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Rheumatology services return to Minehead Hospital

Patients are now able to access rheumatology care at Minehead Hospital for the first time this decade, following the return of the specialty's outpatient clinics to the hospital.

It means some patients no longer need to travel to Musgrove Park or Yeovil hospitals for their rheumatology appointments, with Somerset's other community hospitals also set to offer a service too.

The return of services to the community hospital is thanks to the efforts of Professor Patrick Kiely, a consultant rheumatologist from St George's University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust in London, who has worked closely with the team in Somerset to make it happen.

Dr Luke Gompels, consultant rheumatologist service lead for Somerset NHS Foundation Trust, says: "Following long term planning with Patrick, we're absolutely thrilled to be able to extend our service back out into the community, as well as supporting people with virtual reviews by telephone or video call too.

"The service at Minehead Hospital offers face-to-face appointments for patients with rheumatological conditions, such as arthritis, and our team also coordinates how patients are managed in the community.

"We're aiming to see as many patients as needed at Minehead Hospital, along with our other community hospitals in Bridgwater, Chard, South Petherton, Wellington, Crewkerne, and across the Dorset border in Sherborne.

"All of our patients in Somerset have told us that this is what they want, and it's great news that these community clinics have returned, particularly for those with chronic conditions.

"We now have an opportunity to build the service with a multidisciplinary team, including additional specialist nurses.

"There are over 1,200 patients on high-cost biological medications in Somerset, and by restarting these clinics, we're giving them better access to the service they need, so they can make the best possible choices about their care."

Professor Kiely adds: "I'm really pleased to be a part of this exciting service development, bringing community rheumatology clinics back to Minehead Community Hospital.

“The Minehead team have been overwhelmingly welcoming and helpful, and I much appreciate the support and hard work from Dr Luke Gompels to make this happen, after a few years of planning.

“I am a strong advocate for care closer to home, and these clinics, supported by the administrative and nursing colleagues in the rheumatology team at Musgrove Park, are now a reality for patients with rheumatic and musculoskeletal disorders living in North West Somerset.”

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ATTACHED PHOTOGRAPH

Pictured are members of the team involved in Somerset NHS Foundation Trust’s rheumatology service.

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