NHS
University Hospital Southampton
NHS Foundation Trust

OUR STRATEGIC PLAN 2026 - 2030

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Foreword

University Hospital Southampton is proud to deliver care across the full spectrum of conditions while advancing pioneering research to shape the treatments of tomorrow.

Together, our 13,000 staff provide comprehensive secondary care services to our local communities and highly specialised tertiary services to more than four million people across the south of England and beyond. Guided by our values of Patients First, Working Together and Always Improving, we remain proud of the care we provide and the outcomes we achieve for those we serve.

RESPONDING TO A CHANGING WORLD

The years since our last strategy have brought continued challenge and transformation across the NHS. The legacy of the COVID-19 pandemic, rising demand and widening health inequalities have tested services in unprecedented ways. At the same time, advances in science, digital technology and new models of care have created opportunities to improve outcomes and experience for patients.

We are immensely proud of how our staff have responded demonstrating resilience, compassion and innovation in the face of sustained pressure. The wellbeing of our people remains central to our future. As we look ahead, we will strengthen our focus on supporting our teams to thrive, recognising that delivering outstanding care depends on a workforce that feels valued, included and empowered.

BUILDING ON OUR STRENGTHS

We are proud of our achievements during our last Trust strategy, including the opening of new wards, operating theatres and other facilities, reducing waiting times for patients, and successful developments in areas such as research and digital. We remain a hospital with excellent patient outcomes and are proud that a number of our services are seen as amongst the best in the country. These achievements provide strong foundations as we move into the next phase of our journey.

The UHS community has regularly shown what can be achieved when we work together with shared purpose, not least in response to the West Wing fire in February 2026. The actions of colleagues on the day of the fire in evacuating patients to safety has been described as the greatest achievement in our history and is testament to the professionalism, teamwork and unwavering commitment of our people, even in the most challenging of circumstances.

LOOKING AHEAD

Now is the right time to set out our ambitions for the next five years as we evolve our care to meet the needs of our patients, our communities and our people. In listening to them, we have shaped a strategy that reflects our ambition, embraces change but remains true to our values and builds on our successes. We will continue to look outward, learn from others and embrace improvement in everything we do.

We have also reflected regional and national priorities for the NHS in our plan to ensure we are working with our partners to provide the right care for our patients at the right time in the right place. This needs to be underpinned by financial stability and an environment that ensures we look after our resources, reduce waste and improve efficiencies.

Our strategy will do that through:

- Transforming the way we deliver our services so we can better align demand with capacity through transformation, targeted investment and pathway redesign. Integrating our quality management systems to enable a more efficient and effective use of clinical data – leading to **outstanding care**

- Supporting our workforce so our people feel they can thrive, excel and belong; enabled to lead the delivery of safe, high quality and sustainable services – leading to **outstanding people**

- Achieving a balanced financial position with a focus on productivity and transformation through digital integration and estate development – building our **foundations for the future**

- Enhancing our reputation as a leading-edge teaching hospital centre with an integrated research programme and strong networks that enable world-first treatments – through our **pioneering research and innovation**

Each theme is supported by clear ambitions that set out what we will achieve over the next five years, underpinned by a clear focus on improvement, equity and sustainability.

Over the next five years we will work together across the organisation and with our partners to turn these ambitions into reality – transforming how we provide services and how we support our people to deliver outstanding care for our communities.

Jenni Douglas-Todd
Chair of the Trust Board

David French
Chief Executive Officer

Who we are

University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust (UHS) is a leading university teaching hospital, able to deliver treatments for virtually every condition where one exists whilst leading ground-breaking research to expand our portfolio further.

We provide hospital services for 1.9 million people living in southern Hampshire, and specialist services (including neurosciences, respiratory medicine, cancer, cardiovascular, obstetrics and specialist children's services) to more than 4 million people across the south of England and beyond.

Key facts

Our patients

every year...

770,000 people attend our outpatient appointments

166,000 inpatients and day patients treated, including around **70,000** emergency admissions

155,000 cases present to our emergency department

Our people

13,000 staff members

Research

15,478 people took part in research at UHS in 2025/26, putting us in the **Top 10** UK NHS trusts for the number of research participants

Meals

1.46 million meals served annually

Maternity

4,958 babies born under UHS maternity care in 2025/26

Sustainability

£17m invested in decarbonisation projects as part of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme

Scanners

14 MRI and CT scanners

In addition, we deliver outpatient clinics in sites across the south of England to keep services local for patients. Providing all our services costs approximately £4 million per day.

Who we serve

As seen across the country, health challenges across our population are diverse and complex. We need to work with health and care providers, and local public health teams to provide care that spans the life course, giving children the best start and adults the opportunity to age well.

Amongst our population we have communities facing the impact of significant deprivation. We also have an ageing population, with the number of people aged 75+ expected to increase by 16.5% from 2023 to 2030 in Hampshire and by 8.5% in Southampton. This means that as a healthcare system, we will need to be prepared to increase access to support for challenges such as living with frailty, poor mental health and multiple long-term conditions.

Healthy life expectancy has decreased in most areas, meaning people are living more of their lives in poor health. Preventable deaths from cancer, cardiovascular, respiratory and liver disease remain high in Southampton and Portsmouth, contributing further to the gap in life expectancy across the system. Smoking, poor diet, physical inactivity, obesity and alcohol use remain major drivers of preventable illness and early death.

Smoking during pregnancy remains above national ambition, and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to be felt, with rising adult and childhood obesity rates, increasing physical inactivity and poorer mental health. We must work with organisations across the region to deliver on the Southampton and Hampshire Health and Wellbeing strategies, adopting a whole system approach to address the key drivers of childhood obesity and work to protect independence and improve healthy life expectancy as people grow older with integrated, proactive and personalised care.

