

Trust Strategy 2025 – 2028



The Dudley Group
NHS Foundation Trust



⊕ Our Patients ⊕ Our People ⊕ Our Place

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 **Our Patients**

 **Our People**

 **Our Place**

Welcome

Welcome to this strategy of The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust.

When our previous strategy was written in 2021, we were still managing the COVID-19 pandemic but despite this, our talented, committed and dedicated staff have made some remarkable achievements across our Trust.

We have seen major investments in our acute assessment units with the opening of a modular building at Russells Hall and more diagnostic services available in the community which are proving very popular. Recent inspections of some of our services by the Care Quality Commission have demonstrated the improvements we have been able to make.

We know that as a result of the disruption caused by the pandemic, our waiting times have not recovered to where they were, and too many patients wait too long for investigations and treatment. We are committed to working together to meet the constitutional targets set by the government for the NHS and to do this equitably across the different communities we serve.

With the forthcoming 10-year health plan, we know that much more will be expected of us over the coming years. This strategy demonstrates what we intend to do to meet these new expectations on the NHS and how we will work together with our partners in Dudley and across the Black Country to achieve this. We will remain rooted in Dudley, but as part of an emerging group model with Sandwell & West Birmingham Trust, we will develop this partnership to deliver benefits for our patients.

Our actions will continue to be driven by our values – **care, respect and responsibility**.

We are excited by the opportunities for The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust – we invite you to join us on this next stage of our journey so that the people of Dudley may benefit from excellent healthcare

Introduction

When our previous strategy was published in September 2021, the world was still dealing with the immediate aftereffects of the global pandemic. Nearly four years on, the effects are still being felt across global health systems. Within the NHS, waiting times increased and have struggled to return to pre-COVID levels and many have questioned why increased funding has not always led to corresponding increases in activity levels. The foundations for greater collaboration which were being laid in 2021, have resulted in new organisational structures and ways of working. As predicted, the Trust is now working much more closely with neighbouring trusts in the Black Country and with partners such as primary care, Dudley Council and voluntary organisations in Dudley.

This Trust strategy 2025 – 2028 re-visits what we set out to do in 2021 and celebrates what we have been able to achieve, whilst looking ahead to what is yet to be done. We have deliberately chosen to set the time frame of this strategy to align with the current parliament.

This strategy sets out our vision, values and objectives and embeds how we ensure that we are an inclusive organisation, for staff, patients, families and local communities. It recognises the significant role that The Dudley Group can play as an anchor institution, and the benefits this can bring to the local economy and, in turn, to local people.

This strategy gives us a framework for how we will shape our future as an organisation, and best serve our patients, staff and communities..

“This strategy sets out our vision, values and objectives and embeds how we ensure that we are an inclusive organisation, for staff, patients, families and local communities.”



About The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust

The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust (DGFT) provides acute and community services to the population of Dudley and to other parts of the Black Country, west Birmingham, south Staffordshire and north Worcestershire. Since October 2024, we have taken on responsibility for two GP practices and the provision of support to primary care across Dudley covering the work of GP practices and the six primary care networks. We provide some commissioning functions on behalf of the Integrated Care Board. We provide a range of specialist services, some of which are accessed by patients from across the UK. These include vascular surgery, endoscopic procedures, stem cell transplants and specialist genitourinary reconstruction. Our staff are our greatest asset. We have a workforce of over 6,000 whole time equivalent (WTE) staff making us the second largest employer in Dudley. Russells Hall Hospital has more than 650 beds, including intensive care beds and neonatal cots. The hospital provides secondary and tertiary services such as maternity, critical care and outpatients, an Emergency Department and a new modular building which opened in November 2021 housing the acute medical unit. The Guest Outpatient Centre in Dudley and Corbett Outpatient Centre in Stourbridge provide a range of outpatient and day case services. We have expanded the number and range of diagnostics tests carried out as a result of becoming a community diagnostic centre. We currently provide a full range of community services including adult community nursing, end of life care, podiatry, therapies and outpatient services in people's homes and from a range of community venues across the borough.

We are a designated teaching hospital of the universities of Birmingham, Aston, Worcester and St Georges, Grenada with up to nearly 200 undergraduate medical students undertaking placements with us each year. We provide placements for nurses, midwives, allied health professionals and technicians from local universities. We have an active research team.

The Trust has not had its overall rating updated by the Care Quality Commission since an inspection was carried out in February 2019. Three services were re-inspected in 2024, leading to significant improvements. Both maternity and services for children and young people have been rated as 'good', a testament to our continuous efforts. However, urgent and emergency services remain 'requires improvement' but did show improvements in two domains. Overall, the Trust remains 'requires improvement' with a rating of 'good' for effectiveness and caring and 'inadequate' for safety. Given the hard work our staff have done to improve services since the last trust inspection, the Trust is actively working towards a re-inspection soon to improve the overall ratings our above inspections provided.

