



Trust Strategy

2026 – 2031





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Foreword from our Chief Executive and Chair

This strategy is built on our clear and simple ambition and commitment to provide local people with **5 Star Patient Care** and outcomes, underpinned by our track record of being an outstanding organisation.

Our approach to deliver improvements and progress is based on what our patients, local communities and staff have told us and incorporates national policies, the latest advances in clinical practice and science, and harnesses new digital technology and skills.

Our Vision: 5 Star Patient Care

We want to improve the health and wellbeing of local communities, enabling people to live longer and healthier lives.

5 Star Patient Care makes **safety**, **care**, **pathways**, **communication** and **systems**, the combined emphasis for our patients' experience and our staff achievement.



Our Strategic Objectives

- We will provide services that meet the highest quality and performance standards
- We will work in partnership to improve health outcomes for our population
- We will provide the services of choice for our patients
- We will respond to local and individual health needs and contribute to reducing health inequalities
- We will attract and develop caring, highly skilled staff
- We will work in partnership to create sustainable and efficient health systems

Our Values



**We are
KIND**



**We are
OPEN**



**We are
INCLUSIVE**

Executive Summary

We want to provide local people **5 Star Patient Care** and our staff the widest opportunities for training and career development. Although our performance is amongst the best in the NHS, we can do better. Getting the basics right today with **5 Star Patient Care** and our continuous improvement ethos will ensure a persistent drive to ensure safety and quality across all our services. Our approach and values mean we can rapidly adapt, share best practice and learning across the whole Trust.

Our Strategic Objectives align with NHS England’s ‘Fit for the Future: The 10 Year Health Plan for England’ published in July 2025 which describes three key shifts:

Shift from Hospitals to Community

Focus on Analogue to Digital

Focus on Prevention over Treatment

To deliver our vision of 5 Star Patient Care, we will:

Provide responsive services closer to the population, offering advice and guidance, virtual appointments and easier access to diagnostic services

Provide community services with seamless care enabling a skilled workforce with resource to meet peoples’ needs at home, avoiding unnecessary hospital attendances and admissions

Provide services that support prevention of illness and maintain wellness, to reduce the future burden on healthcare and enable people to live healthier lives

Provide services using technology to reduce duplication and streamline data to enable people to receive care across different boundaries

Provide staff with the right training and skills to innovate and improve with our patients at the centre of everything we do

← Making the best use of our finances and our resources →

Rob Cooper

Chief Executive Officer

Steve Rumbelow

Chair

About Us

A Tradition of Service and Innovation

Mersey and West Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust (MWL) is an anchor institute. This means we are a healthcare family, rooted in the foundations of the NHS and its local communities. We are of and for the people we serve and champion their health and wellbeing.

Our local history is rich in achievement, innovation and hard work. The industrial revolution was born and thrived in our region; the NHS was first promised here – the world’s first railway line runs just a few hundred metres south of Whiston Hospital. We are infused with our region’s energy, aspiration, invention and dedication to improve the health and happiness of our communities with **5 Star Patient Care**.

Our history shows that nothing stays still, progress from invention and innovation empowers, lifts and enhances every aspect of our lives. Healthcare and the NHS is a central part of that, providing safe starts in life, nurturing our growth and learning, keeping us fit and independent, and there when we are in pain and distress.

A Mission of Improvement Today

Our services are currently under huge pressure and people are too often facing waiting times for appointments, operations and emergency care that are too long. Although our performance is amongst the best in the NHS, we can do better. We need to do better because people’s needs for health and care are growing, but so are the skills and technologies we have to meet them.

MWL’s combined strengths mean that we can ensure that our services reflect the most effective ways of delivering the best outcomes for people. We can strengthen both our local services and regional specialties, offering local people the most responsive service. As a teaching hospital we want to continue to ensure our staff are receiving the best possible training, education and development opportunities and we are consistently investing.

We are investing in reducing waiting times and new diagnostic assets such as scanners and pathology services. We are also boosting our clinical services, some of which have been hard to recruit to and fully staff. As part of the NHS’s commitment to net zero, we continue to work on sustainability, and strive for net zero status by 2050.





Persistent and consistent

Getting the basics right today with **5 Star Patient Care** and our continuous improvement ethos will ensure a persistent drive to ensure safety and quality across all our services. Our approach and values mean we can rapidly adopt, share best practice and learning across the whole Trust.