Our population is increasingly ethnically diverse, and it is essential that we recognise and value the breadth of cultures this brings to our local communities. By actively engaging with the experiences and perspectives of our diverse patient population, we can ensure that the services we design and deliver more accurately reflect and meet the needs of those we serve.

How we have moved forward

Our previous Trust Strategy reflected a period of rebuilding for the NHS following the COVID-19 pandemic.
We are proud of the achievements that we have made during this time, including:

Installed state-of-the-art radiotherapy technology to treat cancer patients.

Operating theatres opened in new Vertical Extension building.

Opening of our new patient and family support hub.

Adanac Health Campus development with regional Aseptic hub, a sterile services facility, and a 1000-space multi-storey car park for staff.

More than 500k appointment letters sent digitally in the last 12 months, saving on print and post costs.

Specialist rehabilitation facility opened to support patient recovery in our general intensive care unit.

£56 million awarded to hosted NIHR infrastructure.

43 clinicians supported in Research Leaders Programme.

Top 10 ranking in England for recruitment to clinical trials.

Wellbeing Hub and staff garden, a purpose-built facility designed to support and enhance the wellbeing of our people.

545 staff completed apprenticeships in the last 5 years. In 2023 we were highly commended at the National Apprenticeship Awards (NAS) South East region.

Over 8779 High 5 recognition awards delivered to acknowledge and celebrate our people.

WE ARE UHS
HIGH5
AWARD

We have continued to support and expand clinical services where funding has allowed to utilise this additional capacity and address growing demand. We have also focused on clinical transformation to improve the efficiency of services, with benefits for both staff and patient experience. This has been against a backdrop of rising demand in both elective and urgent and emergency care. Managing that demand aligns to our capacity by thinking differently about enabling more care in the community, through innovative healthcare design with patients and partners.

What we heard

In shaping our new strategy we actively invited contributions from patients, staff and external stakeholders to ensure that our priorities were developed with their input.

The engagement process combined quantitative feedback with qualitative insights. A range of engagement activities were delivered, including:

Divisional meetings covering all **care groups**, enabling clinical teams to share long-term strategic priorities

A series of virtual sessions and **in-person workshops for staff**, including sessions attended by the Chief Executive

1,230
online surveys distributed to patients, staff, and the public, generating a significant volume of structured feedback

30
stakeholder events, engaging partners across the Hampshire & Isle of Wight system

250+
staff postcards capturing frontline insights in an accessible, informal format

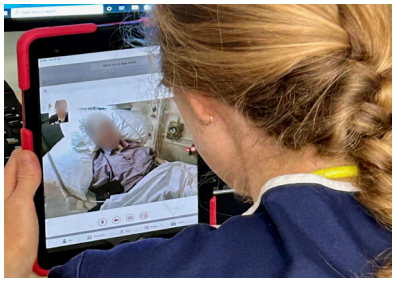
In total, the 3-month programme generated over
1,000
staff interactions and more than
1,100
patient and public interactions, with feedback that offers value to other areas as well as directly to our strategy

1. Patient experience and outcomes
Participants emphasised the importance of delivering high quality, compassionate care and improving communication at every stage of the patient journey. Feedback highlighted the need for clearer updates, better discharge processes, and more consistent coordination between departments. Patients also raised concerns about waiting times, accessibility, and the need for improved support for vulnerable groups, including carers. This has been most directly reflected in the priorities we have developed under our **Outstanding Care** strategic pillar.

2. Workforce wellbeing, development, and retention

Staff consistently highlighted the need for improved wellbeing support, access to staff support resources, and more opportunities for career development. Themes included the importance of protected breaks, flexible working, timely rosters, and a culture that values and supports staff. Recruitment and retention were seen as critical to sustaining high quality care. This feedback has helped us develop the priorities in our **Outstanding People** strategic pillar.

3. Digital systems and access



Across all groups, there was a strong call for more reliable, integrated, and user friendly digital systems. Patients and staff expressed frustration with fragmented platforms and inconsistent digital pathways. There was clear support for a unified digital system that integrates with the NHS App, improves appointment management, and provides timely updates. Participants also stressed the need for

alternatives for those who are not digitally confident. This feedback aligns with the national direction for a digital NHS set out in the 10 Year Plan for Health and is reflected in the digitally enabled section of our **Foundations for the Future** strategic pillar.

4. Estates, facilities, and infrastructure

Feedback highlighted the need for modern, fit for purpose facilities that support both patient care and staff wellbeing. Staff highlighted the need for modern equipment, good maintenance, and staff facilities, while patients emphasised the importance of clean, comfortable waiting areas and improved parking. Sustainability and modernisation were seen as essential to future service delivery. Our estates priorities are set out under Improving Estates in our **Foundations for the Future** strategic pillar, whilst we have also set sustainability as a cross-cutting theme for our strategy, reflecting its importance across all areas.

5. System integration and partnership working

Stakeholders emphasised the importance of joined up working across the Hampshire & Isle of Wight ICS and with wider partners. There was a strong desire for better coordination between services, improved information sharing, and more integrated pathways that support prevention, early intervention, and seamless transitions between care settings. This remains a priority for UHS and we have highlighted networks and collaboration as a cross-cutting theme in our strategy. This also aligns directly with our response to national ambitions to move care from hospital to community, which can only be delivered through a joined-up approach with partners.

The programme was designed to gather a wide range of perspectives through multiple channels, ensuring that the emerging strategy reflects the needs and aspirations of the communities UHS serves.

