

# RUH Matters

Issue 1 | Summer 2026

## Managing Director's letter



Welcome to the first edition of RUH Matters. In this digital newsletter, we share more of the latest news from the Royal United Hospitals (RUH) Bath. There's also an update on the development of BSW Hospitals Group, which is the formal partnership between the RUH, Great Western Hospitals in Swindon and Salisbury Foundation Trust (see page 4).

Since I joined the organisation on 1 September 2025, I have been struck by the passion and support shown for the RUH by our community, during both good times and more challenging periods. However, we also appreciate hearing from you when we don't get it right. Your voice matters, and we value the role of members in keeping us accountable to and focused on what is important to our patients and community, and in helping us to improve the experience of being at the RUH.

On that note, in recent months we have had a particular focus on improving the time you wait to receive treatment at the RUH, whether that is for planned or emergency care. You may be aware that last autumn saw the publication of the first National Oversight Framework tables, a Government initiative to provide more transparency to local communities about how their local hospital is performing. We were disheartened to find ourselves ranked among the most challenged Trusts. Since then our teams, with the valued support of external organisations, have worked hard to improve our position and in the most recent figures, we were placed 82nd out of 134 Trusts. This meant we were the 11th most improved Trust in the country across all statutory indicators, and within the top ten for most improved in Quarters 3 and 4. We are proud of these improvements, especially on cancer, diagnostics and elective targets. There is much more to do, especially on Urgent Emergency Care, but with our improvement has come a c.£140million capital allocation, which over the next five years will enable a rebuilding of some critical functions – most notably our Emergency Department. Find out more on page 3.

While it is pleasing to see us rise in the league tables, the most important thing is what this means for our patients: that people are receiving the diagnoses and care they need, much sooner than before. This results in less anxiety for patients and families during an already difficult time, and improved outcomes.

It also, I believe, better reflects the RUH and the people who work here. One of the things that shone through as soon as I joined was that this is a place bursting with compassionate, hardworking staff. They consistently impress me with the care they provide, and how they go above and beyond to improve the health and wellbeing of our patients and community. This goes beyond simply delivering the day-to-day; you can find out more about some of the new initiatives and impressive research that our staff have been a part of on page 2.

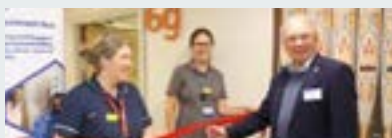
Finally, I want to thank you for your continued support and feedback; together we can make Bath and the surrounding area one of the healthiest places to live and work.

Best wishes,  
John Palmer

Managing Director of Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust



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An update on our performance



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Cancer care closer to home



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Celebrating a special anniversary

## Bringing cancer care to the community

People in Frome and the surrounding area can now access cancer treatment closer to home, following the opening of an RUH-run satellite clinic.

The new Systemic Anti-Cancer Treatment Centre (SACT) at Frome Medical Centre has already treated hundreds of patients since it opened earlier this year. SACT is the use of drugs to treat or control cancer, which includes chemotherapy, immunotherapy, hormonal therapy and targeted therapy.

Patients still received their initial treatment at the RUH's Medlock Unit at the Dyson Cancer Centre. Suitable patients can then continue their therapy in Frome, with the same team of nurses from the Medlock Unit.



Officially opening the new centre

We are grateful to the Bath Cancer Unit Support Group, who fundraised for this service. The support group also received a generous grant from the Richard Oatley Foundation.



## Making a splash

The RUH Stoma Therapy team is supporting its patients to rebuild confidence in the water following life-changing surgery, by putting on free monthly Water Confidence sessions in the RUH's outdoor community swimming pool.

The aim of providing this safe, private setting and expert emotional and practical guidance is to help people living with a stoma return to activities they may have felt anxious about. Participants have gone on to swim independently, return to the beach and one even shared how she had flown on a plane for the first time since having their surgery a decade earlier. You can see coverage of the story of BBC Points West [on Facebook](#).



