

Healthier Together



**Landmark partnership launched
between DBTH and Doncaster College to
revolutionise health and care education
across Doncaster and South Yorkshire**



Music therapy joins stroke
rehabilitation at Montagu p5



Doncaster plumber completes marathon
fundraiser for Neonatal unit p14



Major redevelopment works
begin at DRI p10



Wyndthorpe Hall and Gardens Care Home

Situated in the quaint and historic town of Dunsville, in generous private grounds sits Wyndthorpe Hall and Gardens Care Home. Comprising of two buildings, one being a grade two listed 18th century mansion which houses a dome ceiling and has been converted sympathetically. The second being a beautiful red brick purpose-built building with an idyllic walled garden. Both providing a high standard of person centred care in a home from home setting for our clients.



- ✓ We offer long term residential, dementia and nursing care.
- ✓ We also provide day care and short term/respite stays to give home carers a well-earned break.
- ✓ All meals are home cooked and freshly prepared by our cooks. Daily menu choices are available, and all special diets are catered for.
- ✓ There is a hair salon on site which is visited regularly by a professional hairdresser.
- ✓ Chiropody, eye testing service and other complementary therapies are also available by arrangement.
- ✓ We have a full time personal activities leader who provides a varied programme of activities for our clients varying from one to one, group activities, regular outings and frequent fundraising events throughout the year.

**Wyndthorpe Hall and Gardens Care Home,
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Introducing 'Healthier Together'

Welcome to the first edition of our member magazine 'Healthier Together', previously called 'Foundations for Health'.

The new name for our membership magazine to reflects our renewed strategy and vision, which is focussed on fostering stronger connections and building a healthier future for everyone in our community.

'Healthier Together' embodies our mission to create a collaborative environment where members, our colleagues, patients and our organisation work hand-in-hand to improve health and outcomes for people in Doncaster and Bassetlaw, with a value on shared responsibility and partnership.

This change goes beyond just the title. Moving forward, Healthier Together will feature even more insightful articles, updates about our services, initiatives and projects, stories from our community and news from our governors and partners.

We are grateful for your continued support and enthusiasm as we take this exciting step forward. Together, we are not just reimagining healthcare; we're creating a community that thrives on connection and empowerment.

We hope you enjoy reading Healthier Together!

More information

If you have comments or want further information about any of the articles in **Healthier Together** please contact the Communications & Engagement team on 01302 644244.

This magazine is produced four times a year, with three digital copies and one paper copy in August. To receive an electronic version of this magazine and invites to member events, please send us your name and email address to dbth.foundation.office@nhs.net or contact the Foundation Trust Office on 01302 644158.

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Celebrating one year of exceptional care at the Mexborough Elective Orthopaedic Centre of Excellence

The Mexborough Elective Orthopaedic Centre of Excellence (MEOC) is celebrating its first year of service, marking a significant milestone in reducing waiting lists and improving patient care across South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw.

Since welcoming its first patient in January 2024, the MEOC has helped transform orthopaedic care in the region, providing over 1,300 life-changing surgeries for local people.

The MEOC is a pioneering collaboration between Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals, Barnsley Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, and The Rotherham Hospital Foundation Trust.

Operating from a purpose-built, state-of-the-art facility at Montagu Hospital, the centre specialises in elective orthopaedic procedures, including hip and knee replacements, as well as foot, ankle, hand, wrist, and shoulder surgeries.

The MEOC ensures uninterrupted service delivery by focusing solely on elective care, even during times of high demand on hospital resources.

Angela Schofield from Doncaster was the 100th patient to undergo an arthroplasty, or surgical replacement, on her left hip.

Reflecting, Angela said: "My experience of the service was very positive; everyone I met was so good to me. I had been initially anxious about having an epidural, but it turned out to be a comfortable experience. It also meant that I was able to go home the same day, allowing me to recover in a familiar and comfortable environment."

In its first year of service, the MEOC has performed 1,375 surgeries, helping to significantly reduce associated waiting lists by 20% across the three participating hospital Trusts. The average length of stay for patients undergoing surgery has been maintained at just one day, with 72% of patients discharged on the same day as their procedure.

In addition, patient satisfaction has been consistently high, with Friends and Family Test (FFT) scores averaging 97% and reaching 100% for three months.



Karen McAlpine, Interim Operational Lead for the MEOC, said: "As the MEOC enters its second year, we plan to build on our success. We've added an Orthopaedic Consultant and another will join soon, both recruited through Barnsley Hospital, which will mean increased capacity to perform surgeries.

"We're also looking into extending operations to Saturdays to reduce waiting times further, as well as acquiring equipment to perform more complex surgeries."

The facility has recently introduced the 'Sip Til Send' protocol, a national initiative that allows patients to stay hydrated until their surgery. This reduces pre-surgery anxiety and improves recovery by ensuring better hydration.

Leah Halkett, Sister for the MEOC service, has taken this initiative further by designing a coaster as a visual reminder for clinical colleagues and patients to prompt patients to have 50ml of water every hour before going into theatre.

Leah said: "Our patients have shared that

the protocol has made them feel more comfortable and eased the stress of waiting for their operation.

