

# ESNEFT **life**

Issue 4: Autumn 2020

The East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust (ESNEFT) Magazine

## Eyes behind the mask

Inside:  
Our Coronavirus  
(COVID-19) stories



Born in lockdown



Volunteers step up



NHS rainbows



Sharing staff stories

# Coronavirus (COVID-19) survivors tell us their stories



## A mother has thanked the "phenomenal" ESNEFT teams who helped both her sons survive COVID-19.

Brothers Jacob and Isaac Tayel were admitted to Ipswich Hospital with COVID-19 within 24 hours of each other. Both boys needed intensive care and were transferred to a hospital in Cambridgeshire to help keep them alive.

The brothers were just two rooms apart but because of cross contamination, mum Dianne could only see one of her sons – a decision made easier as Jacob was asleep.

Isaac was the first of the brothers to be discharged from hospital. But as he and Dianne were travelling home, dad Ahmed took a call to say Jacob had again deteriorated and needed to go to a specialist children's hospital for further treatment. It was there the family agreed to Jacob taking part in a drug trial.

Jacob's condition fluctuated but he came off the ventilator on Isaac's 11th birthday, and was able to be part of a phone call to his younger brother. After a

week, Jacob returned to Ipswich Hospital, as his speech and movement began to return.

He finally left Ipswich Hospital at the end of April. Dianne (pictured with both sons, left) said: "It was so emotional. The staff lined the corridor to say goodbye to him.

**Somehow, despite everything, Jacob remembers all the people who cared for him, and it felt like they all remembered him too. It meant so much to see everyone come to say goodbye."**

Dianne added: "The staff at Ipswich Hospital were phenomenal, every single one of them. We cannot thank them enough. I don't know how they do what they do. It's a wonder."

## "I called the doctor and by the evening I was in intensive care"

**When Margaret Holton called her doctor because she felt a bit breathless, she didn't realise quite how poorly she was. By the time she reached hospital a few hours later, she was fighting for her life in intensive care.**

The 60-year-old from Aldeburgh called her doctor on 5 April, but "remembers very little" about being admitted, or the following 31 days she spent in Ipswich Hospital with COVID-19.

Her family were told to expect the worst when Margaret first went into hospital, but she is now back at home recovering after spending a further three weeks at Aldeburgh Hospital.

Margaret, who works at Bagot's Newsagent in Aldeburgh, said: "All the staff who cared for me are absolutely fantastic. I remember being in Aldeburgh Hospital the most and the staff there were just so kind to me.

**They kept my morale up when I kept begging to go home."**

When Margaret (pictured below, centre) started to feel better, she was able to have phone calls with her family.

Margaret, who lives with her sister Sandra Thomas, said: "It was really lovely to be able to talk on the phone, but it's even better to be home with Sandra who is looking after me."

When she left Aldeburgh Hospital she was clapped out by all the staff and when she arrived back home, her siblings, nieces and nephews welcomed her with balloons, banners and cheers. "It was a wonderful way to come home" she said.

Tisha Morelos, modern matron at Aldeburgh Hospital, (pictured below, front right), said: "The whole team – from nurses, physios, therapists – are all so happy to witness her recovery. It was very emotional the day she left to go home."



## "Hospital staff saved my life, no doubt about it"

**A man who battled a collapsed lung, pneumonia and COVID-19 said he feels very lucky and grateful to the NHS staff who saved his life.**



Paul Godfrey developed COVID-19 in March and became very poorly with what he thought was a chest infection. Despite taking antibiotics and steroids, he wasn't recovering.

When he finally went to Colchester Hospital five days after developing symptoms, doctors told the retail worker his lung had collapsed and he had developed pneumonia. He was tested for COVID-19, and although Paul didn't think he had the virus, the result came back positive.

