

STAFF STORIES

Elaine Tibbetts

Elaine has been with the Trust here in Dudley for 50 years and during that time has seen many changes across the NHS. She tells us a little bit about her journey and why she misses getting caught in the snow.



When did you first start working in the NHS?

I started working in the NHS straight out of school when I joined the Nursing Cadets at the age of 16. My dad wanted me to work in the local bank but that wasn't for me and I had been in the St John Ambulance for a few years and knew how to put the odd sling on so I thought 'let's try nursing' and I am still here 50 years later!

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

I would describe it as 'wonderfully boring' given that I have been in the same role since the 70's but it has been a great experience.

I took my three years SRN (State Registered Nursing) training before working in Wordsley at the Female Orthopaedic Clinic for two years.

Since then and for the last 43 years I have worked in a community setting and this has taken me all around the borough with roles in Brierley Hill, Kingswinford and Stourbridge before I settled in Wychbury which is where I stayed for 25 years.

It was only when I supported the team in Dudley and Netherton in 2019 and I gelled with them so much that I decided after a quarter of a century to move over and I have been there since.

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

I have always been told that I am a good and fair manager and that I know how to support my staff. I can't think of anything more important than valuing the people you are in charge of, so that is something that really makes me proud.

How has the NHS changed since you first started?

When I started my career, you knew your patients in the community so well, they all felt like family. Often you would give them your home phone number as there was no 24/7 helpline to call and if the phone rang you would go round and see them straight away.

I also remember that in the old days in bad weather sometimes you got snowed in and your partner would have to give you a lift to see a patient. You would both go in and end up all having a cuppa together and chatting. Obviously times have changed but there was something very special about those days.

Also, because culture and society have transformed so much I think the way patients view their care has changed. Back when I started, patients were really appreciative that you had helped them and gone to visit them. You very rarely got shouted at and there were very few complaints. I think perhaps this has changed now and patients expectations on nurses are totally different now.

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

It is still a wonderful free provision from cradle to grave.