"This initiative goes beyond comfort. Research indicates that well-hydrated patients recover more effectively after surgery. This helps facilitate same-day discharge, which enables earlier mobilisation and therefore boosts rehabilitation."

Susan Joice was offered surgery at the MEOC through Barnsley Hospital. Susan traveled from Huddersfield to the MEOC for her knee replacement surgery on 15 January 2025, one year to the date the service originally opened.

Susan explained why the coasters helped her during her stay: "I had to set off very early in the morning to get to the centre and didn't have my surgery until late morning. I was glad to be offered a drink beforehand so that I felt more comfortable. The coasters are a really helpful way to let patients know they can have a sip of water every hour before going to theatre."

More information

For more information about the MEOC, including previous news stories and a walkthrough video of the department, please visit the dedicated section on the DBTH website: www.dbth.nhs.uk/meoc

Music Therapy joins Stroke Rehabilitation Service at Montagu Hospital

Stroke patients at Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals (DBTH) are set to benefit from an innovative two-year pilot programme introducing Music Therapy to the Stroke Rehabilitation Service at Montagu Hospital.

Funded by the Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals Charity, the service will be led by newly appointed Neurologic Music Therapist, Abbie Jean-Baptiste, whose work is set to inspire hope and progress among patients.

Stroke remains one of the leading causes of disability in the UK, with one in four individuals expected to experience a stroke in their lifetime.

Music Therapy is an established psychological and clinical intervention designed to help individuals affected by illness, injury, or disability. It meets psychological, emotional, cognitive, physical, and social needs through music-based activities tailored to each patient's goals.

As a recognised Allied Health Profession (AHP), Music Therapy engages the brain's plasticity—its ability to adapt and form new neural connections—to aid recovery.

Techniques used by Music Therapy include singing for aphasia, a condition that affects a person's ability to communicate, often caused by a stroke or brain injury.

Singing supports speech and language recovery by leveraging the brain's ability to process music differently from spoken language, using methods like Melodic Intonation Therapy (MIT), which pairs exaggerated rhythm and melody with phrases to stimulate language production. This approach helps patients improve word retrieval and fluency.

Other techniques include breathing exercises to improve vocal clarity, instrument playing to address motor skills and inattention, music for walking, and group therapy for processing life changes after experiencing a stroke.

Abbie joined the Trust in November, bringing her passion and expertise in Music Therapy to the pilot programme. She said about her new role: "I am so excited to have this fantastic opportunity! Music has so many healing elements, and I'm grateful for the chance to advocate for its benefits. When you attend Music Therapy sessions, you can expect a non-judgmental, safe space to explore your thoughts and feelings.



"The biggest myth around music therapy is that you need to sing or play an instrument—don't worry, you don't need any special talent. My role is to help you regain speech, strengthen muscles, and walk with more ease.

"Functional goals are at the heart of each session, whether we're singing to improve speech, playing instruments to build motor skills, or simply using music as a tool to enhance your recovery.

"I want to help you achieve your goals and use music to drive those changes. Yes, it's enjoyable because we integrate rehab with music, but it's also incredibly effective."

Shaping the future of stroke recovery, the Trust has also secured charitable funding through the Fred and Ann Green Legacy for several new pioneering machines that will aid in the upper and lower limb mobility of stroke patients, supporting exercises that accelerate recovery.

The machines will be based within a new gymnasium to be built as part of a £1.4 million investment in the stroke rehabilitation service at Montagu Hospital, and set to open in Summer 2025.

Dr Peter Anderton, Stroke Consultant at DBTH, said: "The new robotic therapy suite will be a first for the NHS, utilising technology

previously restricted to patients receiving private healthcare. Alongside this technology, and the newly acquired Music Therapy, the Stroke Rehabilitation service offers patients the best care available and is heading towards becoming a Hub of Excellence throughout the region."

"Our aspiration is to collaborate with colleagues from other Stroke services in the South Yorkshire area, allowing this facility to help Stroke survivors from a wider catchment to better achieve their recovery goals."

This development follows DBTH being named as one of only four NHS sites in England chosen to trial a new genetic testing service for stroke patients. This pilot, run by NICE and NHS England, will explore whether Clopidogrel, a common medication used to reduce the risk of further strokes, is the best treatment for patients based on their genetic makeup.

The trial will use a test to check for changes in the CYP2C19 gene, which can affect how well the body processes Clopidogrel. Around 30% of people in the UK, and even more in some ethnic groups, have a variation in this gene that makes the medication less effective.

By identifying these individuals, doctors can prescribe alternative treatments to help prevent future strokes.

More information

For inquiries on supporting DBTH and contributing to future healthcare innovations, please contact the Fundraising and Communications Team at 01302 644244 or dbth.charity@nhs.net



State-of-the-art surgical robot settles in at Doncaster Royal Infirmary

In May last year, Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals (DBTH), with support from the Trust's Charity, procured a state-of-the-art surgical robot.

Known as 'Robi Sheldon Alan Surgeonator' or 'Robi' for short, the robot provides a less invasive alternative to traditional surgery. Operated by a surgeon, a camera and robotic arms are inserted inside the patient and controlled from a console using an advanced set of instruments for minimally invasive surgery. This procedure allows for greater precision than traditional laparoscopic (also known as "keyhole") or open surgery.