He was rushed to intensive care with a nurse by his side 24/7 and began treatment. Paul said:

**There's no doubt about it – everyone who cared for me saved my life. I would not be here today if it wasn't for them."**

He added: "The team at Colchester Hospital was just phenomenal. It all happened so quickly. They were treating me for everything and saved my life. I can't fault them. They are risking their lives to save ours."

Paul is now at home recovering, but is still struggling to walk and having problems with memory loss and exhaustion. He said he was determined to give something back to the NHS, so launched a fundraising campaign and charity T-shirt sale.

He said: "The campaign has raised around £2,300 and I'm so pleased. I've never done anything like it before. Everyone kept telling me I needed to relax and recover, but I just want to give something back. I wanted to turn something so negative into a positive."

# Colleagues redeployed into new roles to help where there's greatest need

Colleagues stepped up to the fight against COVID-19 by swapping their usual day jobs for new and demanding roles. Here, we take a look at just a few job swaps and how they have made a huge difference to patients.

## Nurse who returned to frontline felt it was her 'duty during the crisis'

Alexis Johnys was working as a senior nurse visiting people in care homes as part of the Reactive Emergency Assessment and Community Team (REACT).

When the request came for NHS staff to join the frontline, Alexis said she "hovered over the mouse", but wanted to register because of her varied nursing background.

She said: "The country is in a crisis and I felt I had to go where I was needed. I didn't think I would be selected but was asked to work in the intensive care at Ipswich Hospital."

Alexis underwent fast-track training and joined the team in early April.

The change wasn't without personal sacrifices for Alexis though, who made the decision to wean her baby daughter Zara, 14 months, off breastfeeding in order to commit to the critical care role.

The 34-year-old, said: "I'm up goodness knows how many times a night for Zara, so I had to wean her off breastmilk. I thought it might be good timing and it worked out really positively."

Alexis remained in the role until the end of June before moving back to REACT. She said she's aware there may be a second peak, requiring her to return to intensive care, but with such a supportive team she would be happy to.



**"The country is in a crisis and I felt I had to go where I was needed."**

## Education nurse shares pride at caring for COVID-19 patients at the end of their lives

Even though some families cannot see their loved ones who are dying from COVID-19, ESNEFT staff are making sure they are not alone.

Usually a nurse in the education team, Emma was redeployed to the Critical Care Unit at Colchester Hospital where her clinical skills have been a crucial part of our response to COVID-19.

Emma has been reflecting on the highs and lows of her role on critical care. While she has seen many moments of joy with patients leaving the unit and recovering from COVID-19, she has witnessed "heartbreaking" moments of sadness and loss too.

She said: "Although it's one of the most difficult things I have ever done, I take great pride in being able to be with patients in their final moments."

"I hold their hand, stroke their hair and talk to them so they know they are not alone and that they are loved. It isn't how it should be, but it is the best we can do for them and their families."

She added: "But there's also a fighting team spirit which has blown me away and I am thankful to all of my critical care colleagues for supporting me."



**"I take great pride in being able to be with patients in their final moments."**

## From admin and lab roles to the mortuary – two colleagues share their COVID-19 stories

It's not a request many managers would expect of their staff – to leave their current role and volunteer to work in the mortuary. But that's what happened with two colleagues who were redeployed to support the team during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lucy Thorne was working in an admin position for Cancer and Diagnostics when asked if she would carry out a rather different role.

Lucy said she wasn't fazed when asked, as she's worked in a lot of different areas over her 10 years in the NHS.

She said: "Working as a mortuary assistant was so interesting and I really enjoyed it."

Lucy was working in the mortuary at Ipswich Hospital together with colleague Bianca Ranson, who was also redeployed.

Bianca's usual role is a medical laboratory assistant working with pathologists examining specimens.



Bianca said: "The job in the mortuary is drastically different from being a lab assistant. I have been in contact with patients' families, talking to them to make sure they know their loved one is being looked after and arranging bookings with funeral directors."

"It's a worthwhile job, especially talking to families and loved ones."

