

NEURO MATTERS

AUTUMN/WINTER 2022



The Walton Centre
NHS Foundation Trust

Excellence in Neuroscience 



Trauma Team -
**TEN YEARS OF CUTTING-
EDGE SURGERY**

**New strategy
launched**

A new focus on our
outstanding service

**Road to
Recovery**

Ongoing support for
our patients



“Our Walton Willow sculpture represents all those patients who have donated organs after passing away. It’s an incredibly poignant and emotional part of the hospital.”

**Adam Barley, Specialist Nurse,
Organ Donation.**

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Welcome to the autumn issue of Neuromatters, the magazine of The Walton Centre NHS Foundation Trust.

In this issue we look at the Road to Recovery programme which has supported over 500 patients surviving bleeds on the brain, and their families, for 15 years. It's of huge comfort and reassurance to these patients and is being rolled out to other centres.

There's also news of a visit by Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram who came to the Trust in September to see some of the fantastic work being done and speak to staff and patients. We also report on treatment options for two very different areas of our work, a clinic to reduce swallowing problems in motor neurone disease patients, a devastating symptom of this disease, and the Road to Recovery course for brain haemorrhage patients. Across the Trust, our staff are continually looking how to improve the treatment and care we provide to patients and their families, and these are two great examples of that.

It's been over a year now since I've been Chief Executive of The Walton Centre and I couldn't be more proud of every single member of staff here, and the work they do to support our patients and their families every day.

I hope you enjoy this issue.

Jan Ross

Chief Executive

The Walton Centre NHS Foundation Trust

METRO MAYOR TRIES OUT UK-FIRST VR TECHNOLOGY



Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram looks on as medical students train on the new Neuro VR simulator

Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram visited The Walton Centre in September to discuss the nationally leading work being done in the fields of neurology, neurosurgery and rehabilitation.

It was Mayor Rotheram's third visit to the Trust after he opened the Garden Room in Horsley Intensive Care Unit (ICU) in 2019 and the redeveloped Jefferson Ward in 2013, when he was the local MP.

As part of his most recent visit, he spoke to staff and patients in the Complex Rehabilitation Unit, before visiting Radiology and ICU to see the work done in those areas, and also the new Neuro VR machine which is the first and only one of its kind in the UK.

He also chatted with senior leaders about the new Trust strategy (see right) and the plans the hospital has for the future.

Jan Ross, Chief Executive, said it was great to welcome Mayor Rotheram to the Trust again.

"Mayor Rotheram has always been a big supporter of The Walton Centre and the work we do as a specialist Trust in his capacity as Metro Mayor, and previously, while he was MP for Walton.

"As we emerge from the stresses and strains put on healthcare from the COVID-19 pandemic, it was great to be able to show him how we are continuing to provide the very best treatment and care and share our plans for the future.

"Part of these plans is the Neuro VR machine, which was recently installed thanks to funding from The Walton Centre Charity and will be game-changing."

Training tomorrow's doctors



(Left to right) Students Gurditt Sing, Katharine Howick, and Louisa Patrick Sotelo

As the only specialist neurosciences Trust in the UK, The Walton Centre has a significant role in medical education in neurology, neurosurgery, spinal and pain management services. The Trust has strong academic links with the University of Liverpool, providing undergraduate and postgraduate placements and training.

This academic year will see over 300 fourth year students from The University of Liverpool rotating through the hospital as part of their medical degree on four-week placements. The students will experience a range of settings, including ward rounds and neurosurgical experience. A number of fifth year students will then return in April for a SAMP placement if they identified a specific interest in neuroscience.

Feedback from the 2021/22 students was exceptional, with all but one of the evaluation areas scoring above the regional average. In particular, they praised the style and quality of the teaching, and the organisation and communication of the placement.