Michael Smethurst, a 54-year-old lorry driver, was the first patient to undergo a colorectal operation performed by Robi. The procedure successfully removed a cancerous tumour from

his right colon, along with 17 lymph nodes. Just two weeks after surgery, Michael was walking two miles a day, and by five weeks, he was back to cycling.

"The operation hasn't left me with any noticeable scarring, and I was walking a day later. I've also been told that I less likely to develop a hernia due to the nature of the operation.

"I would absolutely recommend this method of surgery to others in my position – Robi is the way forward."

One of the colleagues involved in Michael's surgery was Miss Victoria Proctor, Colorectal Consultant and General Surgeon at the Trust.

Miss Proctor shared the following about Michael's surgery: "Michael was our first ever robotic case at DBTH. He was discharged home

three days after surgery and has made an excellent recovery."

At just five weeks after surgery, Michael was back at work on light duties and riding his bike on rollers in the garage – highlighting the benefits of minimally invasive robotic surgery, in helping patients to return to their normal lives more quickly after major surgery.

Since Michael's procedure, a further 114 patients have undergone robotic surgery at DBTH.

Miss Proctor added: "We look forward to being able to offer robotic surgery and its associated benefits to many more patients in the future."

Robi was purchased last year following support by DBTH Charity and the Fred and Ann Green Legacy.

More information

For inquiries on supporting DBTH and contributing to future healthcare innovations, please contact the Fundraising and Communications Team at 01302 644244 or dbth.charity@nhs.net

Landmark partnership launched between DBTH and Doncaster College to revolutionise health and care education across Doncaster and South Yorkshire

Landmark partnership launched between DBTH and Doncaster College to revolutionise health and care education across Doncaster and South Yorkshire

The official launch of the Doncaster Health Education Strategic Alliance, a pioneering collaboration between Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals (DBTH) and Doncaster College marked a historic step in the future of health and care education across Doncaster and South Yorkshire.

This strategic partnership is set to bridge the gap between education and healthcare, fostering a streamlined pathway into health-related careers.

By removing traditional barriers to learning, the alliance aims to enhance opportunities for individuals from diverse backgrounds, encouraging more people to pursue rewarding careers in healthcare.

Held in the Education Centre, Doncaster Royal Infirmary, the launch event brought together key leaders, educators, learners, healthcare professionals, and local stakeholders to celebrate the alliance's commitment to revolutionising pathways into health and care careers, widening access, and improving outcomes for communities across the region.

Speaking about the alliance, Professor Sam Debbage, Director of Education and Research at DBTH, said: "It was an honor to host the official launch of this formal partnership and



to celebrate this significant milestone with everyone who came along. The event marked a pivotal moment in our shared commitment to shaping the future of healthcare education and fostering a stronger, more resilient workforce for our communities."

"This alliance is a game-changer for health and care education in our region. By working together, we can create innovative training opportunities and ensure that the

next generation of healthcare professionals is well-equipped to meet the evolving needs of our communities."

John Rees, Principal and Chief Executive Officer of DN Colleges Group, echoed these sentiments: "It was an absolute pleasure to join our colleagues from DBTH to formally launch our strategic alliance. Both organisations are fully committed to building long-term and high value routes to careers within the health system and also to supporting lifelong learning opportunities for those already in work or seeking to change.

"We recognise our responsibility to our communities to create more and better opportunities and to build those career routes right here in Doncaster. It is truly exciting to be doing this in partnership and collaboration across the health and education system."

The launch event featured presentations from both institutions, showcasing the alliance's plans to develop innovative education programs, create seamless career pathways, and engage with the wider community to ensure that health education is inclusive and future ready.

This partnership underscores Doncaster's commitment to creating a healthier, more equitable future for its residents and reinforces South Yorkshire's position as a leader in healthcare education and workforce development.



Major redevelopment works begin at Doncaster Royal Infirmary

Works have officially begun on a significant redevelopment at Doncaster Royal Infirmary, marking another step in Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals' (DBTH) ongoing focus on improving facilities and services

The project, part of a wider £19.8 million investment, will see the relocation and refurbishment of key areas, including the Surgical Same Day Emergency Care (SSDEC) department and the former Discharge Lounge, as part of a broader redevelopment plan for the site.

As part of this work, the current Discharge Lounge in the East Ward Block will be transformed into the new SSDEC, with the lounge itself moving to the former Hydrotherapy department at the front of the site's West Ward Block.

These changes are the first phase of a larger project that will eventually see the Department of Critical Care relocated to a new, purpose-built space to enhance accessibility and improve patient care.

Other major investments by the Trust include the Elective Orthopaedic Hub (MEOC), which was successfully completed in December 2023 for £14.9 million. This project delivered ward and operating suite support areas alongside a modular theatre suite at Mexborough.

The £23 million Bassetlaw Emergency Village, a reconfiguration and expansion of Bassetlaw Hospital's Emergency Department, is on track for completion in the coming months and at Montagu Hospital, the £24 million Community Diagnostic Centre (CDC) is progressing through multiple phases, with



the first two phases complete and the third phase, involving a fixed CT/MRI facility, due for completion by March 2025.

