

Annual review 2021/22



40%

rise in A&E
attendances

2020/21 123,269 / 22 172,148



26%

rise in suspected
cancer referrals

2020/21 18,421 / 2021/22 23,124



37%

rise in referrals
received

2020/21 146,074 / 2021/22 200,721



6000

patients treated in
our virtual hospital



5793

staff and
volunteers

Staff 5443 Volunteers 350



West Hertfordshire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust serves people from across Hertfordshire, north London and further afield. It operates from three hospitals; Watford General, St Albans City and Hemel Hempstead, and an outpatient physiotherapy unit in Abbots Langley. The trust is part of the Hertfordshire and west Essex integrated care system and has a catchment area of over 500,000 people. It is one of the largest employers locally with more than 5,000 staff and volunteers.



Phil Townsend
Chairman



Matthew Coats CB
**Chief Executive
Officer**

Introduction from the Chairman and CEO

Achieving teaching hospital status, establishing our role as a centre for robot-assisted surgery and building on the success of our virtual hospital model were just some of the highlights of 2021/22.

On top of this, we made a fundamental and lasting change to the way we work by moving to an electronic patient record. This shift reflects our appetite for embracing the benefits that digital healthcare technology can deliver.

Covid-19 continued to cast its shadow in 2021/22 but our brilliant staff worked tirelessly to put their patients first and keep them safe. And our leading clinicians made time against this challenging backdrop to help shape our plans for new and better buildings.

We simply couldn't be prouder of our staff and we recognise how important it is to care for them as they care for the communities we serve.

Our volunteers also deserve a vote of thanks for their selfless support.



Our estate may be outdated but our technology is increasingly modern.

Updating how we manage information about our patients' care and treatment has helped us dramatically improve how we deliver care in partnership with other organisations. Sharing important health data helps us all coordinate treatment. And our new electronic patient record system stores and manages information so that we don't have to keep asking patients the same questions!

We moved to a new electronic patient record in November 2021 and we are



continuing to explore the possibilities this offers. Next stop – a 'patient portal' so that people can take control of their bookings and have easy access to their own medical history.

Two robots joined our workforce at the end of 2021/22, making us the first (and so far the only) NHS trust to make the leap of buying two at the same time. This enabled us to accelerate our training and therefore our ability to switch to robot-assisted surgery.

Surgeons guide instruments using a console – a technique that results in smaller incisions, reduced blood loss and faster recovery. The team is

Digital transformation at West Herts



expanding the range of surgery that can be performed this way and they will also use the robots (which can move from their Watford General Hospital base) at St Albans City Hospital where we deliver planned surgery.

The pandemic has bumped up the public's familiarity with technology and this has really helped us support people in our 'virtual hospital'. A rich mix of hospital care and monitoring is provided to patients in their own homes – a model of care that means they can be discharged from hospital early or avoid being admitted in the first place.

The patient uploads key health data such as blood pressure, pulse and oxygen levels so that the team in charge of their care – which includes community nurses – can tailor the care they give. The virtual hospital began life as a way to protect hospital beds in the first wave of Covid. It is now being used to care for people with heart and respiratory conditions. Patient feedback has been excellent, as have metrics around safety.

We are proud to have been asked to support other hospitals in setting up their virtual hospitals.

We are proud of colleagues whose passion for patient care, bright ideas and commitment to making the trust a great place to work has put us on the map.

Awards have been won across the trust for high quality patient care, innovation and staff development.

As well as national awards, we organise our very own Stars of Herts annual staff awards – an occasion to celebrate together, applaud colleagues and have some fun!

In December 2021 we realised our goal of becoming a 'teaching hospital' trust. This reflects the work of many teams and individuals in delivering high quality training, learning and education for all levels of the workforce.

Whether it's the student nurse on placement providing care while learning on the job; a junior doctor on a ward round learning from senior colleagues; or a radiographer progressing to the next stage of their career – teaching and learning are everyday activities for the trust's clinical workforce



A few of our 2021 Nursing Times Summit and Workforce Awards winners



Celebrating our amazing staff at our Stars of Herts awards night



Meet the British Medical Journal's 2021 respiratory team of the year!



We became a teaching hospital!

Building new hospitals requires so much more than just building!



In 2021/22 we crystalised our thinking about how our hospitals will work together and the services we will deliver.

We pressed on with getting our proposals costed and drawn up in greater detail so that we could make a strong case for the appropriate funding and approvals.

Our plans are for a new hospital on land next to Watford General Hospital and some new buildings and significant refurbishment at Hemel Hempstead Hospital and St Albans City Hospital.

Each of the trust's three hospitals will have a more clearly defined role. Emergency, inpatient and complex care will remain at Watford General Hospital; Hemel Hempstead Hospital will be the centre for planned medical care and long-term conditions and St Albans City Hospital will be the



centre for planned surgery and cancer care. Urgent care services and some outpatient services will be provided at all three sites. Diagnostic facilities will be upgraded at all three hospitals and this will increase the number of 'one stop shop' clinics, thereby speeding up diagnoses and reducing the number of hospital visits.

The new hospital building will sit within a major regeneration project – Watford Riverwell – which will be landscaped and will offer green spaces and shops. A new multi-storey car park for Watford General Hospital was completed in spring 2022. Its design and location reduces the hilly walk to the current hospital and it will be ideally suited for the new hospital. Elsewhere, refurbishment of our theatres at Watford made good progress and we completed an overhaul of our cardiac catheter facility (pictured top left).

We count ourselves very lucky to have the steadfast support of our charity Raise as well as frequent donations from individuals and families, many of whom have been in our care or have loved ones we've looked after.

In February 2022 we bid a fond farewell to the League of Friends when they finally closed the door on their coffee shop at Watford General Hospital.

They signed off in style after nearly 60 years of support to the trust by making a six-figure donation towards our appeal for a 'super scanner' for the interventional radiology suite.

Prior to this, the League of Friends had donated at least half a million pounds to buy a wide range of hospital equipment. Our dedicated charity Raise was incredibly grateful for the League's donation. You can read more about the scanner appeal here: <https://raisewestherts.org.uk/appeals/interventional-radiology/>

Donations, sponsorship or just curiosity are welcome – please check out the Raise website if you want to get involved! Visit www.raisewestherts.org.uk



Raise enables us to provide the best possible care for patients by helping to fund:

- the latest equipment and technologies
- refurbishment projects to transform facilities into comfortable and peaceful spaces for patients
- staff training and development so they can stay at the forefront of modern clinical practice

Find us online @WestHertsNHS



www.westhertshospitals.nhs.uk