

“It ensures we offer the right type of care in the right place, with often better health outcomes for the patient, while also delivering more affordable care, with the highest quality. That’s why we will continue to invest in improving and maintaining our community hospitals. It’s worked well for 125 years, and we intend to ensure it keeps going strong.”

Diana Smith, NCH&C’s Ward Manager at the hospital, said: “Swaffham Community Hospital plays a pivotal role in supporting healthcare across the whole of west Norfolk. The building may be 125 years old, but still plays a crucial part in the modern NHS.

“The hospital holds a special place in many people’s hearts, and is as important to our community as it was when it was first built all those years ago. The recent investment in the building shows it’s here to stay and will continue offering the best possible care for local people for many years to come.”

Old newspapers and documents uncovered during research into the hospital’s history show it was originally called the Queen Victoria Hospital, and cared for just 39 patients during its first year at a total cost of £135. By 1970, this number had grown to 276 patients, with their care costing £24,193.

In addition, a statement of accounts from 1933 – before the NHS was introduced – showed that a contribution of 2d a week would cover admission or treatment at the hospital for a man, his wife and children – including travel for anyone admitted as an inpatient.

Diane added: “The information we have found out about the history of the hospital has been absolutely fascinating, and shows just how long it has been helping the community. It’s great that local patients are still benefitting today – although now, of course, their treatment is free.”

David Gulliver, Chairman of Swaffham Community Hospital’s League of Friends, said: “Local people realise what an asset the hospital is for our community. We are so lucky to have it and there is a real strength of feeling in the town towards it. We are also delighted with the refurbishment work, which is going to look absolutely fantastic and has ensured the hospital will have a wonderful future.”

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Modernisation

Major refurbishment nears completion

A major refurbishment project which has secured the future of Swaffham Community Hospital for many years to come is nearing completion.

The extensive £1.9m scheme has been funded by NCH&C to improve patient privacy and meet the highest standards of infection control. So far, the project has seen:

- the physiotherapy outpatient area fully refurbished and expanded, creating greater capacity for group activities
- a new waiting area put in place to help keep the inpatient ward area and the outpatient clinic areas separate
- wash basins replaced and a shower converted to a wet room on the 18-bed ward to improve infection control and give people more space and the choice between a bath or shower
- the nurses' station updated to improve confidentiality
- the nurse call bell replaced with a new, modern system
- changing facilities for staff improved and a new shower and toilet installed

The second phase of the upgrade is due for completion in November and will see major refurbishments take place in the outpatients department, where the number of clinic rooms will increase from five to eight.

In addition, new sinks, a utility room and hard flooring are being installed to improve infection control, while the whole area will also be redecorated. To complete the project, work is also taking place to upgrade the admin block.

Diana Smith, Ward Manager at the hospital, said: "We are absolutely delighted with this refurbishment work, which has made a real difference at the hospital. It represents a significant investment which will continue to benefit scores of patients and their families for years to come."

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Reducing length of stay

Staff go to the extra mile to prove fun is good for your health!

A team of Swaffham nurses and therapists have been hailed as being ‘seriously good for your health’ after injecting fun into the rehabilitation of their patients.

Swaffham Community Hospital’s activities programme, introduced by **senior NCH&C nurse Julie Chick**, from Holme Hale, has been heralded by colleagues and patients alike. As well as helping reduce the average length of stay from 25 to 13 days, it has improved the morale of patients, increased their confidence and helped deliver high satisfaction ratings in patient experience surveys.

Julie has been supported by her colleagues to develop a wide range of social activities for inpatients on the 18-bed rehabilitation ward, such as movies, giant board games and pamper afternoons. All have been carefully designed to bring therapeutic benefits by getting people out of bed, encouraging them to socialise and build up strength, coordination and confidence through light exercise.

Ward Manager Diana Smith said: “Julie’s hard work has had such a huge impact. We’re sure that her efforts have been a big factor in helping to reduce the length of stay for patients, getting them back on their feet and recovered to be able to go home quicker.

“Julie goes the extra mile to bring a bit of fun onto the ward, which is so important for people who are recovering from a serious illness or feeling vulnerable and isolated. We all think she is fabulous.”

Julie said: “My bosses and colleagues have been so supportive in allowing me to develop this programme and I get so much out of it. It’s about having a chance to put your illnesses to one side, even for a short time, and to chat and laugh, and do something relaxing or fun to get your spark back again.”

-Ends-



Anthony makes a dramatic entrance!

The last baby to be born at Swaffham Community Hospital made his entrance into the world in dramatic style – and became something of a local celebrity as a result.

Anthony Bass was due to be delivered at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in King's Lynn. But when mum Jean went into labour on 8 July 1978, it quickly became clear he wasn't going to hang around for long before making his entrance into the world.

"My husband Raymond was trying to get me to King's Lynn, but Anthony was impatient," said Jean. "My late mother was in the car with us and kept telling Raymond to slow down – but I just wanted him to drive faster as Anthony wasn't going to wait any longer.

"We managed to get as far as Swaffham Community Hospital, which was a rehabilitation hospital at the time so didn't have a maternity ward. I was taken into a room and two nurses helped to deliver him. One of them – Sue Cox – actually saved his life as he was born with the umbilical cord wrapped around his neck. We were so lucky that she was there.