It also means we have the scale of resources and experience to achieve consistent standards for all our patients. Their good experience and good outcomes are the purpose of our work and the motivation for our staff. Each patient will have very personal needs and each community a local character. We will be consistent in our standards and approach to quality and outcomes, focused on local needs and differences, and deliver services that are personal and with kindness and empathy.



Our hospitals:



Whiston Hospital



St Helens Hospital



Southport Hospital



Ormskirk Hospital

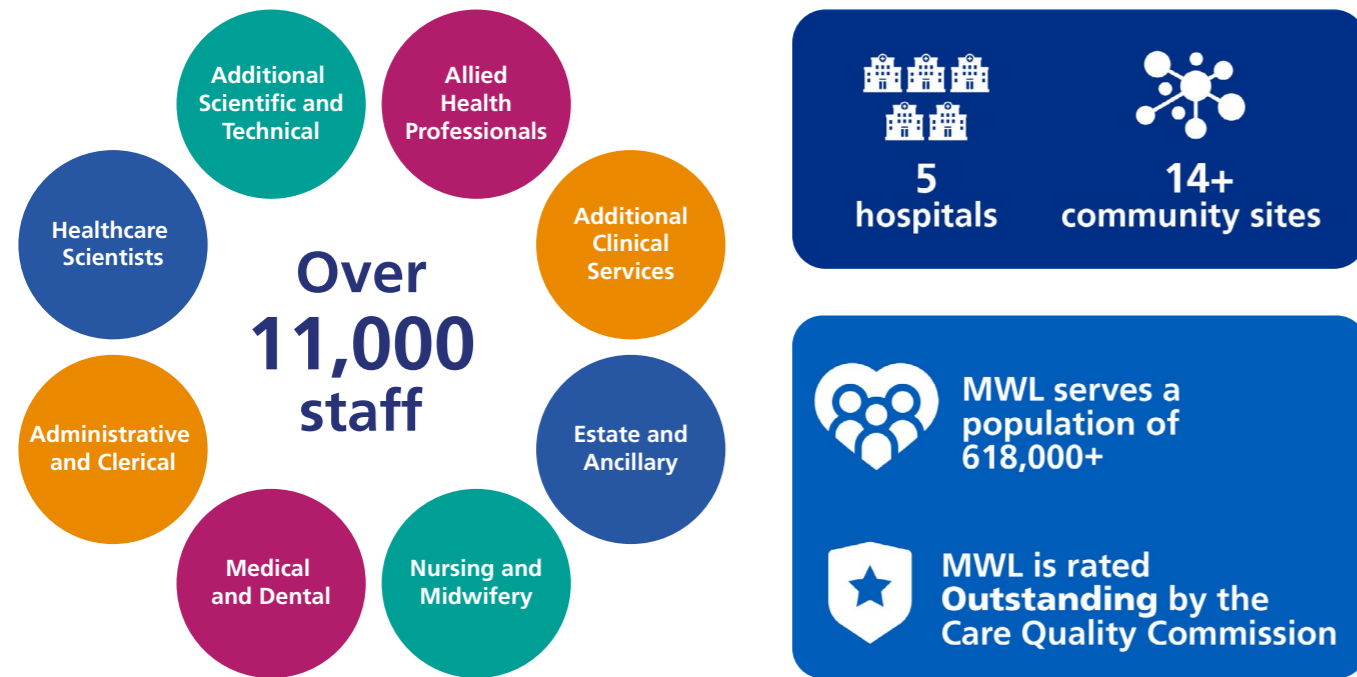


Newton Hospital

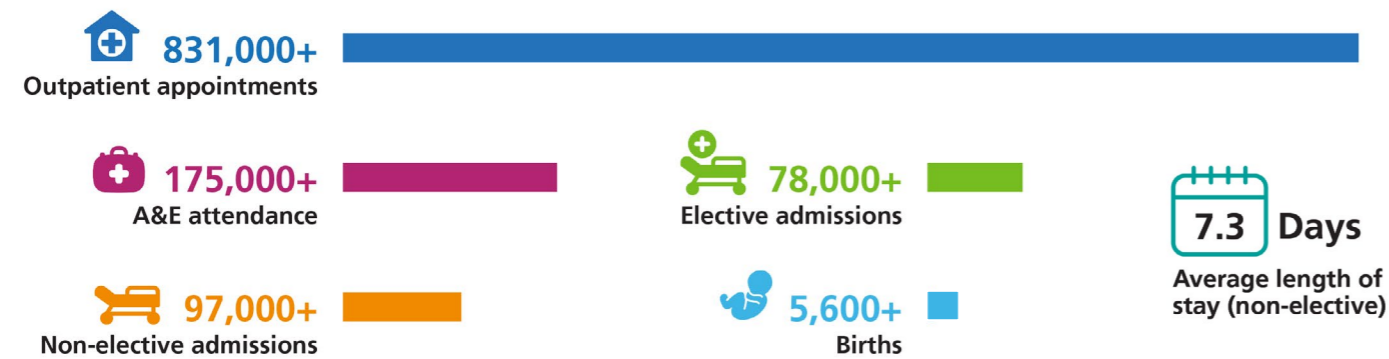
Additionally, we deliver care in and from a number of community sites including:

- Lowe House Health Centre
- Marshalls Cross GP Practice
- St Helens Millennium Centre
- Southport Centre for Health & Wellbeing

Trust in numbers



MWL sees the following activity every year:



Our services include:

Acute Care

We provide all-age emergency services and maternity care across Whiston, Southport and Ormskirk hospitals, as well as a range of medical and surgical specialities across all our hospitals, including St Helens and Newton.

Primary Care

We provide primary care services from Marshalls Cross Medical Centre, situated in St Helens Hospital.

Community Services

We provide adult community services for the Borough of St Helens, and across West Lancashire.

Our inpatient unit, at Newton Community Hospital, is where patients who no longer need an acute hospital bed can continue rehabilitation, freeing up space for patients who are more unwell.

Additionally, we provide urgent care at our Urgent Treatment Centre in the Millennium Centre located in St Helens town centre.

Specialist Regional Services

We also provide the Mersey Regional Burns and Plastic Surgery Unit at Whiston Hospital and the North West Regional Spinal Injuries Centre at Southport District General Hospital, to more than four million people across the whole of Merseyside and West Lancashire, Cheshire, the Isle of Man and North Wales.

Our Communities

Our communities sit within different local authorities, integrated care systems (ICS) and Places which can provide challenges in reducing unnecessary differences in care. There are strategies across the health system aimed at reducing health inequalities with strong commitment from MWL to work collaboratively with our partners to meet the needs of our population.

Health inequalities are unfair and avoidable differences in health between people or groups of people. We want to change this.

