

NEWS RELEASE

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Sustained improvements mean hospital trust has moved out of special measures

Inspiring leadership, sustained improvements and the hard work of dedicated staff has resulted in West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust moving out of special measures.

Inspectors from the Care Quality Commission (CQC) made this recommendation following a full inspection of the trust's three hospitals this summer.

The decision to take the trust out of special measures was made by NHS Improvement, the regulator of hospital trusts.

CQC inspectors also commented on the "strong, supportive and visible" leadership and noted "a positive culture" where staff are "proud to work at the trust".

The CQC assesses five aspects of a site or service – safe, caring, responsive, effective and well-led – and awards them ratings: inadequate, requires improvement, good or outstanding. The full ratings can be found in the summary below.

As well as leaving the status of special measures behind, the trust – which manages Watford General Hospital, Hemel Hempstead Hospital and St Albans City Hospital – has seen a positive and dramatic change in the ratings for its sites and services, despite the overall rating remaining 'requires improvement'.

Trust chair Professor Steve Barnett said: "These results tell a story of commitment, care and high quality services. Even the quickest glance makes it clear that we have come a long, long way since being placed in special measures in 2015.

"Events in recent weeks only emphasise the kind of workforce we're so lucky to have; we won a national award from the Health Service Journal; our medical director was invited to present nationally about our low mortality rates; and staff struggled through snow and ice to keep our services going and our patients safe.

"I am immensely proud of our staff. They never stop wanting to improve, to learn and to deliver the very best care for every patient, every day. Our leadership teams, from the Board to the wards, have been growing in strength over the last few years and this has played a big part in our move out of special measures.

"I would also like to pay tribute to our wonderful volunteers. I was thrilled to see that the volunteer-run Carer Support Team was praised by the CCQ for the support they give to the parents and friends of unwell babies and children."

He added: "It's great news that the overall rating for Hemel Hempstead Hospital has moved from 'inadequate' to 'requires improvement'. In fact, there is not a single aspect of any service at Hemel Hempstead that has an inadequate rating – a massive change from nine red ratings last year to none this year. We will continue to build on this improvement as we consider the range of services to be provided in Hemel Hempstead."

"St Albans City Hospital also now has no inadequate ratings. Multi-site trusts are often criticised for focusing on their main campus to the detriment of smaller sites but today's results show that our team ethos is shared by all. The inspectors noted the changes we have made to some key leadership posts and that we are working more closely across our three hospitals."

Chief executive Katie Fisher said: "The improvement is across the board, with three services now being rated as good against all five aspects – safe, effective, responsive, caring and well-led. Achieving this level of consistency has not been easy but it has been done with pride. I congratulate staff in maternity services and in children and young people's services at Watford, and the surgery team at St Albans for their sea of green!

"This is the second year running where the overwhelming trend is an increasing number of 'good' ratings. This reflects our commitment to quality and the fact that we are becoming a more clinically-led organisation, something that is easy to say but far harder to achieve. Having senior clinical staff around the table when key decisions are being made is good news for our ratings and even better news for our patients."

She added: "It has been a great achievement to reduce the number of services with an overall rating of inadequate to just one – urgent and emergency care at Watford General. However, we have recently recruited additional consultants and made a small increase to capacity to alleviate pressure in this busy service. Looking further ahead, we will need a new or substantially enlarged emergency department big enough to manage the number of patients who come through its doors."

"Nationally, 55% of hospitals' core services are rated good so our 61.5% of core services rated 'good' puts us comfortably above the national average. But it's not just the numbers and ratings that I want to shout about – our local communities should be reassured to know that staff at their local hospitals are driven by wanting to work well in their teams, to learn and improve and most of all, to give great care."

"Finally, I must say that it's great to shake off the special measures tag for our services. My view, since joining the trust in 2016, is that the only thing that deserves to be called special is our wonderful staff."

Ends

1. The CQC inspection report is available here: www.cqc.org.uk
2. For highlights of the report, including ratings tables, see below.

3. For more information, please contact:
 - West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust communications team on: 01923 436280 or email: communications@whht.nhs.uk. Out of hours: 07900 228031.
 - CQC press office: Helen Gildersleeve on 0191 233 3379 or 07825 939328 or email: helen.gildersleeve@cqc.org.uk. Out of hours: 07789 876 508.
 - NHS Improvement press office: Michelle Smith, 020 3747 0988 or 07769 314870 or email: michelle.smith80@nhs.net. Out of hours: 07795 962 933.
4. West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust serves people from across Hertfordshire, north London and further afield. It operates from three hospitals; Watford General, St Albans City and Hemel Hempstead. The trust sees around 600,000 patients a year and is one of the largest employers locally, with around 5,000 staff and volunteers.
5. For more information about our hospitals, visit www.westhertshospitals.nhs.uk. You can also join our followers on Twitter (twitter.com/westhertsNHS) and find us on Facebook (facebook.com/westhertsNHS).

Highlights of the Care Quality Commission report on West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust published 10 January 2018

Background

This was the third comprehensive inspection of the trust; the first took place in April and May 2015. It was rated 'inadequate' overall and went into special measures.

The trust was inspected again in September 2016 and was rated 'requires improvement' overall. It remained in special measures.

The latest inspection took place between 30 August and 1 September 2017 when Watford Hospital, St Albans Hospital and Hemel Hempstead Hospital were all inspected. Unannounced inspections of all three hospitals took place on 12 September 2017.

Results

Overall, the trust was rated as 'requires improvement' for safe, effective, responsive and well led and 'good' for caring.

Four services were rated as requiring improvement overall and eight rated as good. One was rated inadequate.

This was an improvement on the inspection carried out in September 2016, where five services were rated as requiring improvement, five rated as good and two were rated inadequate, although one of these services is no longer run by the trust.

Comparison of the proportion of 'inadequate' and 'good' ratings showing the progression over the three inspections:

	Inadequate	Good
2015	15	20
2016	8	32
2017	3	45

Overview of ratings

	Safe	Effective	Caring	Responsive	Well-led	Overall
Trust Overall	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Good	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Requires improvement

Watford General Hospital

	Safe	Effective	Caring	Responsive	Well-led	Overall
Urgent & emergency	Inadequate	Good	Good	Inadequate	Inadequate	Inadequate
Medical care	Requires improvement	Good	Good	Requires improvement	Good	Requires improvement
Surgery	Requires improvement	Good	Good	Requires improvement	Good	Requires improvement
Critical care	Good	Good	Good	Requires improvement	Good	Good
Maternity & family planning	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Children & young people	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
End of life care	Good	Requires improvement	Good	Good	Good	Good
Outpatients & diagnostic imaging	Requires improvement	Inspected but not rated ¹	Good	Good	Good	Good
Overall	Requires improvement	Good	Good	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Requires improvement

St Albans City Hospital

	Safe	Effective	Caring	Responsive	Well-led	Overall
Minor injuries Unit	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Good	Good	Requires improvement	Requires improvement
Surgery	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Outpatients & diagnostic imaging	Requires improvement	Inspected but not rated ¹	Good	Good	Good	Good
Overall	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Good	Good	Requires improvement	Requires improvement

Hemel Hempstead Hospital

	Safe	Effective	Caring	Responsive	Well-led	Overall
Urgent Care centre	Good	Requires improvement	Good	Good	Requires improvement	Requires improvement
Outpatients & diagnostic imaging	Requires improvement	Inspected but not rated ¹	Good	Good	Good	Good
Overall	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	Good	Good	Requires improvement	Requires improvement

CQC notes:

1. We are currently not confident that we are collecting sufficient evidence to rate effectiveness for Outpatients & Diagnostic Imaging.