The strategy also reflects the period of significant reform for the NHS. Central to this is the 10 Year Health Plan which sets a direction for the NHS for the next decade. This national plan acknowledges the challenges that are facing our health service and how we will adapt services to meet them, this includes:

- Recognising the priority of moving services from hospitals to community and will lead on the delivery of this where it improves care, linking to the developing neighbourhood health services.

- Delivering digital transformation is central to our strategy, and this includes the ambition to align clinical systems across our local geography in line with national direction.

- Supporting the shift to a focus on prevention, particularly where this is targeted at the needs of our local population, and we see that as a large healthcare provider and employer we can have a positive impact.

How we go forward

The purpose of our organisation is to deliver outstanding care for patients and the way in which we achieve that needs to reflect the current context in which we work. To deliver this strategy, we will have to be able to transform the way that we deliver some of our services and to utilise any funding that becomes available to help us do this. This strategy highlights some key areas that we will need to address between now and 2030, including:

- Improving the balance between demand for our services and the capacity that we can offer, achieved through pathway redesign, service transformation and demand management, alongside targeted investments in capacity increases.
- Strengthening workforce capacity, capability, and culture to ensure UHS is able to deliver safe, high-quality, and sustainable services in an increasingly challenging operational environment.
- Achieving a balanced financial position with a focus on our work on productivity and transformation.

We recognise our reputation as a centre which offers cutting-edge treatment, supported by our research programme is an aspect that sets UHS apart from other providers and it is a priority for us to continue to operate in this space.

We would like to see the successes of our organisation reflected in the way that we are measured externally. This includes achieving the best level of assessment outcome from the Care Quality Commission and being ranked within the top tier of providers in the NHS league tables. The objectives set in this strategy are a direct reflection of what we will need to do for this to be achieved, and set us on a path towards gaining Advanced Foundation Trust status under the newly developed national framework.

All of this work is underpinned by our most important asset, our staff, and we remain committed to improving the experience for those working for the organisation. We have an established People Strategy and we continue to follow the underlying principles that were developed in that plan to achieve that, whilst updating our objectives to reflect the new national workforce plan.

Strategic investment priorities

As we launch our new strategy we are initiating a number of strategic investment projects that collectively address the Trust's growing capacity and demand challenges while strengthening its role as a specialist centre and improving access to services closer to where people live.

Work has already begun on building a co-located Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC) on the Southampton General Hospital site. By reducing pressure on the emergency department we will be able to ensure patients receive the right care in the right setting more quickly.

Artist's impression of the UTC

We are also advancing plans to develop dedicated surgical hubs which will provide ringfenced elective capacity, protecting planned care from emergency pressures and enabling high-volume, efficient operating lists.

Recognising the world leading expertise we have at UHS, we will be exploring opportunities to expand our private care offer. Working with a private sector partner to create a dedicated unit, we would be able to provide further choice for patients and generate revenue that will be reinvested into frontline services.

In parallel, the continued development of the Adanac Park Health and Innovation Campus will expand high-quality, modern facilities in a purpose-built environment. This will enable further capacity to be released on the main hospital sites, enabling better consolidation of acute services. Together, these initiatives create a more resilient, efficient, and patient-centred model of care, that delivers treatment where it is best suited.

Our revised strategic framework

In moving us through the next five years we are carrying forward some of the core elements of our previous strategic framework and will continue to be guided by our values of Patients First, Working Together and Always Improving to achieve our organisational vision of **"Outstanding care delivered by outstanding people".**

This will be delivered through our four strategic themes of:

- **Outstanding care** – focused on the care we provide to our patients.
- **Outstanding people** – our priorities for our workforce.
- **Pioneering research and innovation** – delivering research to support and enhance our clinical services.
- **Foundations for the future** – our corporate infrastructure which supports everything that we do.

We have developed ambitions and targeted objectives under each of these themes for the next five years and we will use these objectives to track progress from departmental level all the way up to Trust Board. These themes all have linked strategies which form part of our strategic framework.

We have also set out four cross-cutting themes in our strategy which are reflected across our objectives. These are:

- **Networks and collaboration** – our commitment to working with external partners to deliver our services.
- **Our continuous improvement approach** – embedding an improvement methodology in everything that we do.
- **Reducing health inequalities** – improving equity in outcomes, experience and access across our organisation.
- **Sustainability** – adopting a sustainable approach in delivering care and managing our resources.

We believe that this framework will allow us to deliver measurable success for this strategy and also enable our staff to connect the work that they do every day with the achievement of our long-term goals.

OUR VALUES

Our values continue to shape who we are and how we work:

Patients First – everything we do is centred on patients, their families, and carers. Their needs, experiences, and outcomes guide all our decision-making to deliver patient-centred care.

Working Together – strong partnerships between our people, our patients, and carers enable us to deliver the best care, supported by collaboration across teams, organisations, and external partners.

Always Improving – we are committed to continuously improving our services through inclusive leadership, innovation, research, and more efficient care.