This strategy is built on our clear and simple ambition and commitment to provide local people with **5 Star Patient Care** and outcomes underpinned by our track record of being an outstanding organisation. This is our approach to deliver improvement and progress based on what our patients, local communities and staff have told us.



We know that:

In **West Lancashire**, although overall the area is more affluent than others, still 20.5% of children live in relative low-income families, men in the most deprived areas live 9.8 years less than the national average, and women, 8 years less than the national average.

St Helens is the 69th most deprived of 296 local authorities in England with more than 50% of children aged 0-5 living in the most deprived 20% of areas nationally.

Knowsley is the 12th most deprived borough in England with significant differences in life expectancy and although women in Knowsley will live 3.5 years longer than males, they will spend more time in ill-health.

Southport and Formby have a higher proportion of over-65s than the national average and see higher unplanned hospital admissions for chronic conditions.

Halton is the 45th most deprived local authority in England and people living there are more likely to visit emergency departments and have higher rates of premature death.

Our 5 Year Strategy

This strategy describes the Trust's vision, strategic objectives, implementation plan, enabling factors, and monitoring framework to support this transformation. The strategy aligns with NHS England's 'Fit for the Future: The 10 Year Health Plan for England' and local Integrated Care System (ICS) goals to improve population health, reduce inequalities, and deliver seamless care.

The NHS 10 Year Plan



Shift from Hospitals to Community

Health and wellbeing are not simply about taking a pill, seeing a doctor or waiting for a service. They involve helping people to take greater responsibility for themselves and being more proactive in their own health and wellbeing. This means we need to be using information more effectively to identify vulnerable people who may be at risk and addressing the wider determinants of health such as housing, poverty, employment and education. This is something we can only achieve in partnership and collaboration with other parts of the NHS, primary care, community services, and mental health, and with social care and third sector organisations. Contributing to that way of planning and working will hopefully be a defining habit of the next decade.



