



Designing for the health of coastal communities

There has been recent public health interest in the positive effects of coastal proximity on health and wellbeing, however in the UK, these are often areas of health inequality and older populations.

The Chief Medical Officer's 2021 annual report, focused on the health of our coastal communities, seeking a national strategy to improve outcomes.

Whilst living by the coast is an enviable lifestyle for many, our elderly populations in these areas continue to grow and high rates of major disease are prevalent in our seaside populations. These factors, coupled with staff recruitment difficulties, leave gaps in health services where they are needed most.

In response to this, changes to the way that health is managed and services are delivered has led to models of proactive rather than reactive care.

We often hear the term 'wellness' used, and over recent times, the shift has gone from purely focusing on fixing health issues when they occur, to an aim of allowing everyone to live well, for longer. To support this, we see the development of therapeutic, integrated care environments, bringing together primary, community and social care from a range of organisations. Well designed buildings, with excellent daylighting, ventilation, views out, comfortable acoustics and high quality landscaping

are needed to support these new ways of service delivery, to provide comprehensive care to treat individuals very close to their homes.

The opportunities for this in coastal locations are heightened, with abundant opportunities for social prescribing, and well-documented evidence that 'blue space', as it's known, for example the sea and coastline, is good for body and mind.

In 2018, the pioneering Jean Bishop Integrated Care Centre opened in the coastal city of Hull. Designed by Medical Architecture, this innovative complex is the first of a new generation of health infrastructure that enables out-of-hospital care. It provides local treatment and care to help elderly residents keep fit and well whilst living in their own homes. As well as the NHS, the building incorporates a new fire station for Humberside Fire and Rescue Service, to assist patients who slip and fall.

Sited on vacant school land in an area of the city often deprived of investment, the centre has become a new civic landmark with a generous public realm that segregates traffic and provides a boulevard to encourage mobility. By organising the welcoming point at the heart of the low rise building, all clinical and support functions are nearby and accessible, fostering a sense of reassurance and wellbeing which is central to the experience of patients, staff and

visitors in their journey from diagnosis to treatment and therapy.

Recently, Medical Architecture completed the reconfiguration, refurbishment and extension of Whitby Hospital in the centre of a very popular seaside resort on the North Yorkshire coast.

The original hospital opened in 1979 as the first community hospital in England, however, over the last decade, the breadth of available services was vastly reduced to the extent that the facility was significantly under-utilised and vastly inefficient. At the same time, the internal arrangement did not lend itself to developing an integrated workforce; services were not naturally aligned, resulting in staff often working in isolated parts of the building.

Whitby Hospital's reconfiguration has resulted in a modern, fit-for-purpose health and social care hub, which supports the integrated delivery of primary and secondary care, alongside community services, including a 16 bed inpatient ward.

The sprawling site has been rationalised, focusing on redevelopment of the 7-storey tower block and removal of the lower buildings. This frees up the remainder of the site for a future extra care facility supported by the local authority, to further enhance the 'health and home' offer. A contemporary

extension clearly identifies the new hospital entrance and responds to the steeply sloping site, affording pedestrian access across the site, which was limited previously. The reconfiguration takes advantage of the hospital's elevated location overlooking the historic coastal town, with larger areas of glazing offering spectacular views across the town, harbour and towards Whitby Abbey, providing a positive focal point for patients and an enviable working environment for staff.

The Jean Bishop Integrated Care Centre and Whitby Hospital are just two examples where an integrated model of care has been used to respond to the complex health needs of their coastal communities. There are many locations around the UK facing similar challenges that would benefit from a similar approach to their health infrastructure to bring significant health benefits.

"It's a totally different way of caring for patients. ... The care at the ICC feels unique as it is about prevention and working in a proactive way. ... We wanted the centre to be welcoming and warm and have had great feedback so far. It enhances the healing environment by being relaxed, calm and dementia friendly. It's about working together to agree and deliver the best care for the patient."

Dr Dan Harman, Consultant Geriatrician, City Health Care Partnership CIC - speaking about The Jean Bishop ICC

"Over the years models of care have changed and the spaces that you need to deliver that care have also changed, so this scheme is really about bringing all of that stuff up to date, which will be better for the staff that deliver services on site ... [as well as] securing Whitby Hospital for the next 30 years in a way that's functionally suitable, easy to maintain and sustain for the future."

Peter Todd, Principal Construction Manager, NHS Property Services - speaking about Whitby Hospital

Project Data:

Project: The Jean Bishop Integrated Care Centre | Location: Hull, UK | Architects: Medical Architecture | Client: Citycare with NHS Hull CCG and Community Health Partnerships | Value: £9m

Project: Whitby Hospital Redevelopment | Location: Whitby, UK | Architects: Medical Architecture | Client: NHS Property Services and BAM Construction | Value: £12m

Medical
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