OUTSTANDING CARE

UHS is dedicated to delivering high-quality care, with a strategic focus on improving patient outcomes, safety, experience, and access. This pillar is enabled by the **Clinical Strategy.**

OUTSTANDING OUTCOMES

- To deliver outstanding outcomes across all of our services
- To be able to report outcome measures, that matter to patients, in all specialities
- To use patient outcomes to focus our improvement work

OUTSTANDING SAFETY

- To create a restorative, just and learning culture in response to incidents
- To identify and make improvements in our services from patient safety learning

OUTSTANDING EXPERIENCE

- To embed co-production and partnership working
- To ensure all patients receive high standards of personalised care
- To deliver an exemplar service for caring for carers

OUTSTANDING ACCESS

- To improve waiting times for elective services (routine and urgent) to achieve national standards ongoing
- To improve emergency access performance supported by decreased demand to achieve national standards ongoing
- To improve equitable access to our services

OUTSTANDING OUTCOMES

To deliver outstanding outcomes across all of our services

To be able to report outcome measures, that matter to patients, in all specialties

To use patient outcomes to focus our improvement work

How we will achieve our ambitions
We have a strong and mature approach to clinical effectiveness, with robust oversight of outcomes, audit activity, and compliance with national standards.

Our clinical effectiveness team works closely with clinical leads and patient representatives to continually improve our understanding of service quality and effectiveness.

However, timely access to outcome data remains a system wide challenge across the NHS. To address this, we have developed a Clinical Effectiveness Strategic Plan to improve the collection, interpretation and use of outcome data.

The plan focuses on enhancing data quality across all services, improving timeliness, measurement of trends over time, benchmarking against peer organisations, and prioritising metrics that are meaningful to patients. We will also maximise the value of existing data through better integration with Trust systems, governance processes and broader quality functions.

Our priorities are to:

- **Integrate clinical effectiveness data into Trust systems** to support timely, meaningful reporting in a format accessible to clinical teams. This will reduce the burden of data collection from clinical teams and improve the use of outcomes in decision making, planning and service development.
- **Embed clinical effectiveness within care group, divisional and corporate governance structures**, ensuring outcome data informs prioritisation and risk management from ward to board. This will help direct improvement efforts to areas of greatest impact, support oversight, and ensure achievements are shared and celebrated.
- **Align clinical effectiveness with other quality domains**, strengthening links with departments such as patient safety and patient experience, to give a holistic view quality to those delivering and managing services.

OUTSTANDING SAFETY

To create a restorative, just and learning culture in response to incidents

To identify and make improvements in our services from patient safety learning

How we will achieve our ambitions

Our ambitions for patient safety focus on building a deep and continually evolving understanding of safety issues and risks, past, present and emerging, while fostering a restorative, learning focused response to incidents and demonstrating clear improvements from the insights gained.

Over the next five years, we aim to fully embed the Patient Safety Incident Response Framework (PSIRF) as business as usual, ensuring it becomes a consistent, organisation wide approach to learning and improvement. We will also further integrate our successful quality patient safety partner (QPSP) role into our patient safety structures, alongside other patient feedback, strengthening patient involvement and insight.

Increasing the number of staff with patient safety expertise and developing a strong, psychologically safe culture through human factors and simulation education remain central to our objectives. Alongside this, we will improve pathways and support for patients with mental health needs in hospital, ensuring parity of esteem and reducing safety risks.

Key initiatives supporting delivery include the continued rollout of the PSIRF programme, the development of the QPSP programme, and a dedicated mental health improvement workstream delivered with system partners. Together, these ambitions, objectives and initiatives will strengthen our learning culture, enhance staff capability, and ensure patient safety improvements are both measurable and meaningful.

Case study: QPSPs

The HSJ award-winning quality and patient safety partner (QPSP) programme plays a vital role in ensuring improvement at UHS is co-designed with patients, rather than informed by experience alone.

Moving beyond traditional feedback and consultation models, QPSPs work alongside staff as long term partners and co-leaders, shaping services, safety and quality improvement from the outset.

QPSPs actively support teams to design change *with and by patients*. They challenge services to embed lived experience into decision making, advocate for meaningful patient partnership, and enable direct collaboration between patients, carers and staff. Drawing on wider patient insight, engagement with communities and advocacy groups, and thematic learning, QPSPs help ensure improvement reflects what matters most to patients.

QPSPs make a significant contribution to patient safety through involvement in incident investigation oversight, safety governance and safety improvement workstreams. They are part of safety learning and improvement discussions, ensuring investigations, recommendations and actions remain grounded in patient priorities and experience, shifting safety improvement from organisational learning about patients to shared learning and action with patients.

OUTSTANDING EXPERIENCE

To embed co-production and partnership working

To ensure all patients receive high standards of personalised care

To deliver an exemplar service for caring for carers

How we will achieve our ambitions

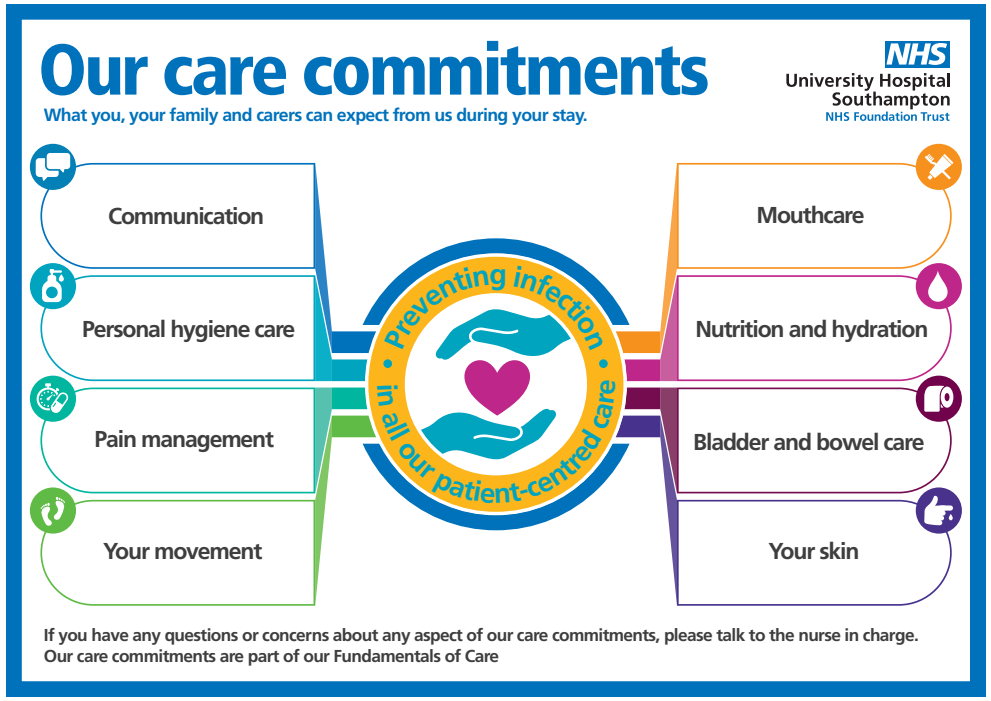
We will focus on providing positive and continually improving patient experiences across all services, increasing meaningful user engagement and ensuring that patient voice remains central to quality improvement.

