



2024-25
**Annual
Report**



Contents *Passionate* about what you do? *So are we*



Annual report 2024-25

1.	CEO and Chair's reflections	2
2.	2024-25 at a glance	4
3.	Who we are	8
4.	Our year in review	10
6.	Quality & safety	12
7.	Our people	14
8.	Innovation and transformation	16
9.	Social value	18
10.	Governance	22
11.	Looking ahead	24
12.	Acknowledgement and thanks	26

Strong foundations

THE 2024–25 reporting period was one of progress, partnership and resilience for HUC. Across all regions in which we operate, colleagues continued to deliver safe, responsive and high-quality care despite the sustained pressures which faced urgent and unscheduled care. Their efforts reinforced HUC's position as a trusted NHS partner and demonstrated the value of our not-for-profit model in supporting communities when they need us most.

In 2024-25 HUC deepened its integration within Somerset and Cornwall while maintaining stability and strong performance across our established services in the East of England. These developments highlighted both the adaptability of our teams and the strength of the collaborative relationships that underpin our approach.

As a Board, we continue to be encouraged by the way HUC contributes constructively to local system priorities and works alongside commissioners and partners to improve pathways and patient experience across diverse settings.

Our governance focus has centred on quality, safety and transparency. The implementation of the Patient Safety Incident Response Framework (PSIRF) has been a significant milestone in maturing our learning culture. PSIRF encourages open dialogue, reflective practice and more consistent sharing of learning across the organisation, and we are already seeing the benefits of this shift.

Strengthened audit processes, enhanced reporting and increased leadership visibility have further supported this work, ensuring

■ These developments highlight the strength of our partnerships and the professionalism of our people – attributes that enable HUC to deliver consistent, patient-centred care despite continued system pressures

we maintain rigorous oversight and clear assurance across services.

Financial and operational resilience also remained key areas of Board attention. The wider NHS continues to face considerable constraints, but HUC has demonstrated sound stewardship, targeting resources where they have the greatest impact and ensuring investment aligns with the organisation's long-term priorities.

We have welcomed progress in workforce development, digital enablement and sustainability planning – areas that will remain essential to maintaining organisational strength in the years ahead.

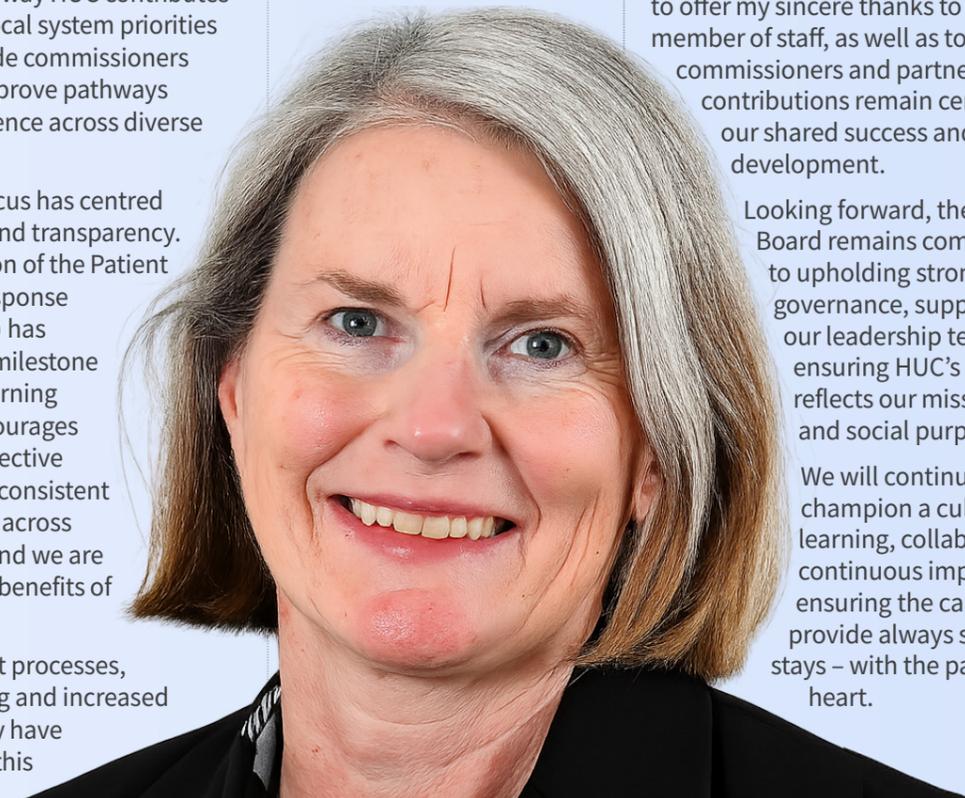
None of these achievements would be possible without our colleagues. Their professionalism, compassion and adaptability continue to define HUC and to shape the experience of our patients.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to offer my sincere thanks to every member of staff, as well as to our commissioners and partners whose contributions remain central to our shared success and ongoing development.

Looking forward, the Board remains committed to upholding strong governance, supporting our leadership team and ensuring HUC's growth reflects our mission, values and social purpose.

We will continue to champion a culture of learning, collaboration and continuous improvement, ensuring the care we provide always starts – and stays – with the patient at its heart.

Sarah Pickup
Chair



for future growth

THROUGHOUT 2024–25, we have demonstrated what is possible when teams, systems and partners work with shared purpose. During a period of significant operational pressure across the NHS, colleagues at HUC consistently showed resilience, compassion and professionalism in every service we deliver. Their dedication has ensured that patients receive safe, timely and person-centred care, even at the busiest times, and it continues to define the culture of our organisation.

A major theme has been our ability to adapt and respond to evolving system needs. As we strengthened our presence in Somerset and Cornwall and continued to deliver stable and high-performing services in the East of England, our teams embraced change with focus and commitment.

These expansions have allowed us to support local health economies more effectively and to contribute meaningfully to integrated care priorities across the regions we serve. The willingness of colleagues to work collaboratively has played a crucial role in ensuring the continuity and reliability of our services.

We also made significant progress in operational infrastructure and digital capability. The opening of our new Peterborough Contact Centre provides a modern, flexible base for hybrid working and strengthens service resilience. In the South West, bringing colleagues together into a single operational hub has improved collaboration and enabled more consistent ways of working.

Enhancements to call-handling technology, analytics and data visibility have supported faster, more informed decision-making,

■ Our people remain HUC's greatest asset. Their professionalism, compassion, and resilience continue to be the driving force behind everything we achieve

enabling teams to manage demand with greater confidence and clarity. Quality and safety remained at the forefront of our operational delivery. The introduction of the Patient Safety Incident Response Framework (PSIRF) has encouraged greater openness, more reflective practice and a stronger focus on learning. The positive feedback from the Care Quality Commission, including a 'Good' rating for our Integrated Urgent Care services in the East, reflects the sustained efforts of teams across HUC and our commitment to continuous improvement and robust clinical governance.

