


# Agenda Item 6

		<b>THE HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR LINCOLNSHIRE</b>	
Boston Borough Council	East Lindsey District Council	City of Lincoln Council	Lincolnshire County Council
North Kesteven District Council	South Holland District Council	South Kesteven District Council	West Lindsey District Council

Open Report on behalf of United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust

Report to	<b>Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire</b>
Date:	<b>13 September 2023</b>
Subject:	<b>United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust – Nuclear Medicine</b>

**Summary:**

Nuclear medicine is a specialist imaging technique involving the administration of radioactive substances in the diagnosis and treatment of disease. This technique enables assessment of the function of organs, whereas most conventional imaging techniques, such as x-ray, look at anatomy.

In February 2022, United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust (ULHT) launched a consultation on consolidating the service at Lincoln County Hospital, to which the Health Scrutiny Committee responded in April 2022.

The ULHT Board made a decision on the consultation in October 2022, and this report provides the Committee with an update on the implementation of that decision.

**Actions Requested:**

The Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire is requested to note the update by United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust on its nuclear medicine service.

## **1. Background**

### Description of Nuclear Medicine

Nuclear medicine is a specialist imaging technique involving the administration of radioactive substances (called radiopharmaceuticals) in the diagnosis and treatment of disease. The technique enables assessment of the function of organs, whereas most conventional imaging techniques (for example x-ray) look at anatomy.

The majority of radiopharmaceuticals are made daily in an aseptic facility known as a radio-pharmacy. The radiopharmaceutical used is dependent on the part of the body that is being investigated. The most common tests performed in United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust (ULHT) are bone scans and heart scans. There are over 20 different tests that nuclear medicine can perform, and they look at conditions as diverse as Parkinson's disease and delayed gastric emptying.

After administration of the radiopharmaceutical, patients must wait for a time for the radiopharmaceutical to distribute in their bodies before they are imaged on a specialist camera called a gamma camera. This camera detects the radiation emitted from the patient to enable the organ of interest to be investigated. A gamma camera is similar in size to a CT scanner.

### 2022 Consultation on Nuclear Medicine Service

Between 28 February and 23 May 2022, ULHT undertook a consultation exercise on the nuclear medicine service. This was in response to the challenges facing the service such as a shortage of clinical technologists, radiologists, and medical physics experts; ageing equipment, including the gamma cameras; and the supply of radiopharmaceuticals and isotopes. ULHT developed a case for change and put forward options for the future of the service, which included as a preferred option consolidation of the service from three sites (Boston, Grantham, and Lincoln) to one site at Lincoln County Hospital. On 13 April 2022, the Committee approved its response to the consultation.

## **2. Developments Since the Consultation**

United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust (ULHT) Trust Board made a decision in October 2022 to consolidate the nuclear medicine service on one site at Lincoln County Hospital, following consideration of the outcomes of the public consultation. Since this decision was made, we have made the following progress:

- We have maintained the same standards of scan-to-report time and the same number of patients are being seen as before the closure of the department at Pilgrim Hospital. The mean scan to report time for nuclear medicine patients in March 2023 was 3.1 days, with 87% of patients receiving a report within 7 days. This excludes Myocardial Perfusion Imaging patients- where the mean scan to report time in March 2023 was 34 days, with 38% of patients receiving a report within 14 days.

During March 2023 the pan-trust service had 367 administrations. This compares to 356 administrations in March 2022. We are hopeful that by centralising the service, any future increase in demand for the service can be accommodated. In addition, the replacement general camera for the cardiac camera will allow greater flexibility for scanning.

- There was consultation with staff at Pilgrim Hospital on their relocation or redeployment depending on their requirements. Three members of staff were redeployed to posts at Pilgrim Hospital and two relocated to Lincoln County Hospital.
- Nuclear medicine scanning stopped at Pilgrim Hospital at the end of 2022 to enable area to be cleared. This transition went relatively smoothly, with some issues to be ironed out around transport for transfer of inpatients needing tests that have now been resolved.
- In April 2023, the final members of staff at Pilgrim Hospital were redeployed or relocated.
- In July 2023, the building which housed nuclear medicine at Pilgrim Hospital was demolished, in preparation for the new A&E build on that site.
- A new state of the art SPECT-CT [*single photon emission computed tomography*] camera has been ordered and is due to delivered in early 2024 to Lincoln County Hospital. A SPECT CT camera is a gamma camera, with a CT added on to allow localisation of tracer uptake for some of our scans.
- A new gamma camera has also been purchased as part of an exciting project which should enable earlier diagnosis and treatment for patients with irritable bowel syndrome and diarrhoea in the primary care sector. This is likely to be in the department within the year and will be able to scan up to 1,200 SeHCAT [*23-seleno-25-homotaurocholic acid, selenium homocholic acid taurine*] patients per year.
- Enabling work for the installation of the SPECT-CT and the gamma camera is being tendered; and this work is due to be completed in March 2024.
- When the cameras are operational at Lincoln, the Grantham department will be closed, and the remaining members of staff will be consulted about their future plans. The plan is that the service will be operating from one site by April 2024.
- Our staffing position is improving, although we have recently had one staff member leave and recruitment into this post is underway:
  - Our first apprentice has successfully completed their second year of a three year training programme to become a qualified technologist.
  - Due to the success of the first apprentice, we have taken on a second person who is due to start the course in September 2023, and this would be completed in September 2026.

- We are working with the breast service at Pilgrim Hospital to ensure breast cancer patients who require nuclear medicine injections are still able to have them on site. Currently patients having their surgery on a Thursday are injected at Lincoln County Hospital on a Wednesday. Monday appointments are being transported Lincoln and then returning to Pilgrim Hospital for surgery. We are now working closely with the breast service to move the majority of this injections back to Pilgrim Hospital, which involves training members of the breast team to perform the radioactive injections and ensuring that the appropriate facilities are in place.
- The building in Pilgrim Hospital that housed nuclear medicine has now been demolished to make room for the new A&E department.
- In April 2024 it is hoped the department will be fully centralised at Lincoln with two new state of the art cameras, with plans for a third camera to be replaced in the next few years.

### **3. Consultation**

This is not a direct consultation item. The Committee responded to the consultation on this service in April 2022.

### **4. Conclusion**

The Committee is requested to consider the information on the nuclear medicine service since the decision on the outcomes of the consultation was made.

### **5. Background Papers**

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Mel Stanley-Grant, Senior Communications Officer, who can be contacted via [ULH.Communications@ulh.nhs.uk](mailto:ULH.Communications@ulh.nhs.uk)