Over the next five years, we will embed meaningful co-production and partnership working across the Trust to make patients, carers and communities equal partners in designing, delivering and evaluating services. We believe this will drive our ability to ensure that every patient receives high-quality personalised care.

This work will link to the Fundamentals of Care programme, which will be far reaching across the organisation. We also aim to be recognised nationally for excellence in supporting carers.

Key initiatives include developing a comprehensive catalogue of patients actively involved in improvement work, expanding the Fundamentals of Care and What Matters to Me? projects to strengthen personalised care, and establishing a Patient and Family Support Hub to provide accessible, dedicated services for carers within UHS.

In addition, our transformation clinical programmes will continue to drive improvements in patient experience, ensuring that coproduction, personalised care and carer support are embedded throughout pathways and everyday practice.



OUTSTANDING ACCESS

- **To improve waiting times for elective services (routine and urgent) to achieve national standards ongoing**
- **To improve emergency access performance supported by decreased demand to achieve national standards ongoing**
- **To improve equitable access to our services**

How we will achieve our ambitions

To do this we will take action across all areas of demand and capacity, linking in the first phase to the rebuild of West Wing following the fire of February 2026. This will be delivered through our transformation work on elective and urgent and emergency care services which will reduce demand and improve the efficiency of our capacity.

Reducing the number of patients who are medically fit to leave hospital but unable to be discharged due to other reasons is a significant priority for us, as well as accelerating the development of pathways for care that can be delivered outside of hospital, in line with national priorities. This will involve strong partnership working with health and local authority partners and may require us to consider new models of working to achieve this.

We will also plan for targeted investment in additional capacity where this is required, for example in our ambition to provide an NHS elective hub facility in Southampton.

We will work to understand health inequalities in access to our services, and implement change to ensure greater equity.

What the future looks like

Our people are able to deliver personalised care within a culture that learns from experience and continually improves. Our patients are able to take more ownership of their decision-making supported by clinical teams who can communicate outcome measures that matter, and direct our improvement work.

OUTSTANDING PEOPLE

Outstanding care is delivered by outstanding people. Our strategy recognises that the experience, capability and wellbeing of our workforce are fundamental to the quality and sustainability of the care we provide and support the transformation needed. We want UHS to be a place where people are supported to thrive in their roles, enabled to excel in their practice, and where everyone feels that they belong. This pillar is enabled by the **People Strategy.**

THRIVE

To attract and retain great people so we have a well-equipped workforce that is able to meet demand both now and in the future.

EXCEL

To develop a skilled, capable and compassionate workforce with clear training, career and leadership pathways.

BELONG

To create an inclusive, supportive and respectful working environment where diversity is valued and everyone feels they belong.

OUTSTANDING PEOPLE

- **To embed a quality improvement approach that empowers our people to innovate and continuously improve**
- **To develop a skilled, capable and compassionate workforce with clear training, career and leadership pathways**
- **To create an inclusive, supportive and respectful working environment where diversity is valued and everyone feels they belong**

How we will achieve our ambitions

We will continue to strengthen our approach to quality improvement across the organisation, ensuring that staff at all levels have the skills, time and permission to identify problems and lead change.

We will support teams to use data, improvement methodologies and lived experience to improve services for patients and staff alike. Alongside this, the improvements that we make through our transformation programmes will have a direct positive benefit on staff experience through their impact on efficiency, for example through our focus on the benefits of automation to improve our administrative processes.

Education is a fundamental part of UHS and we want to reinforce our commitment to it in this strategy. We will invest in the development of our people through clear and equitable access to training, education and career progression. This will include strengthening clinical, professional and leadership development pathways, supporting succession planning, and ensuring that our future workforce has the skills required to deliver outstanding care in an increasingly complex healthcare environment.

We recognise the national direction that healthcare delivery is shifting out of hospitals to community, and we will ensure that this shift is reflected in our education strategy.

The increasing role of digital technology will also change the way we approach education and the skills that are required. We will work closely with other organisations to achieve this, and this will include refreshing our joint education vision with our key partner University of Southampton.

With a workforce of over 13,000 staff, we understand how important our role as an employer is for our local population. We will work with system partners to ensure that we continue to offer career opportunities across the many varied roles that the NHS has to offer, clearly recognising that good employment is linked to better population health. This ambition ties directly in with the new strategy for health and wellbeing in Southampton.

We will also focus on creating a culture where people feel safe, valued and respected. This includes continuing to improve staff wellbeing, tackling discrimination and inequality, and ensuring that all voices are heard. By building an inclusive environment where expertise is valued equally and people feel connected to our shared purpose, we will support our workforce to deliver their very best for patients.

