

40 Years of Care

1984
2024

Milton Keynes University Hospital at 40

The Beginnings

Development of the new city of Milton Keynes started at the end of the 1960s but by the middle of the 1970s there was still no local hospital. Hospital services were provided by Stoke Mandeville Hospital and Northampton General Hospital. In the 1970s a campaign with the slogan 'Milton Keynes is Dying for a Hospital' was led by local residents, who erected an infamous question mark on the proposed site. This resulted in the commitment to build a hospital on the current site.

From 1979, a 'stop-gap' community hospital was opened, linked to the city's first Health Centre at Eaglestone. Construction of Milton Keynes Hospital began on its current 60-hectare site in 1980 with six further health centres operational by 1983.



The concrete question mark erected on the site as part of the 'Milton Keynes is Dying for a Hospital' campaign, 1977



The proposed site of the hospital in 1971



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The Opening

The main hospital as we know it today was built in two phases. The first phase was opened on 24th September 1984 by HRH The Duchess of Kent. The services included four operating theatres, an Accident and Emergency Department, Maternity Services, general and speciality wards, full x-ray facilities, a Pathology Department and Ambulance Station. A Postgraduate Education Centre and an extended Physiotherapy Department, including a hydrotherapy pool, were built soon after the opening.

The second phase was opened also by the Duchess of Kent in 1992. This new area of the hospital included six additional wards and four additional operating theatres.

When the hospital first opened around 1,000 staff were employed by the hospital. In 2009 an army of over 3,000 staff and 500 volunteers delivered care to patients.



HRH The Duchess of Kent at the Royal opening, 13 November 1984



Handing over the keys to the new hospital, 29 August 1983



The first baby born at the new hospital, 8 May 1984



Staff at the opening of Eaglestone Community Hospital, 1979



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Aerial view of the hospital, phase 1



Nurses station, 1984



The new X-ray Department, 1984



The first patient at Milton Keynes Hospital, 2 April 1984



Preparing meals in the hospital kitchen, 1984



New state-of-the-art equipment, 1984

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Arts for Health MK

In 2024, Arts for Health Milton Keynes (AfHMK) celebrates its 20th anniversary. The charity grew out of the voluntary Arts Committee at Milton Keynes Hospital, who had the vision to develop the art collection there when it first opened in 1984.

Even before the hospital opened, art had been at the forefront of its development, from campaign sculptures made by The Hospital Action Group; to a Milton Keynes Health Authority visual arts project to 'humanise' the hospital environment in 1983.

Once the hospital opened the first Chairman of the Arts Committee was Dr Paddy Fitzgerald-Finch, a Consultant Radiologist, and funds were raised to appoint the first Director. Charitable status was secured in 2004.

The Collection now numbers over 400 artworks, the largest permanent art collection in Milton Keynes. The charity organises an annual programme of temporary exhibitions and loaned artworks, arranges art events for staff, and manages the inner green spaces, known as Creative Courtyards, including one which is now a Sensory Garden.

Using The Collection as inspiration, a huge proportion of the charity's work annually involves the commissioning of professional arts practitioners to deliver a wide range of creative workshops designed to improve the health and wellbeing of people in Milton Keynes.



*The Sensory Garden at MKUH
(Credit: Arts for Health MK)*

Visit: www.artsforhealthmk.org.uk to find out more.



Installation view of Look Around you Exhibition (Credit: Arts for Health MK: featuring l-r. Three Girls, Apartment Window and Solstice; screenprints by W. King from The MKUH Collection)



Giant Florence Nightingale puppet parade to MKUH (2018) Look Around You project (Credit: Arts for Health MK)



Jon Buck, The Monumental Family, (1996) cast in bronze at the Pangolin Foundry and exhibited at Sculpture 2000 [at MKUH] (Credit: Jon Buck, The Monumental Family, (1996) from The MKUH Collection)

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Buy-a-Bed Fund

The Buy-a-Bed Fund was launched by local newspaper *The Milton Keynes Express* shortly after the first building work started on the hospital in 1980.

The target was to raise £90,000, the cost of 300 beds for the new hospital. With the help of local groups, organisations and individuals the target was successfully reached.

However, the title of the campaign was slightly misleading as Government funds were already in place to provide the beds, but it did mean that the funds raised could be used to purchase other much-needed equipment for the new hospital.



