**Blogs CHA 2018**

**The Value of Community Hospitals Recognised by the Secretary of State for Health**

Good news!  An unexpected endorsement of the role of community hospitals, by Matt Hancock, the Secretary of State for Health at the Tory Party conference.  He said that the era of blindly closing community hospitals is over and that there is an undertaking to stop the cull of community hospitals.

The CHA welcomes this very positive statement, and we are now very interested in how this will translate to practice.  We will of course provide the Secretary of State with any information required on community hospitals that have closed, are threatened with closure, or have lost or are losing valuable services such as inpatient beds.

One of those cases is Rothbury Hospital in Northumberland. The Secretary of State is due to make an announcement on the loss of beds at the hospital. The Local Authority referred the case to the Secretary of State, and an initial assessment has been carried out by the Independent Reconfiguration Panel.  Local people have campaigned vigorously to have the ward reinstated and the service resumed.  This will be a test case, and will indicate the commitment being made.

The CHA hopes that the Secretary of State recognises the value of community hospitals retaining a wide range of services, including critically the inpatient beds., The role of community hospitals in providing intermediate care, rehabilitation and palliative care, as well as health promotion, diagnosis and urgent care is clear. These local hospitals have been supported by their communities for 150 years, and the loss of services in rural communities has been felt very keenly.

Matt Hancock has supported his local community hospital, Newmarket Community Hospital, so we hope that his local knowledge will translate to a national strategy that recognises the role, function and contribution of community hospitals to the whole community.  We hope that he will give a steer to the 44 Footprints and their CCGs to integrate their local rural hospitals to contribute to fulfilling the policy of "care closer to home."

We will wait and see.

Dr Helen Tucker

4th October 2018

**The Community Hospitals Association response to the Gosport Memorial Hospital Enquiry.**

In the light of the findings of the recent Gosport Memorial Hospital Enquiry, the CHA wishes to express agreement with the findings and recommendation of the report and offer sincere condolences for all the families affected by the events at Gosport Hospital.

The CHA provides a voice for the 340 community hospitals in England and has led the way in conducting audit, quality assurance programmes and research in these small, local hospitals.

Research into end of life and palliative care provided in community hospitals has shown that GPs and community hospital trust doctors have been providing exemplary care with adherence to opiate prescribing guidelines. The care provided has been greatly appreciated by carers of patients. Community hospital doctors do not work in isolation now; they are supported by nursing and pharmacy teams and also by specialist community palliative care teams who provide advice and oversight for inpatients requiring symptom control and end of life care.

Despite the shocking findings of the report relating to a period from 1989-2000, the public should have confidence that the care given now in community hospitals is in accordance with accepted practice and subject to suitable oversight and clinical audit.

Dr Dave Seamark 03.07.2018

**Is there Enough Community Capacity?**

30th April 2018

Today NHS leaders make the case that the NHS is at least 4,000 beds short for next winter.  The BBC television programme, "Hospital" has highlighted the impact that this lack of beds has on individuals as well as hospitals overall. The programme shows in particular the challenges to arranging appropriate discharges particularly for older and more frail patients with complex care needs.  Community hospitals have a role in intermediate care and rehabilitation, and this enables patients in acute hospitals to be transferred out of the acute bed when they no longer require acute and specialist medical care, and if they are unable to return home directly.  At a time when community hospital beds and rehabilitation services are most needed, around 100 community hospitals have had their beds close, either on a permanent or a temporary basis.

However, there has been a shift in thinking recently in some areas.  Some of these beds are now preparing to re-open. The CCG in Devon has required beds in Holsworthy Community Hospital to be re-opened.  In Somerset, it is hoped that beds in Chard, Shepton Mallet and Dene Barton will re-open.  The results of an appeals to the temporary closure of beds in Rothbury Hospital in Northumberland is due to be announced and there is hope that these valued beds will be restored.

Community Hospitals offer services that help communities to be cared for within their own local area, and saves local people having to travel unnecessarily to acute General Hospitals (unless there is no alternative).  The range of services in community hospitals can be extensive, and the CHA is regularly updated on innovative services that can now be provided in remote and rural locations.  Those community hospitals that offer a wide range of inpatient, day patient and outpatient services are in a strong position to contribute to the health and wellbeing of the population. And to also contribute to the effective working of the whole health and care system in their locality.

NHS leaders have alerted to the scale of the shortfall, and the media is highlighting individual experiences. When planning for local health care services, it is important to include community hospitals and recognise their actual and potential role in managing demand.

Dr Helen Tucker

**The Contribution of Community Hospitals**

22nd January 2018

The CHA office has been very busy with calls recently.  The overriding concern from members and callers is the pressure that the NHS is under with regard to A&E departments and acute hospital beds, and wanting to be reassured that there is an appreciation of the role that local community hospitals have in offering Minor Injuries Units and community intermediate care beds. Community hospitals, as small hospitals serving a typically rural population, are part of the local health and care system and contribute to the management of demand.   Also, calls have been received from communities who are concerned that their community hospital beds which have been closed "temporarily" may not re-open. This includes Castleberg Hospital in Settle, Wantage Community Hospital in Oxfordshire and Rothbury Hospital in Northumberland.  Another issue high on the agenda is the role and potential of "community hubs" – those community hospitals that are shifting their focus to increase their role in wellbeing and prevention, and hosting services associated with healthcare provided through partners.  In some areas, local people are now working with their CCG to co-produce a re-design of services within the community hospital/hub that are appropriate for the local area.

At the heart of the community hospital is the ethos that it is a service that helps to maintain people at home, support their independence and wellbeing, and provide a locally accessible and high quality service.  We will watch with interest to see how this is interpreted for community hospitals and hubs and how their services and facilities are re-designed accordingly.  We know that community hospitals and hubs have contributed significantly to the health and wellbeing of their local population over many years, and have the potential to continue to do so.  Local people continue to demonstrate how much they value their local hospitals. The CHA will continue to respond to members who contact us, and hope we can help with advice and information as well as through our networks.

For more comment, follow the [link](https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/social-policy/departments/health-services-management-centre/news/viewpoint/2017/12/Community-Hospitals-%E2%80%93-Discovering-a-New-Model-of-Care.aspx) to the University of Birmingham Viewpoint: Community Hospitals - Discovering A New Model of Care