Tackling violence, aggression and abuse towards staff remains a significant priority for us in this strategy, and we will continue with partners to ensure that we do all we can for our staff in this area.

The delivery of our ambitions for our people and our overall strategy will require significant leadership in all areas. We will build on the successful leadership programmes that we have offered previously to support leaders in this, linking them to the aims of the national Management and Leadership Programme.

Our target at the end of this strategy is that staff experience in the hospital is improved and that we are recognised within the top quartile of NHS providers for staff experience, reflected through the uptake and feedback we see in our national Staff Survey as well as other measures.

We will refresh our existing **People Strategy** to guide the delivery of this strategic pillar.

What the future looks like

Our people come to work with a sense of belonging, in an environment that enables them to deliver outstanding care. All colleagues have the opportunity to develop professionally and feel empowered to lead change that will improve services and experiences for our patients. Our leadership continually models these behaviours, fostering a culture where innovation, collaboration and continuous improvement are actively encouraged and recognised.

Case study: Positive Action Leadership

Valentina Burnett applied for a place on the Positive Action Leadership Programme at UHS. This is a strengths-based development programme for diverse emerging leaders. It supports people to be their full self as they move up into more senior leadership roles. This means individuals can progress a career without feeling they have to change their identity and who they are.

Valentina is among 89 people who have successfully completed the course and since doing so has developed her managerial and operational skills in preparation for the next step. Valentina says of the her experience:

"Every time someone mentions the Positive Action Leadership Programme, it brings a smile to my face. It has truly been one of the best – if not the best – experiences I've had since starting in my current role.

The experience itself was very unique. With each session, the atmosphere became more positive and supportive, and I found myself growing in confidence.

For me, this was not just a programme, but a truly life-changing experience. It transformed not only how I act and communicate, but more importantly how I think—both professionally and personally.

It has helped me become a better leader and a better person, teaching me how to communicate effectively and understand the impact I have on others. It gave me the confidence and sense of security I needed, and for the first time in 16 years working for the Trust, it showed me what true belonging feels like — and how to find it."

PIONEERING RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Research and innovation are central to our role as a leading teaching hospital and to improving health outcomes for our communities. This strategy sets out our ambition to growing our reputable and innovative research and development portfolio that attracts the best people and efficiently delivers the best possible research, treatments and care for our patients.
This pillar is enabled by the **Research for Impact Strategy.**

INSPIRE

To inspire participation in research by creating a culture that champions advocated for innovation.

ENGAGE

To engage with partners to increase the diversity, relevance and impact of our research activity.

DELIVER

To deliver timely and equitable access to research and clinical trials for patients.

PIONEERING RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

To inspire participation in research by creating a culture that champions and advocates for innovation

To deliver timely and equitable access to research and clinical trials for patients

To engage with partners to increase the diversity, relevance and impact of our research activity

How we will achieve our ambitions
We will work to embed research as a core part of clinical care, ensuring that patients and staff see research participation as a routine and valued opportunity. We will support clinicians and researchers to initiate and deliver high-quality studies, building on our existing strengths and areas of national and international recognition. Guiding this work will be our five-year **Research for Impact Strategy**.

Central to this is our ongoing Research Leaders Programme, which aims to identify staff of all clinical disciplines with research leadership potential and gives them time, training and personal development to help them move towards their agreed research career pathway.

We will improve the efficiency and equity of access to research opportunities for patients, reducing barriers to participation and ensuring that research reflects the needs and diversity of our local populations. This includes improving pathways into trials, strengthening support for delivery teams, and using data more effectively to identify and address variation.

Partnership working will be central to our approach, and our close working with University of Southampton is the key foundation of this. Our ambitions to work collaboratively will be demonstrated through the development of an Institute of Medical Innovation (IMI) on the Southampton General Hospital site.

This facility will bring world-leading researchers across disciplines such as engineering and computer science together with our healthcare professionals to accelerate work in areas such as cancer, dementia, sight loss, infectious diseases and respiratory and allergic conditions, with access to the best technology and data at their fingertips.

Artist's impression of the new Institute for Medical Innovation

We will also collaborate closely with other universities, industry, the wider NHS and system partners to increase the scale, relevance and impact of our research. Through this, we will contribute to advancing treatments, improving population health, and ensuring that research translates into real benefits for patients and communities.

We also continue to see the significant potential of innovation at UHS across a number of areas, alongside the recognition of this as a national priority as set out in the 10 Year Plan for Health.

Our priority in this space is to bring together stakeholders to develop and publish an **Innovation Strategy** for UHS, setting out tangible ambitions and priorities for the coming years.

What the future looks like

Internationally recognised research at UHS will continue to attract the best talent, leading work that advances patient treatments and care. Increased numbers of staff are actively engaged in research alongside a growth in the diversity of patient participation in clinical trials to better meet the needs of our population. We will have sustained reductions in study set-up times so research impact reaches patients faster and improves outcomes.

Case study: Growing research leaders to improve patient care

The UHS Research Leaders Programme (RLP) is a cornerstone of our commitment to nurturing research excellence across UHS. The programme was established in 2021, following significant investment from the Trust Board, to support staff who have research leadership potential.

The RLP is open to all healthcare professionals employed through a substantive contract by the Trust. The awards are offered competitively, covering salary costs for at least one day a week (20% whole time equivalent) for up to three years.

The programme has given individuals with exceptional potential the time and space to thrive. Five cohorts, a total of 43 professionals, have now secured RLP awards. Together, they have brought in £17.8m through successful grant applications.

