**Monday 17 February 2025**

**Spotlight on the Minehead Hospital theatres team**

Teams of NHS surgeons perform hundreds of operations every day at Yeovil and Musgrove Park, but it’s not just the larger hospitals where patients can get surgery.

Two of Somerset NHS Foundation Trust’s community hospitals – Minehead and West Mendip – also have state-of-the-art operating theatres that are regularly used for certain procedures that can be done using local anaesthetic.

Tessa Sanford is the manager at Minehead Hospital’s theatre suite and said she’s proud to lead such a close knit team who’re determined to give as many people as possible the opportunity to have surgery in their local hospital.

“We’re a very small team at Minehead, and as we’re in such a remote location compared with the rest of Somerset, we tend to rely heavily on colleagues who’ve retired and want to return on the staff bank,” she said. “We’re very glad to have them, that’s for sure!

“We also have a student currently training with us to become a registered nurse, with education something that we’re really keen on promoting here – that’s definitely the future for us even though we’re a small team in comparison to the operating theatres at Musgrove Park and Yeovil hospitals.

“In many ways we’re a very new team, as there have been a lot of changes in our workforce, and this has coincided with us increasing the use of our theatres from two and a half days a week, up to almost five days! We have also recently recruited extra theatre colleagues, which is great news.

"We want to increase this even further, but of course we need more colleagues in post to be able to achieve this, particularly scrub nurses, but we’re very hopeful in the next wave of recruitment…tell all your friends!

“All the surgery we do here has to be under local anaesthetic, and one of the many things our team is good at is talking to patients about that and allaying their fears, because obviously we can’t offer general anaesthetic here as we are too far from the nearest acute hospital.

“But we can offer a range of day surgeries, including dermatology, maxillofacial for skin surgery, urology screening, podiatric surgery, ocular plastic surgery, as well as hand surgery, which we are hoping to extend in the coming months.

“These satellite theatres that we have at Minehead and West Mendip hospitals help take the pressure off our acute hospitals, as we’re very much freeing up space for those more serious and critical surgeries.

“There’s a real appetite in the local community to promote the hospital and everything provided from here too, and our amazing League of Friends members have been doing an excellent job of raising awareness of the services we offer.”

Allyson Wakeham, a staff nurse in the hospital’s operating theatres, added: “For some of our more elderly patients a trip to Taunton can be really daunting, so it’s great that we can offer them surgery near where they live – though it’s obviously not possible for all surgeries.

“Access to the hospital is so much easier and our patients are always telling us how it’s so easy to get here, and that they feel more comfortable in the smaller environment.

“It’s great for relatives too, as they can bring their dogs with them and go for a nice walk near the hospital grounds, and not having to worry about parking.

“The feedback we get from patients as we take them to the door is really lovely to hear, and in fact a recent patient admitted to me that they were initially apprehensive, but they now want to come here again as a priority if they need surgery!

“I’ve only ever heard positive things from patients about our theatres and they are often surprised when we first bring them into the theatre suite – I would certainly come here!”

Tessa added that she really enjoys working at Minehead Hospital, and said it feels like there is a real team spirit.

“We’re like a little family in many ways, although that does mean we feel it more if a colleague is on annual leave or off sick of course, as we have less resilience than Musgrove Park or Yeovil hospitals because we can’t borrow colleagues from another theatre, for example,” she said.

“Our surgeons tend to come from Musgrove, with the odd one coming from further afield, and they often bring trainee surgeons with them – we’ve only ever had positive feedback from them about our theatres.

“With the Day Surgery Centre at Musgrove only last year celebrating its 30th birthday, it’s fair to say that we are very much a branch of that centre, and we’re really proud of what we’re able to achieve!”

**Ends**

### Attached photo:

Pictured (left to right): Tessa Sanford – theatres manager, Jennifer Armstrong - theatre nurse, Linda Ruthven-Tyers – healthcare assistant, Allyson Wakeham – staff nurse, Rufaro Mukombachoto – operating department practitioner apprentice.

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