

FAQs about the new medical school accommodation and academic teaching building at Tunbridge Wells Hospital

What is being built at Tunbridge wells Hospital site?

Accommodation for up to 145 medical students and trainee doctors, plus an academic teaching building will be built at Tunbridge Wells Hospital.

It will welcome the first intake of Kent and Medway Medical School (KMMS) students in September 2022 so they can undertake their clinical placement with the Trust in years three, four and five of their degree.

KMMS, which opened its doors in September 2020, will provide the Trust with approximately 40 students in the first intake. Once fully established, it will place 120 additional medical students with MTW each year – a 315% increase in the total number of students the Trust currently takes. The students and junior doctors will be split between the Trusts' two hospitals with slightly more based at Tunbridge Wells Hospital due to the wider range of specialities on that site.

Students need to live close to their clinical placement so they have direct access to a wide range of medical and surgical services to complete their studies.

By providing students with a good experience during their training it is hoped they will stay with the Trust once they have qualified. This will lead to an increase in the number of medical staff employed by MTW and provide an essential boost, not only to improving local health and care but also contributing towards the future resilience of the NHS.

Why is the new medical school accommodation building and academic teaching building being built?

In 2016, as part of the NHS Long Term Plan, the government announced a commitment to additional medical school provision to increase the number of medical students trained in the UK in response to the shortage of medical staff and an over reliance on overseas recruitment.

The government is seeking to increase the number of medical school places by at least 25% (around 1,500) in order to expand the number of 'home grown' doctors, particularly in areas where there are fewer doctors at present, to ensure the UK is self-sufficient. The strategy also aims to tackle the issues of an ageing population which will inevitably create a significant strain on the NHS services in the future.

Additional places are to be provided through a mix of expanding numbers at existing medical schools and the creation of entirely new medical schools. Subsequently, in March 2018 Health Education England (HEE) and the government announced the creation of five new medical schools for England. Kent was identified as one of the areas in the country where there is a significant shortage of doctors and the University of Kent and Canterbury Christ Church University were chosen to provide one of the five new medical schools with the aim to train and importantly retain the medical students in the local area where there are shortfalls. According to NHS England the ratio of consultants (doctors) to population was 1:5,000 in Kent whereas in South London the ratio was 1:2,500 as of February 2020, demonstrating a clear need for doctors in Kent.

In September 2020, KMMS (Kent's first medical school) opened its doors to attract and train local students for our local hospitals. It is supported by the Brighton and Sussex Medical School as the 'parent partner' institution.

Students undertaking the five-year Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery degree at KMMS are required to undertake medical placements in primary, community, mental health and secondary care settings. This includes placements in host acute hospitals in their third, fourth and fifth years of study. MTW has been chosen as one of the placement providers with the first cohort of medical students arriving from September 2022. The Trust expects up to 40 KMMS students per year group. Clinical placements will be at Maidstone Hospital and the Tunbridge Wells Hospital providing access to a wide range of medical and surgical services operated from the sites. Those living in accommodation at the TWH site will be expected to work at TWH and vice versa for MH thus limiting the need for travel between the sites.

MTW currently provides clinical placements for approximately 40 medical students from King's and St Georges Medical schools. These are allocated approximately two thirds to Tunbridge Wells Hospital site and one third to the Maidstone Hospital site. This split reflects the requirements of the student curriculum and that Emergency Surgery, Trauma, Orthopaedics, Maternity and Paediatric services are based at Tunbridge Wells. In addition, the Trust provides placements for approximately 70 Foundation 1 (F1) and Foundation 2 (F2) junior training doctors. These are split equally across sites. Some of the existing students are currently accommodated in a location in the High Street of Pembury and a site in Springwood Road, Maidstone. Both accommodation units are exclusively for staff and students of the Trust.

By providing students with a good experience during their training it is hoped they will stay with the Trust once they have qualified. This will lead to an increase in the number of medical staff employed by MTW and provide an essential boost, not only to improving local health and care but also contributing towards the future resilience of the NHS.

When was planning permission granted?

MTW NHS Trust submitted a planning application on 9 March 2021 to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council to build new medical student accommodation and an academic teaching building at Tunbridge Wells Hospital.

Full planning consent was granted by the council on 23 June 2021.

When will building work start?

On 1 July 2021, enabling works started to build a compound ahead of contractors moving on site to start construction work the following month (August).

