



# Case Study

## A Leadership Journey to support a 7 Day Service

### Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust

#### Purpose

A new way of working was developed across the community hospitals, with a strengthening of leadership at every level. This has enabled a 7 day service to be offered, and the community hospitals contribution to the service within the whole system to be enhanced, recognised and valued by partners.

#### Context

Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust manages community hospitals in Abingdon, Bicester, Didcot, Oxford City, Wallingford, and Witney. The community hospital beds provide an intermediate, rehabilitation, acute and end of life care service. The community wards have multi-disciplinary teams, with 4 Matrons leading the 8 wards.



The main service activity on the wards, such as admissions, discharges and therapies was between Monday to Friday during the day, when the full range of Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) were on duty. For evenings and weekends there was an out of hours on-call system staffed by managers across Community Services who were not always familiar with the details of the service. With the increase demand on all services during the Covid-19 pandemic, a decision was made to enhance the community hospital service offering to a 7 day service, with appropriate clinical and management support.



#### What we did

There was an urgent need for patients to have improved access to community-based inpatient care at all times and there was increased pressure on the services across the system.

The Matrons for the community hospitals in Oxfordshire Health NHS Foundation Trust came up with a proposal for a new way of working in the second wave of the pandemic. They developed a system whereby one Matron had an operational responsibility for all community hospitals for a 7-day period. The Operational



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Matron became the single point of access for partner organisations such as the Acute Trusts and Social Care with the inpatient services.

The other 3 Matrons had clinical responsibility across the rest of the community hospitals. This arrangement was on rotation, so each Matron had regular experience of operational and clinical responsibility for all community hospitals in the community directorate. This new arrangement provided leadership and support for staff in community hospitals at all times and 7 days a week.



**“ We split our responsibilities so we can be both operational and supporting the system, and also providing clinical leadership supporting our teams**

MATRON

There was initially some reservation to introducing this way of working, but this system has produced some major improvements for patients, the staff and the service. The Matrons have now developed an overview of the total community hospital offering, and are continuing to work together to improve quality, sustain high standards and reduce variations.

In the past the Matrons had identified a need for improvements in accessing and sharing data on patients and inpatient beds. The pandemic provided the impetus for this to be implemented swiftly, so a new visual system for identifying bed capacity and pressures at any time was implemented. The Covid-19 pandemic accelerated the requirement for data transparency across the whole health system, and this provided a basis for improved understanding and a strengthening of relationships. This has led to a new provider collaborative between the Acute and Community Trust, and it is the ambition of both Boards to have “One Team Oxfordshire.”

The Operational Matron joined the daily “systems call” with all agencies including the Acute Trust, CCG, Local Authority, to help manage the need for beds and services across Oxfordshire. The Operational Matron could contribute the local narrative to the service data which was considered to be invaluable.

There was also a greater understanding of the staff establishment and distribution across the community hospitals. There was previously concern about a lack of staff, and lack of knowledge of staffing levels across the hospitals and services. Information systems on staffing were improved and data shared. Staffing was sustained or increased through initiatives such as successful international recruitment. The Trust also made an increase in student placements. For instance, student placements for AHPs increased by 300%. Some of the students who had their placements in community hospitals have since applied for positions, demonstrating the value of familiarising students with this model of care in attracting people to substantive posts. There have been three nominations for placement of the year for community hospital wards from Oxford Brookes University, giving recognition to their value. A recent quote from a student nurse illustrates their experience.



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“ Working in the middle of the pandemic on a red Covid ward with many staff isolating or off sick, and still staff managed to go above and beyond for the students. The staff couldn't have done more for us – they were truly amazing. Providing palliative care to patients who unfortunately lost their lives to Covid-19 are experiences I will take with me forever.

STUDENT NURSE

## Outcomes and Learning

- The Matrons and staff have reported an increase in job satisfaction, as they have an improved understanding of the wider service, and can see the positive impact on patients and families. Staff describe the “art of the possible” in respect to actions during the pandemic, and talk about the level of “camaderie” between everyone involved.
- Patients benefited from more regular rehabilitation, which could now be offered by therapists every day of the week. This helped promote recovery, and the average length of stay for patients reduced in some of the hospitals from 28 days to 23 days. Positive patient feedback was recorded in the patient feedback system called “I Want Great Care” February 2022. A word cloud created from the most frequently mentioned words records words such as: good, friendly, kind, care, and staff.
- The service strengthened leadership at every level, and offered training and support for managers and staff. Local autonomy and local discretion was supported as appropriate.
- At ward level, staff worked more closely together through their “daily huddles” which meant that everyone was well versed in the needs, priorities, challenges and developments. The senior management team recognised the challenges of working differently and in particular redeployments, and has sent regular communications to staff supporting their efforts



“ Matrons have freedom to act

SENIOR MANAGER



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- The service continues to pursue Quality Improvement projects, such as improving person-centred care at Didcot community hospital. Strengthening leadership and pursuing quality improvement projects is continuing. Staff have said that community hospitals feel better supported
- The 7 day service offered on the community hospital wards was realised through the senior management support every day, the offer of 7 day rehabilitation to patients, an operational matron on duty for all community hospitals, and clinical support from Matrons working across all of the community hospitals.
- Managers and Matrons have concluded that this way of working will be sustained, so the 7 day service in community hospitals will continue.

**“ We are very proud how you have taken this challenge on to support both your colleagues and the patients**

TRUST COMMUNICATION FEB 2022

**“ Despite the horrors, we have come a long way. We need to celebrate that**

SENIOR MANAGER

## BENEFITS TO PATIENTS

- Better access to services
- Less time in hospital and more regular rehabilitation

## BENEFITS TO STAFF

- Improved teamwork and improved data sharing
- Improved job satisfaction
- Leadership and management support is stronger

## BENEFITS TO THE TRUST

- A clearer strategic role for community hospitals
- A more robust place in the system as a trusted partner

## LEARNING

- Benefit of Local Autonomy
- Importance of Data sharing to enhance understanding
- Clarifying the strategic role of Community Hospitals

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue to ensure leadership at every level supports a 7 day service
- The service is building on changes with their Quality Improvement projects
- A focus on leadership at all levels, with training and support



*‘The national voice for Community Hospitals’*

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## Key contact



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