Dr Rhys Davies, Director of Medical Education, said the Trust was proud of its work in this area. "As the UK's only specialist neurosciences Trust, we feel we have a huge responsibility to lead the way in education and training in this area. It is essential for the continued development of treatment and care that we train the very best clinical staff of the future. Ensuring our fourth-year students have a positive, enriching and interesting mandatory placement will hopefully make them really consider neurology, neurosurgery, spinal or pain management as a field to specialise in for their future medical training."

New governors

The Walton Centre welcomed seven new governors in August. Congratulations to Teresa Moretti, Carol Hopwood and Belinda Shaw (Merseyside), Carole Hulse (Cheshire), Geoff Heyes and John McClelland (Rest of England) and Mr Andrew Brodbelt (Medical staff).

The Trust also held its Annual Members Meeting in September, with updates from the Chief Executive and Chairman, and presentations on the new brain tumour pathway and focused ultrasound treatment for essential tremor.

There are two virtual Members' events to sign up to – Learn more about Allied Health Professionals on Tuesday 22 November, 4-5pm, and Neurophysiology on Thursday 16 February 2023, 1-2pm.

You can find out more about our new governors and sign up to our events by visiting our website or contacting Nicola Troy, Corporate Governance Officer and Membership on Nicola.Troy@nhs.net or 0151 556 3484

New trial launched

The STOP EM trial, launched by Professor Michael Jenkinson, Consultant Neurosurgeon, will look into the effectiveness of giving anti-seizure medication to patients undergoing surgery for meningioma brain tumours. Currently, 1 in 10 people who have meningioma brain tumours develop epilepsy within the first year after the procedure. This study will look at the effectiveness of anti-seizure meds in an attempt to reduce this rate.

NEW STRATEGY LAUNCHED



We have recently launched our new three-year strategy which sets out how we will continue to deliver excellent clinical outcomes and patient experience with our team of dedicated, specialist staff.

The strategy reflects the pace of change in the NHS due to the COVID-19 pandemic and highlights a commitment to continuing to provide outstanding services for our patients, not only across Cheshire and Merseyside, but beyond.

Chief Executive Jan Ross said “As you would expect, patients, their families and our staff are at the heart of our new strategy, as is collaboration with our partners across the region – throughout the health, government, voluntary, education and third sectors.

“The strategy focuses on five strategic ambitions: Education, training and learning, research and development, leadership, collaboration, and social responsibility. Through these five

areas, we want to deliver excellent clinical outcomes and the very best patient experience.

“We’re already making great strides in some of these key areas – in October we announced the Trust was awarded University status, a fantastic achievement which demonstrates our commitment to research and education.

“The strategy is a dynamic and innovative approach to delivering the very best care for every patient we treat, and as the UK’s only specialist neuroscience Trust we want to ensure we can lead the region and the country in ensuring patients have the latest and leading treatments.”

Read more at thewaltoncentre.nhs.uk/strategy

FIRST-HAND PATIENT EXPERIENCE

A new role at The Walton Centre has been credited with making a huge difference to patients and staff.

And for Rachael Chadwick, who carries out the role of Patient Support Assistant, it’s more than just a job, it’s continuing the journey with the hospital that saved her life and helping other patients in the process.

Rachael was diagnosed with an arteriovenous malformation (AVM) in 2017, and underwent treatment over the next five years, including two major surgical procedures. Due to complications, she suffered a stroke which paralysed her left side, and had to learn to walk and carry out basic tasks, all with the support of teams at The Walton Centre.

During her recovery she decided to volunteer at the hospital, to give something back for the fantastic treatment and care she’d received.

After a period of volunteering, Rachael saw a new post advertised, Patient Support Assistant. Part of the Patient and Family Experience Team, this new role provides an extra link for the patients, solving non-



clinical concerns and offering help and support to them and their families.

Rachael said she wanted to channel what had happened to her into something positive. “I’m hugely proud to be wearing the badge of The Walton Centre, and working with people who are in the same kind of position I was in. It’s quite emotional sometimes, but I just love it – I can’t imagine having a better job.”