Supporting our people has been another priority. We have strengthened induction, expanded leadership development and invested in wellbeing initiatives that help colleagues feel supported, valued and equipped for their roles. The professionalism and compassion of our workforce remain our greatest strength and the foundation of the care we provide.

Looking ahead, our focus will be on building sustainability, innovation and capacity. We will continue to enhance our digital tools, strengthen operational resilience, deepen collaboration with system partners and invest in our people.

As a social enterprise, every improvement we make is reinvested into patient care. I am proud of what we have achieved together and confident in our ability to continue delivering high-quality, patient-centred care in the year ahead.

David Archer
CEO



2024-25 at a glance



4.7 million service users

Across the East and South West of England



500-plus clinicians

Including GPs, Emergency Care Practitioners, Nurses and Paramedics



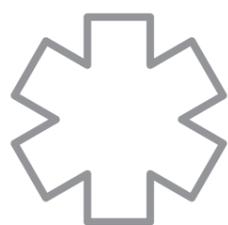
>1.5m calls to NHS 111

Equating to a call every 20 seconds 24/7

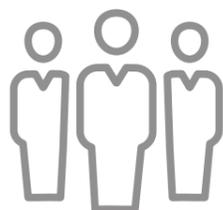


Call times reduced by circa 20%

Average handling time falls from 13 mins to 10.6



10 urgent & primary care services



Increased support for vital roles

Operational Delivery Manager position created



Reserves of £16+ million

Ensuring liquidity and financial stability



91% rate dental care 'very good'

Across the East and South West of England



>10,000 home visits

Our Acute In Hours Visiting Service made 10,128 home visits

Passionate about what you do? *So are we*



HUC drivers deliver Small Acts of Kindness gift bags



Staff don fancy dress to mark Halloween



A HUC Heroes Awards presentation in 2024



Colleagues embark on a litter pick



Teaming up with veterans from the Armed Forces



New recruits having completed training



Working with a homeless charity



A Young Healthwatch team on a visit to HUC

2024-25 at a glance



Nearly 10% of England's NHS 111 calls

Between 8-9% of all the calls made to NHS 111 are dealt with by HUC



6% reduction in energy consumption



94% NHS Pathways pass rate

Circa 350 Health Advisors and 50 Clinical Advisors complete training



Safeguarding enhanced

Inappropriate referrals fall by circa 300 per quarter



>18,000 ambulances redirected

Revalidation facilitates more efficient use of critical resources



IUC services rated 'Good'

Care Quality Commission impressed by findings



Enhanced reporting culture

106% increase in Patient Safety Incidents



40 Clinical Advisors recruited



>1,000 staff across the East and SW

Across the East and South West of England

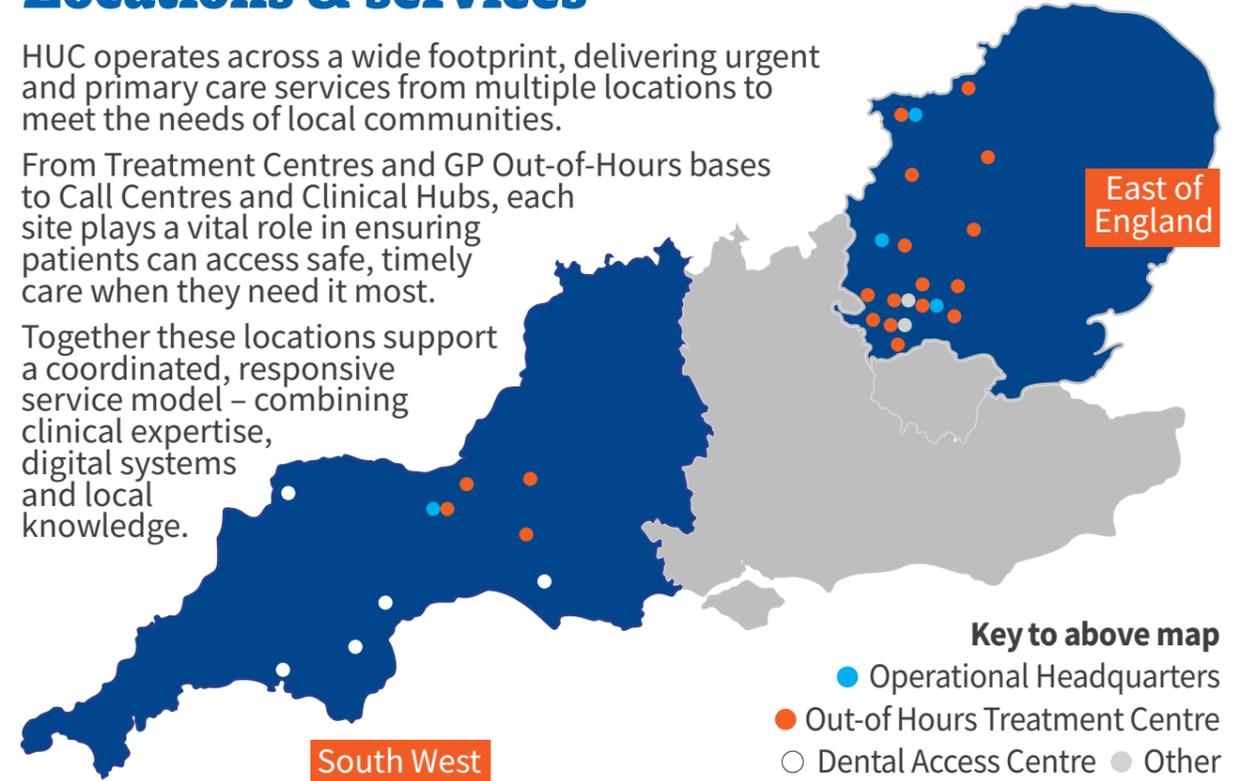
Passionate about what you do? *So are we*

Locations & services

HUC operates across a wide footprint, delivering urgent and primary care services from multiple locations to meet the needs of local communities.

From Treatment Centres and GP Out-of-Hours bases to Call Centres and Clinical Hubs, each site plays a vital role in ensuring patients can access safe, timely care when they need it most.

Together these locations support a coordinated, responsive service model – combining clinical expertise, digital systems and local knowledge.



