

# Quality assurance and outcomes



Our aspiration is to be the best, the safest, and most effective health and wellbeing provider there is – an organisation where our patients, members, customers and partners have a truly exceptional experience.

Underpinning our Quality aspiration is our belief that our people must be the most highly skilled professionals; our processes, practices and procedures must be evidence-based and meet, or exceed, healthcare standards; and our technology must be cutting edge.

In 2020, our commitment to Quality across the Charity withstood the ultimate test, when we made our hospital facilities available to the NHS in support of the fight against COVID-19. We're proud that we supported more than 242,000 NHS patient attendances, allowing people to benefit from care and treatment provided by our 31 hospitals.

The dedication and 'can-do' spirit of our teams showed no bounds in the way they responded to the challenges presented by the pandemic. In some areas, NHS Trusts transferred their whole service provision, such as cancer care, into the local Nuffield Health hospital. In other locations we provided a safe clinical environment for NHS patient overflow, and some of our hospitals took end of life patients, which necessitated palliative care. This was all a huge logistical challenge, which in normal times would have required months of meticulous planning. The speed of transformation of our sites was

2020 HIGHLIGHTS



**242,000**

NHS patient attendances across our 31 hospitals



**98%**

of hip replacement patients saw an improvement six months following surgery



**Top 10**

Featured in the NHS's Top 10 UK Hospitals list



**94%**

of hospitals rated 'good' or 'outstanding' by national regulators





**Caroline Smith**  
Chief Quality and  
Operating Officer

“We are proud to have worked in partnership with our NHS colleagues delivering high quality clinical care together, as one team.”

made possible because of Nuffield Health's long-term investment in clinical Quality and our commitment to safe and effective care provision.

We've always maintained strong relationships with our colleagues in the NHS and these strengthened during the year as we worked together, building new friendships, collaborating, and learning new skills. We were particularly touched when NHS staff came to our hospitals and joined our teams for the Thursday evening 'Clap for the NHS'.

### Governance

Good governance is the foundation of continuous improvement and best practice. Throughout the pandemic, Quality has remained the number one priority for Nuffield Health and will remain so as we move into 2021 and beyond. It continues to lead the agenda for our Board of Trustees and Executive Board meetings.

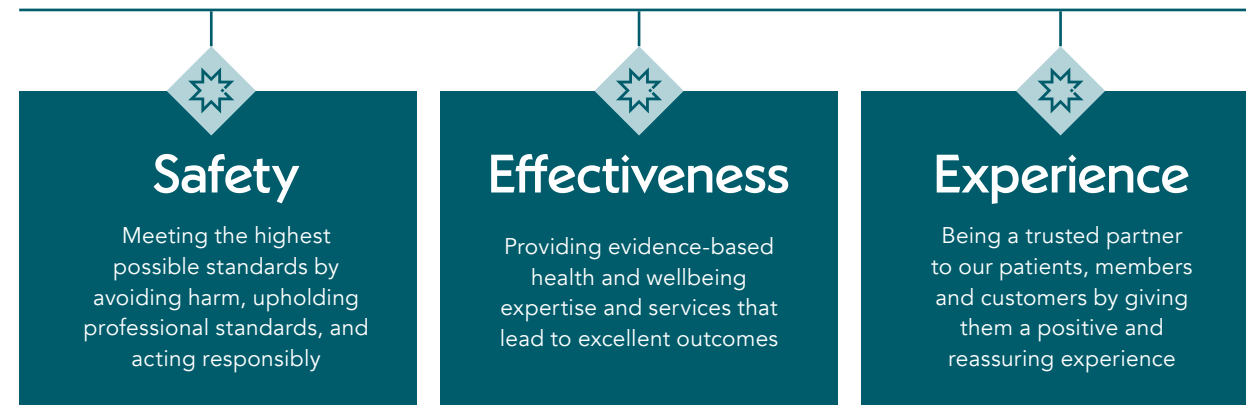
COVID-19 required the health sector to change much faster than it would normally, particularly in areas such as people development and training; communication; speed of response; and flexibility. Therefore, during 2020, meetings were held more regularly, mostly virtually, in order to facilitate agile decision making and support to our teams.

Throughout the pandemic, we remained true to our Quality aspiration and continued to apply the same level of rigour and Quality analysis to everything we did. This gave us confidence that our care standards were being maintained, despite the changes in activity and service provision.

