



Community Hospitals Association
Visit to Beccles and District War Memorial Hospital, Suffolk
A CHA Featured Community Hospital

Blog by Dr Helen Tucker MBE, Fellow of the CHA

I was delighted to be invited to visit Beccles Hospital. I had visited a few years ago and was keen to find out how the services had developed since then.

The moment you walk into Beccles Hospital you know you are in a calm nurturing environment, typical of a community hospital. The reception area is spacious and welcoming and I enjoyed reading the information displayed, particularly about projects, innovations, volunteers and improvements.

Minsmere Ward

I was welcomed onto Minsmere Ward by Elyse Arnott who is the Intermediate Care Therapy Lead who came to our CHA conference in Swindon. Elyse introduced me to Michelle Clements, the Deputy Director of Quality and Will Lawson- Brown the Patient & Carer Experience Lead. Later in the visit we were joined by Stamatia Avroudiadou, who is the Operational Lead Acute-Facing Specialist Services. I am grateful to them for their time – and their enthusiasm!



From left to right: Will Lawson- Brown, Patient & Carer Experience Lead; Elyse Arnott, Intermediate Care Therapy Lead; Stamatia Avroudiadou, Operational Lead Acute-Facing Specialist Services; Michelle Clements, Deputy Director of Quality.

The inpatient facility at Beccles Hospital is Minsmere Ward which offers rehabilitation and palliative and end-of-life care in its 26 beds.

Rehabilitation was described as being integral to the model of care. An active rehabilitation approach is adopted by all staff, and not confined to visits from therapists. Health Care Support Workers (HCSW) are trained in competencies in therapies for instance. There was evidence of multi-disciplinary working to support patient rehabilitation and re-ablement. Staff spoke of the focus on mobility and socialisation on the ward which includes ensuring each intervention contributes to a patient's rehabilitation, encouraging patients to make use of the day room and promoting patients to wear their own clothing on the ward.

The aim is for patients to stay up to 14 days in the 20 intermediate care rehabilitation beds. This is extended by agreement where potential benefit can be shown. The staff have open access via TEAMS to social services and discharge teams for mutual benefit, so communication is optimised and delays are minimised.

Patients are usually admitted from the acute hospitals but may be admitted from their home/usual residence. It is hoped that the proportion of step-up patients will increase thereby helping to minimise avoidable admissions to acute hospitals. The ward also takes patients attending Emergency Departments who may have been assessed by Community Matrons and redirected to a community hospital.

Before admission, nursing staff from Beccles Hospital speak directly to patients who may be transferred from acute hospital wards to talk through their needs and what to expect. On admission patients work with therapists to design their rehabilitation goals which are then recorded in a patient-held booklet; "Rehabilitation Unit Progress Book." On discharge a safe and appropriate plan is agreed with the patient all relevant agencies. There is evidence of person-centred care at every stage.

Minsmere Ward also offers 6 palliative and end-of-life care beds, a service which is provided in partnership with St Elizabeth Hospice. Staff from the hospice support in-patient and out-patient care, as well as providing counselling and bereavement support. It was impressive to see how much attention was given to creating the right environment for patients using the palliative care rooms.

Patient Voice

I was impressed by the focus on person-centred care, and how the Five Year Patient Voice Strategy is being demonstrated. The organisation is benefiting from working with Healthwatch Norfolk and Knowing Works (previously Healthwatch Suffolk) on this and states an aim to *"Make patient voice central to our culture of continuous improvement."*

Patients are invited to give their views on their care experience in many different ways. A recent initiative is a "Patient Feedback Café" where patients and carers can talk about their experiences in a relaxed atmosphere. This is facilitated by Will, the designated Patient and Carer Experience Lead for the organisation. A selection of quotes from two recent café sessions show how much patients appreciate the kindness of staff, the encouragement given to socialise and mobilise and the benefits of the calm and supportive atmosphere.

"Staff are so caring, they have so much time for you. The warmth of the staff makes such a difference."

"It feels like home and has a sense of community."

"The staff have helped Mum so much, she struggles with her memory but they take their time with her."

"The ward is so calm and peaceful."

"I get so much encouragement from staff to walk."

Related Services

My tour of the hospital included the out-patient clinic department. The hospital benefits from having a pharmacy team offering regular ward visits and medication reviews. There is progress being made in offering self-medication for inpatients. The hospital benefits from volunteers such as those helping with activity and exercise classes for patients.

There is a local GP surgery on site and community teams are based in the hospital. The initial impression on entering the site is that the car parks are full, so the hospital is very busy.

The hospital is linked to Carlton Court which is an intermediate care facility . ECCH also own Cavell Care who provide home care and are trialling "Mii Care"; an AI technology driven service which enables people to continue to live in their own homes. Applications of Mii care to the ward settings are being explored.

Impressions

My impression of Beccles Hospital is that it is a vibrant and busy community hospital that has a clear role to play in the local health and care system. I wish the staff well with their plans to continually improve and extend the service, and provide a valued service to the Beccles community.

Acknowledgments

The Community Hospitals Association promotes community hospitals across the UK. We like to feature community hospitals that come to our attention, and are always pleased to be invited to visit. Thank you to the staff of Beccles Hospital for making me so welcome.

Beccles Hospital is managed by the East Coast Community Healthcare CIC in Suffolk.