Focus on Analogue to Digital

Our lives are more connected digitally, creating new ways of living and working and new ways of accessing services and taking part in activities. It is increasingly clear that health and care services can be shaped around individuals much more effectively with new technology - from remote monitoring, to online clinics avoiding hospital visits and saving time, to faster and more accurate diagnostics and treatments with new scanning technology and gene therapies personalised to an individual's clinical condition. These expanding frontiers of medical science and innovation and the introduction of new treatment possibilities will have a huge impact over the period of this strategy.



Focus on Prevention over Treatment

Getting the right service in the right place for someone who is unwell or in need of care is often difficult. This is because many current services were created for a different era with different needs. The way the NHS was organised meant that each service only focussed on their bit of the patient's immediate need. The next decade will see much closer integrated services bringing the best of each organisation to the person that needs it when they need it and taking action to avoid people needing more intrusive and lifestyle changing effects later. Examples include smoking cessation to reduce the risk of cancer, lung and heart disease; reducing obesity to prevent diabetes, heart and lung disease; and reducing respiratory illness from lower levels of air pollution.



5 Star Patient Care

Our commitment to **5 Star Patient Care** is unwavering. Our Trust is a healthcare family and anchor institute, rooted in our communities. Our staff and their families use our services and care about what they mean to their communities. Adopting and adapting to change will only be done strategically, in the context of how it benefits local people, enhances their lives, improves their well-being and sustains their trust and confidence.

We have brilliant staff, great teams, major resources, depths of experience and skills to meet the needs of local people and this strategy is designed to make sure they are accessible, effective and organised to deliver the best results for patients and communities.

5 Star Patient Care makes safety, care, pathways, communication and systems, the combined emphasis for our patients' experience and our staff achievements.



★
Care

We will deliver care that is consistently high quality, well organised, meets best practice standards and provides the best possible experience of healthcare for our patients and their families.

★
Safety

We will embed a culture of safety improvement that reduces harm, improves outcomes, and enhances patient experience.

We will learn from mistakes and near-misses and use patient feedback to enhance delivery of care.

★
Pathways

As far as is practical and appropriate, we will reduce variations in care pathways to improve outcomes, whilst recognising the specific individual needs of every patient.

★
Communication

We will respect the privacy, dignity and individuality of every patient.

We will be open and inclusive with patients and provide them with more information about their care.

We will seek the views of patients, relatives and visitors, and use this feedback to help us improve services.

★
Systems

We will improve Trust arrangements and processes, drawing upon best practice to deliver systems that are efficient, patient-centred, reliable and fit for their purposes.

Demand for healthcare and expectations are continuously growing and there are pressures that we need to respond to better. We recognise the challenges our communities face and we want to make sure that we are diagnosing, treating and caring for more people than ever, and yet too many people are waiting too long, and some parts of our services are strained. We also know that many serious healthcare needs could have been avoided or reduced through earlier intervention and prevention.

We have brilliant staff, great teams, major resources, depths of experience and skills to meet the needs of local people and this strategy is designed to make sure they are accessible, effective and organised to deliver the best results for patients and communities.

We will involve our patients, communities and staff to understand how to make best use of the opportunities that technology and digital innovation will offer and avoid pitfalls and anxiety that they can also create. We will plan carefully how, where and when to invest to make innovation that changes lives easily available, but also not lose the personal and intimate aspects of care that are rightly valued by face-to-face contact, conversation and relationships.

It can be difficult to perfectly anticipate future needs. We could not have anticipated COVID-19's impact, but we did understand how the needs of a growing older population would need to be provided for. We do know how many children are being born and what their needs through childhood will be. We do know what the trends are for disease and illness, so can focus on cancer, heart and respiratory disease. We do know that many more people will be living with frailty, loneliness and dementia. We do know what new medicines are likely to offer. Some technology will surprise us, but we have a track record of embracing such opportunities to enhance the care we give to our patients.