NEW CLINIC MAKING A DIFFERENCE FOR MND PATIENTS



A new service aimed at reducing the impact of one of the most devastating symptoms of Motor Neurone Disease (MND) is being piloted at The Walton Centre.

Swallowing problems, known as dysphagia, affect at least two-thirds of all people with MND. This can either result in choking and chest infections if food, drink or saliva goes backwards, or drooling if forwards. As well as significant health consequences, the impact of symptoms like drooling can result in quality-of-life issues.

Mel Taylor, Speech and Language Therapist, (pictured above), The Walton Centre, said, “From speaking to our patients it’s the issue that concerns them the most, so we really wanted to be able to tackle it as soon as it becomes an issue.”

Previously patients were assessed for three different treatments, a hyoscine patch – prescribed by a GP, this is stuck onto the skin, glycopyrrolate – a drug treatment which needs to be increased through its usage, or botulinum toxin – injections into salivary glands to reduce saliva production.

Currently, patients have to be offered both the patch and drug treatments before being referred for botulinum toxin injections. The Walton Centre has developed a new clinic where patients visit as soon as they start to suffer from saliva management issues and assessed to check their swallow capability before a decision is made about the best of the three options.

Mel added, “We hope this new clinic will make a real difference, to both the quality-of-life for our MND patients and the reduction of further health complications from these symptoms.”

Comment,
like &
share!



‘Literally the best hospital I’ve ever had the pleasure of a placement in! World class in every way, absolutely love The Walton Centre.’

Louise



‘It’s such a wonderful place, the staff and the whole hospital is brilliant. I spent a month here and the care they gave me was the best.’

Mary



‘Thank you Mr Farouk Olubajo for saving my best friend’s life today, you are truly amazing.’

Lesley



‘Love you guys, always going the extra mile and making a huge difference.’

Laura



‘Our heads were in turmoil and we probably never got to thank the people involved but they were absolute lifesavers by allowing us to stay close to our daughter at such a distressful time, amazing facility run by amazing people.’

John

TRAUMA NETWORK 10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

When someone suffers a major trauma as a result of accident or incident, every minute can be critical and collaboration between specialist teams vital.

In 2012 the Major Trauma Centre in Liverpool was created, as a partnership between The Walton Centre and Liverpool University Hospitals to ensure smooth transition between A&E and specialist neurosurgery and spinal surgery.

Over its 10-year history, more than 11,160 patients from across Cheshire, Merseyside and the Isle of Man admitted via the Aintree Emergency Department received a 'Trauma Team Activation', with many more patients also receiving expert care from the highly experienced and specialist staff at both Trusts.

Consultant Neurosurgeon Farouk Olubajo (pictured right) recounts a previous trauma case and how the collaboration of the Major Trauma Centre made a difference.

"It all started with a phone call.... The senior registrar on-call for neurosurgery at The Walton Centre has a mobile phone that allows the trauma team at Aintree University Hospital to inform us directly and immediately of major traumas that require urgent neurosurgical input.

"It was during one of my on-call shifts when I was a surgical fellow that I received a call from the Trauma Consultant at Aintree about a patient who had arrived in A&E after an altercation that resulted in them losing consciousness. As well as being unconscious, they had fixed and dilated pupils which can be a symptom of an injury to the brain from physical trauma.

"The team at Aintree A&E had stabilised the patient and a full trauma scan showed an isolated head injury – the diagnosis was a life-threatening acute subdural haematoma, a serious condition where blood collects between the skull and the surface of the brain.

"Within minutes of me receiving the phone call, the emergency theatre team, Intensive Care Unit, and

Consultant Anaesthetist at The Walton Centre were mobilised for an emergency craniotomy with the hope of saving the patient's life.

"The Emergency Consultant at A&E, along with an Anaesthetist, were given the green light to transfer the patient across to The Walton Centre via the link bridge between the two hospitals, and in less than one hour of the patient arriving at A&E, they had been transferred across the bridge for life-saving surgery at The Walton Centre.

