

# Healthfocus

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Modelling uniforms worn by district nurses over the years are, left to right, Maria Poole, tissue viability nurse; Sharon Morgan, clinical practice teacher; Marcelle Rollings, nurse consultant; Jane Kisly, clinical team leader.

## Celebrating 150 years of district nursing

**WOLVERHAMPTON** City Primary Care Trust marked the 150th anniversary of district nursing with two events celebrating how the service has grown from its beginnings in 1859 through to the extensive specialist service it has become in today's NHS.

Events were held at the Mount Hotel and were attended by district nurses past and present.

The celebrations included reminiscences from former staff, presentations from current staff and displays of artefacts

including old uniforms and a nurse's bicycle.

District nursing first began in Liverpool when merchant and philanthropist William Rathbone employed Mary Robinson to care for his wife at home during her final illness.

Recognising the benefit of – and need for – trained nurses he established a training school and home for nurses attached to Liverpool's Royal Infirmary.

Nurses were supervised by lady superintendents and worked in districts of a cluster of parishes – hence the name district nurses.

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12 page annual report from your PCT



## District nurses past and present mark anniversary

From page one

Despite extensive research the PCT has been unable to establish when the first district nurses were introduced in Wolverhampton.

Molly Henriques-Dillon, general manager of community services for the PCT, said: "Both of these days were designed to showcase everything that is happening in community nursing. Our presentation speakers included Maureen Morgan from the Department of Health and Rosemary Cook who is director of the Queen's Nursing Institute, which has been greatly supportive of district nursing over the years.

"We also had district nurses past and present speak about their experiences, with retired nurses talking about the service in the 1960s and 70s and more recent members of staff focusing on changes in the 80s and 90s through to the student nurses we have now.

"The event was used to acknowledge the contribution of our nurses through long service awards, and we also put out requests for nominations from colleagues for two awards for excellence in leadership and outstanding patient care. Then during the evening we had a party for all the community nurses," she added.

## Changing services

TODAY Wolverhampton has more than 160 community nurses who manage a range of healthcare conditions in patients homes to help keep them out of hospital.

Services include telemedicine, hospital at home and specialist care for TB, diabetes, continence, wounds and at the end of a patient's life.

Molly Henriques-Dillon, general manager of community services for Wolverhampton City Primary Care Trust, said: "District nurses are taking on more complex cases nowadays and providing more care at home than before.

"Among the many changes that have taken place over the years is the introduction of community matrons and telemedicine. This is the remote monitoring of patients with long-term conditions, such as heart problems.

"Patients are monitored using equipment set up in their own homes which transmits readings to a computer that tell the community matron how they are progressing.

"If any abnormalities show up the matron then phones them or visits them at home. The telemedicine service also enables patients to take more responsibility in managing their own health problems.

"We also now have what is called hospital at home which is run by nurses at the Phoenix Health Centre. They provide intravenous therapies, nebulisers and generally help ease the discharge of patients from hospital – stabilising them, administering medication and managing conditions such as deep vein thrombosis and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

"Another recent service development is the introduction of an end-of-life care service enabling patients to spend their last few days of life in their own homes rather than in hospital.

"We are now looking to develop district nurses' expertise around long-term conditions and also to expand our tissue viability service for patients with wounds.

"Our new nurse practitioner-led services and walk-in centre for minor illnesses and injuries are also instrumental in developing the care we provide in the community."

The PCT is now looking at ways of making community nursing teams smaller with three teams covering the city's three localities, each led by a community matron.

# Work ways change but dedication is a constant

**THE life of a district nurse has changed in many ways since Rosemary Russell retired from the job 15 years ago.**

Rosemary joined the service in 1967 employed by the former Wolverhampton Health Authority for the princely salary of six shillings and eight tenths of a penny (around 30p) per hour. She was based at Waterloo Road and in those days district nurses made home visits all over the city rather than having their own area.

"My husband bought me a little Austin A35 car for £60 to do my rounds and later I drove a Morris Minor Traveller," she said.