## Pioneering research

The RUH has supported a University of Oxford-led study that could lead to earlier diagnosis of endometriosis and reduce the need for diagnostic surgery.

All 19 study participants had their scans at the RUH, and RUH staff designed, developed and reviewed the study scans (alongside other radiologists) and advised on using the RUH's specialist SPECT-CT scanner. The findings were very positive, marking an important first step towards reducing delays in diagnosis. This is early stage research and the treatment is not currently available.

[Find out more on our website.](#)

# Improvement recognised, but work continues

The RUH has been named as the most improved Trust in the South West in the latest National Oversight Framework (NOF) figures, which were published in June.

The figures reflect performance for quarter four of the 2025/6 financial year, and show significant progress across a range of services. Since 2025, the RUH has climbed more than 30 places to 82nd out of 134 Trusts nationally.

## Key improvements include:

- 69.1% of patients receiving treatment within 18 weeks of referrals, equating to around 4,200 more patients being treated over the past year. By May 2026, this had further improved to 71.1%, highlighting that this improvement had been sustained.
- Fewer than 1% of patients waiting 52 weeks or more for treatment
- Average ambulance handover times reducing by around 30 minutes to 44.9 minutes (this is the amount of time it takes to be seen in hospital after arrival via ambulance)
- 63% of patients attending the Emergency Department being seen and treated within four hours

These improvements have been a huge team effort. They were supported by Sulis Hospital, the RUH's partner and an independent hospital, which provides additional diagnostic services and orthopaedic operations for NHS patients.

This progress comes alongside continued work to improve our urgent and emergency care services. In May, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) published its report following an unannounced inspection of the Trust's Urgent and Emergency Care service in October 2025. The overall rating for the report reflects the significant demand and pressure that the RUH was experiencing at the time of inspection.



Since the inspection, further improvements have been made, including increased senior clinical cover and strengthened security. In the last NOF results, the RUH has also been recognised as being among the most improved Emergency Departments for four-hour performance at the end of 2025/26.

NHS England has also acknowledged the challenges with the current estate. This will enable the Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC) to operate more efficiently. A new modular UTC is expected to be in place by the end of 2026, alongside a full development of the Emergency Department front door in the future.

**“ Although there is still more work to do, our current position gives us a strong foundation to go further. I would like to thank our staff, who have worked tremendously hard to deliver these results. ”**

**John Palmer**  
Managing Director



## Staff news and celebrations



### New Chair for BSW Hospitals Group

The RUH is part of BSW Hospitals Group, a formal partnership between the Trust, Great Western Hospitals, Swindon and Salisbury Foundation Trust. We came together in May 2025 with a shared ambition to work together to make a positive difference. This includes combining our skills, resources and experience to effectively tackle the challenges we all face, and to strengthen our services. There is more information [on our website](#), and we will also share more as the Group develops.

In April, we appointed Paul von der Heyde as Group Chair. We held the first Group Board in July, when we also introduced one set of Non-Executive Directors (NEDs) for all three Trusts. [Read more about our NEDs.](#)



### RUH leadership changes

The RUH's Executive team has also seen changes recently. Toni Lynch, former Chief Nursing Officer, retired in June, and we are pleased to welcome Jason Lugg as her successor. Jason previously held the role of the Deputy Chief Nursing Officer at the RUH since 2023. [Find out more about Jason.](#)

At the same time, Interim Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Kheelna Bavalia returned to her substantive role with NHS England's South West regional team. Rebecca Maxwell will take up the permanent role in August, joining us from University Hospitals Bristol and Weston NHS Foundation Trust where she is currently Interim CMO. Until then, the role is being performed by Dr Emma-Kate Reed.

We wish Toni and Kheelna very well and thank them for their many and valued contributions to the RUH.