Richard Parker OBE, Chief Executive at the Trust, said: "This redevelopment is another step forward in our commitment to modernising our hospitals and delivering exceptional care for our patients.

"By relocating and upgrading these key services, we are improving accessibility and efficiency while paving the way for the next phase of our plans. These investments reflect our determination to meet the evolving needs of our communities – and I want to share my thanks with all those involved."

Dr Kirsty Edmondson Jones, Director of Infrastructure, added: "This project has

been carefully planned to ensure we can continue to provide services while making vital improvements.

"These changes will enable the next phase of our developments and improve the experience for patients and colleagues alike. We thank everyone for their patience and understanding as we carry out this important work."

The enabling works began on 9 December 2024, with completion expected mid-2025.

While some temporary access restrictions and increased noise are anticipated, the Trust is working to minimise disruption and ensure services remain accessible. Clear signage and alternative routes will be provided, and regular updates will keep patients, colleagues, and visitors informed throughout the process.



Proposed architectural illustrations of the new DCC building

New healthcare room gets people into work

A specialist employability service in Doncaster is celebrating after the opening of its new simulated healthcare workspace has seen all of the people who have used the room so far offered jobs in local NHS services.

Aspire to Be, which is managed by Doncaster Deaf Trust, is for adults aged 19-60 from across South Yorkshire who are Deaf/hard of hearing, neuro diverse or those who have any other communication difficulty helping to make a valuable difference to their lives by developing their skills and supporting them into work.

As part of its approach, the service, on Leger Way, boasts 'simulated work' areas which are used by Aspire to Be staff to work with service users to breakdown certain tasks within a job role and explain in detail the different elements involved. The rooms available include a warehouse, retail shop, café and catering section and hotel room and the new healthcare room was recently added to provide people with first-hand experience of working in a clinical setting.

The new room, that is set up like a hospital room on a ward, has been created in partnership with Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (DBTH) which manages Doncaster Royal Infirmary (DRI). The Trust has provided some equipment that is no longer needed such as a bedside chair, side cabinet, bedding, pillows, cleaning materials, paper towel and soap dispenser, items for the wet room alongside other ad hoc items to make it as realistic as possible.

And after only opening over the summer and as part of a pilot with DBTH, all 17 service users who have been supported by Aspire to Be staff in the new healthcare room have gone onto to be offered job roles in the facilities department at Doncaster Royal Infirmary. It is now hoped the success of the pilot will see it expanded to other departments at DBTH as



well as to other NHS Trusts and health and social care providers in South Yorkshire.

One of the successful service users is Annalise Walsh (18) from Doncaster who has a learning difference and began working with Aspire to Be in July. She is now due to start a new job as a services assistant at DRI in January. Annalise said: "I always struggled at college, so was so happy to find Aspire to Be which offered a different approach to learning.

"I didn't like sitting in a classroom as it didn't feel very supportive. At Aspire to Be it is much more practical and I could learn at my own pace, without feeling judged. I'm really proud and excited about my new job as I've always wanted to help other people so I can't wait to start! I want to be a nurse eventually – I know I'm starting at the bottom, but I'll get there. It feels like my dreams are finally coming true."

Tina Rafferty, programme manager for Aspire to Be, said: "Annalise is a fantastic example of someone who has struggled to get work in the past and felt low in confidence but has come on leaps and bounds since she started working with our work coach Jo in our healthcare room. She is one of 17 service users who have accessed the room since it opened in July and who have all been successful at interview and gone on to be offered roles at DRI. It is an incredible achievement for each of them but also for us a service as it just reinforces that our approach works.

"We work with each individual in such as

personal way and also build relationships with local employers to help develop staff that are trained and ready to work. We hope this is just the start and we can begin working across more DBTH departments and other NHS trusts in South Yorkshire."

Zoe Lintin, Chief People Officer at Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals, said: "At DBTH, we are committed to creating opportunities that open doors and help individuals realise their potential.

"Our partnership with Aspire to Be is an inspiring example of how tailored support and collaboration can make a real difference to people's lives."

Tina added: "Our Aspire to Be service users all have something to offer but just need to be taught skills and gain experience in a different, more tailored way to suit their needs and these simulated areas really help us support them more effectively. They give people real life work experience and gain knowledge of working practices and job expectations.

"We work across a range of sectors including warehousing, hotels, retail and hospitality as well as healthcare so we'd be interested to hear from any businesses in these sectors who would like to find out more and also from people who think our service could help them into work."

Aspire to Be received £465,000 from South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority in 2023 to develop its provision.



More information

For more information about Aspire to Be, please contact Tina Rafferty on tina.rafferty@cscd.ac.uk

Innovative research earns recognition for new midwife at DBTH

Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals (DBTH) is celebrating the achievements of Lucy Williams, one of the Trust's newest midwives, whose internationally recognised research is already making an impact.

Lucy, who joined the organisation earlier this year, demonstrated exceptional skills as part of her studies to gain qualification as a midwife. Her dissertation, "Does Yoga Help to Reduce Blood Glucose Levels in Pregnancies Affected by Gestational Diabetes Mellitus?", explores innovative approaches to managing gestational diabetes mellitus (GDM), a condition affecting 14-15% of pregnancies worldwide.

