

**WYE VALLEY NHS TRUST**  
**Minutes of the Wye Valley NHS Trust Annual General Meeting**  
**Held on 26 September 2024– 6.00 pm – 7.30 pm**  
**MS TEAMS**

**Present:**

Russell Hardy	RH	Chairman
Chizo Agwu	CA	Chief Medical Officer
Glen Burley	GB	Chief Executive
Lucy Flanagan	LF	Chief Nursing Officer
Sharon Hill	SH	Non-Executive Director
Jane Ives	JI	Managing Director
Ian James	IJ	Non-Executive Director
Frances Martin	FM	Non-Executive Director
Katie Osmond	KO	Chief Finance Officer
Grace Quantock	GQ	Non-Executive Director
Nicola Twigg	NT	Non-Executive Director

**In Attendance**

Ellie Bulmer	EB	Associate Non-Executive Director
Jayne Clarke	JC	Associate Chief Medical Officer, Education
Geoffrey Etule	GE	Chief People Officer
Erica Hermon	EH	Associate Director of Corporate Governance
Kieran Lappin	KL	Associate Non-Executive Director
Jo Rouse	JR	Associate Non-Executive Director

**Apologies**

Alan Dawson	AD	Chief Strategy and Planning Officer
Andy Parker	AP	Chief Operating Officer

Ref	Item	Lead	Purpose	Format
	<b>Welcome and Introductions</b>	RH		
<p>RH welcomed everyone to the Wye Valley NHS Trust Annual General Meeting for 2023/24, including staff, families, dignitaries, and partner organizations. The event is being live-streamed on YouTube and serves as a celebration of the Trust's achievements over the past year. Presentations and a video will highlight these accomplishments. RH acknowledged the ongoing challenges, particularly with Emergency Department pressures and elective waiting time and apologised to those affected and emphasised that efforts are ongoing to improve. Despite these issues, RH felt optimistic about the Trust's future.</p>				
1.	<b>Apologies for Absence</b>	RH	Information	Verbal
Noted as above.				
2.	<b>Minutes of meeting on 7 September 2023</b>	RH	Approval	Enclosure 1
<p>The Chairman proposed approval of the minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 7 September 2023 and Mrs Martin (NED) seconded this.</p>				
3.	<b>Introduction to the Annual Report 2023/24 including highlights</b>	GB	Presentation	Enclosure 2
<p>GB presented a summary of the year on behalf of the Wye Valley NHS Trust, acknowledging the leadership of the Managing Director the Executive Team, and the Board. The full Annual Report and a summary are available on the Trust's website and he encouraged everyone to explore the detailed information.</p>				

Despite significant challenges—including high demand, industrial action, and emergency pressures—the Trust has had a positive year. Notably, the Foundation Group expanded with the addition of colleagues from Worcester, enhancing collaboration and innovation across the four Trusts.

**Key activity statistics** - Nearly 80 emergency admissions per day, around 200 Emergency Department attendances daily and approximately 800 outpatient appointments each day. These figures reflect the high volume of services provided not only to Herefordshire residents but also to patients from Wales and other areas.

**Urgent and Emergency Care** - Demand continues to rise, posing challenges across the NHS. Wye Valley's A&E performance has been around the national average for Type 1 Units (full A&E Departments). Performance improved from 55% in February to 65% in March, earning the Trust a capital incentive payment for improvement. Ambulance handover times were strong, with the Trust ranked 8th out of 20 in the Midlands and achieving 99.1% above the regional average for timely handovers. 75% of patients were seen within the 60-minute standard, outperforming the regional average. **Same Day Emergency Care (SDEC)** - To manage demand without increasing bed numbers, the Trust expanded SDEC services, opened two new Units: a Frailty SDEC and a Surgical SDEC. The goal is to treat and discharge patients the same day. 39% of patients used this pathway over the year which increased to 47% by year-end and into the new year.

**Cancer Care** - Referrals increased by 8.2%, reflecting rising demand. The Trust is meeting the 28-day faster diagnostic standard, ensuring patients get a clear diagnosis quickly. 62-day treatment pathway (from GP referral to first treatment) improved to 72%, showing strong progress despite ongoing post-COVID backlogs.