**"It's a worthwhile job, especially talking to families and loved ones."**

More stories on page 6

## Quick-to-adapt theatre staff work differently through COVID-19 pandemic

**Staff across all areas of the Trust have had to adapt quickly to the changes and challenges we've faced – and are still facing – across healthcare.**

ODPs (like Helen Clark, pictured right), or operating department practitioners, work in operating theatres. Their skilled role is focused on working with anaesthetists, surgeons or in recovery, alongside other clinicians.

As routine surgery had to slow down due to changes made because of COVID-19, ODPs have had to adapt, retrain and work in new areas.

Paul Culley, lead educator for Theatres and Anaesthetics at Ipswich Hospital, said: "ODPs are the backbone of theatres – they wouldn't run without them."

"The team has moved mountains to retrain and upskill so they can work in areas such as critical care.

"Our wonderful ODPs have also been manning the emergency theatres, trauma theatres and maintaining urgent surgery lists too, 24 hours a day, seven days a week."

Wendy Hobbs, theatres education lead for Colchester Hospital, praised other colleagues across the Trust who helped ensure the ODP team were upskilled fast.

Wendy said: "Everyone has pulled together to make the training happen. I'm very proud of the way the ODPs have stepped up – it's really brought our profession to the fore in the Trust."



**// I'm very proud of the way the ODPs have stepped up."**

## 'It's brought us closer together as a Trust' says critical care nurse

**It has proved to be one of the most challenging times in the history of the NHS, but staff nurse Andrea Tuckwell feels it's brought our teams closer together.**

Andrea, like many staff members at ESNEFT, moved to critical care to help treat COVID-19 patients.

Despite the pressures on staff, rapid turnaround on training and working with unfamiliar colleagues, Andrea said it's been a time of incredible support.

Andrea is one of a handful of colleagues at ESNEFT qualified as a nurse and a midwife. She was transferred to Critical Care from her day job in Maternity. She said: "I have never seen comradery like it. The support I've had from critical care has been amazing. Staff have moved from all areas but we are all supporting each other."



Andrea said the emotional side of caring for patients and making life and death decisions has been incredibly hard.

"I've had times when I've been in tears," she said, "but it's so wonderful when you see someone making small steps to recovery."

"It really has been a time where the whole Trust has come together and supported each other when working in such an intense environment and learning to be flexible in caring for very sick patients."

**// It's so wonderful when you see someone making small steps to recovery."**

## Uninterrupted PPE supply helps to keep our staff and patients safe

**More than 10 million items of essential personal protective equipment (PPE) have been issued to ESNEFT teams during the COVID-19 pandemic.**

The supply and provision of PPE has been a hot topic of debate both inside and outside of the NHS since the outbreak began.

At ESNEFT, a steady supply of PPE has been maintained throughout the pandemic. Although there have been items in short supply at times, staff have always been able to access the PPE that they have needed, in line with national guidance.

Our PPE management group, which was set up in early April, have worked tirelessly to make sure colleagues have remained safe and protected at work.

Programme director and senior responsible officer for PPE, Chris Howlett, said:

**// We don't always give enough recognition to our support staff, but so many colleagues across the Trust have worked really hard to make sure our frontline staff and patients have stayed safe throughout the pandemic."**

The PPE management group has met regularly throughout the pandemic response period to review PPE supply arrangements, capacity and demand issues, as well as risk assessing and evaluating donated PPE.

The group also helped to introduce PPE champions at Colchester and Ipswich hospitals.

The champions have played an important role in helping colleagues to manage PPE stocks and have also supported departments in making sure stocks are used appropriately.



Stores colleagues with PPE and infection control supplies.