This outstanding work earned Lucy a nomination for an academic award from her university and is currently being prepared for publication. In 2024, her research was showcased at an international conference in Germany, where it attracted significant interest from healthcare professionals and academics. The Trust supported her attendance, funding her travel to ensure she could present her

findings on this global platform.

Lucy's critical review examined whether yoga could play a role in reducing blood glucose levels in pregnancies affected by GDM. Her findings highlighted the potential benefits of yoga as a safe intervention, reducing fasting and postprandial blood glucose levels. Using a structured Population, Intervention, Comparison and Outcome (PICO) framework, Lucy assessed three studies, finding statistically significant reductions in blood glucose levels within yoga intervention groups compared to controls. While her review identified promising trends, it also noted the need for further robust research to address study limitations and the variability in intervention designs.

PICO is a widely used framework in evidence-based healthcare for formulating clinical research questions and systematically searching for relevant evidence. It helps in structuring research and ensuring clarity and focus.

In addition to her clinical role on M1 at Doncaster Royal Infirmary, Lucy has recently completed a period working alongside the

Trust's research midwives. This opportunity was facilitated to support her aspirations of becoming a research midwife in the future.

Lois Mellor, Director of Midwifery, said: "Lucy's passion for research and her commitment to advancing midwifery practice are truly inspiring. At DBTH, we are proud to support colleagues in pursuing their ambitions, and Lucy's achievements are a testament to the incredible talent within our team. We look forward to seeing all that she will accomplish in the future."

Professor Sam Debbage, Director of Education and Research, added: "Lucy's achievements reflect the Trust's commitment to embedding research and education into everyday clinical practice. Her work not only highlights the value of innovative approaches like yoga but also demonstrates the importance of research in improving outcomes for patients."

"We are incredibly proud of Lucy's contributions and look forward to supporting her as she continues to grow and develop her career in both midwifery and research."

Volunteers at local hospitals enjoy festive brunch

On Thursday 12 December, volunteers who work across Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals (DBTH) were invited to a celebratory festive brunch.

The festive season truly kicked off at the Holiday Inn at Warmsworth, where volunteers from across the Trust mixed and mingled at a bespoke brunch, hosted by members of the Board of Directors.

Tables were adorned with crackers, whilst sparkly tinsel hung high as the volunteers helped themselves to a buffet fit for three kings.

Karen Jessop, Chief Nurse at DBTH, said: "Our volunteers are the heart of our Trust, and Thursday's festive brunch was just a small token of our immense gratitude for their unwavering dedication and support."

Their kindness and selflessness make a real difference in the lives of our patients and colleagues every day."

There are approximately 120 volunteers who support services at Doncaster Royal Infirmary, Bassetlaw Hospital and Montagu Hospital,



working in areas ranging from the wards to pharmacy to bereavement.

Reflecting on the event, Suzy Brain England OBE, Chair of the Board at DBTH, said: "It was a special day celebrating all of our amazing

volunteers. The Trust really would not be the same without each and every individual who dedicates their free time to helping patients, visitors and colleagues.

We thank them all for their hard work and commitment."

More information

If you are interested in volunteering at DBTH and would like more information, please follow this link: www.dbth.nhs.uk/jointheteam/volunteering/



Local hospitals to invest in pioneering therapy technology at Montagu Hospital

Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals (DBTH) has announced a £700,000 investment in advanced technology to enhance stroke rehabilitation services at Montagu Hospital.

This development, funded by the Fred and Ann Green Legacy and DBTH Charity, will introduce cutting-edge equipment to improve rehabilitation for patients at the Mexborough site's Rehabilitation Centre and those receiving care at home.

The Fred and Ann Green Legacy was established in 1998 following the passing of Fred Stanley Green, a retired pork butcher from Mexborough, who generously bequeathed £11.5 million to benefit the local community through investment in services at, what was then, the Doncaster Royal and Montagu Hospital NHS Trust.

This latest investment, combined with additional staffing, will significantly enhance the hospital's stroke and rehabilitation services, increasing capacity and improving care.

The Tyromotion Robotic Rehabilitation Suite, the first of its kind in the NHS, will be introduced, offering tools to aid mobility, limb functionality, and cognitive recovery.

Among the devices is the Fesio Grasp glove, an advanced functional electrical stimulation (FES) tool that enhances hand motor recovery through high-tech electrodes linked to a tablet for precise and rapid therapy.

Other equipment includes a robotic gait trainer to improve walking, a balance trainer, and devices designed to restore strength and coordination in both upper and lower limbs.

Additionally, a horizontal tablet will focus on motor and cognitive skill recovery through gamified therapy, and a limb-assessment device will track and report on patient progress.

These state-of-the-art tools will help Montagu Hospital work towards providing rehabilitation services seven days a week, addressing growing demand. Over time, the enhanced service is expected to support patients from a wider area, establishing the hospital as a hub of excellence in South Yorkshire for stroke care.