We were operating in a changing and volatile environment. To enable our people to function safely and effectively, we developed a set of guiding principles to govern our services. These were updated continually, in line with evidence-based guidance, which translated NHS situations and requirements into the context of Nuffield Health.

Our long-standing commitment to Quality, and our decision not to compromise or modify this approach, enabled us to navigate our way through 2020. As we move into 2021, quality and safety will continue to be prioritised over financial performance. Everything we do will be evaluated against the pillars of our Quality Assurance Framework: Safety, Effectiveness and Experience.

## Quality Assurance Framework



CASE STUDY

“We did all we could.”

Nuffield Health's hospital in Woking, Surrey, had not experienced a patient death in 13 years. In March, when the pandemic meant the hospital came under the direction of the NHS Trust, the team were asked if they would take end of life patients. The answer was 'yes' and within two hours the first patient arrived.

It was a huge decision to make but one which matron Carole Ingleby felt was right, despite the fact that most of the team had only ever worked on relatively low risk elective surgery wards. “We've got single rooms so we could offer these patients the privacy and peace they needed,” said Carole. “We felt we could do a good job.”

Kat Truswell, Deputy Theatre Manager was part of the team dedicated to making the time as comfortable as possible for the patients. “We did all we could, including reading to them, playing their favourite music, or just listening and holding their hands,” said Kat. Conversations with patients were recorded on cards and given to relatives and carers. “To ensure everyone was guaranteed the respect and dignity they deserved, we contacted local religious leaders, including the Imam, to find out what was expected”, said Kat. It was important to the team that their end of life should be in line with a patient's religious beliefs.

The intensity of those three months inevitably took its toll on the hospital staff. “We called in the Charity's emotional wellbeing team early on, to give support to our people,” said Carole. “I'm so proud of everyone at the hospital,” she said. “They epitomised what life's all about, and that's being the best for each other.”

The 34 patients who died will always be in the hearts of the Woking team. A memorial rose garden has been created in the grounds of the hospital.

### Achieving high standards

94% of our hospitals are rated 'good' or 'outstanding' by national regulators. COVID-19 restrictions meant the Care Quality Commission (CQC) was unable to carry out face-to-face assessments during 2020. It therefore developed a transitional approach, comprising virtual monitoring. All our sites underwent virtual monitoring. We're pleased that, despite the challenges thrown up by COVID-19, no significant issues were raised by CQC in respect of Nuffield Health sites, and several received positive feedback.

Our HSSU played a key role in the fight against infection, continuing to safely disinfect, sterilise and deliver surgical equipment on a large scale, for us and others in the healthcare sector. HSSU is regulated by the British Standards Institution (BSI), which undertakes annual surveillance audits. Because of COVID-19, audits were carried out remotely, with tasks live-streamed for the auditors to observe. Our teams impressed the auditors with how well they adapted to enable 'access to all areas'.

With great feedback, and only two non-conformances recorded across all sites for the year, we were delighted that HSSU achieved a personal best in this most difficult of years when Quality and safety were paramount.

We're also proud to hold ISO standard certification in key areas: Environmental Management; Information Security Management; Quality Management; and Occupational Health and Safety Management. This demonstrates our commitment to Quality assurance.

