

Sunderland Eye Infirmary



Established in June 1836 as the Sunderland and North Durham Eye Infirmary, the hospital commenced life as a single room in High Street East, Sunderland. The first annual report notes that initial scepticism of the need for a specific eye hospital had been proved wrong by the number of patients treated in the first few months.

It was a voluntary hospital, with subscribers of £1 or more per annum and benefactors of £5 or more being made governors. It was designed for treatment of the poor, plus accidents and those with workmen's tickets.

The hospital moved to Crowtree Terrace then, in 1893, to Stockton Road, Sunderland. By 1903 the hospital was known as the Sunderland and Durham County Eye Infirmary, changing again in 1911 to the Durham County and Sunderland Eye Infirmary. Prior to the First World War the governors were looking for a larger site for the hospital, but this had to be postponed when war broke out and, in fact, the hospital remained at Stockton Road until 1940. In September 1936 Sir John Priestman made a gift of £50,000 to build a new and larger infirmary and a site was acquired in Alexandra Road, Sunderland in 1937.

The foundation stones were laid on 3 December 1938 by Sir John and the new hospital opened in June 1940, though its official opening (by HRH Princess Elizabeth in April 1946) was postponed until after the Second World War. The new hospital became known as the Sir John Priestman Durham County and Sunderland Eye Infirmary. It transferred to the new National Health Service in 1948.

The Sunderland Eye Infirmary (SEI) is one of the largest Eye departments in the country with 16 consultants, serving a population of 900,000. There is a busy outpatient department with Subspecialty clinics covering the whole spectrum of Ophthalmic pathology. A 24-hour eye casualty is available for ophthalmic emergencies and there is one inpatient ward for elective (pre-operative) and emergency admissions. There are 3 fully dedicated ophthalmic operating theatres (with a fourth one being built), which includes the “Regional Cataract Treatment Centre” (CTC), a high volume day case cataract surgery unit. The SEI also provides the regional ocular oncology Service for the North-East of England. The service provided is very much consultant led. Trainees have a high degree of supervision,

with the historical exception of the 24 hour eye casualty department. To a certain extent, this has been addressed with increased consultant input, the appointment of a nurse consultant and a number of nurse practitioners in casualty.

The recent introduction of night nurse practitioners now allows the first on call doctors to be on call from home after 9 pm, thus complying with the European Working Time Directive.

site for eyes was, originally the Excimer Laser Unit at Sunderland Eye Infirmary.

The Excimer Laser Unit was setup in 1993 to provide excimer laser refractive and therapeutic surgeries to both Private and NHS patients and is therefore one of the longest established providers of refractive laser surgery in the country.

Mr Danjoux became Director of the unit in 1997. He introduced the LASIK procedure in 1997, the Excimer Laser Unit being the first in the North-East of England to provide LASIK treatment. Subsequently the range of refractive surgical procedures has been expanded and the Excimer

Laser Unit has developed a reputation as a quality provider of comprehensive refractive surgery services in the region. It is closely allied to the Corneal Diseases Unit at the Eye Infirmary.

Demand for the service rapidly outgrew the units capability as a provider within it's existing infrastructure. Expansion was needed. The Infirmary as a core NHS hospital was not able to take on this development.

In 2000, Mr Danjoux had the vision to create and finance a predominantly private facility site for eyes within an NHS hospital. The aim was to provide superlative treatment utilising the latest technology together with the most highly qualified surgeons, considering only the patients best interests and their subsequent treatment.

site for eyes has continued to be innovative and has introduced several new treatments in the field of refractive and corneal surgery, being the first centre in the North-East to offer implant surgery (both Refractive Lens Exchange and Phakic Implants) as an alternative for patients not suitable for laser surgery. They were the first centre in the region to utilise

Multifocal and Accommodating intra-ocular implants to help patients reduce the need for reading glasses and have extensive experience in this aspect of lens surgery. Similarly, INTACS and more recently Collagen Cross Linking (C-3R) for the treatment of keratoconus and other corneal ectasias were first provided in the North-East by *site for eyes*.

The *site for eyes* team maintain their dedication to the NHS through their ongoing work within the Sunderland Eye Infirmary.



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