

Community Hospital Association

Chair's Annual Report

Reporting period: April 2024 – April 2025

Dear members, colleagues and friends of the Community Hospital Association,

I am pleased to present this report for the period **April 2024 to April 2025**. Over the past year, the Community Hospital Association (CHA) has continued to strengthen its role as a truly UK-wide network, delivering high-quality leadership, improvement and networking opportunities, re-establishing our national conference, and broadening engagement across the multidisciplinary community hospital workforce.

This is my final report as Chair. It has been a privilege to serve in this role, and I am deeply grateful for the commitment, creativity and resilience shown by our members, partners and friends.

1. Year at a glance

During April 2024 – April 2025, CHA has:

- Delivered the **CHA National Conference 2024 – *Community Hospitals: Leading Best Practices Today, Shaping the Healthcare of Tomorrow*** (10–11 October 2024, Cheltenham Chase Hotel), attended by approximately 140 delegates from across the UK and overseas.
- Hosted at least **15 online leadership, networking and improvement sessions** through our Q Special Interest Group (Q-SIG) and CHA-hosted discussions, attracting over 300 participants.
- Co-hosted **international webinars** with IFIC and IFIC Scotland, strengthening CHA's international profile.
- Celebrated innovation through the **CHA Innovations and Best Practice Awards**, sharing improvement work from across the UK.
- Produced **resource packs** on integrated care, leadership, staff wellbeing and safer staffing.

- Maintained strong partnerships with **Q, BGS, NHS Benchmarking, NACEL, IFIC and the End of Life Coalition**, and continued to engage national leaders in advocating for community hospitals.
- Expanded communications through newsletters, blogs, social media and digital content highlighting the contribution of over **500 community hospitals** across the UK.

2. A thriving leadership and improvement network

Working closely with Q, CHA has continued to build a supportive leadership and improvement community:

- The **CHA Q Special Interest Group** grew from 26 to 64 members by November 2024, representing England, Scotland, Wales and international partners.
- At least **15 online discussion events** were hosted (454 registrations, over 300 participants), covering safer staffing, leadership, wellbeing, frailty, palliative and end of life care, and intermediate care models.
- Four leadership-focused **resource packs** were developed on integrated care, staff wellbeing, leadership and safer staffing.
- These sessions have become valued forums for peer support and shared learning, frequently described as inspirational, stimulating and practical.

3. CHA National Conference 2024

The 2024 national conference marked a major milestone for CHA:

- **Dates and venue:** 10–11 October 2024, Cheltenham Chase Hotel – CHA’s first in-person national conference since 2017
- **Theme:** *Community Hospitals: Leading Best Practices Today, Shaping the Healthcare of Tomorrow*
- **Delegates:** Approximately 140 participants from across the UK and overseas

Key features included:

- Keynotes from **Professor Chris Whitty** and **Roy Lilley**, setting a powerful national context.

- Plenaries and workshops on frailty, palliative and end of life care, urgent care pathways, sustainability, staffing models, and the role of environment and art in community hospitals.
- Poster presentations and celebration of the **Innovations and Best Practice Awards**.

Delegates consistently described the conference as a rare and valuable opportunity to reconnect the UK-wide community hospital family and to position community hospitals firmly within integrated and intermediate care discussions.

4. International collaboration and digital learning

Alongside the conference and Q-SIG, CHA has continued to invest in accessible online learning:

- **IFIC and IFIC Scotland webinars** featuring speakers from Singapore, Spain, Canada and the UK.
- Contributions to **Integrated Care Matters** resources, particularly around care for older people in community hospitals.
- Growth of CHA's **digital and YouTube content**, ensuring access for staff working in rural, remote and coastal settings.

Sponsored leadership and networking sessions

Recently (outside of the reporting period), the CHA hosted two lunchtime sponsored leadership and networking sessions, supported by **Abbott Rapid Diagnostics** and **N+L (Queensland Bakery)**. These sessions were offered as additional learning opportunities alongside CHA's core programme.

- **Abbott POCT session:** 45 registered, 26 attended live, resulting in **15 new CHA members**
- **Queensland Bakery (N+L) session:** 71 registered, 44 attended live, resulting in **29 new CHA members**

The sessions attracted a diverse multidisciplinary audience and focused on practical leadership in community hospitals, point-of-care testing to support timely decision-making, and nutritional strategies to address malnutrition in frail patients. Discussions highlighted links between diagnostics, nutrition, safe discharge, hospital-to-home pathways, governance, quality assurance and oral health. Feedback rated the sessions as **good to excellent**, and together they contributed **44 new individual CHA members**.

5. Advocacy, research and influence

As national policy increasingly focuses on care closer to home, CHA has continued to advocate for the role of community hospitals by:

- Promoting the case for a **National Community Hospital Strategy**, focusing on sustainable funding, workforce and integrated models of care.
- Contributing to publications, case studies and opinion pieces on frailty, intermediate care and end of life care.
- Working with partners including **Q, BGS, IFIC, NHS Benchmarking, NACEL and the End of Life Coalition** to ensure community hospital perspectives are included in national discussions.

6. Communication, membership and engagement

Member engagement remains central to CHA's work:

- Regular newsletters share research, improvement work and events, with representation from all four nations and a call for a Northern Ireland lead.
- CHA's social media presence continues to grow, showcasing stories from community hospitals.

Membership growth during the year reflects CHA's expanding multidisciplinary reach, with new members joining from nursing, allied health professions, dietetics, facilities and catering, oral health, education, management, commissioning, industry and the voluntary sector.

7. Sustainability, succession and future focus

Sustainability has been a key theme across people, finances and ways of working:

- **People and succession:** I am stepping down as Chair, and I would like to thank **Sue Greenwood** for taking on the role of Chair from April 25, **David Seamark and Helen** for their significant contributions to the CHA. **Jo Posnette** for

conference leadership, and the wider committee for their commitment during a challenging year.

- **Finances and membership:** CHA will need to continue developing a sustainable financial model, including modest membership and event charges, structured sponsorship aligned with CHA's values, and deeper strategic partnerships.
- **Ways of working:** Lunchtime and in-hours events have enabled greater participation from NHS staff and should continue wherever possible.

I will remain involved in supporting sponsorship and advocacy where I can.

8. Personal reflections as outgoing Chair

Serving as Chair of the Community Hospital Association has been a great privilege. Together, we have re-established a national conference, built a thriving leadership and improvement network, raised the profile of community hospitals, and created safe spaces for shared learning and influence.

As the NHS increasingly looks towards care closer to home, community hospitals matter more than ever. I leave the role confident that CHA is well-placed to continue advocating for and strengthening community hospitals across the UK.

My sincere thanks go to our President and past Presidents, the CHA Directors and committee, our partners, and above all our members, who provide compassionate, person-centred care within their communities every day.

With warmest regards,

Dr Kirsten Protherough

Outgoing Chair, Community Hospital Association