Buy-a-Bed collection walk leaves Eaglestone Community Hospital for Bletchley



The Tuesday Club celebrates raising funds for their second hospital bed



Competitors preparing for the 'Bed Push' at Eaglestone Health Centre, 1981



Bishops Food Stores presents a cheque to the Buy-a-Bed Fund, 1981

40
1984
2024

Years of Care

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General Fundraising



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2024

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Expanding and Innovating

The hospital site has continued to expand to offer better services and to keep pace with the growing population of Milton Keynes.

September 1990: A new Outpatient Centre was formally opened and named after Mr Luing Cowley, who was the District Health Authority Chairman and a member of the Milton Keynes Development Corporation.

April 1992: Milton Keynes General NHS Trust formally came into being. Significant changes to the range of services offered at the hospital included the addition of a Renal Unit, the expansion of postgraduate education facilities and the expansion of the Cardiology Unit and Coronary Care Ward.

October 1992: Phase II was officially opened by HRH the Duchess of Kent. The development contained six additional 28-bed wards, a further four operating theatres, extra accommodation for the Pathology Department and for stores, staff, offices and meeting rooms.



HRH the Duchess of Kent officially opens Phase II, 1992



The new Luing Cowley Centre, 1990



The Duke of Gloucester officially opens the new Renal Unit, 1994

Practice Managers view testing equipment in the new Cardiology Unit

40 Years of Care

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2000: Official opening of the MRI Unit, opened by actress Linda Robson.

2002: A two-storey building housing a 26-bed Orthopaedic Ward and Breast Screening Unit was opened.

2003: The Trust opened an extension to the Children's Ward to house a GP referral unit, an assessment centre and a Patient Transfer Lounge.

2004: A new office block was constructed (Oak House) and a 12-bed Oncology and Cancer Centre funded by the Macmillan Cancer Charity was completed. An enlarged clinic for fracture treatment was also opened in the summer.

2005: The biggest building project on the hospital site for 10 years – a 60-bed Treatment Centre – opened in January 2005. Specifically designed and built for the treatment of patients needing minor surgery and day surgery.

2006: Opening of the Trust's £2.5 million Angiography Unit which provides diagnostic procedures enabling more patients to be treated locally.

2007: Milton Keynes Hospital becomes an NHS Foundation Trust.

2009: A new building housing a state-of-the-art Endoscopy Unit and new 28-bed ward (Ward 22) opened.



The MRI Unit under construction, 1998



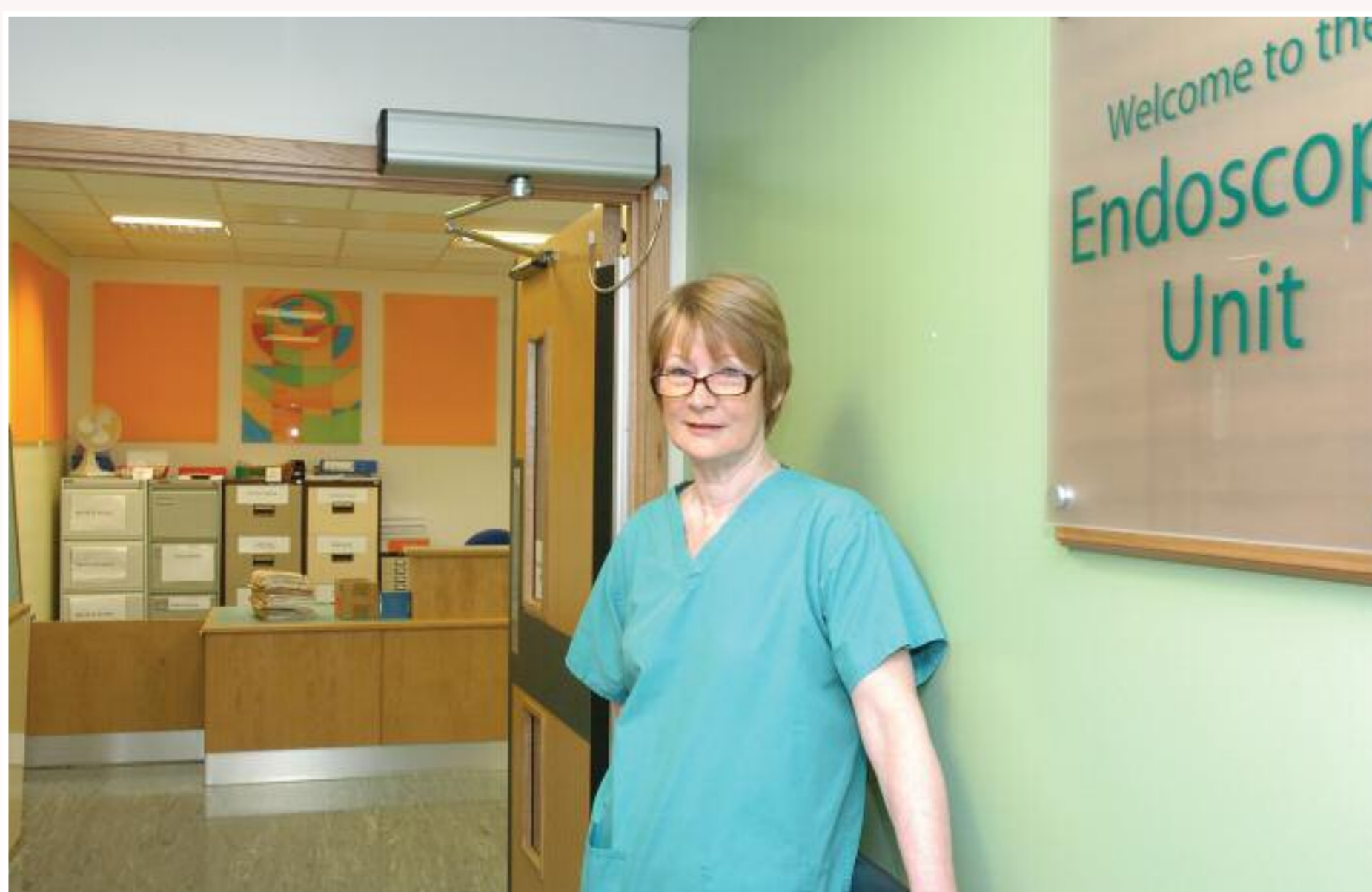
A demonstration of a new CT scanner, 2001