Patient feedback is reviewed regularly. The latest national inpatient survey 2023 showed that the Trust was performing 'worse' than average for 4 questions in comparison to 14 in 2022. The overall patient experience score for the Trust improved from 7.8 in 2022 to 8.1 in 2023. There has been an improvement in overall performance banding with all section scores sitting within the expected range in 2023 in comparison to the 2022 survey where a number of sections were performing 'worse' or 'somewhat worse' in comparison to other trusts nationally.



The National Cancer Patient Experience survey 2023 demonstrates an improved picture in comparison to the previous survey. Questions in the 'Hospital Care' and 'Your Treatment' section have seen the biggest improvement since the 2022 survey around communication and controlling pain. There has been a decrease in the number of scores that fall below the expected range from 25 in 2022 to 12 in 2023.

We received 77,476 pieces of feedback in 2024/25 with 3,985 compliments. The proportion of patients rating their overall experience of care and treatment for the Trust overall as 'very good/good' was 83%.

The Dudley Group is a combined acute and community trust and is classified by NHS England as a medium acute trust. Income comes mainly from our commissioners (local Integrated Care Boards and NHS England for certain specialised services) but the Trust also earns income from the training of healthcare professionals and from research.

Following the decision by NHS England to dissolve Dudley Integrated Health and Care (DIHC) NHS Trust, many of the services provided by them have been transferred to The Dudley Group meaning that we are now responsible for two local GP practices (Chapel Street and High Oak with a combined list size of 6,800), the provision of support services to primary care and some commissioning functions on behalf of the Integrated Care Board.

In 2024/25, the trust spent £638.3m of which £39.4m related directly to primary care and community services.

Since 1st September 2022 we have shared a chair with Sandwell & West Birmingham Trust and since 1st January 2025 we now share a chief executive officer. Since then, other senior leadership roles have been filled that cover both whilst retaining their separate organisational identities.

Our context

The care that we provide and the way that we provide it will continue to be shaped by the national, regional and local factors that impact on us. We know that circumstances are going to change and the expectations on us will be different from what they are today. The following section describes the main things that, to the best of our knowledge, will influence the Trust over the next three to four years.

“The proportion of patients rating their overall experience of care and treatment for the Trust overall as 'very good/good' was 83%.”



About Dudley and the Black Country

It is important that we understand the diverse needs and expectations of the local population. Using intelligence from Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council and other published data, we have been able to summarise the health status of the communities we serve and how this is predicted to change.

We have used tools which provide us with in-depth demographic, health and socio-economic profile of the communities living in Dudley Borough. This has helped us better understand the people we serve and the wide variation in our communities.

About Dudley:

- ▶ The population of the Dudley borough was estimated to be 323,000 (in 2023), with 66,000 people aged over 65 years.¹
- ▶ Life expectancy for men in the most deprived areas of Dudley is 9.2 years lower than in the least deprived areas, 8.6 years lower for women.² Life expectancy and healthy life expectancy have been decreasing in recent years.
- ▶ Almost a third (28.6%) of the Dudley population live in areas amongst the 20 per cent most deprived in England.³
- ▶ Those living in Dudley in bad or very bad health (6.0%) are higher in proportion compared to the England average (5.2%).⁴
- ▶ 84.8% of Dudley's population are white⁵ and the age structure is similar to England, but older compared to other parts of the West Midlands.⁶
- ▶ The rate of current smokers is similar to England and slightly lower than the West Midlands.⁷
- ▶ At 79.7% the employment rate is the highest in the Black Country with the top three employment sectors being health, retail and education.⁸
- ▶ 95.6% of the Dudley population aged 3 and over have English as their first or preferred language. The next most prevalent preferred languages are Urdu with 0.8% of the population, Panjabi with 0.7% and Polish with 0.5%.⁹



How is this expected to change?

The number of elderly people will continue to rise. The number of people aged 75 and over in Dudley is expected to increase by over 4,000 (13%) by 2032. Births are expected to show a decreasing trend.¹⁰

There will be more people living with multiple, complex and long-term health conditions.¹¹

Local people tell us that they are particularly concerned about access to GP services¹². Growing up in Dudley¹³ tell us that families and young people with special educational needs experience loneliness and isolation and do not know where to find information. Many struggle with mental health needs.

Whilst many of the people we serve are digitally literate, we know that there are parts of the population that struggle

to access on-line services through lack of access to suitable technology.

It is clear that there are significant inequalities faced by the people of Dudley, both between Dudley and the rest of England and within the borough. As a major employer and provider of health care services, we recognise the major role we must play to address these inequalities.