**Elective Care** - The Trust has been addressing a nationally recognised backlog of patients waiting for elective procedures. A key focus was reducing long waiting times, particularly those over 78 weeks, which has now shifted to targeting 65-week waits. Over the year, the number of patients waiting over 65 weeks was reduced from around 400 to about 100. Currently, 73% of patients are within the 65-week standard, showing significant progress. The next NHS target is to reduce waiting times to 52 weeks, and ultimately to the national standard of 18 weeks from referral to treatment. The Trust has already achieved a 26% reduction in patients waiting over 52 weeks, with further improvements continuing this year. For diagnostic tests, the goal is to ensure patients receive tests within 6 weeks of referral. Over the past year, the Trust has halved the number of patients breaching this diagnostic standard, showing strong progress in timely diagnosis.

**Discharge Pathways and Patient Flow** - A major factor affecting urgent and emergency care performance is the ability to discharge patients efficiently, especially older, frailer individuals who often require more complex care. The Trust has focused on improving **Pathway 1**: supporting patients to return home with care assessments and support provided at home, rather than through hospital beds. Over the past year, there has been a 30% reduction in delays related to this pathway. This improvement was achieved through strong collaboration with Local Authority partners, expanding domiciliary care capacity, and enhancing access to community-based services. The Trust has also increased use of discharge-to-assess bedded pathways for patients needing more support, using Community hospital beds effectively.

**Stroke Services** - The Trust is especially proud of its stroke care, which is challenging to deliver in a rural area like Wye Valley, where tertiary services are not nearby. As a result, Wye Valley provides more direct stroke treatment than other Trusts in the Foundation Group. The Trust achieved the best performance in the West Midlands for an admitted stroke service, based on national audit standards. Success is credited to strong collaboration with partners at UHCW and University Hospitals Birmingham, use of artificial intelligence to analyse brain scans, helping to identify patients needing thrombectomy (transferred to specialist centres), and deliver thrombolysis locally. These innovations have led to better outcomes for stroke patients.

**Mortality Rate Improvements** - The Trust has achieved a significant improvement in mortality indicators, which measure actual versus expected deaths based on patient case mix. For the first time ever, the Trust's mortality index has dropped below the national baseline of 100, indicating better-than-expected outcomes. This marks a major turnaround from when the Trust first joined the Foundation Group, at which point mortality rates were a national concern. The improvement is credited to robust clinical processes, focused quality initiatives and hard work and dedication from clinical teams.

**Workforce and Staff Engagement** - The Trust's progress has been driven by its engaged and talented workforce. A key focus for the Executive Team and Board has been staff engagement and development. The national Staff Survey is considered the most important indicator by leadership. The Trust is now performing above average in all domains of the NHS People Promise, which includes areas such as Staff morale, Learning and development and Inclusion and engagement. These improvements have directly contributed to the Trust's broader successes. Ongoing actions are in place to build on this progress, and the latest Staff Survey is currently underway to guide further improvements.

**Workforce Well-being and Support** - The Trust has placed strong emphasis on staff well-being, both before and after COVID. A wide range of support programmes have been introduced, including Mental Health support, Well-being Nurses and Freedom to Speak Up Champions. These initiatives have contributed to a reduction in staff sickness rates from 5.1% to 4.6%, lower staff turnover and reduced reliance on temporary staff, positively impacting finances. One key strategy has been encouraging retire and return options, helping retain experienced staff.

**International Nurse Recruitment** - The Trust is proud of its successful International Recruitment programme. In the past year, 110 international nurses joined the organisation, with approval for 77 more in the current year. The Trust is recognised for its strong pastoral support, helping international staff settle in, develop professionally, and feel valued. This supportive approach has earned positive recognition from the Care Quality Commission (CQC) in a recent report.