"It's a real team effort. While the Anaesthetist from Aintree was giving us a thorough handover, an A&E nurse was assisting The Walton Centre Operating Department Practitioner with transferring lines and access to theatre monitors, all while the scrub nurse was preparing her operative trays.

"Following a briefing from the neurosurgery consultant, the patient was wheeled into theatre and had the emergency craniotomy before being transferred to our Intensive Care Unit.

"Being a part of the seamless transition of the patient journey from arriving at A&E in an ambulance, to immediate emergency care, then to a different hospital for specialist surgery, and eventually the neuro-intensive care was invigorating and confirmed a belief in the system that we have to keep patients safe.

"In our line of work, very little is achieved alone. The intimate relationship that the Major Trauma Network fosters means our goals of prompt and high-quality care for trauma patients are aligned and together we can prevent patients deteriorating after a significant injury. We don't always succeed, as patients might be too ill, but the environment is primed for success. I am proud to be a part of such a highly efficient team of specialised staff that value working closely together for the benefit of the most critically-ill patients and their families."

For more information on the Major Trauma Centre, visit our website thewaltoncentre.nhs.uk



Consultant Neurosurgeon Farouk Olubajo

ROAD TO RECOVERY



From left to right: Nurse specialists Selina Monahan, Cathy Stoneley and Debbie Brown.

In 2007, a group of specialist staff here at The Walton Centre identified that patients who experienced Subarachnoid Haemorrhages (SAH), a potentially life-threatening bleed on the surface of the brain, needed a higher level of support after initial treatment. At the time, whilst physical treatment of SAH was comprehensive, the social, psychological and practical needs of those patients surviving the trauma were struggling.

Out of this came the Road to Recovery course – a course aimed at informing patients and their families and bringing them together to share their knowledge and experience. Groups such as The Brain Charity and the Brain Haemorrhage Support Group (BHSG) take part in the course, which is led by Specialist Nurse Practitioners and Interventional Neuroradiologists, Psychologists, Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists and Neurosurgeons. The course covers coiling an aneurysm – the main

treatment for SAH, the psychological effects of SAH and gives practical help on common issues such as fatigue and exercise as well as talks from people living with the effects of an aneurysm.

SAH is most common in people between the ages of 40 and 60, usually affecting women more than men. The course was the first of its kind in 2007. Now, many centres nationally are adopting the same kinds of support sessions for their SAH patients.

