

Pacer train becomes family support centre for Airedale Hospital

- Airedale General Hospital has received a retired pacer train to expand hospital services
- NHS Trust won a Department for Transport competition to 'Transform a Pacer' and will use it as a site to offer support and respite to families visiting the hospital
- competition marked the end of the line for the unpopular Pacer trains on the Northern network

A retired Pacer carriage was lowered into the grounds of Airedale General Hospital over the course of Sunday morning (5 September 2021), ready to start a new life serving the community after completing millions of miles on the railways.

The local NHS Foundation Trust submitted a winning bid to save the vehicles from the scrap heap and use them to create a positive environment that could benefit the local community. The hospital will transform its carriage into a mixed-use, non-clinical space to improve the experience of patients using Airedale General Hospital.

This will have a particular focus on helping children and families, as well as those suffering with dementia, providing a unique communal environment to support patients during their stay.

The 19-tonne carriage was lifted into position by a crane and onto a specially constructed site, ready for restoration.

The vehicle is the third and final of the retired trains to be delivered to community projects as part of the Department for Transport's ['Transform a Pacer' competition](#) in the North of England.

Previously, a vehicle was delivered to a primary school in Bradford to create a new science laboratory, and a second was delivered to a mental health charity based in Huddersfield Station.

The competition means that after 3 decades of service to northern communities, retired Pacer trains will now serve them in new and exciting ways focused on bringing the community together.

Rail Minister Chris Heaton Harris said:

It has been great to witness all 3 of these Pacer carriages taken off the tracks and into new homes to serve communities across the North.

Instead of being a home for disgruntled commuters, this train will

now have a new life bringing happiness and support to families visiting Airedale Hospital.

Kirsty Randall, matron for the children's ward, said:

We're really excited to have the Pacer train carriage on site and can't wait to start using it with our patients and their families.

We're planning on using the space for children and young people who need to be in hospital but not necessarily on the ward at all times.

The space will give these children and young people a space that feels less medical, which will really help our younger patients to have a more positive hospital experience.

The train delivered to Airedale NHS Foundation Trust was provided by rolling stock company Porterbrook and has been in service since 1986, travelling over 3 million miles across the network in that time. It was installed with the help of Network Rail teams, who managed the logistics of putting it into place.

Mary Grant CEO of Porterbrook said:

Our Pacer trains have connected communities across Yorkshire over many years. Now that they have left frontline passenger service, I am proud that one of these vehicles will have a new lease of life at Airedale Hospital.

As good corporate citizens of Britain's railway, we are committed to whole life asset management. Repurposing retired rolling stock is just one way that Porterbrook can help make Britain's railway more sustainable. We hope that families attending Airedale Hospital enjoy using this retired rail vehicle.