Operational Headquarters			
Bedford	Peterborough	Taunton	Welwyn Garden City
Out-of-Hours Treatment Centres			
Bedford	Biggleswade	Borehamwood	Bridgwater
Cambridge	Doddington	Dunmow	Dunstable
Ely	Epping	Harlow	Hemel Hempstead
Hertford	Huntingdon	Luton	Peterborough
Shepton Mallet	St Albans	Stevenage	Taunton
Wisbech	Welwyn Garden City	Yeovil	
Dental Access Centres			
Barnstaple	Dorchester	Exeter	Newton Abbot
Plymouth			
Other Services – MIUs / GPs / UTCs / Integrated Care Hubs			
Cheshunt	Luton	St Albans	

Who we are

Putting people and patients at the heart of care

HUC is a not-for-profit social enterprise and trusted NHS partner providing high-quality, fair and sustainable healthcare services to the communities we serve across the East and South West of England.

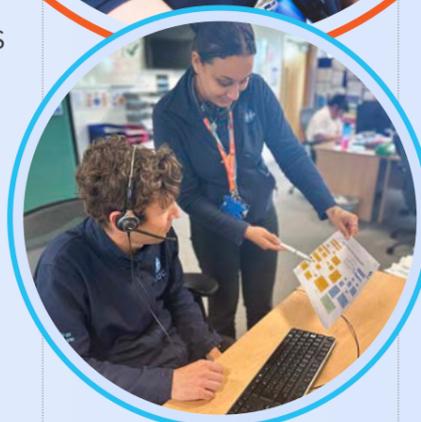
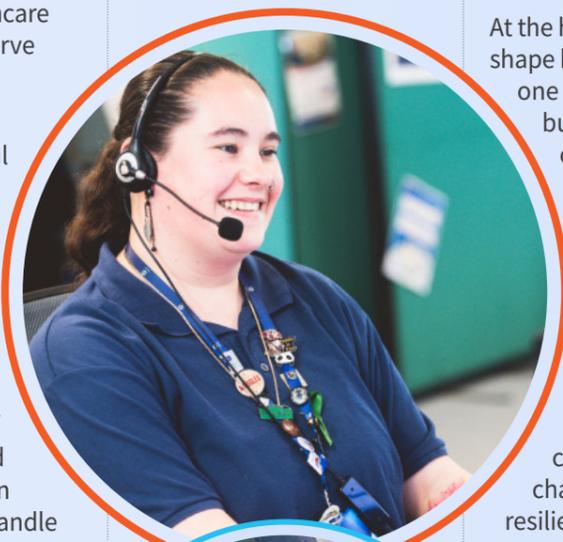
Our purpose is simple yet powerful – to deliver compassionate, safe and effective care while offering fulfilling and rewarding careers that enable every colleague to thrive and develop professionally.

Founded as Herts Urgent Care in 2007, HUC has evolved into one of the leading providers of integrated urgent and primary care services in the region. Each year, our teams handle millions of patient contacts through NHS 111, out-of-hours primary care, clinical assessment, and community-based pathways. We bring together clinical expertise, innovation and partnership working to help local health systems respond to demand, improve access, and deliver better outcomes for patients.

Our mission guides everything we do: to provide healthcare that is high-quality, equitable and sustainable. This means delivering care that meets people's needs wherever and whenever they arise, while building an organisation where colleagues feel supported, valued and able to reach their potential.

Our vision is to be an outstanding provider of healthcare services – recognised not only for quality and performance but also for compassion and care delivered at scale.

We aim to be a sustainable organisation that attracts, develops and retains a highly skilled and committed workforce. We are driven by a belief that compassionate care, effective teamwork and shared purpose create the foundation for safe and responsive



■ HUC delivers compassionate, high-quality care through collaboration, innovation, and integrity across communities in the East and South West

services that make a genuine difference to people's lives.

At the heart of HUC are our values, which shape how we work and how we support one another. We are Collaborative, building effective relationships with our partners, commissioners and colleagues to achieve shared goals and deliver joined-up care.

We are Caring, putting patients and colleagues first, demonstrating empathy and kindness in every interaction. We are Dynamic, encouraging innovation at every level, learning continuously, and approaching challenges with creativity and resilience. And we are Respectful, creating an inclusive and transparent culture built on openness, honesty and pride in what we do.

These values continue to guide us as we embed new services in Somerset and Cornwall, strengthen our established operations in the East of England, and invest in the infrastructure, digital tools and workforce needed to deliver high-quality care. The opening of our new Bedford Contact Centre and the relocation of colleagues in the South West are tangible examples of how we are building capacity and resilience to support frontline care.

As a social enterprise, every surplus we generate is reinvested into patient care, service improvement and staff development. We are committed to using our resources wisely, ensuring that innovation and improvement translate directly into better experiences for patients and colleagues alike.

HUC's success is built on the professionalism of our people and the strength of our partnerships. Together, we remain focused on our shared vision – delivering care that truly starts, and stays, with the patient at its heart.

Passionate about what you do? *So are we*



Our year in review

A year of progress, partnership and purpose

Safe, effective and compassionate services

The 2024–25 reporting period saw a year of significant progress and purposeful transformation for HUC. Against the backdrop of sustained demand across urgent and primary care, we continued to deliver high-quality, patient-centred services – while modernising how we work and strengthening the systems that support our people and patients.

Driving quality improvement

Our commitment to quality and patient safety remained central to every part of the organisation. The introduction and implementation of the Patient Safety Incident Response Framework (PSIRF) marked a step change in how HUC learns from experience.

During 2024–25, the framework was embedded across all services, supported by new governance processes, leadership engagement, and staff training. We established incident response plans, strengthened the flow of learning between teams, and began sharing improvement stories more widely through internal networks.

Other key priorities – including improving patient experience, enhancing clinical governance, and strengthening workforce support – were progressed through targeted initiatives. Feedback from staff and service users informed a series of small but meaningful changes: from refinements to call-handling processes and documentation templates, to improved induction and peer-support arrangements for new advisers.

Together, these developments



■ **2024–25 was a year of purposeful transformation – strengthening our services, supporting our people, and delivering safe, compassionate care for every patient**

are helping to nurture a culture of learning, openness, and continuous improvement. Importantly, this work has focused not just on systems and processes, but on everyday behaviours – encouraging reflection, constructive challenge, and shared responsibility for quality at all levels of the organisation.

By creating space for teams to learn from both what goes well and what can be improved, HUC is strengthening the foundations for safer care and more consistent patient experiences over the long term.

Transformation and innovation

Alongside these quality priorities, HUC invested in infrastructure, digital capability, and partnership working. The opening of the new Bedford Contact Centre created additional capacity and a modern, flexible workspace that supports hybrid working and collaboration. In the South West, the relocation of colleagues to a new operational base enhanced resilience and closer integration with local partners.

Our digital transformation programme gathered pace, with upgrades to telephony, call-handling, and data-analytics systems that improve visibility of real-time performance. Enhanced dashboards now enable managers and clinicians to make faster, better-informed decisions. These innovations, supported by strong IT governance, underpin the organisation's ability to deliver safe and responsive care at scale.