Stroke is one of the leading causes of disability in the UK, with one in four people expected to experience a stroke in their lifetime. Survivors often face significant challenges, and research shows that greater therapy intensity can improve outcomes, particularly in mobility and limb functionality. DBTH's investment in robotic rehabilitation devices will enable stroke patients to engage in supervised, repetitive exercises essential for optimal recovery.

Dr Peter Anderton, Consultant for the Stroke Rehabilitation Service, said: "These devices act as therapy multipliers, not replacements. They allow us to offer patients significantly more opportunities for recovery, amplifying the impact of traditional rehabilitation techniques by increasing intensity while maintaining the critical role of clinical staff in guiding therapy using clinical judgement and experience."

The service is also expanding its facilities with a dedicated gym to house the advanced machines, alongside additional therapy assistants who will provide personalised support to patients.



In November, the team introduced a two-year music therapy pilot to complement these advancements. This innovative approach uses the brain's plasticity to aid speech, cognition, and motor recovery while also offering vital psychological support for stroke survivors, helping them adjust to the life-changing effects of the condition.

In addition to these developments, DBTH continues to pioneer other stroke initiatives. The Trust was recently selected to take part in a national pilot programme offering genetic testing for stroke patients, aimed at identifying underlying hereditary factors and improving personalised care. This programme further cements DBTH's role as a leader in advancing stroke treatment and rehabilitation in the region.

More information

For more information about these advancements and how DBTH Charity supports projects like this, visit: www.dbthcharity.co.uk.



Dr Ahmad Maatouk (right)

Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals selected for national pilot on genetic testing for stroke patients

Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals (DBTH) has announced it is one of only four NHS sites in England chosen to trial a new genetic testing service for stroke patients.

This pilot, run by NICE and NHS England, will explore whether Clopidogrel, a common medication used to reduce the risk of further strokes, is the best treatment for patients based on their genetic makeup.

The trial will use a test to check for changes in the CYP2C19 gene, which can affect how well the body processes Clopidogrel. Around 30% of people in the UK, and even more in some ethnic groups, have a variation in this gene that makes the medication less effective.

By identifying these individuals, doctors can prescribe alternative treatments to help prevent future strokes.

Dr Ahmad Maatouk, Stroke Consultant and

project lead at DBTH, added: "This pilot is a ground-breaking opportunity to bring personalised medicine to stroke care.

"By understanding a patient's genetic profile, we can ensure they receive the most effective treatment from the very beginning. This means not only reducing the risk of further strokes but also improving overall recovery and quality of life.

We're proud to play a leading role in this important initiative, which has the potential to transform stroke care."

Running from December 2024 to April 2025, the trial will focus on high-risk patients, such as those who have had a mini-stroke or a minor stroke. The findings will help shape how genetic testing is used across the NHS in the future.

Richard Parker OBE, Chief Executive at DBTH, said: "This is a fantastic opportunity for our

Trust to help lead the way in improving stroke care. By using genetic testing, we can make sure patients get the treatment that works best for them.

It's exciting to be at the forefront of this innovative work, which could make a real difference for patients here and across the country."

Strokes affect over 100,000 people in the UK annually and remain a leading cause of disability. This pilot is part of DBTH's ongoing commitment to innovation in stroke care, complementing the recent implementation of advanced CT perfusion technology.

This state-of-the-art equipment significantly extends the critical treatment window for stroke patients, allowing for more timely and effective interventions. Together, these initiatives underscore the Trust's dedication to delivering cutting-edge care and improving outcomes for individuals affected by strokes.

Local nurse wins prestigious award at national conference

A Critical Care Rehabilitation Coordinator and Clinical Academic Nurse at Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals (DBTH) has been awarded 'Best Abstract' at this year's British Association of Critical Care Nurses (BACCN) Conference in Aberdeen.

Sarah Varga received this prestigious recognition, underscoring both the excellence of her research and her significant contributions to the field of critical care nursing.

Sarah presented her PhD research at the BACCN Conference, an event dedicated to sharing knowledge and advancing practice within critical care. She presented her PhD research on sedation practices in intensive care units, comparing approaches in the UK and Australia. Through interviews, observations, and focus groups with ICU nurses, doctors, and pharmacists, Sarah explored how sedation decisions impact patient recovery.

Her findings revealed important factors shaping sedation choices and include recommendations to improve patient outcomes. Her research aims to support better care practices for ventilated ICU patients worldwide.

Her work received widespread praise, sparking

engaging discussions and thought-provoking questions from conference attendees, further showcasing her expertise and dedication to improving patient care.

Commenting on this achievement, Professor Sam Debbage, Director of Education and Research at DBTH, said: "Sarah's research and recognition at a national level demonstrate the impact of clinical academic nursing within the Trust.

"Her dedication to advancing critical care knowledge is an inspiration to both her peers and the wider healthcare community. We are incredibly proud of her achievements and the standard of excellence she brings to DBTH."

The BACCN, one of the UK's leading professional organisations for critical care nurses, provides a platform for sharing best practices, research, and professional development. It aims to improve outcomes for critically ill patients through education and collaboration across the healthcare sector.

Sarah's award and her contribution to the conference highlight DBTH's commitment to advancing clinical practice and fostering an environment where education and research are integral to patient care.



