

PRESS RELEASE – 25th October, 2017



South Tyneside Hospital's super scanner in use within weeks

South Tyneside District Hospital's new MRI scanner - the first of its kind in the UK - has now arrived on the Harton Lane site and is expected to be up and running for patients before the end of the year.

The arrival at the weekend of a crane on the hospital site signalled a crucial stage in the £1.5m development, with the delivery of the five-tonne magnet.

The state-of-the-art scanner will use some of the most sophisticated technology in the world and will revolutionise treatment, care and experience for patients from South Tyneside and Sunderland. Providing highly accurate digital images, the new kit will enable doctors to diagnose more diseases and conditions, from cancers to sports injuries, in more parts of the body, more quickly.

It replaces the previous MRI scanner, which had been in use since 2004, and the investment in South Tyneside District Hospital signals a clear commitment from the

South Tyneside and Sunderland Healthcare Group to continuing to provide the highest quality of patient care and experience as locally as possible.

Building work in preparation for the installation of the new MRI machine, including removal of the old one, began in September and the ongoing service for patients has been seamless due to the introduction on site of a temporary mobile scanning unit. With the new equipment now on site, it just remains to fit out the scan, control and electronics rooms and train staff in readiness for the scanner to come into operation.

The 'tunnel' of the new scanner is much shorter, wider and better lit which will provide a much better, more comfortable experience, especially for those patients who feel claustrophobic and who previously had to be referred to an off-site 'open' scanner. The wider tunnel will also be more suitable for patients larger than those which the previous scanner could accommodate.

To help patients relax, one wall of the scan room will be devoted to a work by famed South Shields artist Bob Olley called 'Coal, Ships, Fish and Chips', which captures famous local landmarks.

Lead Consultant for Radiology, Dr Richard Cooper, said: "The new scanner is great news for local patients and I'm delighted that we are so close to it being operational. It will be much more efficient, the image quality it provides is fantastic and results will be available much faster. It also has amazing potential, for example, it will allow the visualisation of tumours in more detail, allowing an improvement in their staging. We are already looking at how we can use it in more fields in the future, such as cardiology."

Dr Shaz Wahid, South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust's Medical Director, added: "We're very proud to have taken delivery of the new scanner, which is the first of its kind in the UK, and we are very excited about its potential. Its arrival demonstrates that, despite the unprecedented financial pressures facing the NHS, we are committed to major investment at South Tyneside District Hospital in line with our aim of providing local services of the highest quality for local people now and in the future."

MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) is the name given to an imaging technique which takes very detailed images of the inside of the body. It uses a powerful magnetic field and radio waves, together with an advanced computer system, to build up a series of images through the area under examination. Patients lie within the tunnel or 'bore' of the MRI scanner when being scanned.

The results of the scan can be used to help diagnose conditions, plan treatments and assess how effective previous treatment has been. The scanner can be used to examine almost any part of the body including:

- the brain and spinal cord
- muscles, bones and joints (musculoskeletal)
- heart and blood vessels
- internal organs, such as the liver, womb or prostate gland

The previous scanner at South Tyneside had different pieces of equipment for scanning different parts of the body, sometimes requiring patients to be moved if multiple areas of the body were to be scanned. The new scanner incorporates more of these pieces of equipment together within the patient table. Therefore, once the patient is on the scanner table less movement will be required if more than one body area is being scanned. This is particularly important for the comfort and care of patients who are very ill.

The installation of the new MRI scanner is the latest investment in the South Tyneside District Hospital site. In the past two years, the Trust has also opened Haven Court, a £9 million centre of excellence for integrated health and social care for older people and a new £1.4 million Surgical Centre, which is improving patient experience and access to surgical services. It also hopes to start work early in 2018 on a new energy centre, which will signal a further investment of £5 million.

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Photo caption: South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust business manager Bronia Fleet, senior engineer, capital projects, Diego Peralta, and MRI lead Miles Weston

Notes to editors

South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust and City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust have been working together as part of a strategic alliance known as the South Tyneside and Sunderland Healthcare Group since March 2016. A joint executive management team has been in place since November 2016 and is working towards a shared vision to develop high quality healthcare services that will benefit local communities for many years to come. Detailed work is currently taking place through the 'Path to Excellence' programme (www.pathtoexcellence.org.uk) to discuss how both Trusts can work better together to improve quality of care and address the challenges and pressures facing the whole NHS.

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