# CORONAVIRUS

## You must wear a face covering (over mouth and nose) if you are visiting hospital.



**STAY ALERT ▶ CONTROL THE VIRUS ▶ SAVE LIVES**

# New mums sharing special bonds despite giving birth during lockdown



**It's hard, but it has been lovely having the curtains open and talking.**  
New mum Catherine, Colchester



**Women who had been anxious about coming into hospital to have their babies during the COVID-19 outbreak have spoken of the support and comfort they found in each other during challenging times.**

East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust had to make some difficult decisions in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak to keep our staff, women and babies safe.

In Maternity services they included only allowing one birthing partner to accompany a woman in labour and suspending visiting to postnatal wards.

However three women said coming into hospital during the pandemic was not as bad as they thought it might have been – thanks to the support they received from each other and their midwives.

Jenna Mowbray is pictured in the top photo with son Jack. The 31-year-old from Colchester was on Lexden Ward, which she said felt “daunting and lonely” as her family couldn’t be with her, but it was when she heard a woman crying in the bay next to her that she struck up a conversation.

Catherine (bottom photo) had had twins by emergency Caesarean section on 22 April and at that point had not seen her babies, Chloe Rose and Jack Peter, as she had been under anaesthetic for the delivery.

Catherine, 36, from Colchester, said: “It’s hard, but it has been lovely having the curtains open and talking.”

The pair were also joined by Nicole Reece, 37, from Harwich (middle photo with baby Elliott). She said: “It was so nerve wracking, but it was a much better experience than I thought it would be and it’s down to the people in hospital and the midwives.”

Visiting restrictions in Maternity have since been relaxed and all the most up-to-date information is on the ESNEFT website.

# Evening of remembrance

**On 4 July – the weekend of the NHS 72nd anniversary – we lit up our hospital buildings blue to help remember those who have died during the pandemic.**

Landmarks up and down the country lit up blue while households were encouraged to put a light or candle safely in their window to shine a light on the evening of remembrance.

Our thoughts and condolences are with the families and loved ones of everyone who has lost their life to COVID-19.



**Thank you to colleagues who are supporting patients and their loved ones during these difficult times.**



# Virtual clinics hailed a success

**Colleagues at our hospitals held more than 5,600 video consultations in just four months so that patients could continue to receive the care they needed during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic.**

Colchester and Ipswich hospitals were among the first in the country to start using the Attend Anywhere system in late March, when face-to-face contact was limited due to lockdown.

Since then, around 70 specialties have used the system.

As well as bringing added convenience for patients, the system allows relatives to attend appointments alongside their loved ones, as more than one household can join the call. This has been



Diabetes nurse Claire Wadham using our Attend Anywhere system

especially useful during lockdown, when consultants have been able to speak to family members as far afield as Florida.

Feedback has also been very positive, with 91% of patients describing Attend Anywhere as “easy” or “very easy” to use, and 73% saying they were very likely to choose a video consultation again.

Colleagues are now looking at how video and telephone clinics will continue to be used alongside face-to-face appointments in the future.

