Turning adversity into opportunity
What’s the idea here?

If you have a serious accident or illness in this country, the initial treatment you are likely to receive from the NHS will be second to none. Interventions and expertise in responding to major and life-threatening injury and illness are widely acknowledged as outstanding.

Unfortunately, the same is not true if people then require clinical rehabilitation to get back to fitness, to work and to living meaningful lives. We fall behind many other nations in helping injured people regain their former lives.

When we fail to support people who have the potential to get back their quality of life, we are failing the individual and creating wider problems in society. This is significant in terms of individuals’ mental health and wellbeing and national productivity. The cost in both human and financial terms is significant.

The National Rehabilitation Centre (NRC) will change this. It will bring about new ways of working, drive innovation and significantly improve services for patients.

This leaflet introduces the NRC and provides a snapshot of its purpose and potential.

Origins – the relationship with the Defence and National Rehabilitation Centre Programme

The NRC is part of the overall Defence and National Rehabilitation Centre (or DNRC) Programme. This seeks to do 2 things. First, to deliver a 21st century successor to the MoD’s former Headley Court facility in Surrey. This new Defence facility opened in 2018 and is now treating members of the armed forces. Second, to create a National Rehabilitation Centre to provide clinical rehabilitation for NHS patients as well as providing a national hub for innovation, cutting edge R&D and training and education.

Key to the NRC is it being on the same site (the Stanford Hall Rehabilitation Estate, near Loughborough) as the Defence establishment – but 400 metres away from it. This will allow patients in both centres to benefit from shared expertise, knowledge and facilities.
Where could this lead?

The benefits of creating the NRC are many and wide-ranging.

The NRC will extend the success of acute services (and Major Trauma Centres) by providing a national centre of excellence in patient care, but also in training and research.

Collaboration with Defence medicine and the sharing of expertise (and some facilities) will make innovation and the adoption of new approaches quicker and more successful. New ways of treating patients and aiding recovery will lead to a step change in rehabilitation and far improved outcomes for patients.

In terms of innovation and enterprise, the NRC offers a real opportunity to drive new rehabilitation products and technologies on an international basis. The NRC will be an exciting space where R&D in the rehabilitation field can take effect very quickly. Already, the Defence establishment is acquiring new knowledge not least through its advanced facilities such as the Computer Aided Rehabilitation Environment (or CAREN). The cohort of patients treated at both the NRC and the Defence facilities presents an opportunity for some really good clinical research. Alongside the MoD, the university sector and business enterprise and by virtue of its design, the NRC facility itself will provide a unique place to test and develop tomorrow’s new treatments and techniques.

In educational terms, the NRC will have a strong learning environment and culture, acting as a centre of teaching excellence allowing rehabilitation practitioners to refine skills or upskill. This will establish the reputation of rehabilitation as an NHS discipline. It will have a profound effect on rehabilitation outcomes at the NRC itself or by taking that expertise to other locations.

Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust – which is home to the East Midlands Major Trauma Centre – is the NHS programme sponsor. The Trust provides the acute regional service of neuroscience, complex lower limb trauma and major trauma, where many patients subsequently require rehabilitation.

In the near term, the NRC will have an immediate impact and make a meaningful difference. In the long term, it could be transformative.
More than a building...
The NRC is much more than a building. It will be a place where patients, innovation, expertise and the physical space combine to push boundaries beyond that achieved to date. It should be viewed as a major national investment in patient care, innovation and technology supporting the NHS’s Long-Term Plan. It will offer specific and unique opportunities for businesses and collaborators to advance new treatments and technologies.

The clinical gap...
Across the NHS in England, there is a significant shortfall of rehabilitation beds against the standard set. In the East Midlands (population 4.6 million) there are only 85 rehabilitation beds against the standard of 270.

With the introduction of Major Trauma Networks in 2012, 20% more lives are being saved and they are amongst the most seriously injured. Across the NHS no additional provision has been made for the rehabilitation of these people.

Who benefits...
The NRC would principally treat patients from the East Midlands region. Commissioners and providers from across the East Midlands are working with national experts (for example Get It Right First Time programme) to design the clinical model and patient pathways.

Patients with trauma injury conditions would benefit from tailored programmes drawing on the specialist expertise and facilities available in both the NRC and Defence establishments.

The range of major trauma injury is wide. Cases include a motor accident, a bad fall, badly broken bones, amputations, musculo-skeletal injury, a major heart attack or a stroke – and many more. In all cases clinical rehabilitation could make a major difference to recovery.
Making the opportunity a reality

The idea for the NRC was born in 2009 as part of the DNRC concept and in 2014 the Government formally committed to exploring its potential in a statement to Parliament. At the heart of the DNRC concept was sharing, so the Defence facility was to be built first with the NHS facility following on. The estate chosen to achieve the DNRC concept was of a size (360 acres) that took into account the opportunity of an NHS facility being on the same site.

With the Defence facility now up and running and treating patients since 2018, the NHS opportunity is now becoming a reality:

• In the 2018 Budget the Government pledged £70M to fund the capital cost of building the patient care component of the NRC.

• NUH and the local commissioners are working in partnership with regional and national NHS bodies and programmes to develop the necessary business cases and approvals.

• Partnerships are developing between universities and potential education/research providers, and with industry to explore the potential for enterprise, innovation and commercial involvement and with the MoD to determine the practical arrangements for sharing expertise and facilities to mutual advantage.

• Individuals and organisations are being sought who wish to participate, collaborate and contribute to making the NRC happen.

• The target for the new NHS facility on the Stanford Hall Rehabilitation Estate to be taking its first patients is 2023.

Key facts

• Defence medicine achieves more than double the 'repair rate' of repairable injury than the NHS. The NRC aims to reduce that gap.

• It is the intention that what will be achieved on the site housing both the Defence facility and the nearby NHS will, in time, be rolled out to support a network of regional rehabilitation centres on a hub and spoke model.

• Evidence gathering demonstrates that the NRC would return substantial economic savings to government in terms of reduced costs of care and improved productivity for people post serious injury or illness.
Maintaining momentum

Many of the essential elements to make the NRC happen are in place:

- We have a site with planning permission in place for the next 7 years available for a peppercorn rent with access to the full range of facilities on the Stanford Hall Rehabilitation Estate.
- We have detailed designs worked up in conjunction with clinicians and NUH, drawing on the best of proven healthcare architecture.
- We have sharing arrangements in principle in place with the MoD.
- We have completed evidence-based research to demonstrate the value and benefits of the NRC in clinical, economic and social terms.

But we have important work still to do to maintain momentum:

- Widen awareness and understanding of the opportunity presented by the NRC.
- Involve and engage potential partners who could benefit and play a part.
- Complete the NHS process on service transformation in respect of East Midlands rehabilitation – with the support of the Clinical Commissioning Groups and NHS England.
- Complete the funding arrangements – adding to the £70M for the patient care component already pledged by Government.
- Broaden knowledge within business for how the clinical rehabilitation delivered by the NRC would benefit employers in terms of staff fitness and wellbeing.

The case for the NRC is clear and compelling. If you would like to know more or to get involved, please get in touch. Details are on the back cover.
For more information on the NRC Programme Contact Miriam Duffy or James Wright at nrc@nuh.nhs.uk