Our context continues to change

Following the general election in July 2024, the new government commissioned Lord Darzi to conduct an independent investigation of the NHS in England. Published in September 2024, the report concluded that the NHS is in critical condition but with vital signs that are strong. The report identified the major themes for the forthcoming 10-year health plan which is expected to be published in 2025:

- ▶ Re-engage staff and re-empower patients
- ▶ Lock in the shift of care closer to home by hardwiring financial flows
- ▶ Simplify and innovate care delivery for a neighbourhood NHS
- ▶ Drive productivity in hospitals
- ▶ Tilt towards technology
- ▶ Contribute to the nation's prosperity
- ▶ Reform to make the structure deliver

The plan will be developed with a focus on three major shifts in the way healthcare is delivered:

- ▶ Hospital to community: plans for neighbourhood health services with care closer to home
- ▶ Analogue to digital: greater use of the NHS App and sharing data more easily
- ▶ Sickness to prevention: patients with long-term conditions better able to manage their own health including through the use of wearable technology

The 10-year health plan is expected to build on the direction set out in the NHS Long Term Plan (NHS England 2019) with its aim of boosting 'out of hospital' care and integrating primary and community services and reducing pressure on emergency hospital services.

Following the Health and Care Act 2022, integrated care boards have been established as the local 'headquarters' of the NHS across England supported by integrated care partnerships involving a wider range of stakeholders including local councils, education providers and the voluntary sector. When the last strategy was written, these components of system working were only just emerging. Three years on, they are established and starting to deliver.

We remain an NHS Foundation Trust, delivering services for the people of Dudley and surrounding area and remaining accountable to them through our governors and members. We are still responsible for the quality of services and the way in which we use our resources. But we have an important role in integrating services in our 'place' (Dudley) and our 'system' (The Black Country) and take responsibility for ensuring that services across organisations are sustainable and of the highest quality.

An NHS Long Term Workforce Plan was published in June 2023 which set out a path for increasing the size of the NHS workforce to meet increasing demand. This will be updated following publication of the 10-year health plan.



Our system

The Trust is now a key partner within the [Black Country Integrated Care System](#) and our activities need to support the delivery of both the [Black Country Integrated Care Strategy](#) and the [Joint Forward Plan](#) published by [Black Country Integrated Care Board](#). Like many other systems, The Black Country Integrated Care System faces significant challenges including the need for services to be financially sustainable. The system has developed an operating model which sets out how the different parts of the system will work in order to bring about the purposes of the ICS:

- ▶ improve outcomes in population health and healthcare
- ▶ tackle inequalities in outcomes, experience and access
- ▶ enhance productivity and value for money
- ▶ help the NHS support broader social and economic development.

This will include delegation of authority to provider collaboratives and place-based partnerships who will over time become responsible for the commissioning and delivery of services.

The Trust is part of the [Black Country Provider Collaborative](#), where we join with colleagues from [Sandwell & West Birmingham Trust](#), [The Royal Wolverhampton Trust](#) and [Walsall Healthcare Trust](#) to 'provide better, faster and safer care to the population of the Black Country'. Through our collective efforts, we have been able to establish specialist skin cancer surgery (Mohs) within the Black Country and introduce robotic surgery to both Russells Hall Hospital and Sandwell health campus in addition to New Cross Hospital. This is expected to lead to the relocation and consolidation

of specialist urology services across The Black Country making the best use of precious resources and improving outcomes for patients. The collaborative supports clinical networks which are standardising care and reducing variation where it cannot be clinically justified.

The collaborative not only focuses on clinical improvements. There is opportunity to look at our 'back office' functions to ensure that these are delivered in as efficient a way as possible. The collaborative is currently working on the creation of a single payroll function and standardising mandatory training with plans for other projects in development.

One of the most significant changes to hospital services locally has been the opening of the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital (MMUH), managed by Sandwell & West Birmingham NHS Trust in October 2024. The facility replaces many of the inpatient services previously located at Sandwell General and City Hospitals. We will work closely with Sandwell & West Birmingham Trust and the ICB to monitor the impact of this change, particularly for emergency care following the closure of the Emergency Department at Sandwell General Hospital.

To meet the challenges being faced by primary care both locally and within the Black Country, the ICB has published a draft strategy on the future of primary care.¹⁴ This emphasises the need for primary care to focus more on the prevention of ill health with improved access to unplanned care in general practice making better use of community pharmacy. The future direction of primary care development will obviously impact the two practices that have now transferred to the Trust.

“...we have been able to establish specialist skin cancer surgery (Mohs) within the Black Country and introduce robotic surgery to both Russells Hall Hospital and Sandwell health campus in addition to New Cross Hospital.”



Our place

All organisations are expected to work towards better integration of services: integrating primary health care and hospital services, physical and mental health, health and social care. Within Dudley, we play our part in the [Dudley Health & Care Partnership](#) – one of four place-based partnerships in the Black Country.

The Partnership has continued to build trust and relationships within Dudley. Community Partnership Teams have been established in all primary care networks consisting of professionals from different organisations working together to support people with long-term conditions. Pathways have been redesigned to make the mission of '**community where possible, hospital when necessary**' a reality¹⁵. Recent achievements include increased use of the falls pickup service which has supported more people to remain in the community and encouraging results from the Community Partnership teams which shows a reduction in the average number of GP attendances and hospital admissions for those supported by the teams.