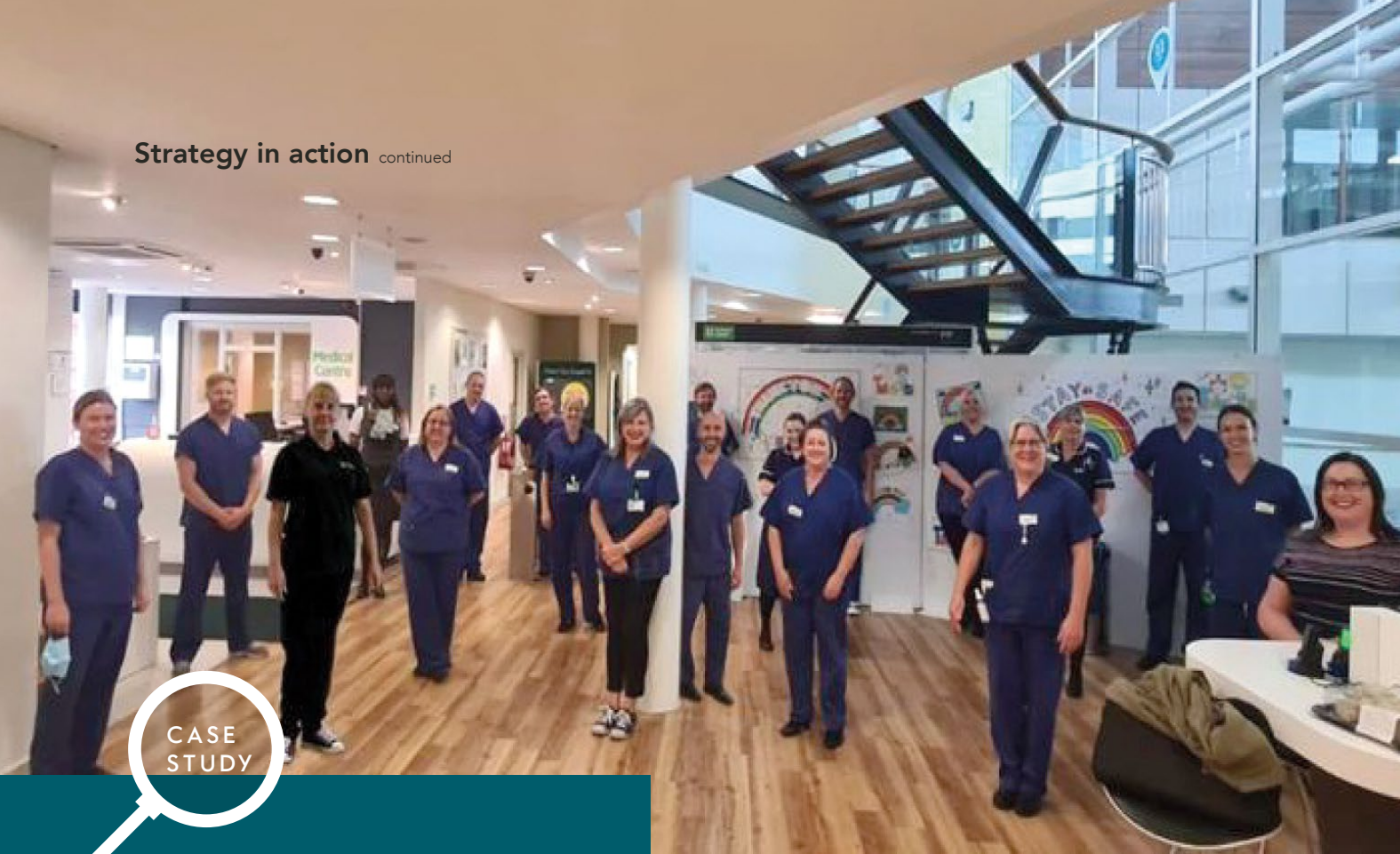
Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, we continued to advance our quality position and received industry recognition in several areas:

- Nursing Times Workforce Award for Preceptorship Programme of the Year
- featured in the NHS's Top 10 UK Hospitals list, with two sites providing significantly better health outcomes across both hip or knee replacement surgery\*
- 94% of knee replacement and 98% of hip replacement patients saw an improvement six months following surgery, in line with industry averages\*\*
- 69% of knee replacement and 70% of hip replacement patients achieved a better than expected health outcome, both above the 63% and 66% national averages.\*\*

\* PHIN publication – February 2021

\*\* NHS Digital publication – February 2021





CASE STUDY

## “Putting the care of the patient at the heart of everything.”

In March 2020, as our hospitals moved under the direction of the NHS, the decision was made to transform our CQC registered clinic at our fitness and wellbeing centre at Birmingham Rubery into a hub treating patients living with cancer. This meant chemotherapy for vulnerable patients from four of our hospitals could continue.

Within two weeks, the site was completely remodeled, with carpets taken up and replaced with easy to clean flooring, and the necessary equipment transported, tested and placed in position.

Deborah Scott, National Quality Lead for Cancer Services, said: “This was an excellent example of our hospitals working together collaboratively with our fitness and wellbeing centres, always putting the care of the patient at the heart of everything we did.”

Everything was done to make patients as comfortable as possible and transport was arranged for those living some distance from the site. Feedback showed patients felt safe and protected from the virus, because it was a closed unit. They also felt cared for and supported, in a welcoming and pleasant environment.