Expanding and strengthening services

HUC's growth during 2024–25 reflects our ability to respond to local priorities

and system needs. We have deepened our presence in Somerset and Cornwall, embedding services within new integrated care systems, while continuing to deliver consistently high performance in the East of England. Our NHS 111, out-of-hours, and clinical assessment services continue to operate at large scale, handling millions of patient contacts with professionalism and compassion.

We also advanced work on our Green Plan, embedding sustainability principles into operational planning, fleet management, and estates decisions. These changes contribute to a more efficient, environmentally responsible organisation that is prepared for the future.

Supporting our people

None of this progress would have been possible without the commitment of our workforce. Over the year, we expanded leadership and wellbeing initiatives, introduced new professional-development pathways, and invested in training to support continuous improvement.

Regular engagement sessions, internal communications, and the relaunch of the 'One HUC' programme have strengthened a shared sense of purpose across teams and regions.

Looking ahead

As we advance through 2025–26, HUC is well positioned to build on the progress achieved. Our focus remains on improving patient outcomes, enhancing digital capability, and supporting our people to deliver care of the highest quality.

Through collaboration, innovation, and a steadfast commitment to our mission, we will continue to evolve – delivering care that truly starts, and stays, with the patient at its heart.

Passionate about what you do? **So are we**



Quality and safety

Embedding learning, listening to patients, protecting people

Embedding a culture of learning

Delivering safe, high-quality care is at the heart of everything HUC does. During 2024–25, we strengthened our systems and culture through the implementation of the Patient Safety Incident Response Framework (PSIRF) – a major development in how the NHS approaches patient safety and organisational learning.

PSIRF has shifted HUC's focus from isolated incident reviews to broader learning and prevention. Over the year, teams across all services – from NHS 111 to out-of-hours and clinical assessment – worked together to embed its principles into everyday practice. We introduced clearer reporting pathways, new training for staff, and a more open approach to sharing insights across regions.

Each incident, complaint, or piece of feedback is now treated as an opportunity to learn, not just a process to complete. Dedicated learning response groups bring together clinicians, operational leads, and governance staff to identify themes, share best practice, and agree practical actions. This approach is already leading to better understanding of clinical risk, improved escalation processes, and stronger collaboration between sites.

This work has helped to normalise learning as part of everyday practice, rather than something triggered only by serious incidents. Teams are increasingly encouraged to reflect on near misses, positive outcomes, and examples of effective teamwork, using these insights to strengthen consistency across services.

By supporting open discussion and shared reflection, HUC is fostering an environment where staff feel



■ **Every lesson learned and every improvement made strengthens our culture of safety - ensuring patients receive the best possible care, every time**

confident to speak up and contribute to improvement, helping to embed learning into routine decision-making and clinical practice.

Listening to patients and acting on feedback

Patients and service users continue to shape how we improve. Across 2024–25, HUC collected thousands of comments, survey responses, and compliments – and, crucially, acted on them.

Through our 'You Said, We Did' programme, patient feedback has led directly to a series of service changes. For example, feedback from callers highlighted the need for clearer explanations during call transfers; in response, updated call scripts and adviser guidance were introduced to make the process more transparent and reassuring.

Another recurring theme was waiting times for call-backs from clinicians. HUC responded by refining its clinical triage system, improving prioritisation for higher-risk patients, and enhancing real-time visibility of pending cases.

We also used feedback from service users in Somerset and Cornwall to tailor information materials and improve accessibility for people using our services for the first time. These small but meaningful changes demonstrate our commitment to listening, learning, and continuously improving the experience of care.

Safeguarding people and promoting wellbeing

Safeguarding remains a central part of our commitment to quality and safety. HUC's safeguarding team works closely with local partners, Integrated Care

Boards, and safeguarding boards to protect vulnerable adults and children and to ensure that all concerns are acted upon swiftly and appropriately.

During 2024–25, the team delivered new training to enhance staff awareness of domestic abuse, mental health crises, and child exploitation, strengthening the confidence of frontline colleagues in recognising and responding to risk. Safeguarding leads also collaborated with our clinical advisers to refine documentation and referral processes, ensuring information flows efficiently between services.

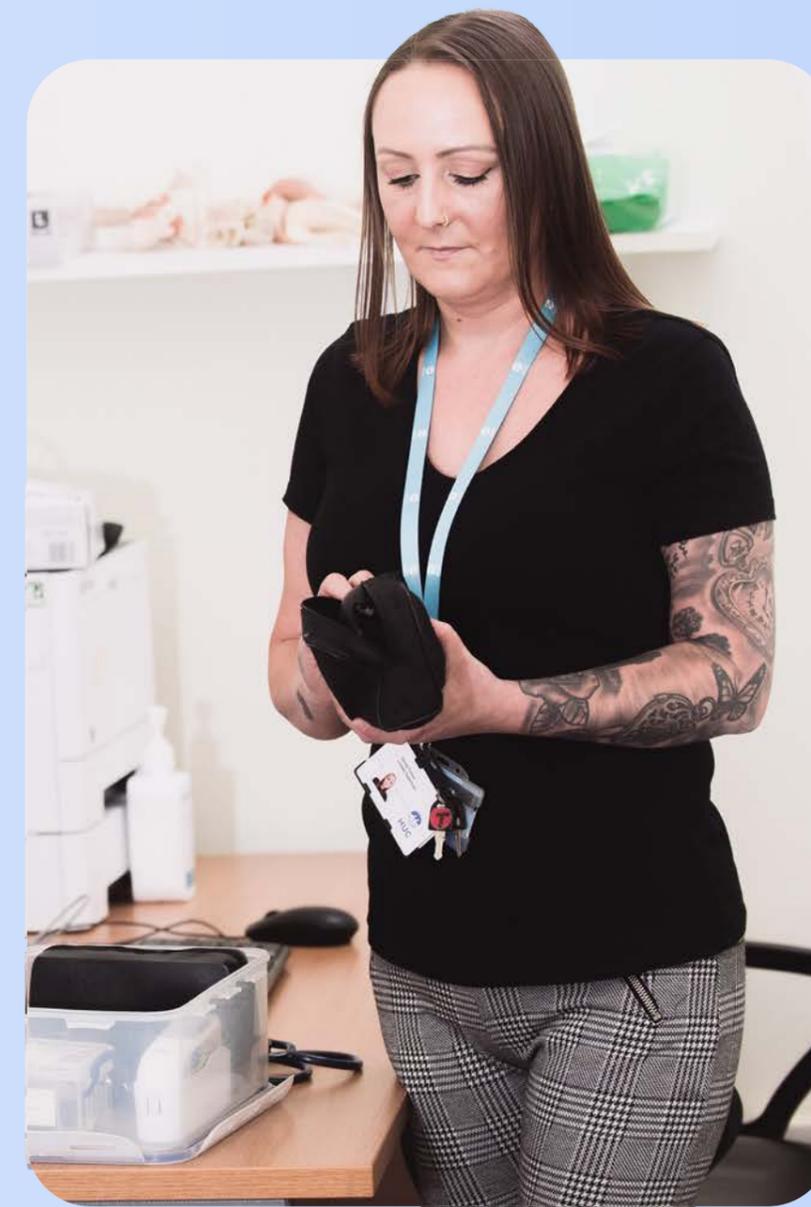
One case, for example, involved a call to NHS 111 that raised concerns about a child's welfare. Thanks to the quick response of our trained advisers and the escalation pathways now embedded under PSIRF, the child was rapidly referred to local safeguarding partners and received timely support. This kind of joined-up working illustrates the impact of our safeguarding approach in practice.