Actress Linda Robson officially opens the new MRI Unit, 2000



Milton Mouse Children's Unit



The Endoscopy Unit opens, 2009



The new Treatment Centre, 2005

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1984
2024

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2015: Due to a partnership with the University of Buckingham to establish the country's first independent medical school, the hospital becomes Milton Keynes University Hospital (MKUH).

2017: Opening of the hospital's new main entrance, following the closure of the original entrance in 2015. The new main entrance provided a light, bright and welcoming main route into the hospital for patients and visitors, complete with areas to eat and drink.

2018: The Academic Centre, in partnership with the University of Buckingham, opens to students. The centre includes simulation teaching areas, classrooms and a state-of-the-art, 100-seater lecture theatre.

2020: The new Cancer Centre is opened, located at the rear of the hospital estate. The Cancer Centre co-locates all oncology, clinical haematology and cancer-related chemotherapy services under one roof, with an in-patient ward located on the top floor.

2022: The Maple Centre was opened on Monday 31 October and is designed to deliver an integrated approach to Same Day Emergency Care (SDEC) for patients. The centre is designed to reduce pressures on the Emergency Department, ensuring patients are seen in the most appropriate environment for their needs.



Academic Centre opening (l-r): Sir Anthony Seldon (former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Buckingham), HRH The Duke of Kent KG, Joe Harrison (CEO of MKUH)



University name change (l-r): The late Baroness Margaret Wall (former Chair of MKUH), Sir Anthony Seldon



CEO Joe Harrison opens the main entrance alongside the Mayor of Milton Keynes David Hopkins



SDEC Matron Annie Sarmiento cutting the ribbon with CEO Joe Harrison to open the Maple Centre



MKUH Cancer Centre

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The Friends of MK Hospital

The Friends of Milton Keynes Hospital and Community, previously known as the League of Friends, was formed in 1980 raising money for purchases for the hospital when it opened. The Friends have raised over £3.5m, including funding the first CAT scanner in 1988. When the Cancer Centre opened in January 2020 the Friends funded 22 chemotherapy chairs and 24 televisions. The Friends have also given £50K for the development of the wellbeing centre in the new Radiotherapy unit.



Friends shop, 1994

The Friends have always had a shop in the hospital starting with a small tuck shop in 1984 and then a much larger shop which opened in 1990. In 2015 the MK Friends shop moved to the centre of the hospital next to Eaglestone restaurant. The shop is open 7 days a week with a wide range of items from toiletries, confectionery, groceries, newspapers and magazines and fresh food. We prepare hot and cold food from our kitchen.



