

# News Release

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## **New dedicated stroke and neurological rehab unit**

Dorset County Hospital (DCH) and Dorset HealthCare are jointly providing a new dedicated rehabilitation unit for people recovering from stroke and neurological illnesses or injuries.

The 10-bedded unit based at the Yeatman Hospital in Sherborne opened its doors to patients on Tuesday 4 August.

The service will initially run as a pilot until March next year, offering a fresh approach to rehabilitation to improve outcomes for patients in west and north Dorset. Patient feedback and engagement will shape how the service develops after the pilot period.

In line with national guidance, the unit will be led by a Consultant Therapist working alongside a specialist rehabilitation team and hospital nursing staff.

The unit's approach will also encourage active participation from nominated rehab companions, who can be friends or family members. Rehab companions can take part in therapy sessions and ward rounds, and are encouraged to support practice between therapy sessions.

Louise Clark, DCH's Head of Occupational Therapy and Allied Health Professional Lead for Stroke Services, said: "This is an exciting and positive step. Rehabilitation was prioritised in the NHS Long Term Plan published last year and, in the wake of COVID-19, has never been more important.

"Both our trusts are committed to ensuring the delivery of high quality rehabilitation services – both in an inpatient setting, and through on-going rehab support in the community as soon as care needs can be safely met outside of the hospital.

"Moving rehabilitation beds from DCH also supports the development of 'hyper acute' stroke services there, which is a priority for Dorset. It is imperative that only people with the most serious medical needs remain on the acute site, to ensure that people suffering a stroke have rapid access to the required level of care."

The new unit forms part of the Dorset Vision for Stroke and Neuro rehabilitation approved by all four Dorset NHS trusts and the Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group last year. And feedback from patients and their families will help to evaluate and develop the service in future.

Interim Matron of the Yeatman Hospital, Helen Hunt, said: "This is a very exciting initiative for us at Sherborne. We already care for patients with rehabilitation goals but this opportunity will enhance our nursing skills further in the field of stroke and neurological illnesses.

“This joint venture is a positive step for the future of the Yeatman, and will make a real difference to patients in our community.”

**ENDS**

**PHOTO: Stroke and neurological rehab unit lead Louise Clark, centre, with Yeatman Hospital Interim Matron Helen Hunt and Senior Sister Barbara Ludlow.**

**For more information please contact the DCH communications team on 01305 254683 [communications@dchft.nhs.uk](mailto:communications@dchft.nhs.uk) or Communications Manager Jonathan Slater at Dorset HealthCare on 01202 277080 [jonathan.slater@nhs.net](mailto:jonathan.slater@nhs.net)**