Continuous improvement through partnership

Quality and safety are everyone's responsibility at HUC – and our progress depends on the expertise, compassion, and vigilance of our people. Over the year, we have continued to strengthen governance oversight, refine risk management processes, and promote multidisciplinary collaboration across all our sites.

By embedding PSIRF, listening to patient voices, and maintaining a strong safeguarding culture, HUC continues to demonstrate its commitment to care shaped around patient needs. Every lesson learned, every improvement made, brings us closer to our goal: care that truly starts, and stays, with the patient at its heart.

Passionate about what you do? **So are we**



Our people

Building a supportive, inclusive and skilled HUC workforce

Embedding a culture of learning

HUC's colleagues remain at the heart of everything the organisation achieves. Across all services and sites, our people demonstrate professionalism, compassion, and resilience in delivering safe, effective, high-quality care to patients and communities. Their commitment underpins HUC's success and its reputation as a trusted NHS partner.

Wellbeing and support

Colleague wellbeing continued to be a central priority throughout 2024–25. The organisation maintained a clear focus on supporting physical, mental, and emotional health, recognising that staff wellbeing directly affects the quality of patient care. Initiatives included targeted communications to raise awareness of support resources, promotion of the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), and continued partnership with Occupational Health to provide timely access to advice. Managers also received guidance to help them recognise and respond to wellbeing concerns.

Regular internal communications encouraged open conversations about workload, morale, and support needs, helping to identify areas for improvement. HUC's approach remains one of prevention, early intervention, and care – ensuring colleagues have access to help when they need it.

Diversity, inclusion and belonging

HUC is proud of its diverse workforce and is committed to maintaining a culture where everyone feels

■ Colleagues consistently identify teamwork, communication, and mutual support as defining aspects of HUC's culture



welcome, valued, and able to contribute fully. During 2024–25, the organisation continued to strengthen its work on equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), supported by leadership from the People and Culture teams.

HUC's EDI framework sets out a clear commitment to fair and equitable treatment in recruitment, training, and career progression. Policies are reviewed regularly to ensure inclusivity and compliance with legislation. Data monitoring and staff feedback continue to inform targeted actions to address under-representation and improve accessibility.

HUC remains committed to providing equal opportunities, fostering respect, and ensuring that individual differences are recognised and celebrated as part of its culture.

Leadership and professional development

Developing and supporting leaders at all levels remained a key focus in 2024–25. The Leadership Development Programme continued to equip managers with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to lead effectively in complex environments. The programme emphasises compassionate leadership, effective communication, and coaching and mentoring. It supports both experienced and emerging leaders and is central to HUC's succession planning.

Training opportunities were extended across the workforce. Health Advisers, Clinical Advisers, and support staff all benefited from enhanced induction, refresher training, and continuous professional development. These

opportunities ensure colleagues remain up to date with the latest standards and are confident in applying their skills.

Digital learning platforms supported flexible access, enabling colleagues to complete mandatory and development modules at times that suit their shifts.

Engagement and recognition

Colleague engagement continued to play a vital role in shaping improvement. HUC's regular Staff Survey and engagement forums provide important insight into colleagues' experiences. Feedback informs organisational priorities and ensures policies reflect real needs. Recognition remains a valued part of HUC's culture.

Managers and teams highlight examples of exceptional performance and teamwork through local recognition schemes and internal communications. These initiatives reinforce shared pride and underline how individual contributions combine to deliver outstanding patient care.

Looking ahead

In 2025–26, HUC has continued to invest in its people through leadership development, wellbeing initiatives, and programmes that strengthen inclusion and belonging. Work will also continue to develop clearer career pathways, supporting internal progression and professional growth.

Colleagues consistently identify teamwork, communication, and mutual support as defining aspects of HUC's working culture. That shared sense of purpose – of being one organisation united in care – remains the foundation for everything we do and the key to delivering high-quality, patient-centred services across all the communities we serve.

Passionate about what you do? *So are we*



Innovation & transformation

Driving change through collaboration and technology

Innovation at the heart of improvement

HUC continues to embrace innovation as a driver of improvement, sustainability, and high-quality care. Work in 2024–25 focused on partnership, digital enablement, and service redesign – ensuring innovation directly supports patient outcomes, workforce wellbeing, and system resilience.

Strategic innovation and collaboration

Innovation at HUC is collaborative. Working with Integrated Care Boards, NHS partners, and community organisations, we identify shared challenges and co-design solutions that improve access, experience, and quality.

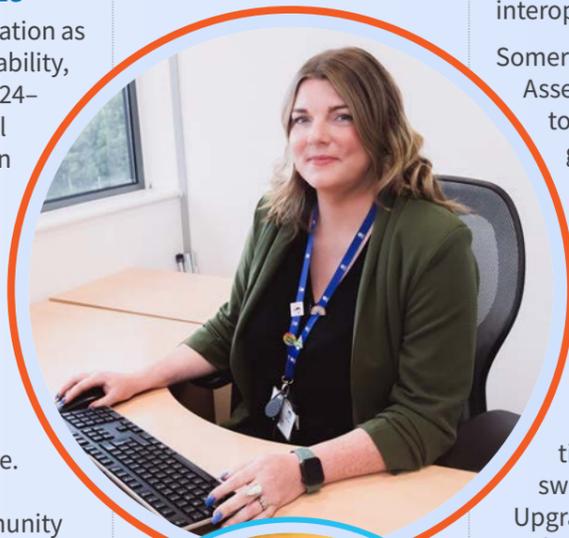
In 2024–25, this approach underpinned several system-wide projects, including the Care Coordination Hub in Somerset, the ‘Perfect Day’ Directory of Services initiative, and continued NHS 111 performance improvement. Each showed how partnership, insight, and flexibility deliver consistent, high-quality outcomes.

These programmes also demonstrated the value of testing ideas at scale while remaining responsive to local context. By combining operational insight with frontline expertise, HUC has been able to adapt approaches quickly, learn what works, and refine delivery in real time.

This collaborative, iterative approach ensures that innovation remains practical and grounded, delivering improvements that are sustainable for services and meaningful for the patients and communities we serve.