Doncaster plumber completes marathon fundraiser for Neonatal unit

A Doncaster plumber completed the Yorkshire Marathon on 20 October to raise funds for the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) at Doncaster Royal Infirmary (DRI).

In April 2021, Mark Wigham spent three weeks on the unit with his daughter, Evelyn, who was born three months early and weighed just 2lb 1oz. Thanks to the 'personal touch' of the neonatal team, Mark knew he was in good hands.

He said: "They always had smiles on their faces even though a job like that is not always fun and games with little babies. They knew everything you needed to know to make you feel okay and with a personal touch."

Despite COVID restrictions at the time, Mark and wife Gemma made sure to see Evelyn as often as they could, making use of the parent rooms and limited visiting hours.

In late April, the neonatal ward and surrounding wards suffered a devastating flood and Evelyn was one of the first to be evacuated. She spent a further seven weeks under the care of the Special Care Baby Unit (SCBU) at Rotherham Hospital.

Mark recalls the rollercoaster of emotions during Evelyn's time in hospital. He said: "It's a bit of a blur. You didn't know what was going to happen. One day she was good, the next she took a downward turn. It was an endless cycle of different emotions."

Mark and Gemma would balance work and childcare with visits over to Rotherham.



Mark with daughters Matilda and Evelyn at the Sheffield 10K



Mark with daughter Evelyn

Recalling the moment Evelyn was given the all-clear to go home, Mark said: "They showed us how to bath her to test how she regulated her temperature. It was the best kind of test. That's when we knew it was finally over."

Older sister Matilda finally met Evelyn when she was ten weeks old. Evelyn is now a thriving and energetic three-year-old, who Mark describes as 'perfect'.

Despite the stress of the situation, Mark knew early on that he wanted to give back to the people who helped his family. He said: "While this was all going on I thought, one day I'm going to fundraise for this."

Earlier this year, Mark walked 62 miles over the month of May, raising just under £1,000 for Bliss Charity, who support families with babies

born premature or sick.

As a former semi-professional rugby player for Hull Ionians, Mark saw the marathon as both an opportunity to push himself and recognise his incredible wife. Mark said: "My wife is a huge inspiration for doing this. The pain and trauma that my wife and Evelyn went through will be more than what I'll go through doing this marathon."

The £1,200 Mark raised will be used to improve parent facilities on the NICU, including comforter beds and a general revamp, as well as any equipment the unit may need. Mark continued: "The NICU unit at DRI was so supportive and we will forever be grateful for the care we received. It's who you are as a person, to be a good nurse or medical practitioner."



Hospital charity thanks community for generous festive donations

Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals' (DBTH) Charity has expressed heartfelt gratitude to the local community, businesses, and supporters for their generosity during the festive season. Donations ranging from hampers and toys to funds and personal visits brought joy to patients visiting our hospitals.

Highlights of the season included the Children's Ward's annual Winter Wonderland and its first-ever Christmas Market, featuring crafts, baked goods, entertainment, and a performance by Blidworth Welfare Band. The event raised £1,200 towards a sensory room for young patients, a milestone celebrated by Ashleigh

Elam, the ward's Sister and event organiser.

Generous contributions came from groups like GXO, DHL, Legacy Church, and Club Doncaster, whose players donate £500 and visited young fans. Patients also enjoyed a visit from Victor, the friendly polar bear mascot from the Yorkshire Wildlife Park.

Duncan Batty, Head of DBTH Charity, said: "On behalf of the Charity, I want to express my gratitude to our incredible community who have shown such generosity this festive season.

"Your donations have brought so much joy and comfort to those in need. We are deeply thankful for your support in helping us make this season brighter for so many."

Doncaster and Bassetlaw
TEACHING HOSPITALS
CHARITY



Introducing the DBTH Charity Lottery

We're excited to announce the launch of the Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals (DBTH) Charity Lottery, offering a fantastic opportunity to win prizes while supporting patient care and services across Doncaster Royal Infirmary, Bassetlaw Hospital, and Montagu Hospital.

Joining is simple and quick – visit <https://dbthcharity.co.uk/join-the-dbth-charity-lottery/> and fill out the online form in just a few minutes. Membership is £5 per month, and the first draw will take place in February 2025.

Players are assigned a unique six-digit number, with weekly draws every Saturday and eight bonus draws annually (60 draws per year). Prizes include £25,000 for matching six numbers, £1,000 for matching five numbers, £100 for matching four numbers, and £10 for matching three numbers. Winning numbers will be announced monthly on the DBTH Charity website and shared on the Trust's social media platforms.

All proceeds from the lottery will directly benefit projects that enhance patient care, staff wellbeing, and hospital facilities. DBTH Charity has previously funded a surgical robot, a bereavement suite for parents who have experienced the loss of an infant, and several garden spaces for patients, families, and colleagues to enjoy.

Duncan Batty, Head of Charity, said: "We're absolutely thrilled to launch the DBTH Charity Lottery. Every ticket purchased will contribute to improving care and services for patients and families in Doncaster, Bassetlaw, and beyond. This is an easy, fun, and impactful way to give back to your local hospitals while also being in with a chance to win fantastic prizes. We encourage everyone in the community to get involved and help make a real difference."