**Elective Surgery and Productivity** - The Trust has made major strides in reducing elective waiting times. A key milestone was the opening of its first-ever Surgical Day Case Unit, including a dedicated Cataract Theatre. This new facility has significantly improved patient flow and productivity, especially in cataract procedures. The Trust is now delivering over 30% more elective activity than pre-COVID levels—the highest increase in the West Midlands. The Unit is not only enhancing patient care but also serving as a recruitment enticement, attracting top clinical talent.

**Wye Valley Diagnostic Centre** - The Trust is developing a new Community Diagnostic Centre as part of a national NHS initiative. Located on Holmer Road in Hereford, the Centre is off the main hospital site, making it more accessible to the public. It will be staffed by the Trust and fully integrated into its services. The centre is expected to open in summer 2025, and will significantly expand diagnostic capacity for the local community.

**New Education Centre** - The Trust is planning a state-of-the-art Education Centre to replace its current, outdated facility. This initiative is being led by senior leaders and is supported by Herefordshire Council funding, a fundraising campaign and NHS capital funding, where available.

**Sustainability and Carbon Reduction** - The Trust has committed to leading the NHS on carbon reduction, as part of its broader group strategy. Efforts are already underway to reduce the organisation's carbon footprint, which is significant due to the scale of NHS operations. A major development is the construction of a £20.5 million government-funded Energy Centre, started earlier this year. The centre will feature six air-source heat pumps and three water-to-water source heat pumps. Once operational, the Trust will be 95% fossil fuel free, making it a leader in sustainability within the Group. This marks a major step toward a greener, more energy-efficient NHS.

**Partnership Working** - While the Trust delivers many services directly, it achieves the most impact through strong partnerships, particularly within Herefordshire. The One Herefordshire Partnership is highlighted as a leading example of Place-based collaboration in the NHS. The Trust was shortlisted by the Health Service Journal in the Integrated Care category, recognising the strength of this collaborative work.

**Looking Ahead** - The Trust has a clear set of objectives for the current year, aligned with its recently refreshed group-wide strategy. A major strength of the group model is the ability to share best practices and coordinate leadership across organisations. The recent Lord Darzi review of NHS performance outlines national priorities that closely align with the Trust's Strategy. The upcoming 10-year NHS plan, expected in spring 2026, is not expected to change the Trust's direction but may help accelerate progress on key initiatives.

4.	Extracts from the Annual Account 2023/24	KO	Presentation	
<p>The Trust successfully completed and submitted its audited accounts on time, thanks to the efforts of the Finance Team and External Auditors. The year ended with an adjusted deficit of £13.38 Million which was in line with the forecast agreed with NHS England. However, this meant the Trust did not meet its statutory duty to break even. Other key financial duties—such as public dividend capital, cash flow, and capital spending—were all met. Income primarily came from the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board and neighbouring Commissioners. Expenditure was mostly on staffing - total staffing spend £222 Million. Of that, £36 Million was on temporary workforce, which remains a key area of focus .The Trust is working to grow and retain its own workforce, linking to initiatives like the new Education Centre. Additional spending covered drugs, clinical supplies, and essential healthcare services. There was also a significant capital investment programme during the year.</p> <p>The Trust invested £29 Million in capital projects, including completion and opening of the Elective Surgical Hub, ongoing investment in infrastructure, equipment, and asset maintenance. Despite financial challenges and a planned deficit, the Trust improved invoice payment performance, benefiting local suppliers.</p>				

The Annual Account and Report were audited successfully, meeting all reporting standards and showing significant quality improvements over the previous year. A collaborative culture between Auditors and the Finance team is fostering continuous improvement.

Value for Money Assessment - Weaknesses identified: financial sustainability, due to not meeting the break-even duty and Cost improvement delivery, with targets not fully met. Governance concerns included a CQC rating for the Emergency Department and the Trust's current Level 3 status under the national oversight framework. Plans are in place to address these areas and improve performance.

The financial environment remains challenging for both the NHS and the Trust. A planned deficit of £31.4 Million has been set for the year. The plan includes delivering £20+ Million in cost and productivity improvements. The Trust aims to deliver 117% of pre-COVID (2019–20) elective activity levels, to help reduce waiting lists. Beyond 2024–25, the Trust is also focusing on medium-term financial sustainability, working collaboratively across the system and within Herefordshire.