"We lived in a police house as my husband was a policeman, but we had no phone, and the phone in the police office next door could only be used for police business.

"I applied for a phone and had to wait two months for it to be installed and in the meantime used the nearest public phone box!"

"That's hard to imagine in these days of mobile phones, but somehow I managed."

Rosemary grew up in the Cheshire countryside and admits it was quite a culture shock when she was allocated her first 'patch' in Wolverhampton – the Lunt estate in Bilston.

Nevertheless, the young district nurse soon came to relish the challenges of the job, but after six years a back injury ruled out any more heavy lifting and she transferred to the Royal Hospital where she spent 12 years and became a Sister on the coronary care ward and in the outpatients department.

Happily Rosemary was able to return to district nursing for the last eight years of her career.

"District nurses are very special, a breed apart," said Rosemary. "You have got to be totally self-reliant as you never know what you are walking into.

"In my day there was no fear of guns or knives, but people could be very obstreperous and sometimes the presence of the district nurse was resented by the family of the patient.

"I had to deal with some unpleasant situations, but most patients were thrilled to see me, which helped to make the job worthwhile.

"I always made sure I was cheerful and friendly. Most patients were pleased to talk to me. In fact a good chat and a touch of the

hand was often just as beneficial to them as the medical care – and I am sure that is still true today."

During her career Rosemary provided home care for people of all ages – from a boy of 16 paralysed from the neck down in a trampoline accident, to the very elderly.

"As a district nurse I have looked after people from all walks of life – including the Earl of Shrewsbury when I was training at the Royal Salop Hospital in Shrewsbury. As an 18-year-old girl I was very impressed with the Duchess of Shrewsbury's diamond, ruby and sapphire ring!"

Rosemary has a number of happy and amusing memories – including the elderly lady who always insisted she took tea and biscuits with her.

"Her tea wasn't very nice, but one day it was particularly awful. I wanted to dunk a biscuit in the tea to help take the taste away and asked the patient if she would

mind. She told me: 'Certainly, my dear. The Queen Mother always does that when she comes to visit me!'"

Rosemary added: "In my day GPs respected the opinion of a district nurse and recognised that we had common sense and a good knowledge of the patient's needs.

"A lot has changed since then – for instance patients now benefit from leaving hospital earlier to be cared for at home by district nurses.

"In the old days patients could spend too long in hospital beds which would cause problems like blood clots.

"I often speak to district nurses in Wolverhampton and they are just as dedicated, caring and professional as they were in my day. It's nice to know that some things about the job don't change."



Retired district nurse Rosemary Russell, 75, with a letter from 1967 offering her a job as a district nurse in Wolverhampton on a salary of just under seven shillings an hour. Her first uniform was handmade to measure.

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Community Matron Tracey Slater with patient Geoff Perry.

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## Matron is 'such a brilliant help'

**HEART patient Geoff Perry has made amazing progress since he was referred to Wolverhampton City Primary Care Trust's community matron service.**

The 85-year-old, who was hospitalised with heart failure and emphysema a year ago, now has a much better understanding of his health problems and can spot early warning signs that his condition is deteriorating.

Community matron Tracey Slater assesses Geoff, diagnoses any problems, prescribes and manages his medication, makes referrals and puts him in touch with services to provide care closer to where he lives.

And Geoff said the help has given him much greater independence and put a stop to endless hospital admissions.

"Tracey has kept me out of hospital – it's such brilliant help. When you have heart failure you really worry about what's going to happen in the future, but Tracey has helped put me back on the right path," he said. His wife Margaret,

73, said the service was also a great support for her.

"Knowing Tracey is only a phone call away is so reassuring – it's a wonderful service. When Tracey first came in Geoff was a very poorly man. However, with all her support he has made great progress.

"It's like he has his own personal nurse. She is able to support Geoff with many things – she was the first to realise he was hard of hearing and would benefit from a hearing aid."

Tracey said: "We are a proactive service – helping people to recognise early warning signs of decline. We have put a personalised management plan in place which was put together with Geoff.