Digital transformation

Digital innovation remained central to



■ Innovation at HUC is never about technology alone - it's about working together to make every patient journey simpler, safer, and more joined-up

service improvement. Major technology transitions strengthened resilience, interoperability, and clinical safety.

Somerset and East of England Clinical Assessment Services were migrated to a single hosted Adastra platform, giving seamless oversight across regions. Similar integration for Out-of-Hours and Dental Helpline services enhanced efficiency and created a more connected patient journey.

The new Monitoring Activity and Performance (MAP) dashboard now provides real-time operational data, enabling swift, evidence-based decisions. Upgrades to the Storm telephony platform and VMware Horizon system improved connectivity and speed, while work began on virtual smartcards and an integrated workforce management system.

Redesigning services

Transformation extended beyond technology to service design. Programmes targeted efficiency, variation, and capacity planning. Pan-HUC rotas across NHS 111 and Clinical Assessment Services created a single, flexible workforce model, improving resilience during peaks and supporting a consistent patient experience.

The relocation of the Peterborough Contact Centre to modern, purpose-built premises further strengthened training, engagement, and operational capability, providing high-quality facilities and scope for growth.

Partnership and social value

HUC's transformation agenda is supported by a clear commercial and social value framework. The Commercial Development function seeks opportunities aligned with our

mission while addressing system priorities around equity, access, and integration.

During 2024–25, HUC secured urgent-care contract extensions across Hertfordshire and West Essex, Somerset, and Bedfordshire – reflecting commissioner confidence in sustainable, high-quality delivery. Relationships with Primary Care Networks, local authorities, and Voluntary, Community, Faith, and Social Enterprise partners were strengthened to support more joined-up, locally responsive care.

Collaboration with Healthwatch provided valuable insight into patient experience, particularly for younger and vulnerable service users. Partnerships with groups such as Small Acts of Kindness and Luton City of Sanctuary reinforced HUC's commitment to community wellbeing and inclusion.

Continuous learning and future priorities

Innovation at HUC is evidence-driven. Transformation teams use staff and patient feedback, audit findings, and clinical governance data to refine processes and share learning across services. The emphasis is on practical, safe change that simplifies systems and empowers teams.

In 2025–26, HUC has continued to embed innovation through its Transformation and Digital Strategies – expanding digital integration, strengthening predictive analytics for workforce and demand planning, and deepening partnerships that enhance system resilience and patient care.

By combining collaboration with technology, HUC is building a future-ready organisation that continues to learn, adapt, and innovate in delivering exceptional care.



Passionate about what you do? *So are we*

Supporting people, communities and the planet

Creating social value

HUC's commitment to social value reflects its founding purpose as a not-for-profit social enterprise – to deliver care that benefits patients, colleagues, and communities alike.

In 2024–25, this commitment continued to shape how we worked: from developing partnerships with voluntary and community organisations to investing in education, sustainability, and inclusion.

By embedding social value into every part of our business, we ensure that our success is shared across the systems and communities we serve.

Working in partnership with our communities

Collaboration remained central to HUC's approach to social value during 2024–25. Across the East of England and South West, we strengthened partnerships with voluntary, community, faith, and social enterprise (VCFSE) organisations to reach people who may otherwise struggle to access care.

We became active members of local VCFSE alliances across Hertfordshire & West Essex and Luton & Bedfordshire, helping to connect health and community services more effectively.

This approach also supported proactive engagement through Healthwatch, where HUC colleagues presented at local AGMs and contributed to patient-facing materials co-designed with young people from Central Bedfordshire.

Colleagues hosted a visit to the Bedford Contact Centre from ICB urgent and emergency care commissioners and primary care teams, alongside system-wide pathway demonstration sessions



■ As a social enterprise, HUC's success is measured not by profit, but by the difference we make - for our patients, our people, and our communities

involving primary care, community services, and the VCFSE sector. These sessions improved awareness of HUC's services and created stronger working links across the system.

We also developed new partnerships with hospices, including Keech and Sue Ryder, supporting the transformation team in replicating the established palliative care pathway from Cambridgeshire & Peterborough within Luton & Bedfordshire. This work is improving access to timely, compassionate support for patients who have complex needs.

Tackling inequalities through innovation

HUC continues to seek innovative ways to reduce health inequalities and improve local access. A standout example in 2024–25 was the installation of a health kiosk at Luton Town Centre Surgery, funded through targeted system support.

The kiosk, available during all surgery opening hours and accessible in five languages, helps patients check key health metrics and access information independently or with staff support.

We also participated in the Dental Access Pilot across the East of England, contributing operational insight to help test new approaches to urgent dental care.

At the same time, HUC maintained strong relationships with community partners such as Small Acts of Kindness, distributing dozens of winter-support bags to vulnerable individuals across Luton & Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire & West Essex.



Investing in skills, sustainability and the future

Supporting education, skills and inclusion

HUC plays an active role in supporting learning and career development across the health system. In 2024–25, a new partnership was established with the University of Bedfordshire, working with Dr Nenadi Adamu, Senior Lecturer in Society, Community and Health.

The collaboration gives MSc Integrated Healthcare Practice and Strategic Leadership students the opportunity to spend time at a HUC contact centre, gaining first-hand understanding of NHS 111 operations and how urgent care integrates into wider healthcare pathways.

We also supported local work-experience placements between July and September 2024, enabling students from nearby colleges to experience healthcare roles within a supportive, structured environment.

Beyond formal programmes, colleagues across HUC continued to make personal contributions to community wellbeing – from fundraising for St Clare's Hospice to donating blood in support of national NHS campaigns. These individual acts exemplify the caring culture that defines our workforce.

Championing sustainability

Environmental sustainability remains a key part of HUC's social value framework. Guided by our Green Plan, we are embedding sustainability principles across estates, fleet, and procurement.

HUC's Bedford and Peterborough



■ **By working with partners in education and sustainability, HUC helps shape a more compassionate, innovative healthcare system**

Contact Centres have been designed with energy efficiency and flexible working in mind, reducing both emissions and travel. Fleet modernisation and improved scheduling have cut unnecessary mileage, while increased use of virtual meetings and hybrid working has further reduced our carbon footprint.

We also took part in the Luton Sustainability Business Support Programme, enrolling through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to strengthen sustainability practice within primary care. This initiative connected HUC's Luton Town Centre Surgery with other organisations – including NHS England, Transport for London, and Network Rail – to share learning and promote local sustainability leadership.

Looking ahead

In 2025–26, HUC has continued to build on this foundation of partnership and social impact. Priorities include deepening engagement with VCFSE networks, expanding educational collaborations, and strengthening reporting of measurable social-value outcomes. We will also continue to integrate sustainability goals into operational and estates planning as part of our wider transformation strategy.