**91%** of patients describing Attend Anywhere as “easy” or “very easy” to use

**73%** said they were very likely to choose a video consultation again

# Hospital amateur photographer captures eyes behind the masks



See more  
photographs  
on our ESNEFT  
Facebook page

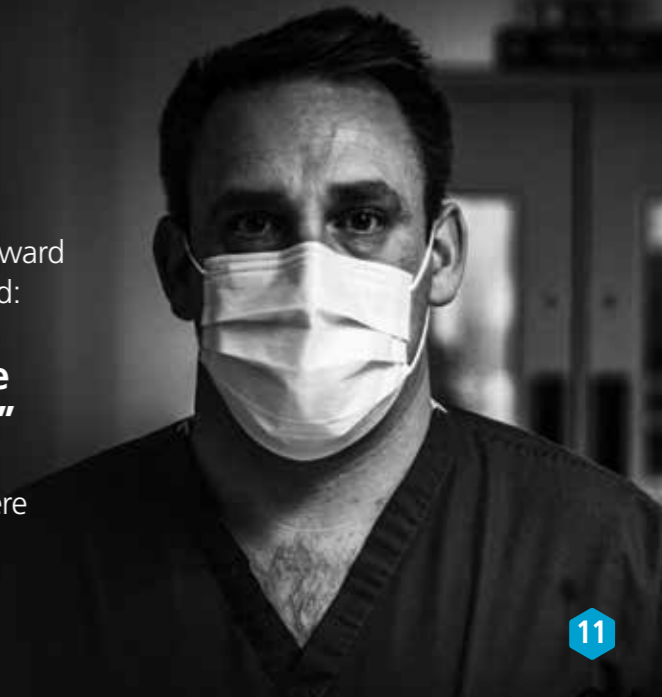


These powerful photographs of ESNEFT colleagues wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) were taken by hospital colleague Colin Gray (pictured right).

Colin is a clinical skills technician who worked in a COVID-19 ward at Ipswich Hospital during the height of the pandemic. He said:

**“ I wanted to give the people I work alongside something to look back on in years to come.”**

We shared a selection of the photographs online and they were viewed by more than 25,000 people.



# Staff behind the frontline

Here, we tell the stories of colleagues from support services across our hospitals. Everyone has had their part to play during the pandemic to help patients, families and frontline staff.

## Hanna

Hanna Green is a trainee anatomical pathology technologist (APT) at Ipswich Hospital. Hanna works in the hospital's mortuary and is one of around 700 APTs in the UK.

She said: "Our role is special because we get to provide the last stages of care for our patients and ensure that it's done in a dignified, respectful and holistic manner."

The mortuary team work 24/7 to care for patients after they have died.

Hanna said: "Here in the mortuary we care for patients who have passed away in the hospital and in the community setting.

"A big aspect of our role is facilitating visits for the families and loved ones of the patients that we care for."

COVID-19 has impacted how mortuary staff like Hanna do their jobs. Hanna added:

**COVID-19 has impacted us a lot, like it has for every other department in the hospital. The main impact is that we haven't had face to face contact with the families of the patients we care for. Hopefully this will change soon."**



## John

John Benneworth is a porter. He's worked at Colchester Hospital for eight years.

Our porters play an essential role in keeping hospitals going and patients safe. John said:

**We're a friendly face for nurses to see on the ward. We're all pulling together.**

"The role of the porters at the moment is for the transportation of patients, keeping the oxygen filled up on the wards, and keeping a friendly and smiley face."



## Mazin

**Clinical teams have played a vital role in dealing with COVID-19, but without our non-clinical colleagues, like those in the IT team, our patient care plans and response to the outbreak would simply not have been possible.**

Senior infrastructure engineer Mazin Karkotli is just one member of the team who has played a crucial part.

During the outbreak he has been focusing on making sure people can work effectively at home and maintaining the critical systems at our hospitals so they work for colleagues who are both on and off site. The team have supported up to 2,000 staff to work from home during lockdown. Mazin said:

**We're all relying more on technology to communicate so we're making sure colleagues are well looked after and supported."**

He added: "I have always loved working for the NHS, it's not just a job. There are a lot of people out there helping to keep things going."



## Debbie

**Debbie Long has been a housekeeper at Colchester Hospital for 12 years. She was redeployed to work on a ward treating COVID-19 patients during the pandemic.**

She said:

**We look after each other and the patients. We're an integral part of this team.**

"At the moment, we know we are very important and we work as a team to support all the staff here and keep it safe for all of us; patients and staff."

## Peter

Peter Chapman is a grounds manager. He has worked at Ipswich Hospital for 19 years.

His team maintains our grounds and gardens, in all weathers, throughout the year. He said:

**The team delivers a lot for our staff, patients and visitors, from grounds maintenance right through to looking after the courtyards and working on new developments and gardens.**

"During the cold winter months, we provide an adverse weather function, where we grit the site and keep the snow clear and paths free of ice to keep the site operational."

