A CHA Featured Community Hospital

Newmarket Community Hospital

West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust

By: Helen Tucker with Chris Humphris

There is a warm welcome for all at Newmarket Community Hospital. Chris and I were visiting the hospital as committee members of the CHA. We were meeting staff with the aim of learning about Newmarket community hospital, its services and plans for the future. We had lots of questions.

As Chris and I walked into the bright and open reception area, I was surprised to see neighbours from my village. We live an hour away from the hospital by car, but in fact the hospital serves a wide catchment across Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire and Essex. My neighbours were sitting in the café area in reception relaxing with a coffee. They could not wait to tell me how wonderfully calm the hospital was, how fantastic the facilities were and how much they appreciated being able to park easily and for free. This unprompted feedback from appreciative patients made a great start to our visit.

We were pleased to meet Sue Jones, operations manager, Ellie Maynard, Senior Physiotherapist and Becky Smith, ward manager.

Listening to accounts of the work of the hospital showed us that this was a community hospital with a strong team spirit, where the impact of collaborative working was showing in the efficient service to patients. The multi-disciplinary working is in evidence as well as close working across health and social care. This is helped by having social work on site. Community staff are also onsite helping to integrate hospital and community services. Newmarket Community Hospital is part of West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust, and benefits from support from acute colleagues and services.

Sue, Ellie and Becky spoke of their ethos of enabling patients to move on as quickly as possible, and to signal this they have renamed the ward a short stay assessment unit. Moving on for most patients means returning to their own home. The 'short stay' they aim for is shown in their impressive performance. They have achieved an average length of stay of 11 days consistently over the past 18 months. This compares to the national benchmarked average of 24 days for an equivalent stay in a community hospital according to NHS Benchmarking Network.

The ward of 33 beds is a mix of single rooms and small bays, and they maintain an average occupancy of between 95% and 98% which compares to the NHS Benchmarking average of 93%. The ward team is supported by the local GP practice which visits daily and a Consultant Geriatrician who visits weekly and is also available for ongoing advice. Sessions with the physiotherapy and OT team is offered up to 5 days a week, with facilities such as a large well equipped gym. The gym is also used for outpatients such as for cardiac rehabilitation and lung function rehabilitation.

In addition to the inpatient beds, the community hospital site offers services which includes outpatient clinics, a mental health hub, a community diagnostic centre and much more. There is

evidence of staff working across the services, such as clinic staff such as phlebotomists helping on the ward. Also patients on the ward having their Xrays in the Community Diagnostic Centre.



From left to right
Helen Tucker Fellow of the CHA, Becky Smith Ward Manager, Ellie Maynard Senior Physiotherapist, Chris Humphris Associate Committee Member CHA, Sue Jones Operations Manager

The hospital benefits from charitable funds such as through the "My Wish" charity. There was evidence of support from the Hospital League of Friends, such as the Rosemary Ward Courtyard they funded to celebrate their silver anniversary "to provide a beautiful and peaceful garden for patients" dated 1971-1996. The Hospital League of Friends no longer operates. The hospital staff can now apply to the "My Wish" charity for support. Community involvement continues to be demonstrated through the number of volunteers witnessed in the hospital, readily identifiable by wearing colour coded teeshirts with a logo.

Newmarket is famously known for its racecourse and there is support for the hospital from the racing fraternity. Once a year one of the horses is brought to the hospital so that patients have a chance to see the horse and connect with it, with staff describing it as giving *"moments of joy in an afternoon."*



Patient meeting a Racehorse "Man of Promise" from Godolphin at Newmarket Community Hospital Sept2026

The CHA continues to be most interested in Newmarket Community Hospital. Chris and I, with our colleague Suzanne Jones, facilitated a Regional Workshop on Community Hospitals in 2019 at Newmarket hospital. This attracted staff from Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire and

Peterborough. This proved to be a stimulating day that created and strengthened networks across the region. We appreciated having the chance to catch up and learn more about the services being offered.

We would like to thank staff at Newmarket Community Hospital for hosting our visit, and for such a stimulating and interesting discussion about the important services offered at the hospital.

Chris Humphris and Helen Tucker

References

We have included references to key documents and websites.

Community Hospitals Association
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.
https://www.communityhospitals.org.uk/

Godolphin and Man of Promise surprise patients at Newmarket Community Hospital
https://www.youtube.com/shorts/DY1K9t9Ab2I

"160 Years of Service to the Community: History of Newmarket General Hospital"
by Dick Heasman and John R Melleney. May 1996
https://wellcomecollection.org/works/sjg3sy3u

NHS Benchmarking Network Bed-based Intermediate Care Project
https://www.nhsbenchmarking.nhs.uk/our-datasets/member-programme/member-datasets/intermediate-care

CHA Regional Workshop on Community Hospitals at Newmarket Community Hospital 2019
https://www.communityhospitals.org.uk/conferences/conferences-pre-2023/past-workshops-2023.html