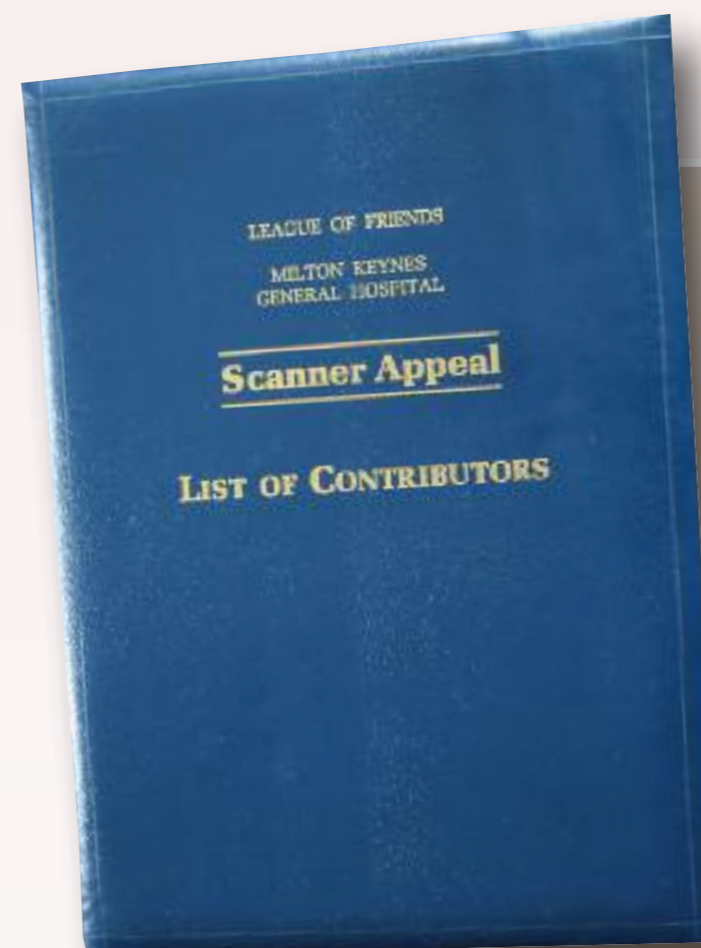
Milton Keynes Gazette article, 1984



For many years the Friends have had a morning trolley round which goes round the wards with goods for patients and staff.

The service the Friends offer would not be possible if it was not for the dedicated volunteers and staff. New volunteers are always required to improve our service whether it is raising money, helping in the shop or going round the wards with the trolley. If you'd like to help email info@mkfriends.org.uk or phone 01908 904034

Visit the website for more information www.mkfriends.org.uk



CT scanner, 1988

40 Years of Care

1984
2024

Milton Keynes University Hospital at 40

MK Hospital Charity

Milton Keynes Hospital has a proud history of fundraising and community support. Since its inception, local people and businesses have helped to improve the lives of patients, visitors, and staff.



One early success was the 'Buy a Bed' Appeal, launched before the hospital opened. It raised over £90,000 to equip the facility with modern beds, each carrying a plaque naming its donor.

In 1995, Milton Keynes Hospital Charity was established as the hospital's official charity, continuing this legacy of community-driven fundraising.

The charity raises funds to support projects and items that enhance patient care and experience beyond NHS provision, including outdoor spaces and resources that bring comfort to patients and loved ones.

From the 'Buy a Bed' campaign to the 2018 Cancer Centre Appeal—which raised £1 million—the charity's enduring partnership with generous supporters ensures MKUH remains a beacon of high-quality care and hope for all who rely on its services.

Join us in making a difference at MKUH! Email us fundraising@mkuh.nhs.uk or visit our website mkhcharity.org.uk



The charity's cancer centre appeal, publicly launched in 2018 (Credit: Milton Keynes Hospital Charity)



Agora roller skaters for the 'Buy-a-Bed' appeal, 1981 (Credit: Living Archive)



Parent and Neonatal Unit: a baby in a BabyLeo incubator, funded by the charity (Credit: Milton Keynes Hospital Charity)



Staff member and family in the charity-funded Sensory Room in Children's A&E (Credit: Milton Keynes Hospital Charity)



The central courtyard at the MKUH Cancer Centre, funded and maintained by the charity (Credit: Milton Keynes Hospital Charity)