

STAFF STORIES

Mushtaq Ahmed

Chief of Surgery and Consultant Orthopaedic surgeon Mushtaq Ahmed has been with the Trust here in Dudley for 25 years. Here he tells us more about the beginning of his career and the amazing journey of trauma and orthopaedic services at The Dudley Group and what his vital role in the NHS has taught him.



Photo taken prior to Covid-19

When did you first start working in the NHS?

I joined the NHS in January 1991 as a trainee registrar in Trauma and Orthopaedics on the Edinburgh rotation.

Can you talk me through your different roles during your time with the NHS and explain a little about each one?

From 1991 – 1996 I was a trainee registrar which included a period of senior registrar at the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary. I also spent my last year in Liverpool to do my Masters Degree and the FRCS Orth exam and took this in the early years of the introduction of the exit examination.

During my last year in Liverpool, I applied for an advertised post in Dudley to the surprise of my Scottish trainers who had not heard of the Black Country! I liked the area when I came for a visit and started as a consultant in December 1996.

When I joined as a junior consultant, I discovered the department to be in a crisis-situation as all the senior colleagues had moved to working part-time, with just 2 substantive colleagues to manage the department including on-call with locum support. The next 6 years were challenging in delivering the Trauma and Orthopaedic services with minimum resources.

I took on the Clinical service lead role in the first few years of appointment and increased the staff numbers to ensure the service was safe and effective. In 2004 I took on the clinical director role and we saw a real increase in workforce in the department and I did that role successfully for 10 years. That was a time when I think the department changed a lot as we had the new hospital built and eventually everything moved here, which was a very exciting time in terms of change and recruiting new colleagues into the department. We have now changed the name of the department to Midlands Orthopaedic Centre and are excited about the future.

Is there anything you have been particularly proud of during your time?

I feel privileged to have contributed to turning round a once struggling department into what is now considered to be amongst one of the best departments in the Trust and is viewed as such in the region as well. I am proud to have been part of this journey.

I am also proud of my clinical work being one of few spinal surgeons who provide a spinal service in a District General hospital setting. That challenge of being a single handed spinal orthopaedic surgeon

combined with my management role has been a real challenge in terms of trying to balance the two roles.

The department is highly sought after by trainees in the region and this is a credit to a great team of colleagues in the department. We also appointed the first Orthopaedic consultant nurse in the department when this was a new concept to improve research, teaching, and training.

How has the NHS changed since you first started?

The biggest changes in the NHS have been brought about by significant improvements in treatments coupled with an ageing population. There is an ever-increasing number of patients with complex medical problems which we are managing by novel treatments. As a surgeon it is exciting to be able to perform complex procedures through minimally invasive techniques which 30 years ago would not have been possible. Our emergency workload has increased and this is reflected across the surgical specialities.

Is there anything you would say to people thinking of joining the NHS?

I am passionate and committed to the NHS and I always say that whether you work in comms, admin, on the wards as a nurse, volunteer or medic there is no better job than working for the NHS and contributing to improving the lives of our patients. This is such amazing work everyone does and what could be better than helping people? The satisfaction one gets from treating someone is beyond description.

If you could sum up the NHS in one sentence what would it be?

An amazing one of its kind organisation delivering an incredible service 24/7 and I feel so privileged to be part of it.