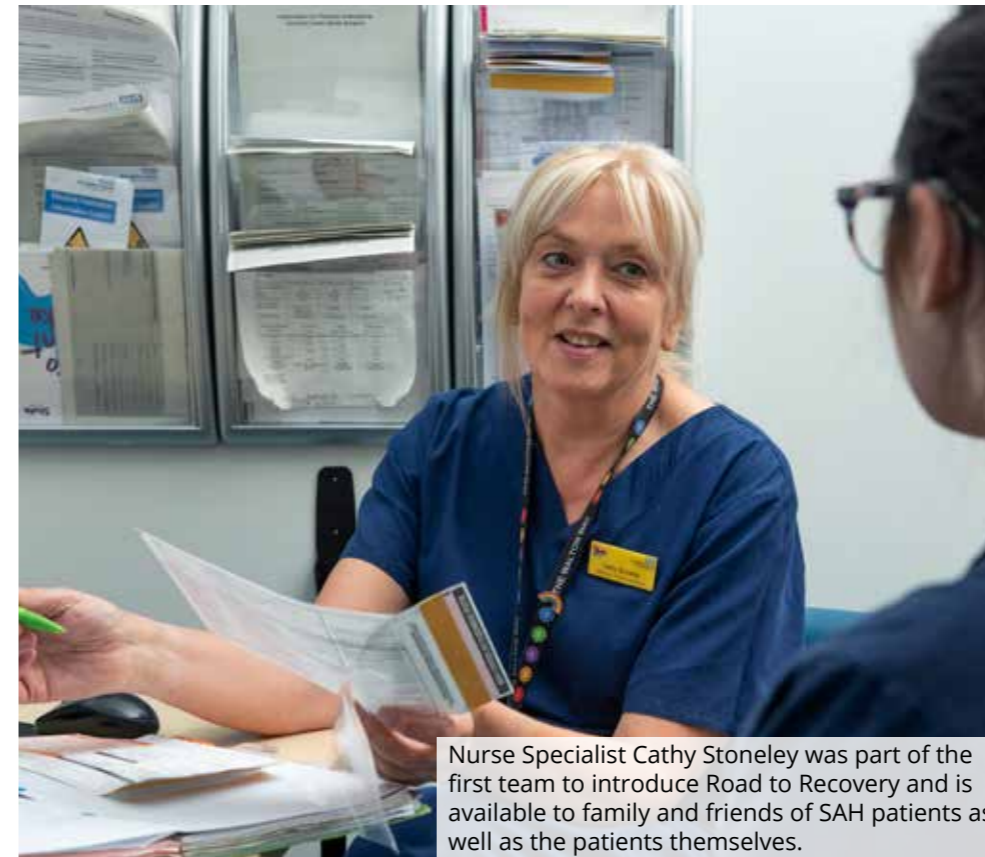
Neurovascular Advanced Nurse Practitioner Cathy Stoneley was part of the team which launched the course and is still helping to deliver the course today. She said: "It's been an amazing journey to see the course grow from strength to strength. Patients always give really positive feedback about the content of the course and the opportunity to meet people who are in the same boat. We treat about 150 patients a year for SAH, so it's vital that these

"I'm delighted that this course has lasted so long and has helped so many patients."

Dr Andy Nicolson,
Medical Director

patients get ongoing support for their rehabilitation. The work we do is ever-changing, and the COVID-19 pandemic was a particular challenge as they're usually in-person sessions. To adapt, we made the courses available online – with huge success because we are now able to offer it to people from further afield or those not able to travel! It's also a success because of a committed faculty and neurovascular team, who deliver the educational programme and support from the management team and brain haemorrhage support group. It really is a team effort of committed people who want to put the patient first and support their recovery."

Medical Director Dr Andy Nicolson said: "I'm delighted that this course has lasted so long and has helped so many patients. SAH is often a life-changing event in someone's life, even if they make a full recovery. I'm proud that our clinicians have used this course to bring patients together, to foster a sense of community and enable them to be reassured by each other's experiences. I very much look forward to seeing what the next 15 years hold."



Nurse Specialist Cathy Stoneley was part of the first team to introduce Road to Recovery and is available to family and friends of SAH patients as well as the patients themselves.

In May 2021 Darryl Hyde from Warrington had a SAH and an emergency endovascular coiling performed. He and his wife Louise attended the Road to Recovery course.

He said: "It was incredibly useful for us to be able to take part in these sessions. For me, it was great to meet people who were at different stages of their recovery. I've experienced fatigue and other side effects, and to meet and talk to other people who have too helped to normalise many of the issues I faced.

"Louise has been a rock throughout my rehabilitation, but it is so reassuring to know that there are other people going through similar experiences after SAH. For Louise, the course was informative and gave her a great insight into what treatments I received. The sessions on practical help with recovery from the Occupational Therapists and Physiotherapists were very useful too. I'm so thankful for The Walton Centre, the continuity provided from first admission all the way through to the



course six months later was amazing, I truly feel that staff here can relate to my case on a personal level - Cathy & Debbie the specialist nurses: I am very thankful for all their support."

Aspects of the course



The Road to Recovery course is made up of four parts and is available to family and friends of SAH patients as well as the patients themselves.



To date, the course has supported over 500 people, and will continue to in a hybrid virtual/in-person way going forward



"Encouraging to talk to people who have been through the same thing."