Contractor ESS Modular started construction work to build the new medical student accommodation and academic teaching building on 2 August 2021. To mark the event a groundbreaking ceremony was held on 5 August 2021. Chair David Highton and Chief Executive Miles Scott were joined on the day by Sir David Behan, Chair of Health Education England (HEE); Greg Clark, MP for Tunbridge Wells; Professor Chris Holland, Dean of Kent and Medway Medical School (KMMS), and Councillor Tom Dawlings, Leader of Tunbridge

Wells Borough Council. You can read the full story about the groundbreaking ceremony by clicking [here](#).

When will building work finish?

Building work is due for completion at the end of February 2022, and the external works and landscaping are due to be finished by the end of March 2022.

Once completed, the ground floor of the six-storey high building will house the academic space – a learning hub, private study, offices and toilets – as well as two six-bedroom flats. Floors one to five will be entirely student accommodation made up of six, five or four bed flats, all of which will have a communal kitchen, dining and living area and an ensuite attached to each bedroom. In addition, eight wheelchair accessible flats will be provided – two on each floor – from the first to the fourth floors.

On the roof there will be solar panels plus a green roof on the south east wing of the building. The building will be all electric with no natural gas supply. Heating will be provided by electrically powered heat pumps – meaning a reduction in carbon emissions. The existing picnic area to the front of the building will be retained and enhanced with a new meadow grass terraced bank with seating and the existing woodland walk will be extended. A green wall, planting and raised beds will be installed on the north east of the site along with a hedgerow.

When will the first intake of students arrive?

The Trust will welcome the first intake of Kent and Medway Medical School (KMMS) students in September 2022 so they can undertake their clinical placement with the Trust in years three, four and five of their degree.

KMMS, which opened its doors in September 2020, will provide the Trust with approximately 40 students in the first intake. Once fully established, it will place 120 additional medical students with MTW each year – a 315% increase in the total number of students the Trust currently takes.

By providing students with a good experience during their training it is hoped they will stay with the Trust once they have qualified. This will lead to an increase in the number of medical staff employed by MTW and provide an essential boost, not only to improving local health and care but also contributing towards the future resilience of the NHS.

Where will the students park? Will they use the staff car park?

Living on site removes the need for students to travel by car to and from the hospital for their course activities as they can access the hospital by foot. A free staff bus service is also available should they need to travel to Maidstone Hospital.

In addition, a drop off and pick up area and 74 cycle parking spaces will be available on site along with existing bus services which provide easy access to the town centre and nearby amenities. All of these will be promoted by the Trust to students in line with this being a car free development.

What about all of the trees that have been cut down to make way for the new building?

MTW NHS Trust was subject to the most stringent requirements and provided multiple independent reports on the full range of biodiversity obligations and preservation of trees as part of the planning application which was submitted to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.

The council's tree officer and biodiversity officer laid down very onerous requirements with respect to the biodiversity obligations and tree removal criteria.

No oak trees were removed and the trees that were felled were poor quality sweet chestnut trees. The felling process required onsite biodiversity studies to ensure the trees being removed were not used for bat roosting or bird habitats.

Once building work is completed, plants and trees (including semi mature trees) will be replanted in the area. A new meadow grass terraced bank with seating will also be installed, the existing woodland walk will be extended and a green wall, planting and raised beds will be added on the north east of the site along with a hedgerow. Timber from the felled sweet chestnut trees will be utilised to create garden furniture which will be placed in the woodland area.

The Trust has also set out to achieve a Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM)* rating of 'Excellent'. BREEAM is a voluntary national green building sustainability rating system for assessing the environmental performance of buildings. If achieved, it will place the building within the top 10% of new non-domestic buildings in the UK to receive the rating.

The former picnic area has been removed to make way for the building, will it be reinstated?

The former picnic area will be reinstated to the front of the building and enhanced with a new meadow grass terraced bank with seating. The existing woodland walk will be extended and a green wall, planting and raised beds will be installed on the north east of the site along with a hedgerow.

Timber from the felled sweet chestnut trees will be utilised to create garden furniture which will be placed in the woodland area.

In the meantime, outside seating for staff to use can be found next to the Wingman Tent, which is located at the rear of the Education Centre on -Level 2.

Who can I contact if I have any questions or comments about the development?

If you have any questions or comments regarding the development, or if you need any more information, please email – mtw-tr.palsoffice@nhs.net