Mr Lappin (ANED) proposed approval of the Annual Account 2023/24 and Mrs Twigg (NED) seconded this.

5.	Introduction to the Quality Account 2023/24	LF	Presentation	
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LF introduced the Quality Account, describing them as a comprehensive document that reviews the quality, safety, and audit priorities of the past year and outlines the focus areas for the upcoming year. The document has been publicly available on the Trust's website since the end of May and was not audited this year. She explained that the Quality Committee, chaired by a Non-Executive Director, meets monthly to oversee quality and safety. Its main goal is to ensure that the services provided meet the standards expected for oneself, family, and the wider community.

This year marked significant progress in patient safety. National Strategy Implementation: The Trust fully implemented the National Patient Safety Strategy, meeting all NHS milestones. We successfully transitioned to a new Incident Reporting System, replacing the previous one. Patient Safety Incident Response Plan: Approved by the Integrated Care Board, this Plan includes local safety priorities tailored to the Trust's specific risk profile. The Trust remains in the top quartile nationally for incident reporting, reflecting a culture of openness, transparency, and learning. We have a weekly Patient Safety Panel which is a well established, multi-disciplinary panel reviews all incidents weekly, ensuring thorough oversight. Safety in Sync Initiative: A new Herefordshire-based forum bringing together health, social care, and voluntary sector colleagues to collaboratively address safety concerns and drive improvements.

The Chief Executive highlighted that mortality is a vital indicator of service safety. It had been a concern in previous years but has shown notable improvement recently. The SHMI has improved significantly, now at 96, which is below the expected mortality rate. This places the Trust in a strong national position. Our Crude Mortality rate has also improved over the last two years and now sits well within the national average, which is a positive achievement. Continued efforts are being made in areas such as sepsis, stroke, pneumonia, frailty, nephropathy, and heart failure. A local Mortality Committee has been introduced. The Learning from Deaths process has been reviewed to ensure local learning is shared both within the Trust and across the wider healthcare system. The Medical Examiner Service now reviews all deaths in Herefordshire, not just those in hospitals. This provides greater scrutiny, independence, and a channel for bereaved families to raise concerns. The service presented its achievements at the recent Safety in Sync forum.

This year, the Trust took a dual approach by identifying both Patient Safety priorities (aligned with the National Patient Safety Strategy) and Quality priorities (based on local needs and feedback). Key areas of focus include VTE, Tissue Viability, Martha's Rule and Time-Critical medications (ongoing focus, especially on Parkinson's medications). There are plans to expand this to other critical medications in the coming year. There is continuous improvement based on feedback from national surveys, the Friends and Family Test, and other sources.

A key area of pride this year is the International Nurse Recruitment Programme, which has made a significant impact on the Trust. International nurses now make up one-third of the nursing workforce. We have retention rates and success in this area. LF gave examples of staff who have made notable achievements. The Trust also received the NHS Pastoral Care Award from NHS England for its outstanding support to international nurse recruits.

The Trust is also proud of several other accomplishments: Safety in Sync which was shortlisted for a Health Service Journal (HSJ) Award, National Wound Care Strategy (Wye Valley Trust was one of the first Trusts to support the programme), Special Care Baby Unit (achieved first-level accreditation in the UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative), Preceptorship Programme (expanded to include Allied Health Professionals, international and local nurse recruits and awarded the National Quality Mark for excellence in preceptorship).

