-site. This strategic setup enables the RRL to focus on rapid diagnostics, enhancing clinical decision-making and patient outcomes.

Innovation and integration

The laboratory was equipped with advanced digital automation and a robust Laboratory Information System, seamlessly integrated with the hospital's Electronic Patient Record (EPR). This enables clinicians to electronically request tests and receive results with speed and precision, reinforcing the lab's commitment to timely, accurate diagnostics.



Biomedical Scientists lead the analytical sections of the lab, supported by a dedicated team of Medical Laboratory Assistants and Associate Practitioners. Together, they uphold rigorous quality control standards and maintain accreditation, ensuring the highest levels of reliability and safety.

Pioneering improvements

In 2025, the RRL introduced a new pre-analytical initiative aimed at improving sample quality, enhancing patient experience, and promoting sustainability. This forward-thinking approach reflected the department's dedication to continuous improvement and innovation.

The RRL also actively contributes to Trust-wide initiatives including the Improving Together programme and Demand Optimisation, demonstrating its collaborative spirit and commitment to service excellence.



Expert overview

Clinical direction was provided by a team of experienced clinical scientists, alongside a consultant chemical pathologist and consultant haematologists.

Their expertise ensures that the laboratory not only met but exceeded clinical expectations, delivering diagnostics that were both efficient and impactful.

Special thanks to Ibtisam Osman, Principle Biomedical Scientist for facilitating this event.

Reading in Bloom Winner



At this year's Reading in Bloom Awards Ceremony, the Royal Berks Charity and Royal Berkshire Foundation Trust were honoured to win the Gold Award in the Well being Garden category. This was in recognition of our outstanding Oasis Staff Health & Wellbeing Garden, designed as a peaceful retreat for staff to support their mental health and well being.

The garden is a collaborative project which also brings together community and corporate volunteers, working alongside our staff and contractors to maintain this wonderful space. This award marks a proud moment for us and recognises all the hard work and funding which has made it possible for us to create this beautiful space.

Trust awarded Gold for supporting the Armed Forces Community

We're proud to announce that the Trust has achieved the Gold Award from the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme - the highest level of recognition for organisations that support the Armed Forces community.

This award reflects our strong commitment to those who serve, including reservists, veterans, and military families. Our Forces Network brings colleagues together to share experiences, host guest speakers, and mentor service leavers joining the Trust.

The award particularly acknowledges our Armed Forces Covenant pledge, which we reviewed and re-signed during the summer.

We work closely with Brock Barracks and our local cadet force on joint events and recruitment, and we're registered with the Forces Families website and the Career Transition Partnership to support veterans moving into civilian careers.



Help the NHS to reduce medicines waste



Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB) is urging patients to make simple changes to help reduce medicines waste - which is estimated to cost the NHS nationally around £300m each year.

People are being encouraged to check how much prescription medication they have at home before ordering more and checking the expiry date on their medicines. They can also get advice from their GP or pharmacist around prescription medicines.

The campaign will also include messages for the public and patients around keeping medicines stored safely and how to dispose of unused medicines properly.

Local people can attend a local [Digital Café for free support and advice](#) on using the NHS App around ordering their prescription medication.

For further tips and advice on how to reduce medicine waste visit the [StayWellBOB website](#).

Protect yourself and your loved ones from flu



Flu is now circulating in the community earlier than usual and one of the current flu strains is particularly serious in the elderly.

Alongside proper and frequent handwashing, flu vaccines give you the best protection, and some people are eligible for a free flu vaccine.

Anyone aged 65 and over, pregnant women, and people aged 6 months to 64 with long-term health conditions are eligible for the flu vaccination on the NHS.

Check your eligibility and book online.

Our highlights from the last 12 months

Watch highlights from the last year which we shared at our recent AGM meeting.

The Annual General Meeting is our opportunity to showcase what we've achieved over the past year and look ahead to the next 12 months.

It was a perfect opportunity to recognise the incredible work that our 7,500 colleagues and volunteers do each day, and the challenges they overcome to provide outstanding care to our community.



Our Annual General Meeting 2025

This year our Annual General Meeting took place on Wednesday 17 September 2025 at 5.30pm. The meeting was held in Lecture Theatre 2, Trust Education Centre, Royal Berkshire Hospital, RG1 5AN, with the option to attend physically or via our live webinar.

Our Annual General Meeting gave our local community a chance to come and hear about your local NHS, including an in-depth look at the Trust's performance for the year 2024/25 as well as our plans for the year ahead.