Delivering Our 5 Year Strategy

Our Strategic Objectives

- We will provide services that meet the highest quality and performance standards
- We will work in partnership to improve health outcomes for our population
- We will provide the services of choice for our patients
- We will respond to local and individual health needs and contribute to reducing health inequalities
- We will attract and develop caring highly skilled staff
- We will work in partnership to create sustainable and efficient health systems

This means that we will:

Provide responsive services closer to the population, offering advice and guidance, virtual appointments and easier access to diagnostic services

- GPs and community-based staff can access expert advice to avoid a hospital referral or admission
- Clinical pathways that support a 'straight to test' approach and improve patient outcomes aligned to **Getting It Right First Time - GIRFT ***
- Clinical services are stabilised and strengthened
- More people attend their hospital appointment
- More people are treated within 18 weeks of being referred by their GP

Provide community services with seamless care enabling a skilled workforce with resource to meet peoples' needs at home, avoiding unnecessary hospital attendances and admissions

- Community and primary care services can access diagnostic services and specialist advice to avoid hospital admissions
- More people being cared for in their own home or within their community
- Less people attend A&E for conditions that can be treated in the community

* <https://gettingitrightfirsttime.co.uk/>

Provide services that support prevention of illness and maintain wellness, to reduce the future burden on healthcare and enable people to live healthier lives

- More people are supported through self-care and advice and guidance.
- We use data insights to drive service improvement and patient experience
- We are co-producing models of care with all relevant partners

Provide services using technology to reduce duplication and streamline data to enable people to receive care across different boundaries

- Digital systems are aligned and unified
- Staff benefit from digital innovation to reduce duplication and support decision-making
- Patients benefit from using technology to access self-care and manage their health

Provide staff with the right training and skills to innovate and improve with our patients at the centre of everything we do

- Staff can work across multiple locations and access relevant information
- Staff are resilient, healthy and motivated
- Patients have a better experience and outcome metrics