<p>Maternity Services: We received positive results from a CQC inspection last year and are ranked in the top five Trusts in the Midlands in the NHS National CQC Maternity Survey. We featured among the top Trusts nationally in three domains and were recognised in a recent national publication on maternity services.</p> <p>The Trust highlighted several innovative developments, with a focus on frailty care. Frailty Same Day Emergency Care was launched in September 2023 which offers comprehensive geriatric assessment and same-day discharge when appropriate. The aim is to avoid unnecessary hospital admissions, supporting the principle that “home is best.” Dementia Care Innovations: We have appointed a new Acute Dementia Lead and rolled out the Virtual Dementia Tour – immersive training for frontline staff to better understand and care for patients with dementia. Falls Prevention: We introduced yellow socks and wristbands as visual indicators for patients at high risk of falling. Early signs show a reduction in falls, especially those causing harm.</p> <p>Mrs Martin (NED) proposed approval of the Quality Account 2023/24 and Mr James (NED) seconded this.</p>				
6.	Questions from the Public			
<p>There were no questions raised prior or during the meeting. The Chairman advised that questions could be sent to the Associate Director of Corporate Governance – contact details are available on the Annual General Meeting page on the Trust’s website.</p>				
7.	Recognising the Achievements of our Staff and Volunteers			
<p>JI introduced the video, publicly thanking all staff for their dedication and achievements over the past year. She highlighted the outstanding progress and innovation delivered across the Trust, recognising that these successes were achieved despite—and sometimes because of—significant challenges, particularly in the Urgent Care pathway. There was emphasis on the importance of teamwork, which she described as a hallmark of the Trust and appreciation for the way teams collaborate internally and with external partners, including the Herefordshire Council, Sodexo, and patients themselves.</p> <p>The video included sections on “Surgical Same Day Emergency Care Unit providing faster assessment, diagnosis and treatment”, “Dedicated Frailty SDEC Unit for the urgent assessment and treatment for frail people”, “Supporting the Health and Wellbeing of our Staff”, “Integrated neighbourhood working improving patient and service user experience”, “£21 Million Day Case Surgical Unit opened to improve waiting times for our patients” and “Improving quality of maternity care for women and their families”.</p>				
8.	Chairman’s Award			
<p>The Chairman presented this year’s Chairman’s Award to Jayne Clarke, Associate Chief Medical Officer for Education, in recognition of her exceptional contributions to education at Wye Valley Trust.</p> <p>Key highlights of Jayne’s achievements include leadership in education (she is a Paediatric Consultant with a deep passion for education). She was instrumental in the design and development of the new Education Centre and championed a multi-professional approach to education and training.</p> <p>Jayne has revolutionised recruitment and education for nurses, Physician Associates, Pharmacists, and other non-medical staff. She has developed the Education and Training Quality Dashboard and led improvements in simulation training and the CSR programme (funded by NHS England).</p> <p>Jayne has strengthened partnerships with Worcester University and the University of Birmingham and played a key role in expanding medical student placements and negotiating with NHS England. She has also been involved in successful funding bids to support education initiatives.</p> <p>Jayne has been described as a beacon for education and an ambassador for the Trust. Her work is seen as laying down a heritage asset for future generations. She was praised for her vision, dedication, and inspirational leadership, and was celebrated by colleagues as she received this award.</p> <p>Jayne expressed her gratitude and pride in receiving the Chairman’s Award. She emphasised that the achievements highlighted were not hers alone, but the result of working with an exceptional, multidisciplinary education team—people she described as inspirational and dedicated. She also extended heartfelt thanks to the Executive and Non-Executive colleagues for their ongoing support and encouragement of the Education Team.</p>				

The Chair concluded the meeting with special thanks to Glen Burley, Jane Ives, and the entire Executive team for their tireless commitment to delivering high-quality care year-round. He acknowledged Lucy Flanagan for her leadership in patient safety and quality initiatives and recognised Geoffrey Etule for his impactful work on staff health, wellbeing, and values. He extended his gratitude to Frances Martin, Deputy Chair, and all the Non-Executive Directors for their wise counsel and support.

He extended his appreciation for GPs, Primary Care partners, Social Care colleagues, and the Local Authority for their collaboration, especially around hospital discharges. He thanked the volunteers, including Chaplaincy, League of Friends, and others who give their time to support the Trust.

The Chairman acknowledged the recent social unrest and its impact on BAME staff. He highlighted that while only 2% of Herefordshire's population is from a BAME background, 20% of Trust staff and 50% of Consultants are. He reaffirmed the Trust's support and gratitude for BAME colleagues, including international nurses and their families.