### Cancer care

Throughout the pandemic, our hospitals worked closely with NHS Trusts to provide safe, secure, clinically effective care for people living with cancer. Our relationship with the NHS was strengthened through these challenging times as we delivered high level expertise to facilitate the best patient outcomes. In some areas, the NHS Trust transferred its cancer provision into the local Nuffield Health hospital. For example, Addenbrookes Hospital relocated nurses, doctors and pharmacists to work alongside our Cambridge team.

The hubs set up in our CQC registered clinics, based within our fitness and wellbeing centres in Farnham and Birmingham Rubery, proved a lifeline for existing Nuffield Health patients living with cancer. The unique make up of our estate allowed us to transform our centres into clinical hubs, providing essential care to vulnerable patients in a clinically-safe and COVID-secure environment.

Despite the testing times, we delivered on our commitment to install iQemo at all our sites. iQemo is an electronic chemotherapy prescribing system, which provides automatic dose calculations, allergy and sensitivity alerting, and drug-to-drug interaction support. This was a significant achievement for us, and a key Quality improvement initiative. The system is safely managed, with effective governance controls, and is undoubtedly of great benefit to our patients.

In 2019, our Quality Lead for Cancer Services set up the Independent Sector Cancer Network (ISCN). As a result, a paper titled ‘Standards for cancer care in the

independent sector’ was developed, covering diagnosis to end of life care. Demonstrating the robustness of the paper, most independent healthcare providers adopted the standards during 2020. The standards also informed several of our cancer care policies and procedures. We remain committed to continually improving cancer services, in line with national cancer standards and best-practice guidance.

### Assessing people for surgery

At the beginning of 2020, we were focused on embedding our streamlined pre-operative assessment (POA) process across our hospital network to ensure patients were safe and fit for surgery. This included optimising clinical recovery and delivering long-term health benefits including improved mobility. However, in March, when we came together with the NHS, our focus changed and we adapted our pre-operative criteria, focusing on safe and effective admission. The use of robust pre-admission screening enabled us to mindfully support the NHS in a safe and secure manner, and ensure patient safety was safeguarded at all times.