The RLP supports awardees to build a portfolio of research activity that will attract or generate funding. As intended, this is now facilitating research to become a significant and sustainable component of their job plan.

Dr Kristin Veighey, RLP lead, said: "The integration of research into our Trust strategy has fostered a culture where research is not only encouraged but celebrated. As a result, we continue to receive interest from national research funders and NHS/higher education institution partnerships from across the UK keen to learn from our model."

FOUNDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

To deliver outstanding care now and in the future, we must ensure that the foundations of our organisation are strong, resilient and fit for purpose. To do this we must achieve financial sustainability, continue to develop a modern and safe estate, and provide digital systems that support high-quality, efficient and integrated care. This pillar is enabled by the **Estate Masterplan**, the **Green Plan** and the **Digital Strategy.**

FINANCIAL STABILITY

We are committed through our financial planning to improve our current position and to be recognised as a financially efficient organisation.

IMPROVING ESTATE

We will continue to invest in our estate, ensuring that facilities are safe, accessible, are environmentally efficient and support high-quality care and staff experience.

DIGITALLY ENABLED

Our ambitions are to have digital systems that improve patient care and safety, make better use of time and drive efficiencies.

FOUNDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

To be a financially stable organisation to enable the delivery of all areas of our strategy

To have an improving safe estate where our people can deliver quality care

To have a digitally enabled environment to improve efficiency for staff and the experience of patients

How we will achieve our ambitions
To achieve financial stability we are committed through our financial planning to improve our current position and to be recognised as a financially efficient organisation. This underpins the decisions that we can make to deliver all areas of our strategy. To achieve this, we will focus on improved productivity and efficient use of resources, as well as targeting specific opportunities that will support our financial status. This will include our commercial workplan, which focusses on areas where we can bring income to the hospital outside of traditional NHS funding.

As an example, our ambition is to grow our offer for private patients, which will attract funding that can then be reinvested in improving NHS services.

We will continue to invest in modernising our estate, ensuring that facilities are safe, accessible and support high-quality care and staff experience. This includes delivering major strategic capital schemes, improving the condition and sustainability of our buildings, and ensuring that our estate supports new models of care and links directly to our need to better balance demand and capacity of our services.

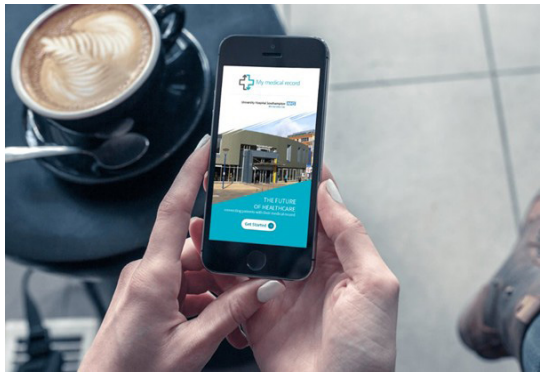
The West Wing fire in February 2026 has focussed some of our immediate priorities and we will link these into our longer-term ambitions for the estate.

Our **Estates Masterplan** will continue to guide our long-term approach to our hospital sites. Our Health and Innovation Campus at Adanac Park offers us a unique opportunity to expand services that do not need to be on our main site, building on the successful developments like our regional aseptics hub. We will also look to other locations as options for our strategic ambitions such as consolidated regional pathology provision, and ringfenced elective operating hubs.

Artist's impression of Adanac Park Health and Innovation Campus

We will also deliver a number of ambitions from our latest **Green Plan** in this area. This will include reducing carbon emissions from heating and powering our estate, improving energy and water efficiency, as well as waste reduction and improved waste segregation.

Digital transformation is a key enabler of our digitally enabled approach and the national direction of the NHS through the 'analogue to digital' shift. Our ambitions are to improve patient care and safety, save users' time and help to reduce cost. This is so we can enable the 10-Year Plan for the NHS and maintain a cyber secure hospital.



For staff, we will develop a digitally enabled environment where they are supported to be digitally fluent and have access to systems that will save their time, improve efficiency and reduce our overall costs. Our aspiration is that every employee across the Trust is part of the digital journey, and digitally fluent enough to effectively utilise and promote digital tools. As our strategy directs a change in the way we work, we recognise that we will need to retrain and reskill our people.

Case study: Cutting carbon emissions by 87% through major theatre upgrade

The Trust cut waste from anaesthetic gases by 87% through a major upgrade to the pipework entering its operating theatres, reducing the amount of nitrous oxide (N_2O) being released into the atmosphere by around 600,000 litres a year – preventing 354 tonnes of carbon dioxide being emitted (CO_2e) annually.

The saving is comparable to around 175 return flights between London and New York, the annual energy use of around 40 UK homes, or driving around the Earth more than 30 times in a typical petrol car.

Traditionally, the gas has been supplied to theatres through central pipework connected to large storage systems, known as manifolds. Evidence shows these systems are prone to leakage, meaning substantial volumes of gas can be released into the atmosphere even when theatres are not in use.

At UHS, six manifolds routinely supplied nitrous oxide to paediatric, obstetric and neurological theatres, with occasional use in adult general and trauma anaesthesia. The Trust has now decommissioned its piped nitrous oxide manifolds and is instead using small portable cylinders attached directly to anaesthetic machines in theatres where the gas is required regularly. Additional portable cylinders are used to allow theatres to work flexibly and ensure nitrous oxide remains available when clinically needed.

This has eliminated leakage and significantly reduced waste while ensuring patients continue to receive safe anaesthetic care through the alternative supply arrangements. The work supports the Trust's updated Green Plan and the NHS ambition to achieve net zero emissions by 2040.

