Our Social Value Pledge

NHS
Dorset County Hospital
NHS Foundation Trust

Social Value Activity Report

2025-2026

We are very pleased to publish our latest edition of the Dorset County Hospital Social Value Activity Report.

Dorset County Hospital is committed to maximising the positive social value impact we have on our local communities, contributing to improving the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the local population.

The report highlights a few of the wide-ranging initiatives as part of the hospital's ongoing social value programme.

The Trust's Social Value Pledge is available on our website at www.dchft.nhs.uk/about-us/social-value

For more information about DCH's social value commitments and how you can contribute and make a difference, please contact Simon Pearson, Head of Charity and Social Value, at simon.pearson@dchft.nhs.uk

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Volunteer Activities

Volunteers now visit wards around the hospital offering a variety of activities for patients to get involved with, from reading and colouring to knitting and chess. The aim is to support our patients' wellbeing and help make their time in hospital a little brighter.

Supporting carers

Experience of Care Week allows us to consider how we listen, communicate, and the everyday interactions that shape someone's experience.
A highlight of this week was to crown our inaugural Patient Experience champion who demonstrated how a minor change will assist patients with communication difficulties and improve care and their ability to converse with staff.

The HIVE

Our new HIVE (Health and Wellbeing, Information, Volunteering and Engagement) hub offers a welcoming space for patients, families and carers to provide feedback about their experience, raise concerns, and be signposted to various local support services. It is also used by local organisations for drop-in events.

Cradle Bags from Tilbury Douglas

Contractors of our new Emergency Department and Critical Care Unit, Tilbury Douglas, have delivered over 100 Cradle comfort bags to support families following a loss at any stage of pregnancy. Each bag is filled with essential toiletries, as well as a leaflet which signposts bereaved families to support.

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DCH Charity hits Emergency and Critical Care Appeal halfway point

The DCH Charity were delighted to reach the halfway point of their Emergency and Critical Care Appeal, raising £1.25 million to pay for equipment and facilities in the new Emergency Department and Critical Care Unit currently being built at DCH. They have received generous donations from the local community including businesses, individuals, trusts and foundations and organisations.

Widening Participation

The Widening Participation team has continued to strengthen and evolve its approach to social value, developing initiatives with innovation, creativity and a strong focus on inclusion. They have achieved the NHS England Silver Work Experience Quality Standard Award and were included on the Springpod Impact List.

Work Experience

The workstream continues to support students in Year 10 (14–15 years old), sixth form and college students (16–18 years old), and undergraduate students, alongside offering placements to older individuals seeking to change career.
We have expanded our placement offer to students from local specialist schools and care experienced individuals. These targeted interventions help reduce support more representative participation in the future workforce. As a result of this focused approach, we have seen a 32% increase in workplace experiences, rising from 250 in 2024/25 to 329 in 2025/26.

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Spotlight on Supported Internships

We have continued to work with Coastland College and the Southwest Regional Assessment Centre to offer supported internships and have also teamed up with Employ my Ability. These 26-week placements are designed for young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

Skills Bootcamp in Health and Social Care

We delivered our first Skills Bootcamp in Health and Social Care. This was the first offering of its kind by an NHS organisation operating as an independent training provider. Funded by the Department for Education and delivered in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions, Dorset HealthCare and social care employers, the programme supported the identification and recruitment of suitable candidates, particularly those facing barriers to employment. 75% of the participants went onto into local employment in the health or social care sector.

T-levels

We have increased our T-Level in Health industry placements in 2025/26 with 13 students from Coastland and Yeovil Colleges compared to 3 in 2024/25.

‘Intro to’ programmes

During 2025/26, Dorset County Hospital hosted a range of three-day programmes designed to introduce local Year 12 and 13 students to careers in healthcare.

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Sustainability

Nature Recover Ranger Ruth Boyle joined us June 2025. As part of the Healthy by Nature Project, Ruth is delivering greenspace improvements while engaging staff, patients, visitors and local community with nature for health and wellbeing.

Over 1,000 bulbs were planted across the hospital site this autumn/winter season and around 50 herb plants were added to the garden space outside our Damers Restaurant.

Regular ranger-led patient activities, including bulb planting and collaborative activities in partnership with Arts in Hospital, as well asthe Dementia and Chaplaincy Teams.

Our recycling station in Damers Restaurant and an initiative to increase recycling in theatres is helping us reduce waste and we now cover this topic as part of the staff induction.

Our rehoming service allows other services to make use of disused office furniture, bins, trolleys and cabinets and has been a success - saving us nearly £2,000 in nine months and avoiding almost 9 tonnes of CO_2 emissions.

Arts in Hospital

Arts in Hospital is continuing to promote existing, and establish new partnerships between DCH and our community, delivering activities which reduce inequalities, increase opportunities and improves health and wellbeing for all.

Creative Health delivers multiple forms of Social Value and our work is feeding into the NHS 10-year plan with our community outreach, and we are helping to reduce health inequalities through socially engaged art.

Our Art collection is a valued cultural resource, used by local schools and colleges and other outreach groups.

We commission local and regional artists to produce work for the hospital. The most recent of these is for the Fortuneswell Unit as part of their refurbishment, designed by local artist Bethan Venn.

One of our long-term projects is our partnership with Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra (BSO), which continues to thrive. We are working with them on a long-term plan to deliver activity across patient pathways and to focus on prevention within the wider community.

Participation activities, with our Creative Health Specialist, who works with stroke and patients with Dementia continues, reducing strain on staff and increasing wellbeing on the wards. This includes recruiting and training volunteers, providing skills training and prospects for members of the wider community.