



Community Hospital Association

Comments on the Proposed Plans to close Teignmouth Hospital and develop a health and well-being centre.

The CHA was invited by the BBC to express a view about the plans to close Teignmouth Community Hospital -

The Community Hospital Association is concerned about the closure of community hospitals, including Teignmouth Hospital. Community hospitals serve as essential healthcare hubs, contributing significantly to patient care and staff satisfaction. While we recognise the evolving nature of healthcare services, we urge decision-makers to carefully consider the impact of such closures, including closing inpatient beds on local communities.

The replacement plan should be evaluated not just in terms of infrastructure but also in terms of maintaining the accessibility and effectiveness of healthcare services for the local population.

This recent BBC article highlights the impact of not being able to discharge patients from the acute sector in Devon (2). Whilst not their only function, Community Hospitals inpatient beds are necessary for step down for certain patient groups who need, and deserve, a prolonged rehabilitation period which will then allow them to return home rather than being prematurely located to a nursing home.

Community hospitals are of paramount importance, particularly for providing services to older adults living with frailty, minor injury units and remote outpatient services. They are not just healthcare facilities but integral parts of local communities. These hospitals provide personalised care, foster community well-being, and address the unique and wide ranging healthcare needs of the population they serve. The closure of community hospitals can have far-reaching consequences, affecting not only the immediate healthcare landscape but also the social fabric and interconnectedness of the community. We advocate for the recognition and preservation of the crucial role that community hospitals play in maintaining the overall health and well-being of communities and the vulnerable populations within them. We have an ageing population in the UK (3,4) and this will require more healthcare services and provisions suited to the needs of this population. We know that older adults and their families prefer healthcare closer to home and the less chaotic environment of a community hospital in comparison to the acute sector. Sometimes inpatient beds are a necessity as not all healthcare can be provided to older adults at home. Additionally, the goodwill and local support community hospitals receive is not replicated in the acute sector.

Dr Kirsten Protherough

Chair & Director of the Community Hospital Association

November 2023

(1) New health centre approved as battle to save Teignmouth hospital continues
<https://www.devonlive.com/news/devon-news/new-health-centre-approved-battle-8520010>

(2) Hospital patient discharges putting strain on Devon's care sector
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-devon-64386912>

(3) The Office of National Statistics <https://www.ons.gov.uk/>

(4) The World Health Organisation "Decade of Healthy Ageing"
<https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/decade-of-healthy-ageing/decade-proposal-final-apr2020-en.pdf>