He added: "I enjoy working for the Trust, the team delivers a lot, but it's not just for staff, it's for visitors and patients. They enjoy the green areas and we get a lot of reward and positive feedback on our work."



# The role of volunteers

Here we celebrate some of the important roles our volunteers took as they stepped up in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thanks to all those who have volunteered!



## Florrie and Jude

Best friends Florrie Hulbert and Jude Pottruff have been racking up miles both on foot and in the car while making deliveries to our NHS teams.

The pair have been volunteering twice a week during the coronavirus pandemic, driving to our acute and community hospitals and delivering donations – from Easter eggs to water bottles.

Florrie said: **“I wanted to volunteer because it gave me a purpose at quite a weird time and I wanted to do something to help. It was really nice being able to help people and knowing that I came away from the day by doing something useful.”**

Jude said: **“It has been really fun and a great experience, I got what I wanted out of it too, just to help and try my best at something. Everyone who was part of the team had a great time, it was a great atmosphere and a great feeling to help the NHS and give something back.”**



## John and Andy

Our hospital radio volunteers have been keeping patients entertained while visiting has been restricted. John Alborough and Andy Patrick are keeping hospital radio alive during the pandemic. John is the chairman of Hospital Radio Ipswich and has been a volunteer for 46 years.

John said: **“I would recommend being a volunteer to anyone. During the COVID-19 outbreak the hospital radio team decided to continue to serve patients in hospital, as many have been isolated it is even more important that we should continue.”**

Andy Patrick works at Hospital Radio Colchester as part of a small team who have been working hard to keep on air during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Andy said: **“We haven’t been able to visit the wards so it’s been really important for us to continue keeping patients, visitors and staff entertained. It’s been very rewarding to hear patients’ feedback, knowing that we really are making a difference and making their hospital stay a little bit easier, that is why I volunteer.”**

## Alan

Alan Bateman is former cancer patient who is now volunteering to support others with cancer. Cancer support helplines have been set up at both Colchester and Ipswich hospitals to help anyone with a cancer diagnosis.

Alan, who has been volunteering on the helpline, said:

**“The doors to the Cancer Information Centre are firmly shut but in the meantime we are still trying to offer the best service we can by developing a Cancer Support Helpline.”**

**“We are working as a team and hopefully we are doing a good job to keep our patients safe.”**



## Izaak

Izaak De May has been helping out across the hospital. He’s worked on our staff helpline, delivered donations and handed out face masks to people coming in for tests.

Izaak said **“I have been volunteering at Ipswich Hospital since November now. I was at Hospital Radio Ipswich before but because of COVID-19 I have been helping out in other areas such as handing out face masks and delivering food packages to staff across the wards.”**

**“I enjoy what I do, I think it’s very rewarding and I get satisfaction coming out of every shift, thinking ‘Wow I’ve done something good today’. I hope more people volunteer for their local communities, such as their local hospital because I think it’s a really good opportunity.”**



# Thanks for all your donations



We have been overwhelmed by the support we have received from our local communities. From food parcels and toiletries to personal protective equipment (PPE) – donations came flooding in. Here are just some of the stories.

## COVID-19 Staff Wellbeing Fund

At the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak our Charity team launched an appeal to aid the welfare and wellbeing of staff.

Our Staff Wellbeing Fund has raised over £336,000 from kind donations by our communities and NHS Charities Together.

A large proportion of the fund has now been committed to improving the physical, mental and financial wellbeing of staff and is in direct response to where our staff felt the money was best spent.

The most ground-breaking development is £154,882 dedicated to training 10% of the workforce as mental health first aiders. Their role

will be to help reduce mental health difficulties among staff and proactively support staff wellbeing.

Plans are being formed for all staff to attend a mental health awareness course to aid their own wellbeing and all managers will receive additional training to further increase their knowledge and understanding of mental health.

Other longer term projects continue to develop well too, such as the staff oasis spaces. Architectural plans are now underway to create quiet rest spaces for our staff.