The Dudley Health & Wellbeing Board provides leadership for Dudley's health and care system. Using local evidence, it works to identify the needs of local residents, promote high quality, safe and joined-up services and tackle health inequalities across the borough. [The Health and Wellbeing Strategy \(2023 – 2028\)](#) is about how to make Dudley a place where everyone can live 'longer, safer and healthier lives'. The strategy is focussing on three goals:

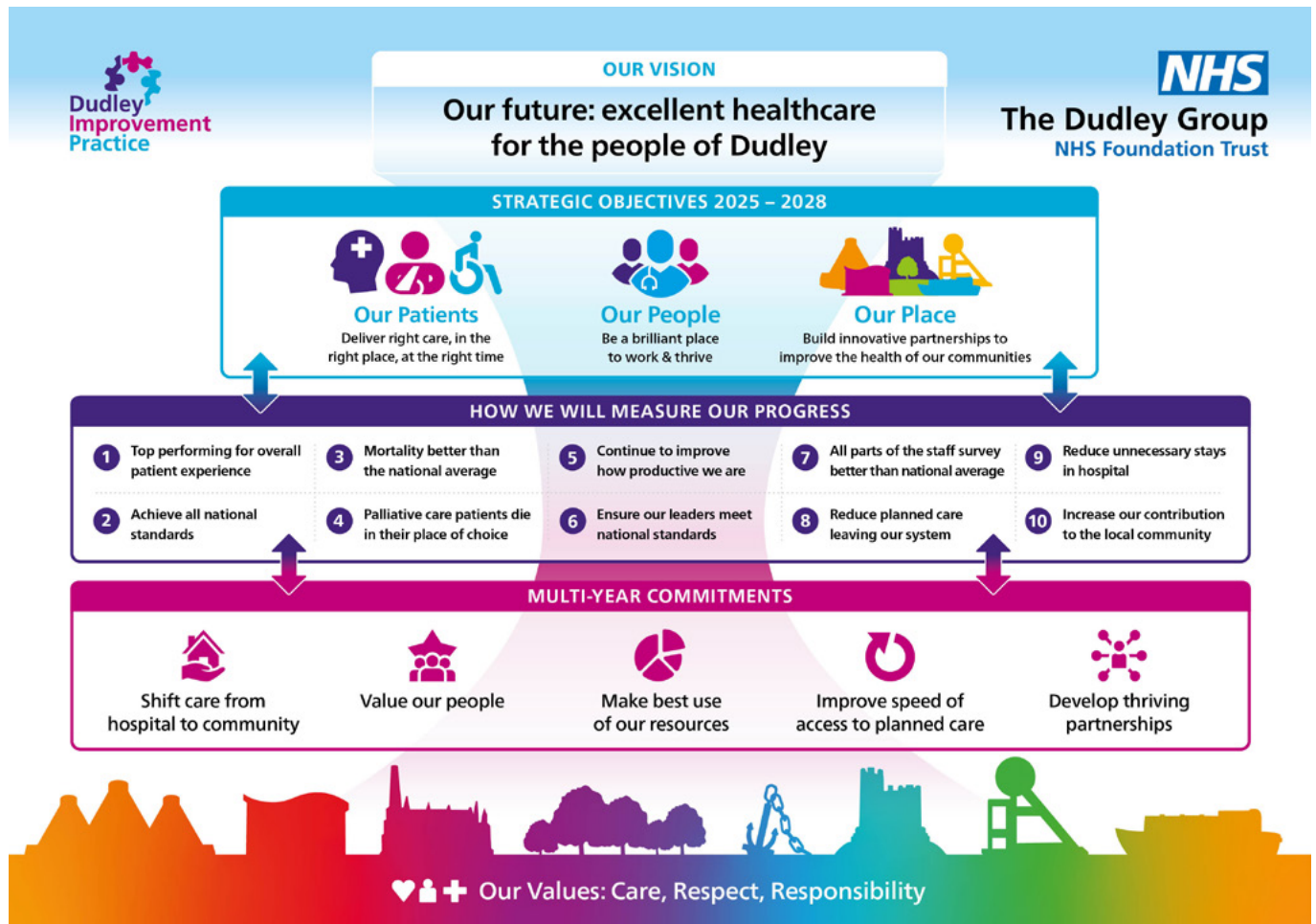
1. Children are ready to learn and ready for school
2. Fewer people die from circulatory disease
3. More women are screened for breast cancer

We clearly have a role to play in achieving these goals and the steps we plan to take are set out later in this document.

Partners are committed to working together to take on responsibility for commissioning of some services across Dudley as part of the operating model of the ICS.



Strategic framework



Our vision

Our new vision is designed to be simple. It combines our desire to deliver excellent care recognising that this is primarily for the people of Dudley.

