

## University Hospitals Birmingham

### Case Study by The Centre for Sustainable Healthcare

*University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust (UHB) runs the three-year-old Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham (QEHB) and provides direct clinical services to nearly 800,000 patients every year, serving a regional, national and international population. It is a regional centre for cancer, trauma, renal dialysis, burns and plastics, and has the largest solid organ transplantation programme in Europe. The Liver Unit celebrated its 30th year of transplantation in 2012.*

*QEHB employs more than 8,000 members of staff and has 1,213 inpatient beds, 30 operating theatres and a 100-bed critical care unit, the largest co-located critical care unit in the world. QEHB is host to the Royal Centre for Defence Medicine (RCDM) and treats all seriously-injured British military personnel evacuated from overseas. It also treats military casualties from other countries, such as Denmark. The co-location of QEHB, RCDM, University of Birmingham Medical School and Birmingham Women's Hospital on one site makes the hospital site one of the largest healthcare campuses in the world.*

UHB joined the NHS Forest in 2014 when it took delivery of 200 young trees (whips). These have been mainly planted around the edges of the grounds to provide screening around the adjoining Oleaster National Centre for Mental Health and Barberry mental health unit. They also form part of an ecological corridor for wildlife.

The hospital campus is built on the remains of [Metchley Roman Fort](#), constructed soon after the Roman invasion of Britain in AD43. The fort has constrained development, but also meant that the hospital campus has large areas of green space, which are now being turned into orchards, wildflower meadows and community gardens. Meanwhile two sections of woodland are being thinned out, planted up with bluebells and snowdrops and having paths cut through, while the woodland next to the Oleaster is being developed into an outdoor therapeutic environment.

Antony Cobley, a senior HR manager, responsible for equality, diversity, health and wellbeing is the architect of all these changes. He began three years ago by facilitating a fruit and vegetable stall outside the main entrance to the new hospital to present a healthy alternative to the hospital shops. Open six days a week, it has become very popular with visitors and local people in particular. He then followed that up with a local farmers market eighteen months later, which has become a monthly fixture. His advice for anyone wanting to make changes in their hospital environment is to start with quick wins such as these, which enable people to build



trust that your initiatives work, and then it is easier to move onto other projects such as orchards and gardens.

The breadth of the projects and level of positive collaboration with public and private sector organisations inside and outside is inspiring. They include Birmingham City Council and various public and private sector organisations such as Cofely, who built the new hospital, English Heritage, The Woodland Trust, mental health support organisation Spring to Life, Freshwinds, The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) and Mondelēz International, which now owns Cadburys.

Inside the hospital complex, The National Trust is planning to base its national fern collection in five of the outdoor pods that lie within the new hospital complex, because the differing microclimates are so conducive to growing. These spaces will then become areas of quiet and reflection for patients or visitors and provide a welcome green space for patients and staff to look down on. Meanwhile, Age Concern is working with Antony to develop guided walks on the top floor of the hospital for the winter months and outside when the weather is fine. He is also overseeing the regeneration of a fishpond and garden that is earmarked for dementia patients.

To aid pollination, six beehives are being set up. These will have major benefits for local biodiversity and tie in well with [DEFRA's new Call to Action](#) for land managers to promote bee populations.

An area of the Roman fort has been earmarked for allotments and the project is being run by The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) [as part of the Health for Life programme](#), funded by Mondelēz International. Because they are not allowed to dig down more than an inch, raised beds are being put in of differing shapes and sizes for wheelchair users or those with limited mobility or for growing plants of different height needs. The beds will be planted in a representation of the fort layout with barracks, granary and central building. It is intended to plant some traditional Roman crops, but local residents will be able to take over some plots and decide what they want to plant.

What is perhaps most amazing about all these differing projects is that thus far the hospital has not had to spend a penny. Everything has been donated or offered through grants. All these new services allied with the stunning design of the hospital can only enhance the benefits for staff, patients and visitors. It is telling that in the past three years, the level of demand for the new hospital's services is so high that the old Queen Elizabeth hospital next door is being reopened.

These projects are succeeding because Antony:

- is a senior manager within the hospital who has the backing of his chief executive Dame Julie Moore;
- worked in various roles within the QE for several years; has built up relationships at all levels of the hospital administration and is now in a position to make strategic decisions;
- brought in stakeholders such as English Heritage, Birmingham City Council and Cofely, the PFI contractor, at the beginning of the different developments;
- managed to get funding from public and private sector for the different projects which means the NHS has not had to fund any of them;
- is involving the local community and providing spaces and services that they want to use;
- has looked at how best to use the internal and external environment for the different needs of the hospital users;
- is a passionate innovator who listens, respects and facilitates change, recognising that he can't do it all himself.

If you are interested in finding out more about any of the ideas or projects suggested here, please contact [Antony](#). If you wish to register with the NHS Forest or would like to be the subject of a case study, please contact [Mary Zacaroli](#).