



11 April 2023

## New NHS macular treatment centre declared officially open



Pictured (left to right): Rachel Adams - ophthalmology outpatients senior sister, Helen Evans - ophthalmology clinical service manager, Shantanu Gudsoorkar - consultant ophthalmic surgeon specialising in macular diseases.

Patients who need regular eye injections to treat macular conditions no longer need to travel into Musgrove Park Hospital for their appointments.

It follows the opening of a new macular treatment centre in Taunton – located in the same building as the existing ophthalmology diagnostic centre at Harrison House on the Blackbrook Park Estate, just off the M5 in Taunton.

The ophthalmology diagnostic centre in Taunton opened in spring 2022 where people in Somerset with retinal conditions and glaucoma have been able to get all their tests in one place. A second diagnostic centre also opened at the Quedam Shopping Centre in Yeovil.

The new macular treatment centre, which is run by our trust, has been funded and equipped through a joint working project between the trust and global life science company Bayer, with support from the Musgrove Park Hospital League of Friends and its donors.

Mr Shantanu Gudsoorkar, our consultant ophthalmic surgeon who specialises in macular diseases, was involved with both the diagnostic and treatment centre projects.

He said: “Our macular team at Musgrove Park Hospital provides vision saving eye injection treatment for patients with wet age-related macular degeneration, diabetic macular oedema and retinal vein occlusion.

“Over the last five years there has been a growing demand for the treatment of macular conditions in Somerset, because of an increasing elderly population and better diagnostic equipment within community-based and high street opticians.

“Our service currently gets 40 new referrals every month, and we have 2,500 patients under our care who need regular appointments and treatment – this is twice the number of patients since 2017.

“Our skilled macular nurse practitioners performed 12,000 injections in 2022, compared with 6,000 in 2017 – showing the progressively rising demand for appointments and treatment which has doubled over the last five years.

“As a result, our macular service has outgrown the assessment and treatment areas in our eye clinic at Musgrove Park, without any scope for expansion.

“The available space in our existing ophthalmology diagnostic centre was the natural choice as our elderly visually-impaired patients could access it easily and it’s also future proofed to meet the increasing demand.”

Rachel Adams, our ophthalmology outpatient department senior sister, said: “We now have two new consulting and treatment rooms at Harrison House, all purpose-built with high-quality air filtration technology.

“This is a real game changer for our patients as it means that over 300 patients a week can have their diagnostic investigations for macular, glaucoma, and macular treatment at Harrison House, instead of at a busy hospital, and we have capacity to expand this further over time.

“When Harrison House opened last spring, we future-proofed it to ensure we had that extra space that we could grow into, so this is our natural next step.

“Patients have told us that they like using Harrison House and find it accessible being just off the motorway, particularly with the free parking available. It’s also a nicer environment to work in.

“We’re so grateful to our pharmaceutical partners Bayer and the Musgrove Park Hospital League of Friends for their generous support and we’d also like to thank our construction partners, Speller Metcalfe, who have worked extremely hard to meet the deadline for both the diagnostic and treatment parts of the centre.”

Rose Gilbert, Senior Medical Advisor, Ophthalmology, Bayer UK, said: “Bayer and the NHS share a common goal in improving patient outcomes and therefore, we were delighted to work with Somerset NHS Foundation Trust with the aim of improving ophthalmology patient care in Somerset.”

“This joint working project involved Bayer and the trust pooling skills, experience and resources to ensure this innovative facility maximises capacity to treat patients to reduce the wait time to first treatment and enable timely follow up treatment, both vitally important to help patients get the most out of their treatment.

“The new centre will also offer greater ease of access to care and improved experience for patients and their families.”

Peter Renshaw, chairman of the League of Friends at Musgrove Park Hospital, said: “The funding of £220,000 from the League has enabled more patients with eye problems to be seen on the Blackbrook Park site, thereby easing pressure on the hospital to deal with more acute cases.

“This has only been possible through donations and legacies from our community, and the League is very grateful for the continuing support that enables funding for equipment and building work for the benefit of patients and colleagues.”

Building contractor Speller Metcalfe, which delivered both the Yeovil and Taunton ophthalmology diagnostic centre projects in 2022, was also responsible for the completion of the new macular treatment centre.

Divisional director for the firm, Matthew Bailey, said: “We’re pleased to have continued our relationship with Somerset NHS Foundation Trust and work to provide this new state-of-the-art ophthalmology centre.

“Providing a purpose-built space for these treatments will really make a difference to patients. The NHS is one of our key clients and we know how much of an impact this new facility will have on the community.”

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