"Geoff prefers not to go to hospital and I support him to stay at home. The improvement to his quality of life has been liberating, allowing him to take his first holiday for over two years. It's a partnership – he can call me and we'll make decisions about his care together."

## Team are like an extended family

**LONG-term patient Audrey Smalling regards Wolverhampton's district nursing team as more like an extended family since she started receiving their help over 35 years ago.**

Audrey, who lives in Eastfield, was a passenger in a car when it crashed in January 1973. The accident left her with severe whiplash and she was paralysed from the neck down.

Over the years she has made a lot of friends through the community nurses, including clinical team leader Jane Kisly who is a regular visitor.

Audrey said: "I first met Jane when I moved to my present address in

1979 and since then I have got to know a lot of the community nurses who have given me general care and support. Over the years they have become more like an extended family to me. I've made a lot of friends through them and I don't really see it as a carer-patient situation anymore. It is more of a relaxed, friendly atmosphere and we have a good banter – but if it wasn't for them coming in things would be a lot harder for me. They are very patient."

Audrey, aged 55, is visited by the nurses from Monday to Thursday and then attends The Maltings day centre for activities on Fridays.

"A lot of the student nurses learn through coming to visit me as well, as it gives them experience of dealing with a person who has spinal injuries and they can ask me questions," she said.

"There might be some things I can't do for myself but I can offer a lot of advice."

In her spare time Audrey also does voluntary work visiting patients on two of the wards at New Cross Hospital.

"I like to try and help other patients who are disabled realise their potential and what they can do with their lives, and to encourage them not to just give up. I don't look at my disability as an illness. You have to learn how to get on and move forward," she said.

Audrey has written a book about her own experiences called *A Mountain To Climb* in which she talks about life before her accident and coming to terms with it afterwards.



Audrey Smalling, right, with community healthcare assistants Gemma Williams, left, and Tina Davis, from Bilston Health Centre.



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## Colleagues name award winners

**CLINICAL team leader for Wolverhampton East Jane Kisly has picked up a special leadership award as part of the 150th anniversary celebrations for district nursing.**

Jane was nominated by her colleagues to receive the outstanding contribution award.

Based at Bilston Health Centre, Jane began her general nursing career in 1977 at the Wolverhampton Eye Infirmary and then trained at New Cross and the Royal hospitals before moving into the community nursing service in 1983.

"Receiving the award was a nice

surprise, but the work is very much a team effort which is one of the key elements to community nursing," she said.

**A DEDICATED approach to high quality patient care also earned local district nurse Kerry Walker an award at the celebrations.**

Described by her colleagues as "an excellent role model," Kerry received seven nominations from staff – earning her an award for outstanding contribution to patient care.

● Jane, left, and Kerry are pictured with their awards.

## Thirty years of community nursing

**1980s**  
Nurses are introduced to work in areas such as diabetes, continence, wound care and TB.

**LATE 1980s**  
Computer system introduced to help district nurses record patient activity.

**EARLY 1990s**  
Phlebotomy services, including blood testing introduced.

**MID 1990s**  
Hospital at home scheme introduced. Community nurses start to treat patients at home for a variety of conditions that would previously have required a visit to hospital.

**1997**  
Hospital at home service extended to include providing intravenous therapy and management of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and deep vein thrombosis in the community rather than in hospital.

**2002**  
Introduction of community service monitoring anti-coagulation levels of patients on Warfarin which would have previously required a hospital visit.

**2005**  
Introduction of community matron service.

**2007**  
Introduction of telemedicine enabling patients with long-term conditions such as heart problems to be monitored remotely via electronic links.

**2007**  
Introduction of pioneering service to treat people with multiple sclerosis with intravenous drugs at home.

**2007**  
City's first walk-in centre for the treatment of minor illnesses and injuries – run by highly trained nurses – opens at the Phoenix Health Centre, Parkfield Road.

**2008**  
Local community district nurses invent Hoo-kOn drip stand, revolutionising the way intravenous drugs and fluids are given to patients in their own home.