"The following week, Swaffham Hospital had its first ever fete and asked if we would go along as guests of honour. They made Anthony the star of the show – but he was blissfully unaware of the drama he had caused!"

Anthony, who lives with his wife Jo in Wymondham, now has two young children of his own – son Mallory, three, who is named after one of his heroes, Everest mountaineer George Mallory, and six-month old daughter called Tilly.

"Anthony and his wife were so thrilled when they had a boy and a girl, but nothing could quite top the spectacular way he entered the world!" added his mum. "He is now keeping a memory box for his children, and has included a photograph taken at the fete so the story stays alive.

"It such a good job we got to the hospital when we did as he couldn't wait. Even now, he still gets things done quickly, so it must be part of his personality.



“It’s strange how fate works. We were so lucky to have someone who used to be a trained midwife come to the fore and will always be grateful to the hospital and the two nurses who helped.”

As a result of Anthony’s birth, Sue – who had previously worked as a midwife – returned to the specialty. Anthony’s parents were so grateful to her that they asked her to become his godmother, with the families still staying in regular contact.

The second nurse to help was **Kay Gulliver**, who is married to David, Chairman of the hospital’s League of Friends. She said: “I was on duty on that Saturday morning when one of the cooks from the kitchen called out ‘quick – someone’s having a baby’. We rushed out from the ward and saw Jean.

“We got her round to the hospital’s casualty department and within a few minutes, Anthony had arrived. It was quite amazing and a real experience for everyone involved.

“A few weeks ago I was at a friend’s wedding and was introduced to Anthony again. It was really nice to meet him properly after all these years.”

Anthony said: “As my wife Jo says, it’s not that I’ve always been impatient, I’m just exceptionally bad at waiting for life to come to me!

“Mallory was also born in dramatic fashion. He was two weeks overdue, and was eventually delivered by emergency Caesarean after similar complications with the cord. At 9lb 13oz, he had got stuck! As we know the importance of midwives like Sue, we actively supported and agreed to the attendance of trainees at his birth. As Mum mentioned, I’ve always heeded George Mallory’s infamous saying ‘because it’s there’, meaning get on with it and do it because you can. Mallory shows all the signs of his namesake.

“Tilly arrived in a more sedate manner. After the drama of her sibling, we opted for a planned Caesarean and it was the end of the erratic deliveries in the Bass household. The consultant at the time told us ‘this will be a beautiful experience and not a smash and grab like last time!’

“I remember having a discussion with Jo about her name as my first choice was different. I eventually went downstairs to get a coffee and as I was about to pay, a group of ladies walked in wearing bright pink tops with ‘Team Tilly’ in big white letters on their backs. I then conceded defeat as I was convinced there was a stronger force in the room that day.”

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Patient / carer feedback

“Thank you for the excellent care”

NCH&C’s Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) regularly receive compliments about the care provided at Swaffham. Recent feedback includes:

- “Thanks for excellent care given to my wife. The care and attention she was shown were exemplary. Staff had an ever present concern for the comfort and peace of mind of all of patients and a cheerful atmosphere prevailed at all times. I do believe that Florence Nightingale would have been proud to have had the support of your team, including the ladies who dispense tea, coffee and biscuits with such good cheer. All of these things reflect greatly on the leadership of the hospital.”
- “Thank you for the care and understanding shown to my relative. It was outstanding and also extended to all family members, who were treated as well as the patient.”
- “Thank you for all the help and encouragement. You eventually got my legs working and it feels good.”
- “Thank you for helping me progress and enabling me to live in my own home.”
- “Thank you for looking after me, making me feel better when I got down and encouraging me to do things I didn't think I could do.”
- “Thank you very much for all the kindness and caring you gave me while I was in your care. My stay was very pleasant and I would fully recommend your care to anyone who has to spend time recuperating. They will get first class treatment and attention.”

- ENDS -



Facts and figures

- Swaffham Community Hospital was built in 1888 at a cost of £321, 9 shillings and 6d farthing. It was originally called the Jubilee Hospital.
- It treated 39 patients in the first year, at a total cost of £135.
- Financial papers from 1933 show that 2d a week contribution would secure admission and treatment at Swaffham, Norwich, or King's Lynn hospitals and free transport for those admitted as inpatients. The contribution would cover a man, his wife and children under the age of 16, and was available to married couples with incomes of less than £200 or single people earning less than £150 a year. Those needing to use the hospital would first need to obtain a "voucher of admission".
- By 1970, the hospital had 18 beds staffed by 13 nurses and was treating 276 patients a year at a total cost of £24,193.
- An extension, called the Balcony Ward at the front of the hospital, was added shortly after the Second World War and a nurses home was built next door in the early 1950s.
- Baroness Gillian Shephard opened the new ward extension at the hospital on March 31, 1995.
- The hospital now cares for around 330 inpatients a year who stay for an average of 17 days
- At any one time, 86% of the beds on the inpatient ward are occupied.
- The hospital serves a population of around 148,000 people across west Norfolk.