By combining compassion, collaboration, and environmental responsibility, HUC continues to demonstrate that delivering outstanding healthcare and creating community benefit go hand in hand.



Ensuring integrity, oversight and accountability

HUC's governance framework ensures the organisation is safe, well-led, and accountable – underpinning the delivery of high-quality, patient-centred services. As a not-for-profit social enterprise delivering NHS-commissioned care, HUC combines the rigour of corporate oversight with the values of public service.

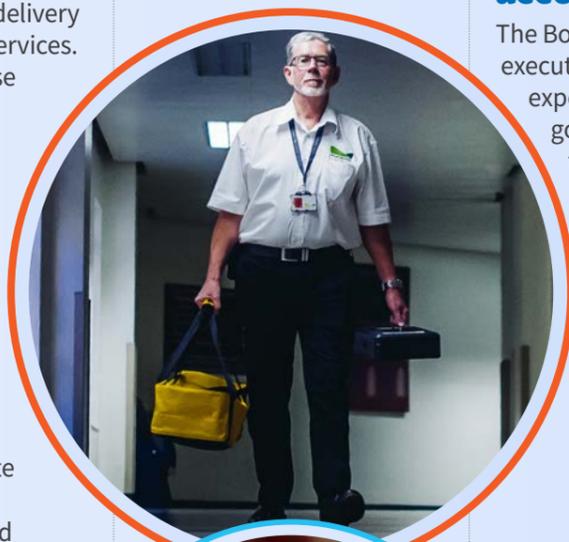
A structured assurance-led model

Governance at HUC is based on a structured assurance model linking operational delivery, clinical governance, and corporate decision-making. Oversight is provided through committees and reporting mechanisms that promote transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement.

The Board of Directors sets strategic direction and monitors performance in line with the NHS Triple Aim – improving outcomes, enhancing experience, and ensuring best use of resources. Regular assurance reports on quality, safety, finance, workforce, and risk management inform decision-making, supported by internal and external audit.

The Clinical Quality and Governance Committee oversees patient safety, clinical effectiveness, and experience, ensuring that learning from incidents and feedback leads to improvement. The Executive Management Team provides day-to-day leadership and drives delivery against priorities.

Risk management is embedded at all levels. HUC's Board Assurance Framework (BAF) identifies and monitors principal risks to strategic objectives, ensuring controls and mitigations are in place. Reviewed quarterly, the BAF forms the cornerstone of the organisation's corporate assurance.



■ **Strong governance isn't just about oversight - it's about culture, integrity, and ensuring that quality and safety run through everything we do**

Leadership and accountability

The Board includes executive and non-executive directors who bring extensive experience across healthcare, governance, and business. Together they provide balanced scrutiny and support.

Clear lines of accountability run from frontline services through to Board level. Clinical leadership ensures patient safety and quality remain central to every decision, while operational review meetings maintain oversight of performance, compliance, and improvement.

HUC also benefits from strong partnership governance, working with Integrated Care Boards, NHS England, and other partners to align with wider system priorities.

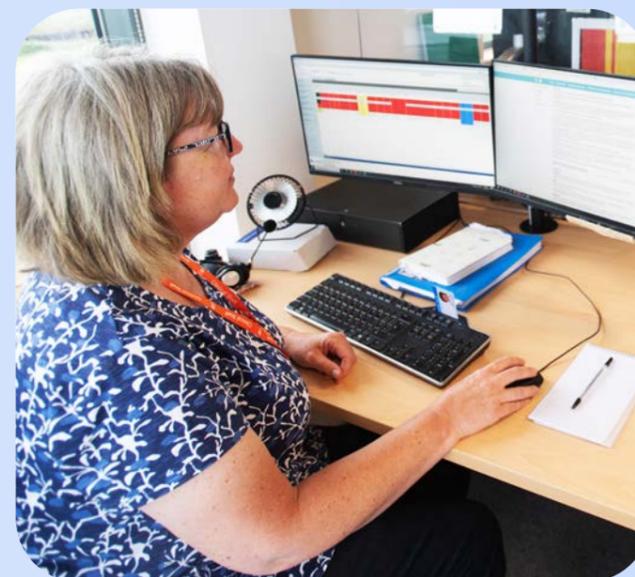
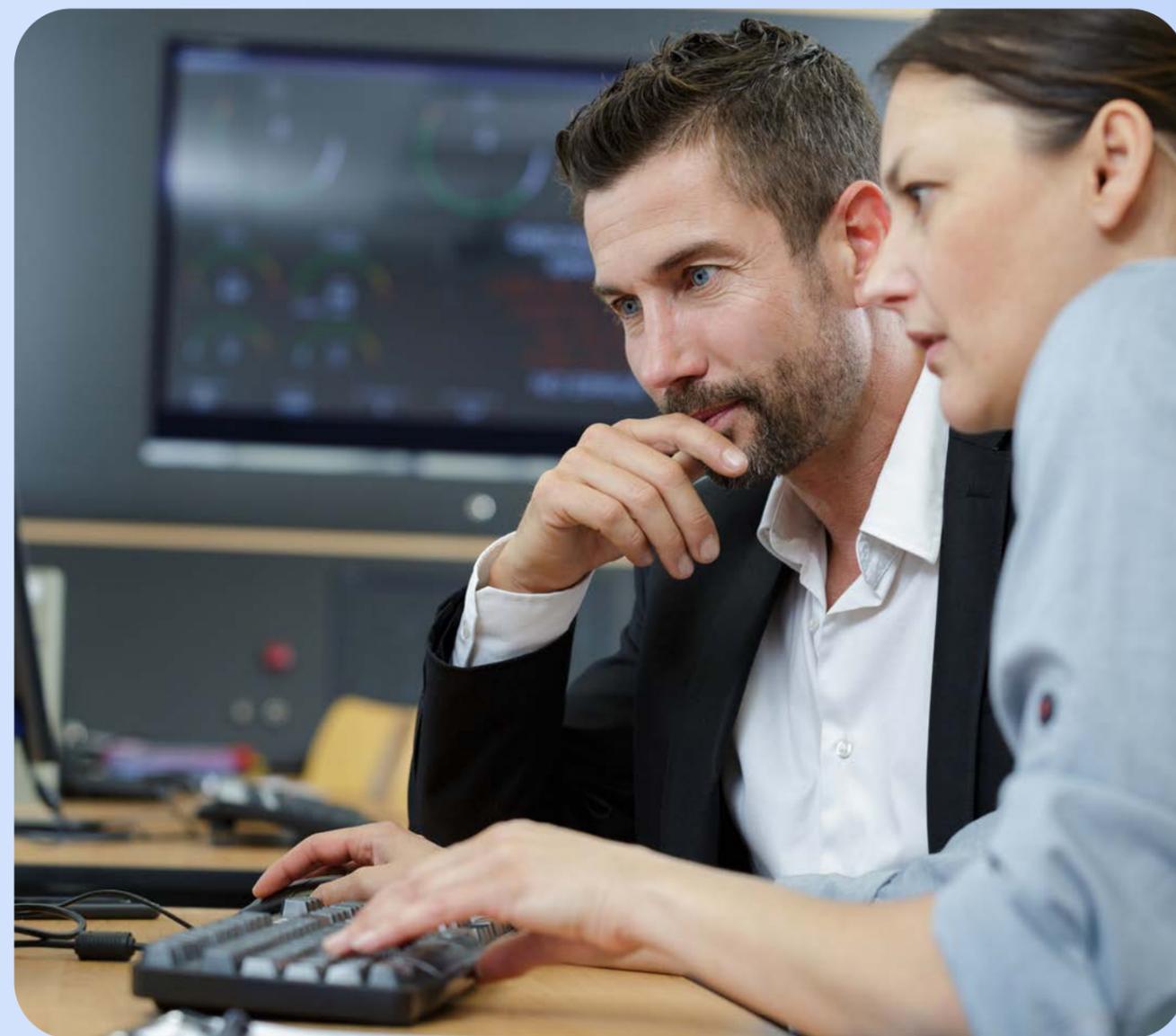
Integrity and values