Our strategic objectives

We have identified three strategic objectives, the pursuit of which will guide all that we do. For each of these, we have summarised the key achievements since the last strategy was introduced and what we want to achieve by 2028.

Our values

Our values support our vision and define how the Trust and every member of staff will work to deliver the best care possible. We adopted our current values in 2015 and since then have been increasingly embedded into our local processes. They form part of the recruitment process, are included in annual reviews and underpin our approach to improvement through the Dudley Improvement Practice. We believe that these values remain relevant to us in this next phase of our journey.

Care - we provide safe, quality healthcare for every person – every time

Respect - we show respect for our patients, our visitors and each other – at all times

Responsibility - we take responsibility for everything we do – every day



Deliver right care, in the right place, at the right time

What we have done since 2021

- ▶ Received a CQC rating of 'good' for maternity and children's services
- ▶ Implemented the Patient Safety Incident & Reporting Framework
- ▶ Introduced robotic surgery to improve outcomes for patients
- ▶ Opened a hybrid theatre to improve the quality of care provided to vascular patients
- ▶ Opened the Rainbow Unit housing the acute medical unit and expanded the space for Same Day Emergency Care and the range of services available
- ▶ Implemented the Community Diagnostic Centre with more services available in community locations
- ▶ Provided community midwifery services in the Family Hubs alongside health visiting and local authority services

What we want to do by 2028

- ▶ Achieve a rating of at least 'good' for all of the services inspected by CQC
- ▶ Develop an elective hub away from Russells Hall Hospital for the majority of our inpatient elective surgery
- ▶ Expand our provision of virtual wards, reducing the need for admission to hospital
- ▶ Provide as many outpatient services as possible in suitable community locations preventing the need to come to hospital
- ▶ Develop a new model for the care of older, frail people with more services available in people's homes

Case Study

Family Hubs

Our model of family hubs demonstrates innovation in neighbourhood health and care services. Specialist skills are pooled together in calm safe spaces in the community that provide one-stop access for families.

In 2022 Dudley borough was allocated £3.7 million of Family Hub/Start for Life national funding to provide a coordinated and accessible "front door" for families. One element of the Dudley offer was the recruitment of 15 Family Hub Practitioners, 5 each from maternity, health visiting and children's services.

By the trust offering midwife antenatal and postnatal appointments at the Hubs, families were not only able to access services closer to home, but they were also introduced to the wide range of multiagency and voluntary sector support, at a time proven to be when parents are most likely to make behaviour changes. This supports our system wide priority to give Dudley's infants the best start in life.

Family feedback shows that the offer of universal services has changed public opinion of the Hubs to a family friendly space offering a one-stop shop for their needs. In future the trust will host 3 Family Hub Practitioners, supported by a specialist midwife to target their support to infants under 2 to achieve the health and wellbeing goal for children to be ready to learn.

“ Family feedback shows that the offer of universal services has changed public opinion of the Hubs to a family friendly space offering a one-stop shop for their needs. ”



Be a brilliant place to work

What we have done since 2021

- ▶ Reduced the vacancy rate from 13% to less than 7%
- ▶ Increased the response rate for the staff survey and achieved results that are now similar to the England average
- ▶ Reviewed nursing allocations to ensure safe staffing levels
- ▶ Increased the staff wellbeing offer and established a network of wellbeing champions across the organisation
- ▶ To the end of 2024, trained 5,500 staff in improvement methodologies, started a community of improvement practice and asked all staff to identify an improvement project as part of their objectives
- ▶ Improved appraisal process and increased completion rate from 68% in 2022 to 90% in 2024

What we want to do by 2028

- ▶ Be the local employer of choice – supporting people to get into work, develop and progress
- ▶ Continue to expand the wellbeing offer to staff with more people accessing support for mental health and physiotherapy for musculo-skeletal problems. This is expected to reduce sickness absence
- ▶ Expand the number and range of wellbeing champions with at least one active champion for each service
- ▶ Sustain and expand membership of individual diversity networks
- ▶ Ensure that the behaviour framework and Trust values translate into staff lived experiences
- ▶ Ensure that staff have a voice that counts and feel empowered to speak up about any concerns that they might have and feel confident that action will be taken
- ▶ Raise the profile of the anti-discrimination agenda through our policies and practices
- ▶ Embed the community of improvement practice to provide an in-house improvement consultancy
- ▶ Improvement co-designed with people with lived experience
- ▶ Standardised management systems embedded across the organisation and partner trusts in the Black Country

Case Study

In May 2022, the trust launched a programme to recruit wellbeing champions. Starting with 40 this has now grown to approximately 140 across the organisation. Champions are often already in roles that lend themselves to being supportive to staff, and the champion role helps to develop

this further by ensuring the champions are up to date with the support offer and how best to approach conversations with staff. The champions are networked through regular meetings and a teams channel where they can share ideas. As a result of introducing the champion role:

- ▶ Wellbeing boards have been set up in departments where information and resources can be shared
- ▶ Local drop-in sessions covering topics such as fitness, team building, financial wellbeing
- ▶ Staff now have a 'go to' person they can have a conversation with about their wellbeing
- ▶ Training in mental health first aid has been provided

We have seen a positive increase in our wellbeing results as measured in the annual staff survey. As the champion role continues to embed across the organisation, we expect this to continue.