### How our COVID-19 Staff Wellbeing Fund has supported Ipswich Cardiology staff

**1** Jade Etti and Sheryl Prescod enjoy a socially distanced break sitting at the table and chairs purchased from the fund. Sheryl said "It's lovely to have somewhere we can sit and enjoy our breaks outside."



**2** Here Alison Rose is making her lunch with the panini press purchased from the fund. Alison said: "The knowledge that this has been funded from a wellbeing fund just for staff is very touching."



**3** This is Josh Mundy enjoying the fresh coffee machine and his new role of barista – he has already experimented making several different coffees for the team! Josh said: "I am very grateful for the donation of the coffee machine", which was also purchased from the fund.



## Talented schoolgirl paints and sells stones to raise money for the NHS

A talented schoolgirl has shown her appreciation for our NHS staff who cared for her by painting and selling rocks she finds on her daily walks.

Rubie, or Rubie Rocks as she's now known, raised £650 through lockdown after deciding she wanted to help give something back.



## Retired radiographer organised donations to our COVID-19 Staff Wellbeing Fund

Satish Thaker, a retired radiographer from Colchester Hospital and President of the East Anglian Indian Association (EAIA), presented the charity team with a £2,501 donation to our COVID-19 Staff Wellbeing Fund. The donation was raised by the EAIA in collaboration with the Hindu Cultural Heritage Centre in Clacton.



## Consultant shaves hair to raise money for useful kit



Consultant Immo Weichert, who works in the Emergency Assessment Unit at Ipswich Hospital, took to the clippers and shaved off his hair at the beginning of lockdown. He raised £1,080 to help fund a patient transfer scale.

This clever piece of kit weighs immobile patients in seconds during transfer from trolley to bed (or bed to bed) to give patients a less stressful and more dignified experience.



**+**  
**ESNEFT**  
 has been  
 donated:

**4,300**  
 face masks

**1,300**  
 goggles

**4,400**  
 visors

**1,575**  
 coveralls

**2,650**  
 scrubs

**86,900**  
 gloves

# Celebrate...

Bite-size good news stories from around our trust

## Family liaison service in Critical Care

A dedicated team of retired Critical Care nurses returned to play a vital role in our response to COVID-19 by keeping families updated about loved ones who were receiving treatment for the illness.



Family liaison services were set up at both Ipswich and Colchester hospitals by former staff, keeping families informed daily, relaying messages and answering questions.

## Long term recovery support

Effects of COVID-19 don't simply go away when patients leave hospital – respiratory and swallowing problems, fatigue and memory loss are all common. Our allied health professional colleagues, including therapists, have developed specialist rehab care to support patients in the long-term once they leave hospital. Pictured here is cardiac rehab physiotherapist Fiona Sawyer.



## Speech and language therapy graduates straight in at deep end

When new graduates Pradeep Phull and Sara Jacobs joined ESNEFT, they didn't realise quite how quickly they'd have to put their newly learnt clinical skills into action.

The duo joined the speech and language therapy (SLT) team at Colchester Hospital at the beginning of the pandemic. They have both taken on the challenge and treated complicated cases of patients with COVID-19.

Sara said: "The impact of COVID-19 has significantly changed the way the SLT team work. As a newly-qualified practitioner it has been a challenging time to get to grips with a new role and adapting so much of what we do for our patients."



## Aldeburgh's key workers recognised

The vital contribution that colleagues across ESNEFT have made during the COVID-19 pandemic has been recognised after a 'key worker' sculpture was unveiled at Aldeburgh Hospital. The piece was created by Woodbridge blacksmith Tom Moye.



## Clear curtains helping patients safety

New clear vinyl curtains have been installed on wards to help keep patients safe and reduce the spread of COVID-19. Our Estates team have joined forces with Infection Prevention and Control to design the bedside curtains. They form a physical barrier to reduce the spread of the virus and are clear so colleagues can observe patients easily.