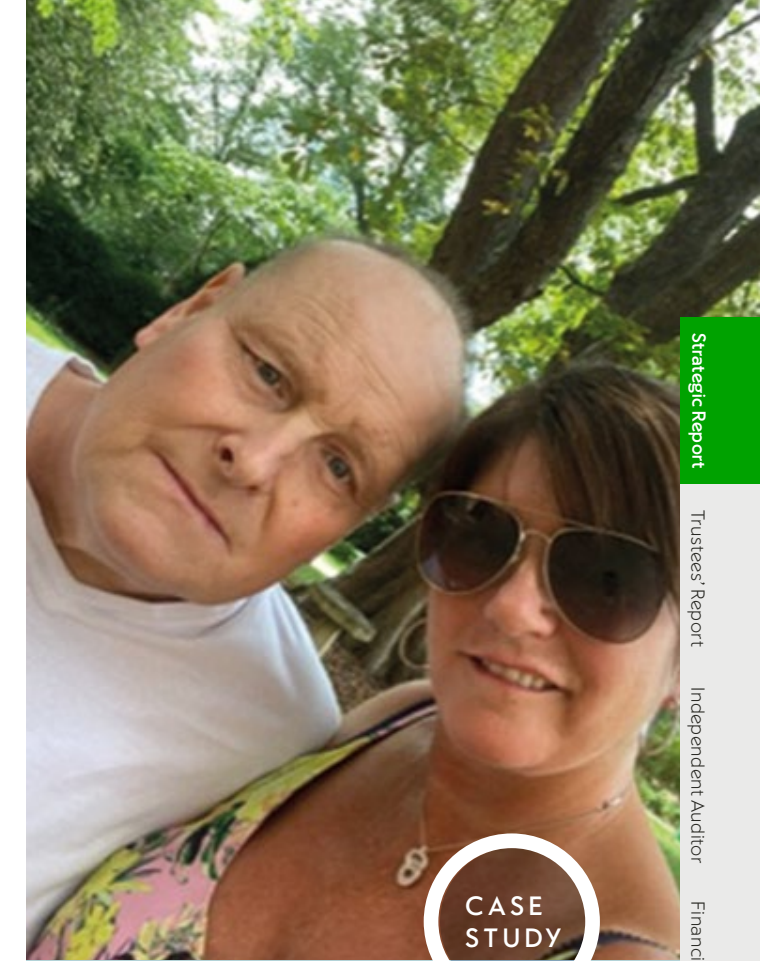
### Safety culture

We continually focus on improving our safety culture and have encouraged our people to report concerns, near misses, and incidents – however minor. It was no different in 2020, as we supported the NHS through the pandemic. The year understandably saw an increase in incidents, with deaths rising significantly in line with our NHS work, our varied activity profile and patient demographic during the pandemic. We maintained our clinical Quality standards, ensuring all deaths and adverse incidents were appropriately scrutinised, and learnings were used as a source of continuous improvement.

Never Events are defined by NHS England as ‘serious incidents that are wholly preventable because guidance or safety recommendations that provide strong systemic protective barriers are available at a national level, and should have been implemented by all healthcare providers’ (NHS Improvement, 2018).

Five Never Events were reported in 2020 (an increase of one, compared against 2019). Nuffield Health maintains a zero tolerance approach towards Never Events and strives for zero incidents. When they do occur, they are investigated by a senior clinical leader and critically reviewed by our Clinical Leadership Team and Quality Forum. Meticulous investigation and scrutiny enables us to identify root causes, deploy preventative actions, and ensure these incidents are used as a source of learning and continuous Quality improvement.

Nuffield Health is committed to encouraging an open safety culture, where all employees feel able to raise



CASE STUDY

## “They are all angels and I will say that forever.”

NHS patient Paul Aberdein was told in March 2020 his leukaemia had returned and that his transplant would have to take place after the COVID-19 peak. With his local NHS hospital focusing on COVID-19 patients, Paul’s treatment and continuation of care was transferred to the Nuffield Health hospital in Cambridge. His stay lasted 64 days.

“They kept me secure, helped me progress, and made me fit enough for surgery,” said Paul. “I really don’t know what would have happened otherwise.”

The Nuffield Health and NHS Addenbrooke’s Hospital teams worked together under one roof, sharing knowledge and experience to keep patients like Paul well, and build their strength.

“I had dedicated NHS and Nuffield Health nurses, doctors and specialists, working together 24/7. It’s hard to explain how being shielded in this way brought such immediate peace of mind. I’ve been so humbled by the whole experience. It was a total team effort, for which I am truly thankful,” said Paul, adding: “They are all angels and I will say that forever.”



“Infection prevention and control is extremely important. Chris thoroughly deserves this award for her leadership in this area. I thank her for stepping up to lead this vital work.”

**Ruth May**  
Chief Nursing Officer for England, on awarding the Silver Chief Nursing Officers’ Award to Chris Finch, Nuffield Health’s Infection Prevention and Control Lead Nurse

issues or concerns, and suggest improvements. A variety of channels and escalation mechanisms are in place to support this, including a confidential, and independently managed, Safecall hotline; our grievance process; and escalations via our Freedom to Speak Up Guardian and management teams.

During the year, we produced ‘Speak Up’ guidance that centred on the management of concerns relating to the pandemic. This encouraged open dialogue and allowed us to manage COVID-specific issues in a timely manner,

helping keep patients and our people safe. Patient safety is paramount in all our clinical environments. In 2020, we commissioned an external ‘Subject Matter Expert’ review of our Speak Up infrastructure to allow us to validate the efficiency of our systems and processes. An improvement plan, focusing on system, process and cultural enhancement, will be implemented in 2021. It will include a network of Speak Up Ambassadors to help better enable a culture of openness and transparency.

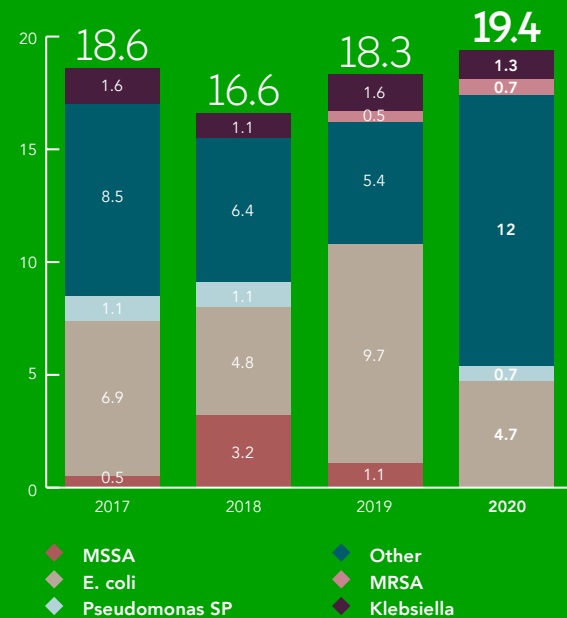
### Avoidable infections

2020 saw an increase in the overall number of infections compared to 2019, from 18.3 to 19.4 per 100,000 bed days (see chart).