5 Star Patient Care is underpinned by our values:



**We are
KIND**



**We are
OPEN**



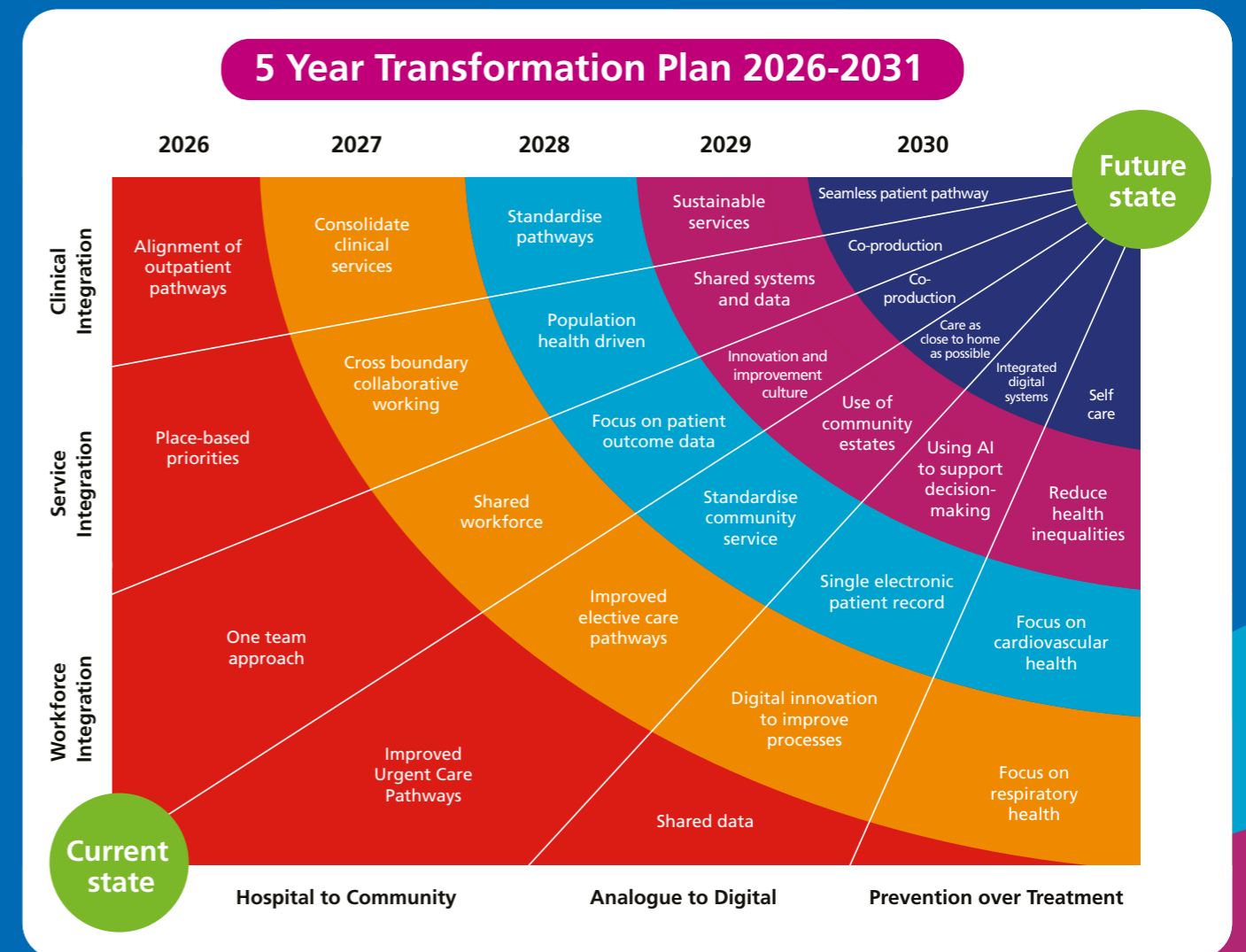
**We are
INCLUSIVE**

Implementation

Publication of this strategy is the first step to achieving our vision to deliver **5 Star Patient Care** through a fully integrated health system that improves population health, reduces inequalities, and delivers seamless care across organisational boundaries.

Our 5 year transformation plan will guide how services are developed and improved. Most importantly, we'll work with patients, staff, and partners to design better care together. We want staff to feel supported and confident to suggest new ideas, so we can keep improving care and health outcomes for everyone.

We'll keep track of health outcomes and share progress openly, so you can see the difference these changes make.



Our Enabling Strategies

The Trust has a number of enabling strategies that support the delivery of our **5 year strategy**. These reflect our aspiration to continuously improve over the next 5 years. They are:

Health inequalities	This strategy outlines how we use information to benefit local population needs and enhance health and well-being.
People	This strategy sets out our ambition for MWL to be the best place to work for our staff. We will create a culture of kindness, inclusivity and openness. As a local employer, we will offer the best possible training, development and career opportunities so everyone can develop, grow and thrive.
Estates and Green	These plans outline our ambition to achieve net zero and ensure we use estates and resources efficiently to ensure a safe, secure and high-quality patient environment.
Continuous Improvement	This strategy supports the delivery of sustained improvements by applying a standard improvement approach to empower staff to improve care and outcomes for our patients.
Communications and Engagement	This strategy is to ensure clear, consistent and inclusive communication that supports delivery of the Trust's priorities, strengthens culture and builds trust with our staff, patients, communities and stakeholders.
Patient Experience and Inclusion	This strategy describes our commitment to improving patient experience by meaningfully engaging with our patients, key stakeholders and local communities to remove any barriers to access our services.
Clinical	This strategy outlines our ambition to integrate and stabilise clinical services to sustain the delivery of safe and effective patient care.
Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professionals	This strategy describes our approach to ensure exceptional Nurses, Allied Health Professionals and Midwives deliver 5 Star Patient Care with compassion and pride.
Digital	This strategy outlines how we will make the best use of technology and AI to reduce duplication, making it easier for our staff to access and input information to improve patient experience.

We know that healthcare can feel different depending on where you live. That's why we're working together with local partners to share ideas and remove barriers, so everyone gets the best care possible. We'll work with hospitals, GPs, community services, charities, and universities to bring new ways of working that benefit local people. This includes using digital tools, supporting research and innovation, and listening to patients and staff.

We'll also make sure that people who find it hard to access digital services or live in remote areas are not left behind.