Build innovative partnerships to improve the health of our communities

What we have done since 2021

- ▶ Agreed principles of working together with the other acute and community trusts in the Black Country through the Black Country Provider Collaborative. As an example, this has established a service for specialist skin cancer surgery (Mohs) by working with Royal Wolverhampton and Walsall trusts
- ▶ Agreed 'principles for collaboration and partnership' between primary and secondary care and played a key role in Community Partnership Teams (CPTs) supporting people with long-term conditions
- ▶ Became the host of the Dudley health & care partnership
- ▶ Started alcohol and tobacco teams to support patients with alcohol and tobacco dependency
- ▶ Supported the 'Kickstart' employment programme and started a local pre-employment programme with Dudley Council to support people into work (ICan)
- ▶ Forged closer link with local schools and offered regular 'Behind the scenes' tours for local secondary students to promote the range of careers available in the NHS
- ▶ Joined the lung cancer screening programme to detect lung cancer earlier and improve chances of recovery

What we want to do by 2028

- ▶ Provide specialist vascular services to the whole population of the Black Country
- ▶ Further develop the Community Partnership Teams (CPTs) into the neighbourhood teams envisaged in the 10-year health plan by identifying those most at risk and preventing illness
- ▶ Work with partners in Dudley including Dudley College and University of Worcester to make Health Innovation Dudley, the new health and care campus, a resounding success
- ▶ Support the development of primary care in Dudley as part of the primary care transformation in the Black Country
- ▶ Front-line clinical staff to have more time and capacity to support patients by 'Making every contact count' to prevent illness and address health inequalities
- ▶ Develop a care navigation centre for Dudley health and care services
- ▶ Support the earlier detection of cancer through provision of responsive and culturally-appropriate screening services for breast, lung and colorectal cancers
- ▶ Work with partners to make the Family Hubs in Dudley sustainable by co-locating appropriate womens and childrens services alongside preventive health and local authority services
- ▶ Develop a much closer partnership with Sandwell & West Birmingham Trust, working together to harness the strengths of both trusts whilst retaining individual organisational identities
- ▶ Realise the benefits to our organisation of having university trust status, developing closer relationships with Aston University and increasing the amount of research conducted within the trust

Case Study

ICan is an employment partnership with a difference. Forged as a way of working differently, we have been working with Dudley Council to deliver access to employment, changes to make our recruitment practices more inclusive and developing ways of working in partnership that help us learn and deliver good employment for those furthest from jobs.

What we've done: Working together with some additional external funding (Combined Authority, Commonwealth Games Legacy), we have provided supported paid work experience placements to give candidates genuine work experience - improving their chances of work in the future and changing their thoughts about what it is like to work for

Dudley Group or the Council. Many of our work experience candidates have gone on to get jobs with the Trust. We also created a direct entry training route into clinical support worker jobs.

The key elements of the programme were working together to build how we support people into work, their first steps on the programme and routes into permanent roles. We work and learn together - so our programme has developed over time (and continues to do so). We've managed to create opportunities for local residents to get into work, address barriers for people with disabilities and support people with care experience to get ahead.

Our assurance metrics

We will monitor our progress against delivering the strategic objectives in this strategy through a small number of measures. In designing these measures, we have adopted the approach used by the Dudley Improvement Practice, namely that our measures should reflect four domains: **delivery, quality, cost and morale**.



Delivery

- ▶ Achieve all national standards
- ▶ Reduce planned care leaving our system
- ▶ Reduce unnecessary stays in hospital



Quality

- ▶ Overall experience score
- ▶ Mortality (SHMI/ HSMR)
- ▶ People die in their preferred place



Cost

- ▶ Continue to improve how productive we are



Morale

- ▶ Staff survey results
- ▶ Leaders meet national competency framework
- ▶ Increase our contribution to the local community



Our multi-year commitments

To realise our strategic objectives, we are making five multi-year commitments. Over the period of our strategy, these commitments will lead to objectives that we need to deliver each year which will help us to deliver our strategy and drive the change we wish to see.



Shift care from hospital to community

We will shift care closer to home, so that only those who need to be in hospital are seen there, providing the best experience of care.

Our commitment is to shift the focus of care from hospital settings to community-based services, promoting a holistic approach to health, wellbeing and earlier intervention. Through our continued work in our local health and care partnerships and by investing in community health initiatives, we aim to provide proactive, integrated care that supports patients in, or as close as possible, to their own home. Our goal is to enhance health outcomes, reduce hospital admissions, and foster a healthier, more resilient community.