- For the first time in five years, no MSSA blood stream infections were recorded.
- One case of MRSA, where the patient was negative on admission, was recorded. Subsequent investigations demonstrated effective infection prevention with no cross-contamination identified during the patient’s hospital stay, with the theatre team all testing negative. Our investigation determined that the infection was likely to have been community-acquired, as there was post-operative socialisation with family members, some of whom were MRSA carriers.
- E. coli infections halved and all cases were related to immuno-compromised oncology patients, who are a higher risk cohort.
- Eight cases of Clostridioides difficile were identified. Six were classed as community-acquired, as there had been no previous hospital interventions. Two cases were attributed to the hospital, but unavoidable as they were triggered by use of pre-operative antibiotics prescribed in line with national guidance.

### Bloodstream infections

Number of infections per 100,000 bed days



## Quality Improvement Plan for 2021

<h3>1 Enhance our safety culture</h3>	<p><b>What we plan to do</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Sustain and monitor excellent standards of practice in operating theatres</li> <li>◆ Refine our Speak Up systems and processes, deploying a new policy, best-practice training, and an ambassador framework that enhances current practice</li> <li>◆ Develop a Nuffield Health electronic patient record, using a modular, phased approach towards implementation.</li> </ul>
<h3>2 Be recognised for our commitment to professional development</h3>	<p><b>What we plan to do</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Deliver our Nightingale Programme to a cohort of future nursing leaders</li> <li>◆ Launch our Theatre Manager Development Programme to a second cohort</li> <li>◆ Launch our Registered Nurse Degree Apprenticeship to a pilot cohort of healthcare assistants. This accredited programme will enable them to train to become Registered Nurses, whilst working in clinical practice.</li> </ul>
<h3>3 Develop specialist services in line with best practice</h3>	<p><b>What we plan to do</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Continue to deliver our clinical enhancement plan within cancer services, focusing on the effective utilisation of systems (iQemo), and maintaining best-practice in multi-disciplinary team clinical management</li> <li>◆ Complete our standardisation of emergency care provision in primary care facilities. This includes the deployment of best practice algorithms and equipment, and the introduction of the Royal College of Physicians’ National Early Warning Score (NEWS) tool into all registered facilities.</li> </ul>
<h3>4 Enhance our governance</h3>	<p><b>What we plan to do</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Resume policy development, ensuring that our policy library is up to date and fully aligned with current UK regulation and evidence-based practice</li> <li>◆ Evaluate our governance infrastructure, seeking opportunities to improve ward-to-board reporting, clinical audit and adverse incident management.</li> </ul>

### International nurses

In the autumn we welcomed 60 nurses from the Philippines to help fill vacancies and reduce our reliance on temporary staffing. We’re delighted to add their knowledge and skills to our body of clinical expertise. Our Filipino nurses will not only help us to deliver high Quality care, they will add diversity and enrich the Charity.

All passed their Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCE) and are now fully registered with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC). Their overall pass rate was 15% higher than the 2020 national average. This is testament to the hard work of the nurses, and our Clinical Education team who provided quality support and guidance to the group.

We’re hugely impressed at their courage in coming to a different country in the middle of a pandemic, away from their families, and taking on new roles with such enthusiasm and skill. The nurses joined our teams on

the wards to support the NHS and the fight against COVID-19, as well as looking after our private patients.

In 2021 they will embark on our award-winning, newly designed, Preceptorship Programme to support their ongoing transition into the UK healthcare system and continue their development with Nuffield Health.

### Looking ahead

COVID-19 will remain a threat into 2021 and beyond. It will be incumbent upon us to continue to be agile and able to change systems and processes at short notice. One thing that will not change is Nuffield Health’s commitment to providing Quality care across all our activities and we applaud our teams for their selfless compassion and dedication during this difficult year.