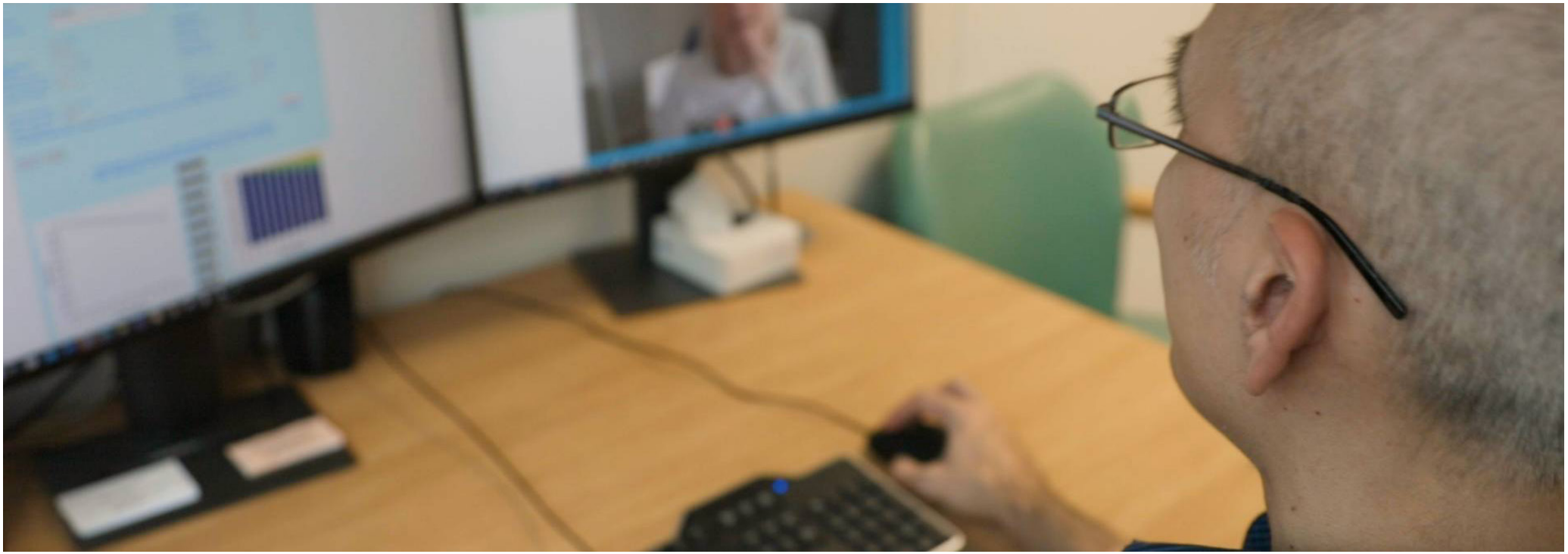
For patients, we want to ensure our digital systems support them in being able to access timely, efficient and joined-up care. Our work with other local health partners to bring together clinical systems will continue. We will also link in with national developments such as the NHS App to ensure that our patients can be at the centre of their own care, and we recognise the wider national strategy to have a shared digital architecture and infrastructure across NHS England trusts. We will look to adopt as much of this national infrastructure as possible.

Strong clinical engagement has also been a strength of our digital delivery and we will continue to invest in clinical leadership roles to ensure there is a talent pipeline of clinicians with a strong interest in digital. Our updated **Digital Strategy** will guide our overall delivery in this domain.

Through these foundations, we will create an organisation that is resilient, adaptable and well-placed to meet the needs of our communities in the years ahead.

What the future looks like

UHS will be a strong, resilient, and future-ready organisation. Financial sustainability allows us to invest in developing a safe, high-quality estate that supports our patients and staff. Our infrastructure will be underpinned by digital systems that enable efficient, integrated, and high-quality care across services. We will be equipped to meet demand, embrace innovation, and ensure the best possible outcomes for our communities, now and in the future.



EMBEDDING THE STRATEGY

Our strategy will only succeed if it lives beyond this document and is fully embedded from board to ward.

We must ensure it is the true north that guides all our work, driving our operational efficiencies, improving the quality of our care, ensuring we are sustainable for the future and developing our workforce.

We must consistently thread our strategic goals through everything we do - ensuring that every role, every team and every decision is clearly connected to how we are transforming services and improving outcomes. Through our defined pillars and values, we will create a shared sense of purpose, helping colleagues understand how their daily work directly contributes to meaningful change.

We will support this by aligning corporate objectives, team plans and individual goals, ensuring that improvement underpins how we work every day.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT
All components of the Trust's transformation agenda must be supportive in delivering the Trust's strategy.

QUALITY
The quality of the care received by patients is paramount. Change must support the improvement of care delivery and quality.

OPERATIONAL
Changes in the way the Trust operates must support it in becoming more operationally effective and efficient.

WORKFORCE
Staff at all levels and across professions need to be engaged with the organisation and enabled to lead and support changes.

FINANCIAL
The Trust needs to become financially sustainable and therefore transformative change must deliver sizeable returns on investment.

Measuring success will be central to sustaining momentum. We will track progress not only through operational and clinical outcomes, but through how we improve the experience of both our staff and the people in our care. Regular feedback, staff surveys, patient insight and real-time data will enable us to listen and learn.

Above all, we will celebrate success - recognising our people by highlighting how their contributions are making care safer, more effective and more compassionate every day.

In doing so, we will make the change needed to deliver our strategy so that it is meaningful, visible and owned by everyone across our organisation.