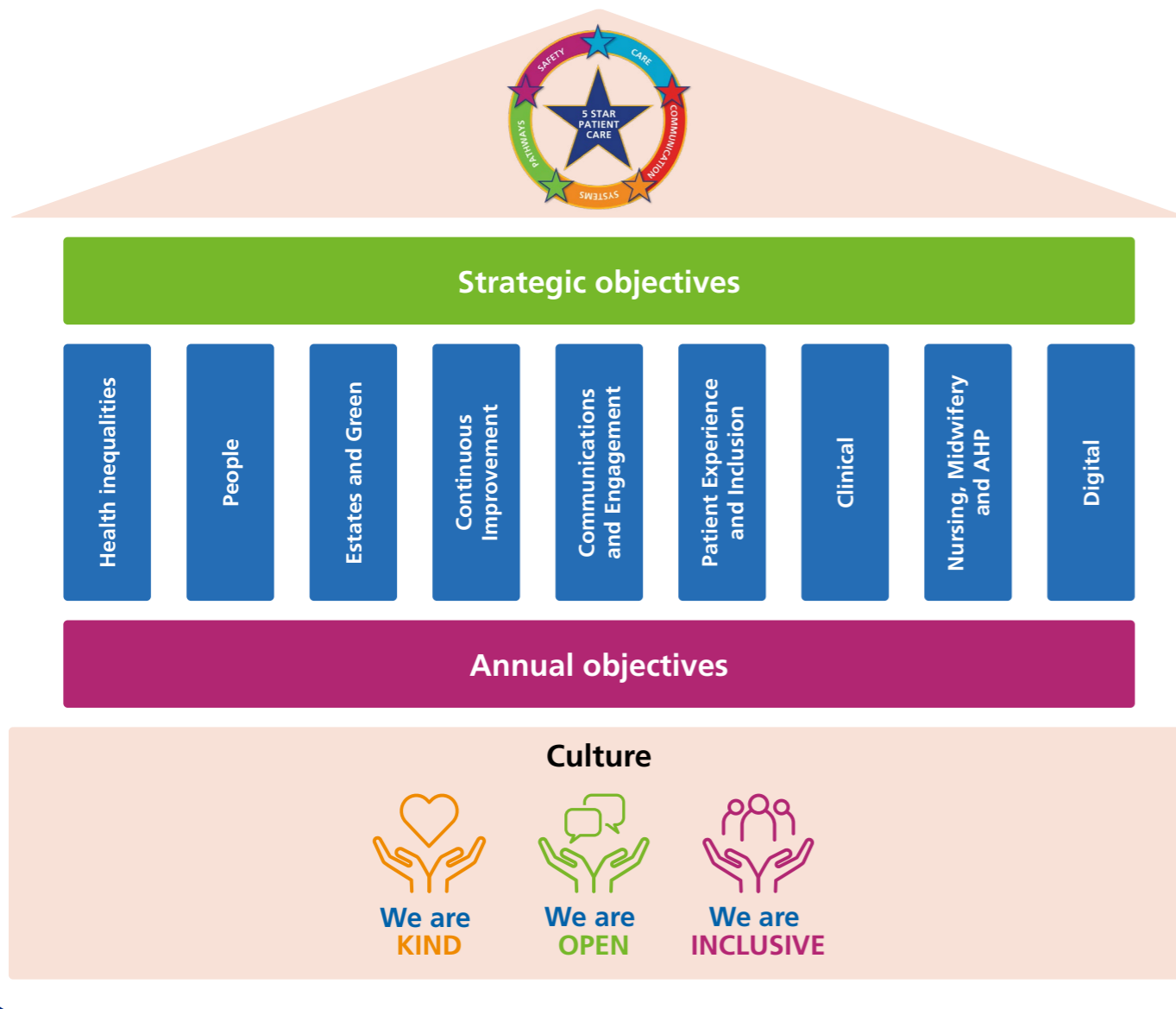


Strategic House

This graphic sets out how different elements work together to deliver our vision.

At its peak sits our vision of **5 Star Patient Care**, the purpose that connects every role, team and site across the Trust. Our strategic objectives provide clarity on our long term direction and define what matters most for the future of the organisation. The supporting pillars represent our enabling strategies: the mechanisms through which strategic intent is translated into action. Annual objectives are the practical priorities and deliverables for the next 12 months, ensuring sustained progress against our longer term ambition.

Underpinning the entire framework are our foundations, which are essential to success: our culture, MWL values, expected behaviours, leadership approach, and staff networks and communities.



Our Pledge

This Strategy comes at a pivotal moment for the NHS. The focus on local, community-based care is now matched by the technology to achieve it. The growing health and care needs of people in later life are better understood and planned for. Prevention and avoidance of illness, frailty risks, pain and harm to mental and physical wellbeing is being targeted rather than just being prepared for the consequences of them.

Our Strategy is designed to harness and drive this moment of progress and improvement in the health of the people and communities we serve. Getting the basics right today with **5 Star Patient Care** and our continuous improvement ethos will ensure a persistent drive to ensure safety and quality across all our services. This is our pledge to you.

5 Star Patient Care is our vision and our pledge to you





**Mersey and West Lancashire
Teaching Hospitals**
NHS Trust