To join the DBTH Charity Lottery, visit <https://dbthcharity.co.uk/join-the-dbth-charity-lottery/>

For further information, contact the DBTH Charity team on dbth.charity@nhs.net

Meet our new governors

In September last year, new governors were elected to the DBTH Council of governors. They were voted in by our members and joined us for a three year term of office.



Phil Mettam – Public Governor for Bassetlaw

"I began my career with the National Coal Board before transitioning to the NHS, where I built a rewarding 30-year career across the East Midlands and Yorkshire.

"With over 15 years of Board-level experience, I bring expertise and strategic insight to the Board of Governors. My leadership acumen is further enriched through my role as the founder of a successful Leadership Consultancy, where we offer strategic inputs, outdoor and executive coaching and mentoring, and well-being walks.

"I live locally, and both of my children were born at Doncaster Royal Infirmary (DRI), making my connection to the area deeply personal.

"Outside of work, I am passionate about sport, wildlife, and fitness. I am also proud to serve as a Trustee for the South Yorkshire branch of the RSPCA, supporting the welfare of animals in our community."



Andrew Flynn – Public Governor for Doncaster

"I'm currently a Councillor on Stainforth Town Council and have been passionate about volunteering in the community for a number of years.

"Election to the Council of Governors of DBTH is an absolute honour and privilege. I am a Company Director and bring a vast range of experience in both business and voluntary sectors. My aim is to do all I can to make a difference for the people of Doncaster in ensuring the Trust provides high quality services which are accessible to all.

"I believe as a Governor, it is important to not only support the Trust, but also to be a conduit for feedback from the public, making sure voices are heard."



Colin Wallace Public Governor for Doncaster

"I've called Doncaster home for over 20 years, where I live with my wife and our three children. My father, now retired, dedicated his career to the NHS as a GP. In my 40s, I took up Taekwondo, earning my black belt in 2023—a personal achievement I'm incredibly proud of.

"A few years ago I also had the thrill of being signed for a season with the first team at my beloved Partick Thistle FC, something that my kids hate me talking about! Sadly for me it was a competition prize and nothing to do with my ability! I also try to play squash and take part in Park runs whenever possible.

"I currently serve as an Area Veterinary Manager for PDSA, a role I've held for over 13 years. Before that, I worked at Argos. I pride myself on being a people-focused leader, committed to achieving the best outcomes through full team engagement and collaboration. My leadership philosophy centres around fostering a positive, inclusive environment where everyone can contribute and succeed."

Deborah Benson – Public Governor for Doncaster

"I am excited to serve as Governor and I hope to contribute to improvements in the health of our city.

"With experience in change management across both the health service and broader industries, I am passionate about using new technologies to enhance patient care.

"My personal journey also fuels my dedication to healthcare. After having a stroke a couple of years ago, I, along with family and friends, founded a support group for stroke survivors and carers in Doncaster.

"I am also an active member of Stroke Voices in Research with the Stroke Association, advocating for better stroke recovery support and research."





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Can't go to Specsavers? They'll come to you

We caught up with Kejal Shah who has been an Optometrist with Specsavers Home Visits for 8 years. She explains to us how this much-needed service works.



So, tell me more about the Home Visits service...

Our at-home eye test is very similar to what you would have experienced in-store, just with a few adjustments and specialist equipment to make it home-friendly.

Optometrists, like myself, carry out the eye test, adjusting it to your individual needs. If glasses are needed, experienced colleagues will help with frame selection and then return to fit them. And, it goes without saying, all customers are supported with ongoing aftercare.

In response to demand, we've also now launched a new audiology home visits service. So far, we have home hearing services in 19 locations in the UK, with plans to expand this over the coming months.

Who is able to benefit from a home eye test?

Put simply, it's about bringing the service to your door, if you can't get to one of our stores.

So if you, a friend, or loved one, are unable to leave your home or care home unaccompanied, due to a physical or mental illness or disability, we can come to you.

There are a wide range of conditions and reasons why someone might not be able to leave their home. You can speak to us about your situation and we can help you understand if you or your loved one qualifies.

What if someone is bedbound, or struggling with communication? Can you still help them?

The Home Visits service is designed to provide eyecare which is as individual as our customers are.

Some customers might be clinically vulnerable or they might be non-verbal or living with dementia. Depending on the situation, we might use pictures instead of letters for example. Even with a customer who is bedbound, we can change the position of the chart so we're still getting completely accurate results. All the tests are adapted to fit the customer's environment and comfort level. We can also speak to the customer or their loved one ahead of the visit, to address any questions or talk through the process.



Given that you provide such a personal and tailored service, does your care go beyond just an eye test?

Every colleague I know sees our services as something beyond just a job. Whether it's sharing stories over a cuppa, popping something in the post for them, or passing them something out of reach, going that extra mile is such a rewarding part of our role. I only need to see a customer's smile to know I've made a difference.

That's a big part of what we do. Provide a personal service, tailored care and expertise, right to people's homes, no matter what their situation – in homes, care homes or sheltered housing.

How do I find out whether someone is eligible?

You can head to our website at www.specsavers.co.uk/home-visits which features a simple step-by-step guide to eligibility and a wealth of information. Alternatively, you can call **0800 0890144**.

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