Good governance depends on integrity and openness. HUC fosters a culture where staff can raise concerns and contribute to improvement. Regular reporting, engagement sessions, and a robust policy framework support consistent, values-based decision-making. Governance processes are reviewed annually to ensure compliance with the NHS Code of Governance for Providers and the CQC Single Assessment Framework.

Looking ahead

In 2025–26, HUC will refine its assurance model to strengthen clinical leadership, enhance digital oversight, and embed the new internal audit cycle.

Good governance is central to HUC's mission – ensuring that patients, colleagues, commissioners, and partners can have full confidence in how the organisation is led and held to account.



Shaping a sustainable future for urgent and primary care

AS HUC enters the year ahead, we remain focused on building a sustainable, high-performing organisation that continues to put patients at the start and heart of care. The past year has seen important progress in strengthening our systems, partnerships, and workforce – and 2025–26 is about deepening that progress, embedding change, and demonstrating measurable impact.

Our ambition is clear: to be the partner of choice in delivering safe, responsive, and compassionate urgent and primary care. This means continuing to learn from experience, invest in our people, and collaborate across the health and care system to improve outcomes for patients and communities alike. We will continue to ensure that the care we provide reflects our core values of safety, compassion, and effectiveness in every aspect.

A major focus for 2025–26 will be on quality improvement. Building on the foundations of the Patient Safety Incident Response Framework (PSIRF), we will refine our internal processes to ensure learning is shared quickly and consistently across services. The implementation of a new clinical governance framework, alongside a strengthened peer review process, will help drive continuous improvement and transparency.

We will also continue to invest in our people. Leadership and talent development remain central to HUC's long-term success, with new opportunities planned for skills building, mentorship, and professional growth. Employee wellbeing and engagement will continue to be prioritised through initiatives that support flexible working, inclusion,



■ We're building on solid foundations – with renewed energy, stronger partnerships, and a shared purpose to deliver exceptional care

and recognition of individual and team contributions.

Digital innovation and sustainability will play an increasingly significant role in shaping how we work. The expansion of our digital infrastructure will improve efficiency and enhance patient experience, enabling smarter use of data and real-time insight. Our Green Plan remains an integral part of our strategy, ensuring that environmental responsibility continues to guide decisions across estates, fleet, and procurement.

Collaboration will remain at the heart of HUC's approach. We will strengthen our relationships with Integrated Care Boards, NHS partners, and the Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector to deliver joined-up, community-based care. We will also continue to nurture partnerships in education and training, giving students and early-career professionals valuable experience within urgent and primary care.

In all these areas, HUC's focus remains the same: to deliver care that is safe, kind, and effective; to act as a trusted partner within the NHS system; and to make a positive difference to the lives of the people and communities we serve. We remain committed to transparency and accountability, ensuring that the organisation's leadership is aligned with its mission to improve the quality of care and operational excellence.

By combining clinical excellence, compassionate leadership, and responsible innovation, HUC is well positioned to meet the challenges of the year ahead – and to continue shaping a healthcare system that is truly integrated, inclusive, and sustainable for the future.



Acknowledgements

Dedication and teamwork at the heart of HUC's story

HUC's achievements over the past year have only been possible thanks to the dedication, expertise and teamwork of people across our organisation and the wider health and care system. We would like to express our sincere thanks to everyone who has played a part in helping us deliver high-quality, compassionate care to patients and the communities we serve.

Our frontline teams continue to be the face and voice of HUC. We are deeply grateful to the NHS 111 health advisors, clinical advisors and out-of-hours clinicians who respond with professionalism and empathy to thousands of patients every day. Their calmness under pressure, clinical skill and compassion remain at the heart of what we do. We also recognise the tireless contribution of our operational and administrative colleagues – including dispatchers, resource planners, drivers and call-centre supervisors – whose work behind the scenes ensures services run smoothly around the clock.

We would like to thank our commissioners, Integrated Care Boards, NHS England colleagues and partner providers for their continued trust and collaboration. Together, we have developed innovative ways of working that support system resilience, strengthen urgent and primary care pathways, and ensure patients receive the right care in the right place at the right time.

Our gratitude also extends to the many local practices, pharmacies, community services and voluntary and social care organisations we work alongside every day. Their willingness to collaborate, share learning and adapt to changing demand underpins the integrated approach to care that HUC is proud to



■ **Every day, our people put patients at the start and heart of care, working together with compassion and professionalism to make a difference to thousands of lives**

champion. We particularly acknowledge the commitment of our support teams – including People, Finance, IT, Clinical Governance and Communications. Their work is less visible but vital in ensuring that our clinical and operational teams have the tools, systems and support they need to deliver excellent patient care. Whether developing digital platforms, maintaining our facilities, supporting recruitment and training, or ensuring compliance with governance and quality standards, their contribution is critical to HUC's success.

We are equally indebted to our Non-Executive Directors and Executive Team, whose leadership, insight and support guided the organisation through another challenging and transformative year.

We also thank our staff representatives and wellbeing champions, who play an important role in supporting colleagues and shaping a positive, inclusive workplace culture. Their input ensures that HUC remains a caring organisation not only for patients, but also for those who work within it.

Finally, we wish to thank our patients and service users. Their feedback – whether through compliments, concerns, surveys or engagement sessions – shapes the way we learn, improve and grow. Every comment, suggestion and story helps us refine our services and deliver on our shared purpose of putting patients at the start and heart of care.

To all who have contributed to HUC's journey this year – thank you. Your commitment, collaboration and compassion continue to make HUC what it is today: a caring, dynamic and forward-thinking organisation built on teamwork and trust



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