**2009**  
End-of-life team introduced enabling patients to spend their last few days of life in their own home rather than hospital.

# Film charts celebration



Student district nurse Helen Carrington.

**A DOCUMENTARY has been made about Wolverhampton's contribution to national celebrations marking the anniversary of 150 years of district nursing in England.**

The film includes interviews with nurses past and present, footage of the award winners and speakers along with nursing artefacts on display at the celebrations.

Mari Gay, director of community and rehabilitation services for Wolverhampton City Primary Care Trust, said: "This will be a great resource. A record of community nursing in the 21st century which draws upon the combined knowledge of people – some of whom have been in the service their entire working lives.

A former district nurse herself Mari's role includes being responsible for the development of community nursing services across the city. She added: "The film captures nurses views on how their role

has changed and how the PCT has responded to those changes.

"It also recognises the considerable district nursing staff workforce in the local community and their contribution and commitment and will be useful material for people researching district nursing."

Speeches by the city's then Mayor, Councillor Christine Mills, Maureen Morgan, nursing officer for the Department of Health and Rosemary Cook, director of the Queen's Nursing Institute were all recorded as part of the documentary.

It was produced by local film-maker Henry Metzger – who is chairman of the Wulfrun camcorder club – with the help of his grandson Steve.

Henry from Perton, has shot more than 50 films of NHS buildings around the Wolverhampton area including the Royal Hospital, Wolverhampton Eye Infirmary and the Women's Hospital.



## Walk-in centre contact details

**PEOPLE with minor illnesses and injuries can get NHS treatment at one of Wolverhampton's walk-in centres without needing an appointment.**

**PHOENIX HEALTH CENTRE:**  
Parkfield Rd, Parkfields, WV4 6ED.

**Opening hours:**  
Monday-Friday, 10am-7pm.  
Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holidays, 9.30-4.30pm.  
Buses 526 stops outside and 558 in Dudley Road.

**SHOWELL PARK HEALTH AND WALK-IN CENTRE:**  
Fifth Avenue, Showell Park, Low Hill, WV10 9ST.

**Opening hours:**  
8am-8pm, seven days a week including Bank Holidays.  
Tel: 01902 446711.  
Buses 511 and 598 stop nearby.

## Grandma's gift leads to career in caring service

A GIFT from her grandmother at the age of five set Helen Carrington on the path to a successful career in nursing – which has now led to the final stages of her completing a district nursing degree.

Helen, who has been a trained general nurse since 1996, will become a fully qualified district nurse when she completes her degree course at the University of Wolverhampton at the end of August, before officially graduating in February 2010.

As a five-year-old, Helen's grandmother bought her a Ladybird book of nursing after she asked what sort of work nurses did. She said: "No one in our family was a nurse but after I got that book – which I still own – it was all I wanted to do. I signed my contract on my 21st birthday and haven't looked back.

"I always really enjoyed working with the district nurses when I was a student nurse and that eventually made me

want to do it full-time. I love the whole culture and the fact that I can make my own decisions.

"When I first started I had only around five patients on my list but now district nurses can average around 18-20 depending on the type of patient.

"We see patients of all ages from 18 upwards and they all vary in their needs from relatively simple things like wound dressing to care for much more complex illnesses."

She explained that her degree course lasted nine months and was made up of assignments and presentations with just one exam.

"I have really gained from taking this degree. It has definitely improved my practical skills and knowledge and I would now like to put that to use in helping other student nurses."

Helen, who is based at Bilston Health Centre, gave a presentation on her district nursing progress at the 150th anniversary celebrations.



## In pictures... Wolverhampton celebrates 150 years of District Nursing



Former district nurses, left to right, Mary Poxton, Connie Evans, Sally McNulty and Sheila Mildoon.



Rosemary Cook, director of the Queen's Nursing Institute was a keynote speaker at the celebration event.



Historic equipment on display at the celebration events.



Tissue viability nurse Maria Poole models headgear worn by district nurses in the 19th century.