# New app keeps parents updated on babies' progress on neonatal units during COVID-19 outbreak

A new app helped to keep one couple connected with their newborn twins when they were being treated on different neonatal units nearly 60 miles apart.

vCreate, which allows videos and messages to be securely shared with new parents, has been keeping families updated on the progress of their babies throughout the pandemic at our hospitals.

The free, NHS trusted app was first launched at Colchester and Ipswich hospitals when, in line with national guidance, hospital visiting had to be restricted.

Jane and Alex Askew's twin boys were born prematurely at 30 weeks.

James and his brother Freddie were born by Caesarean section on 26 March at Ipswich Hospital.

They were transferred to Colchester Hospital's Neonatal Unit after two weeks, where the medical teams identified Freddie was having some bowel problems. He was then transferred to Addenbrooke's for more specialist care for nearly two weeks.



went home on 6 May. Freddie was in hospital for an additional three weeks and was discharged home on 29 May.

Both babies are now doing well and keeping new parents Jane and Alex busy.

## Offering extra support to parents when their babies are in hospital

ESNEFT's neonatal unit teams have been using vCreate to send videos and photos to parents when they have been unable to be in hospital.

It has helped to provide reassurance and reduce the separation anxiety some parents can feel when they cannot be with their baby.

Neonatal ward clerk Tuesday Simpson said: "Babies born at this time are going to be part of history. vCreate allows families to make memories by saving the photos and videos we send them.

"Parents can contact us using the app which gives them reassurance when they are not here."

Clinical lead nurse on Framlingham Neonatal Unit Julia Cooper said: "Parents are over the moon. It's the little things, like videos of their babies going to sleep at night that they have really liked."



Above left: At Colchester Hospital, pictured left to right, is staff nurse Chloe Handley, ward clerk Tuesday Simpson and nursery nurse Karen Smith.

Above right: Junior sister Scarlett Fleming films dad Paul feeding his daughter at Ipswich Hospital to send a video home to her mummy.

Jane said it was a "tough time" for her and Alex as first time parents, but the app was a big help for them.

She said: "It was really good to have the app. The nurses would send photos overnight and although you know they would ring if something was wrong, it's added reassurance and lovely to see a photo. Our family and friends enjoyed seeing them too."

James was in hospital for six weeks before he

# Antibody testing system hailed a success

**More than 20,000 patients and frontline workers were checked for COVID-19 antibodies in less than six weeks after ESNEFT developed a fast self-service testing system.**

The Trust set up the new system – which manages test requests using software robots – in a matter of days following a Government directive earlier in the spring.

The system allows people to book a test using a secure website, with all of the paperwork – including issuing the results – completed by robotic ‘virtual workers’.

The antibody test identifies whether someone has had COVID-19 in the past and works alongside swab (antigen) testing, which shows if they currently have the illness.

Within six weeks, the Trust carried out 20,662 tests on its own staff, along with patients, community service, primary care, ambulance, mental health and social care and military colleagues in east Suffolk and north east Essex.

Dr Shane Gordon, Director of Strategy, Research and Innovation, said:

**// We are very proud of our antibody testing system and the excellent feedback we have received.**



“Our staff worked incredibly hard to set up this fast, secure and effective system within just a matter of days. We’re especially pleased that the process is largely managed by our virtual workers, which frees up admin staff and laboratory colleagues to focus on patient care.

“The results of these tests will help contribute to understanding the prevalence of COVID-19 and the way it spreads within the community.”

ESNEFT is only able to take blood from patients for tests which have been requested by a healthcare professional, and not from people who have ordered their own testing kit online.

## Rainbow road art

Rainbow road art has arrived at Ipswich and Colchester hospitals. Each site now has a rainbow crossing and ‘Be safe. Be kind. Stay well’ messages. Thanks go to local business Highway Assurance for brightening up both sites free of charge.



**NHS**

East Suffolk and  
North Essex  
NHS Foundation Trust

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