A key dependency of this is the interconnected improvement work to reduce waiting lists and the backlogs the pandemic created, ensuring people are treated promptly and get back to a state of wellbeing.

In practice, our divisions will be developing new pathways and models of care to focus on the following areas:

- ▶ Frailty and nursing homes
- ▶ Development of the clinical hub
- ▶ Moving outpatient services out of hospital



Value our people

We will create an environment which allows everyone to be their best self and provide opportunities for personal growth, to recruit and retain the best talent.

We are committed to creating an environment where everyone can thrive by listening to staff and acting on their concerns. Building on our work in health, wellbeing, and development, we will expand opportunities for growth and retention. Our integration with primary care and collaboration with Sandwell & West Birmingham Trust opens new career pathways, while partnerships with Aston University and others enhance access to research and education.

We will promote shared roles, flexibility, and inclusivity, foster a culture free from bullying and discrimination, and empower every individual to feel valued, engaged, and supported in delivering outstanding patient care.

In practice this could mean:

- ▶ More shared roles and flexibility for staff to work across organisations
- ▶ More staff from all disciplines engaged in research



Make best use of our resources

We will become more efficient by streamlining our processes, optimising our facilities and harnessing technology and artificial intelligence, to demonstrate best value

Our commitment is to get the best possible value for the taxpayer by eliminating duplication. Many of our assets such as imaging equipment and operating theatres are expensive to run and need to be used in the most efficient way possible. Greater use of digital technologies will support us to do this and release precious clinical time to focus on patient care.

Our corporate services are included within this, where we will work with others to deliver quality services at a reduced cost.

In practice, our teams will be:

- ▶ Looking at how to make best use of our estate
- ▶ Making data from primary and secondary care available to each other
- ▶ Piloting the use of AI and scaling up if benefits can be demonstrated



Our multi-year commitments



Improve speed of access to planned care

We will reduce waiting times for investigations and treatments, to provide personalised care at the right time and be the preferred choice for patients.

Our commitment is to return to the constitutional target of 92% patients being treated within 18 weeks of a referral by the end of this strategy. We will do this by focusing effort on better communication between primary and secondary care, making the best use of the resources available to us and adopting best practice from across the NHS.

In practice, our teams will :

- ▶ Offer more advice and guidance to primary care so that only patients requiring secondary care are put on to a waiting list
- ▶ Ensure that waiting lists are always well-managed
- ▶ Where appropriate, deliver as much surgery as possible in a day case or outpatient setting and when patients need to be admitted, ensure their length of stay is as short as possible
- ▶ Provide planned surgery in a protected facility called an elective hub in conjunction with Sandwell & West Birmingham Trust



Develop thriving partnerships

We will work with partners on innovation, transformation and sustainability to achieve the best outcomes for our communities.

We aim to lead a cultural shift from a treatment-centred model to one that prioritises prevention and early intervention. We recognise that some of the most powerful health interventions occur well before hospital and community care is needed, namely that a safe home, education and employment upon leaving school are fundamental determinants of health. As a large public service, major employer and anchor institution within the borough, we can influence and support these early fundamentals through close working with our partners.

In practice, our early prevention schemes will focus on the following areas:

- ▶ Working with the local authority on planning
- ▶ Education, safeguarding and physical activity in local schools
- ▶ Clear access points for local employment into all roles

In addition, by implementing comprehensive public health programs, expanding access to health education, and encouraging healthy lifestyles, we will empower our patients and communities to take charge of their own health. Through proactive measures and innovative prevention strategies, we aim to reduce the incidence of chronic diseases and improve overall health outcomes for future generations.

In practice our health interventions will focus upon:

- ▶ Targeted screening to detected disease such as cancers earlier
- ▶ Public health campaigns and vaccination
- ▶ Research into genomics and personalised healthcare



Our underpinning plans

The Trust's single strategy is underpinned by several cross-linked delivery plans, that set out the key milestones, projects and programmes of work that delivery our vision and strategic objectives. Dudley Improvement Practice is our design and delivery improvement methodology. This is a matured, well adopted home grown quality improvement mindset, supported by a growing network of improvement champions to sustain the approach. Our plans will assure delivery through a range of mechanisms embedded with our corporate governance approach, aggregated in a Board Assurance Framework (BAF) addressing our strategic risks.

The Dudley People Plan

The Dudley People Plan (our workforce strategy) covers a three-year period from 2023 -2026 and summarises what our people can expect around support for them whilst they work with us. This is outlined in each of our five People Journeys:

- ▶ Equality, inclusion and diversity
- ▶ Culture, Leadership and Learning
- ▶ Wellbeing
- ▶ Recruit and retain
- ▶ Continuous improvement

The plan describes our ambition to support our people - and to attract people to come and work with us. Implementation will need to incorporate the implications of the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan which aims to increase workforce capacity across the NHS over the next fifteen years.