### A special 25th birthday

In May, staff threw a surprise party to celebrate 25 years of the Community Neonatal Outreach Service, which has supported thousands of babies cared for in the RUH's neonatal unit (currently around 90 each year). Guest of honour was Cath Ould, Neonatal Community Sister, who has been there since the service launched

The service provides practical and emotional care and support to babies that have been looked after in the Dyson Centre for Neonatal Care, and who still need additional support in the first few weeks or months at home.

Maria, from Midsomer Norton, who had support with their daughter Alisha, said: "They are so much more than a service to us. They've become like family, and we will always be grateful for everything they've done."

## **RUHX is the official charity of the RUH Bath. We work closely together to help patients to live healthier and happier lives in Bath and beyond.**



Some of their focuses so far in 2026 include:

- The 20th anniversary 'Walk of Life' in May saw 280 participants take to the Kennet & Avon canal, walking either 26.2, 16 or 10 miles; many others joined in remotely. Together they have raised over £60,000.
- Fundraising continues for a £4million PET-CT scanner, which will support faster diagnosis, research and treatment planning for Cancer, Alzheimer's Disease, Cardiac, Rheumatic and Neurological Disease patients. Visit the RUHX website to learn more and hear about the difference this technology made to patients.
- Over the past six months, fundraising has taken place to help create a very special space: a Children's Ward de-escalation room – a calm, quiet room that will include soft furnishings, low stimulation lighting, and sensory-friendly features.

We know how powerful this kind of space can be to help support children facing mental health challenges. The room is on track to be ready this summer.



Celebrations at the Walk of Life finish line

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## **The Friends of the RUH recruits volunteers and raises funds to provide essential facilities, services and equipment for patients.**



Last financial year, the Friends made £400,000 available to the RUH. This supported areas such as wheelchairs for safer and more dignified patient transport; an ultrasound machine in the Emergency Department, aiding faster bedside diagnosis; and reclining and lay-flat chairs, providing respite and comfort for families during longer hospital visits. The 'Shop Trolley' has also been reintroduced, making it easier for patients on wards to buy essential and comforting items.

The charity also provided the Soundbite Music Programme, a series of public lunchtime concerts and a Musician in Residence, who engages with patients and provides live music on wards. Feedback shows that this music has a positive effect on mood, comfort and recovery.

In 2025, volunteer numbers grew to 238 from 198 the year before. These volunteers contributed over 23,900 hours during the year, up from 21,158 – a reflection of their generosity and commitment.



We are pleased to have reintroduced the much-loved shop trolley



## Become a volunteer

Our much-valued volunteers are valued members of the RUH team. They provide practical and emotional support in wards and departments, work in the shop and Friends Café at B18, maintain our beautiful gardens, work behind the scenes to keep the hospital running smoothly, and much more.

We are grateful to have more volunteers giving more hours than ever before, but there are always more roles to fill. If you're interested in joining us, take a look at the [Friends of the RUH website](#). We look forward to meeting you.



## Work for us

Do you want to work in a role where you make a difference to patients, staff and in the wider community every day?

We have vacancies across all areas of the Trust, in both clinical and non-clinical roles. You can see all current opportunities [on our website](#).

You can also follow our careers team [on Facebook](#).

## Keep in touch



RUH Bath



@RUH Bath



Royal United Hospitals Bath  
NHS Foundation Trust



[www.ruh.nhs.uk](http://www.ruh.nhs.uk)

## Listen along

Run by volunteers, **Bath Sound** is the official hospital radio of the RUH.

You can tune in from home or while in hospital. Find out more and listen along [on their website](#).

## Become a Governor

Would you like to make a difference in local healthcare? On Monday 10 August, any existing member of the RUH will have the opportunity to nominate yourself to stand as a Public Governor.

Our Council of Governors act as a link between the RUH and the communities we serve, helping ensure local views are heard and reflected in discussions with the Board of Directors.

Governors do not manage day-to-day operations. Instead, they hold the Board to account for the RUH's performance and contribute to its future development.

Please look out for an email from 10 August with more information about how to submit a nomination.

For more information on the role of Governors, including how to get in touch with them with any feedback, please [see our website](#).