We welcomed staff, patients, carers, families at the event, and offered the opportunity to interact with our showcasing departments, who proudly shared their services within the Trust.



Getting to know our Governors: Terri Walsh, Public Governor, Wokingham

Hello everyone, my name is Terri Walsh, and I'm proud to serve as a Public Governor for the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust, representing the Wokingham constituency. I've held this role for just over a year, and it's been both a privilege and a learning journey and one that enables me to bring the voices of our community directly into the heart of the Trust.

In my day-to-day life, I'm the Joint Chief Executive of SEND Voices Wokingham, the parent carer forum for Wokingham Borough. We are a local charity that represents the collective voice of families who have children and young people aged 0–25 with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Through our work, we collaborate closely with local and regional partners across health, social care, and education to help improve SEND services for families in our area.

Many of the families we represent use services provided by the Trust, and their experiences, both positive and challenging, are invaluable. We regularly gather feedback through face-to-face conversations, annual surveys, focus groups, and social media. This feedback is then shared with service providers through reports, presentations, and meetings. By working together in this way, we can help the Trust continuously improve patient experiences and outcomes for SEND families.

On a personal note, I have lived in the Wokingham Borough for over 30 years, and my family and I have benefited from many of the services offered by the Trust. This long-term connection gives me a real passion for ensuring that the Trust's priorities, values, and strategic aims continue to evolve, meeting the needs of all local people, and especially those with SEND.

Anyone over the age of 16 can become a member of the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust. Membership helps inform how best to improve services and ensure patients' and local communities' needs are at the centre of decision making. More details about being a member are on the website here: <https://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/about-us/governance/membership>

Terri Walsh, Public Governor, Wokingham

Get involved and have your say

Join us at one of our upcoming open meetings in 2026. Full details and agendas are available on our Trust website [Open Meetings - Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust](#)

- Wednesday 28 January 2026 9am: Board of Directors
Seminar Room, Trust Education Centre, Royal Berkshire Hospital
- Wednesday 25 February 2026 5pm: Council of Governors
Seminar Room, Trust Education Centre, Royal Berkshire Hospital

Discounts? Did you know?

As a member of the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust you are eligible to amazing Health Service Discounts to save money on holidays, electrical goods, meals, goods, meals, days out and more! To register contact us at: Foundation.trust@royalberkshire.nhs.uk for a letter of eligibility follow this link: [Register | NHS Discounts | Health Service Discounts](#) Select 'Foundation Trust Member' upload your letter.

Meet your Council of Governors

Find a [full list of your Council of Governors](#) on our website.

Become a member

Invite your family and friends to become a members through our [online form](#) to receive our latest updates, help shape how hospital services are delivered and enjoy access to NHS discounts.

Get in touch with the team Foundation.trust@royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Thinking about a career in the NHS?

If you would like to join our team we are always looking for talented staff with a commitment to providing the best patient care.

View our live job vacancies on our website: [RBFT work with us](#)

Are you interested in work experience and placements?

Work experience gives those interested in a career in the NHS the opportunity to gain hands-on experience observing what happens in hospitals, the day-to-day work of NHS multi-disciplinary teams and an understanding of the attitudes, the behaviours and values that are expected in a healthcare setting. Shadowing our teams, you will have the opportunity to see first-hand what is involved in the job role you are considering.

Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust is committed to supporting young people and adults looking to pursue a career in healthcare. Our placements are open to students and adults resident in the Berkshire or surrounding South Oxfordshire area. Students from outside these areas and outside the UK will not accepted for a placement.

The trust offers clinical placements and non-clinical placements at set times across the academic year.

For more information and to check out the eligibility criteria please visit [Work Experience and Placements - Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust](#)

How to apply

- Year 12 and 13 Medicine Placements: Due to the high level of applications, medicine placements for 2024 are now full.
- Year 12 and 13 Placements (All Other Areas): To apply for a placement for other areas including nursing, midwifery, allied health professions, pathology, clinical engineering and medical physics and pharmacy please contact: healthcareworkexperience@royalberkshire.nhs.uk.

Please note we are unable to offer placements within Psychology, Psychiatry, Paramedics, Art Therapy, Music Therapy, Drama Therapy, Dietetics, Social Work or Mental Health.

- Adult Placements: these are offered at different times of the year depending on the capacity of the hosting department at the time. Please contact healthcareworkexperience@royalberkshire.nhs.uk.