"Good practical strategies for fatigue management."

"Really appreciated the insight provided into the technical aspect of my treatment."

SAVING THE DAY

In October last year, Liverpool FC Women Goalkeeper Rylee Foster was involved in a serious road accident in Finland, which meant she was thrown from the vehicle at high speed. The then 23-year-old sustained several fractures to the bones in her neck as well as multiple serious injuries to the rest of her body. She was stabilised in a hospital in Helsinki and flown back to Liverpool a week later. It was at that point that clinicians at LFC asked for experts at The Walton Centre to review Rylee's scans.

Rylee said: "They gave me a call when I was having breakfast with my family and told me to go immediately to The Walton Centre to be fitted with a Halo jacket as soon as possible. Without it I would've risked severe injury, maybe even paralysis, because my fractures were actually separating further apart."

The Halo is an external fixation device, which consists of an external metal frame that attaches to the head with four screws. Once fitted, it reduces the weight off the head on the neck and stops any movement of the neck, allowing the fractures to heal and repair.

Advanced Nurse Practitioner Keren Smallwood fitted Rylee with the Halo, and leads a specialist service supporting patients with neck and spinal injuries. She said: "We knew very quickly that Rylee's neck needed immobilising straight away. The Halo system the patients are fitted with stops movement of the neck bones and supports the fractures whilst they heal. Like putting a broken arm in a plaster cast, the neck needs that isolated time for the bones to fuse back together, so they can heal properly. The Halo system is worn 24 hours a day and cannot be removed for the length of time they are in it, usually a minimum of three months. The patients attend clinic every two weeks for us to check the system and the skull pins, which means we usually get to know the patients really well. Rylee managed very well, she was a pleasure to work with."

After several months in the Halo, Rylee had scans which showed that her fractures were healing. The device was removed and replaced with a hard



"The support from The Walton Centre has been exceptional."
Rylee, patient

neck collar, and she continues to recover slowly. Rylee said: "I was so relieved to have it removed, living without being able to turn your head or look down was annoying! But I am so grateful because it essentially saved my health and mobility. The support from The Walton Centre has been exceptional. They've been on hand to answer questions – from me and my coaches – and it means such a lot. It could mean that I can get back on the pitch again and play football!"

Q&A DR CHARLOTTE DOUGAN, CONSULTANT NEUROLOGIST



What's it like working at The Walton Centre?

I really value the access I have to peer colleagues and their drive to provide excellence and develop services further, this is invaluable in what can be challenging work for a complex group of patients.

What are some of the challenges you face?

My biggest challenge is the uncertainty when faced with a patient who has a rare disorder that eludes diagnosis. I have never quite got comfortable with the concern that I am missing something, but that is common to many neurologists who often face difficult or complex rare disorders. Fortunately, two (or more) heads being better than one, and I can access some good brains to help!

What's the most satisfying part of your job?

It would still be the satisfaction of making a correct diagnosis that leads to a treatment, some resolution for the patient, and feeling that the job has been well done. More recently we have started to realise the benefit of molecular diagnosis, leading to new gene therapies in neuromuscular disorders when previously we could only provide supportive treatment. We are entering a new era in treatment across neurological and NM disorders that is exciting, challenging, and will keep me engaged until the end of my career!

What does your role involve?

I have been a Consultant Neurologist at The Walton Centre since 2005, with a specialty interest in neuromuscular (NM) disorders. I completed a research degree in Motor Neurone Disease at The Walton Centre with Professor Carolyn Young during my training many years ago (1997-2000) which sparked my interest in this area. My current role involves diagnosing and managing a range of neuromuscular conditions. I work predominantly here, but also conduct a joint transitional adolescent NM service at Alder Hey Children's Hospital.

What kind of patients do you see and how do you support them?