Quality and Safety

A 3-year Quality and Safety Delivery Plan is being developed to outline how the trust will deliver high quality and safe care to its patient population for the period 2025 - 2028. It will align to the Trust strategy and be supported by the Trust vision, values, and strategic objectives. The enabling plan will support the Trust to deliver on overarching priorities with clear yearly objectives to demonstrate proactive thinking and action, whilst ensuring there are sustainable outcomes for patients and staff.

The proposed overarching priorities include:

- ▶ Improving partnership working
- ▶ Staff development
- ▶ Safe management of the deteriorating patient
- ▶ Improving patient outcomes
- ▶ Development and implementation of National safety standards for invasive procedures (NatSSIPs)
- ▶ Safe medicines management
- ▶ Care closer to home
- ▶ Improving patient outcomes
- ▶ Improving patient experience
- ▶ Right workforce
- ▶ Digital infrastructure to support quality and safety



Our underpinning plans

Estates and facilities

The Trust's Estates Strategy 2022 – 2027 was reviewed and updated in November 2022. In recent years the Trust has successfully bid for capital to expand the endoscopy suite and the number of minor procedure rooms at Russells Hall Hospital. The Rainbow Unit (a modular build) was opened to services in November 2021. The trust has received capital

to expand the resuscitation area within the Emergency Department and work is due to be completed by winter 2025.

Following the development of an estates strategy across the integrated care system decisions about significant capital funding will be made with partners across the ICS.

Digital, data and technology plan

Based on our progress to date highlighted by our digital maturity assessment scoring, The Dudley Group is one of the leading digital trusts in the midlands. We have become a provider that does not need a 'digital strategy', as technology has and will continue to be adopted as a mechanism for innovation to deliver the core Trust Strategy. Our plan is to build on the 'brilliant basics' we have put in place such as our electronic patient record that by March 2025 will meet almost all of the national standards set out in the digital capability framework (DCF) which is mandated by 2027.

To further align to our patient needs and the wider national and regional requirements, our new digital plan will focus in 3 key areas: digitise, connect, and transform.

Using our Dudley Improvement Practice methods, we will therefore:

- ▶ **digitise services**
- ▶ **connect them to support integration, and through these foundations**
- ▶ **transform services to improve quality and safety.**

Green plan

The Green Plan is due to be refreshed in 2025. Since the plan was introduced in December 2020, we have been able to raise awareness amongst staff and implemented schemes to reduce waste, improve recycling and make it easier for staff to use alternative methods of transport. The NHS aims to be world's first net zero carbon health system by 2040 (2045 for

wider emissions in the supply chain) so there is much more that we need to do. We need to work with our PFI partners in order to decarbonise the estate we occupy, so we will focus our efforts over the coming years on issues within our direct control.

Research, development and innovation

A revised strategy 2022 – 2027 to promote research, development and innovation across all departments and disciplines was adopted by the Trust in September 2022. The Trust has a vision to become the organisation known for providing an environment where research, innovation and the adoption of new technology flourish: supporting staff to identify challenges to the delivery of high quality care, then working with them to seek, support, implement and evaluate solutions.

Key to this will be working with local academic institutions, industry and Health Innovation West Midlands to identify opportunities for research and the adoption of new technologies and processes. We aim to embed a culture where research will be integrated into routine clinical care to benefit our patients, by creating a supportive environment that optimises the best outcomes for our staff, patients and the wider population.

Our ambition is that as a result of these actions we will achieve university trust status.

Implementing our strategy

This strategy sets out our goals and what we are going to do from 2024 to 2027 at a high level. We believe delivery of ambitious strategic goals can only be achieved by taking a continuous improvement approach to learning, responding and implementing change, to benefit our patients, staff and Dudley people.

In 2018, we made a long-term commitment to building a system for continuous improvement and were selected by NHS England to be part of the first national cohort in the Vital Signs programme. Supported by NHS England, eight trusts co-produced an approach to developing a culture of continuous improvement which is founded on supporting and empowering staff to improve the services they are passionate about. Using NHS IMPACT, the NHSE best practice guide for continuous improvement, we continue to evolve the Dudley Improvement Practice (DIP).

All improvement activity supported by the Dudley Improvement Practice team is aligned to the Trust's vision and goals which we continually strive towards. Each division,

department and team will use the vision and goals to guide their improvement efforts by defining objectives specific to their work area. Using a variety of methods appropriate to the work, and a ward to board reporting information cascade of virtual or physical improvement boards and team huddles, every member of staff will know how their work is contributing to the strategy.

Alongside the adoption of this new strategy, the Trust has also reviewed the strategic risks that will prevent our goals from being delivered; this was undertaken in line with the Trust's Risk Management Framework and agreed risk appetite. The Board Assurance Framework will document the Board's strategic risks alongside its appetite for risk in the achievement of strategic objectives. The Board Assurance Framework is reviewed throughout the year at the board and its committees to monitor the management of identified risks in line with its agreed risk appetite. Corrective action is taken to mitigate these risks and to the attain the target score.

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