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Join today: [www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk](http://www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk)

## **A message to colleagues from the Sherwood Forest Hospitals Board: You have our support**

Dear colleagues,

On behalf of the Trust's Board of Directors, we want to recognise the significant operational pressures you are facing and to thank you for everything you are doing for one another – and for the patients we serve.

After another year of rising demand, the start of winter has brought increased attendances in our urgent and emergency care services, the return of industrial action, and a rise in flu cases. These challenges affect the care we provide and have a personal impact, too – something we do not underestimate.

To help manage these pressures, we have taken steps including:

- Substantively recruiting to a number of roles, including to offset reductions in bank and agency spend
- Reconfiguring key areas of our hospitals to maintain safe and effective care
- Continuing to work closely with our partners – including primary care, mental health, councils, East Midlands Ambulance Service (EMAS) and other acute hospitals – to manage demand across the system.

We know the exceptional lengths you and your teams are going to every day. We recognise that you are making risk-based decisions, sometimes outside established practice. We also recognise that colleagues may need to make exceptional decisions in the best interests of patients during these pressures – including working to ensure patients have their care needs met in all areas across the Trust. Many of you have concerns – which we share – about doing this.

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We want to be clear that the Trust Board holds the operational risk for the Trust and you have our full support and backing for the care you are providing and the decisions you make in the best interest of patients. If concerns arise, they will be considered in context and regulators have confirmed they will take these circumstances into account when reviewing any cases.

If you are uncomfortable with any aspect of patient safety in your service, please escalate concerns to your divisional leadership team or to the wider leadership team, including any of us.

## What we are asking of you

To help us to manage these pressures this winter, please focus on the following priorities:

- **Make every bed count**

Good patient flow is essential. Please conduct high-quality Board Rounds each morning to identify patients ready for discharge. Consider whether diagnostic tests can be completed as an outpatient. Use the Discharge Lounge promptly to free up beds.

- **Get your free flu vaccine**

With flu cases now at their highest levels in 2025, vaccination is the best protection for you, your family and our patients. It will also help to reduce sickness absence over the winter period. You can [visit the homepage of our intranet to find out how, where and when you can get your vaccine this winter.](#)

- **Keep our CARE values at the heart of what we do**

Our CARE values matter more than ever when pressures are running high. We are clear we will not tolerate poor behaviour or abuse of our colleagues who are working hard to provide the best possible care in difficult circumstances. Please search 'staff abuse' on [our Trust website](#) for support and advice on how to report staff abuse.

## Support for you

There is support available to you – as always – through our VIVUP Employee Assistance Provision service, which is there to offer practical support and advice.

You can contact them – 24 hours a day, seven days a week – on 03303 800 658 or [visit the colleague wellbeing pages of our Trust website.](#)

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## Freedom to Speak Up

Freedom to Speak Up is there to support Trust colleagues to speak-up safely and with confidence when they have concerns that the quality of care we are providing does not live up to the standards we expect of ourselves and others.

You can find information on how to contact the Trust's Freedom to Speak Up Guardian and Freedom to Speak Up Champions on the Trust's website at <https://www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk/staff-zone/freedom-to-speak-up-guardian/>.

## Thank you

Thank you once again for your commitment, compassion and professionalism.

We are proud to work with you all.

Yours sincerely,



**Graham Ward**  
Chair



**Jon Melbourne**  
Chief Executive



**Philip Bolton**  
Executive Chief Nurse



**Simon Illingworth**  
Chief Operating Officer



**Dr Simon Roe**  
Chief Medical Officer

On behalf of the Board of Directors at Sherwood Forest Hospitals

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