One of the reasons why I love practising in this area is the breadth of conditions seen, which

continues to challenge. Conditions from myasthenia gravis and acute neuropathies to more chronic genetic neuromuscular disorders such as muscular dystrophy and spinal muscular atrophy or rare metabolic disorders. The field of practice has changed enormously over recent years, with emerging genomics and refinement of molecular diagnoses paving the way for disease modifying therapies.

The role requires close work with colleagues through diagnostic services such as neurophysiology and neuropathology, plus a network of services across Liverpool and beyond to meet patients' complex needs. We also have an experienced therapy team, which has transformed the quality of what we can offer.

ON COURSE FOR SUCCESS

The Walton Centre Charity was delighted to hold its charity golf day at Formby Golf Club earlier this year, after a two-year absence due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hosted by Liverpool FC legend and Charity patron, David Fairclough, the event raised over £15,000 for the Home from Home relatives' accommodation at The Walton Centre, where relatives can stay after a patient has been admitted for urgent treatment.

We welcomed 22 teams to the event, with players including former Reds stars Phil Neal, Alan Kennedy and Neil Mellor, former British

Olympian high jumper, Steve Smith, and actor David Morrissey.

Madeleine Fletcher, Head of Fundraising, said it was amazing to be back for the first time since 2019. "Our annual golf day is a great event and we were so disappointed to cancel it in 2020 and 2021, but we were really pleased to be back in 2022.

"Thank you to Formby Golf Club who always put on a fantastic day for us, and our key supporters Investec, our sponsor this year, Porsche Centre Chester, A&B Engineering, Odendaal Diamonds, and Lynx Golf."



WALK FOR WALTON

The inaugural Walk for Walton raised an amazing £14,000 in May, as 90 supporters took on the challenge of walking 100,000 steps in a month.

Money raised will go towards the Home from Home accommodation.

Supporters took on the challenge at home and overseas, including France, Spain and Sweden.

Next year we hope to run both virtual, and in-person events so keep an eye on the website for news!

thewaltoncentrecharity.org



HITTING THE HEIGHTS



Congratulations to our eight intrepid fundraisers, including our very own Community Fundraiser Anne Hodgson, who took part in the annual charity abseil down Liverpool Cathedral – raising £3000!

NEW STAFF GARDEN OPENS

Staff at The Walton Centre can now enjoy a brand-new garden in which to relax and enjoy some outdoor space. The 'Breathe Easy' garden was designed by Peter Lloyd from Liverpool and won the Silver-gilt medal at The RHS Flower Show at Tatton in 2021.

It was recreated in the grounds of the hospital over the past year and is now open for staff to use. Thanks to Gardens by Peter Lloyd, Mustard Seeds Gardens and NHS Charities Together for their support for the project.

SIGN UP TO THE SANTA DASH 5K



The Liverpool Santa Dash is back once again on Sunday 4 December.

The event brings together so many people in a spectacular human tide of red and blue and officially kick starts Christmas in the city.

Anyone can take part, there's no time limit and you will receive your very own santa suit and medal for participating.

Find out more at thewaltoncentrecharity.org/events



How to support The Walton Centre Charity

Sign up to our lottery

For just £1 per week you can sign up to play The Walton Centre lottery, run in conjunction with YourLottery.

Every time you play 60% of your stake goes directly to The Walton Centre. Sign up now at thewaltoncentrecharity.org

Fundraise for us

We have a range of ideas on our website, and tips on how to make the most of your fundraising activity. You can set up a fundraising page on our website and invite your friends and family to get involved and support you.

Make a donation

You can either make a one-off or regular donation to The Walton Centre Charity via our website. Your donation – however big or small – will make a real difference to patients treated at The Walton Centre now and in the future.

CHARITY CHRISTMAS CARDS



The Walton Centre Charity Christmas cards are on sale from the Fundraising Office in the main reception of The Walton Centre. There are many designs to choose from and cards are sold in packs of 10 at £3.50 per pack.

They are also available to buy online at thewaltoncentrecharity.org

Fundraising Team

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