

Sustainable recoveries from crisis to independent living

Safe, compassionate and expert care for adults with complex mental health needs

Our Essex hospital offers high-quality, tailored care that promotes recovery and independence for people with complex mental health needs, including those with forensic histories or in the criminal justice system.



CQC rated 'Good' across all five domains for our Essex PICU and acute services

Sustainable recovery for independent lives

If you need help for someone with urgent or complex mental health needs, our team in Essex is here for you – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

We support adults experiencing an acute deterioration in their mental health or whose complex behaviour presents a risk that is difficult to manage in mainstream services, including those with co-existing needs such as personality disorder or forensic histories.

Our specialist multidisciplinary teams (MDT) work closely with NHS and criminal justice partners to provide expert, compassionate care in safe, therapeutic environments.

Our aim is for long-term, sustainable recovery through tailored therapeutic interventions, enabling individuals to live more independent lives in the least restrictive environment.



We support:

- ✓ Adults aged 18–65 years with severe mental illness or personality disorder
- ✓ People in crisis and with behaviours that challenge who need short-term intensive support
- ✓ Those with complex needs requiring specialist rehabilitation care
- ✓ Patients who cannot be managed and cared for in other settings, including acute and PICU hospitals, prison or the wider criminal justice system

Quality assured

Our Essex hospital is regulated by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), with wards nationally accredited by the Royal College of Psychiatrists (RCPsych) Quality Network for PICUs (Audley ward) and Forensic Mental Health Services (Danbury ward).

“Staff treated patients with compassion and kindness. They understood the individual needs of patients and supported them to manage their care.”

Latest CQC inspection report



Expert insight

Antony Miller, Service Director, Essex

Antony shares his thoughts on how the clinical teams in Essex are well placed to support the changing needs of patients being admitted to our PICU and acute services, including those with increasingly complex needs and those from the criminal justice system. Scan the QR code to hear his views or visit <https://youtu.be/m-bAidxFulU>

“We have all the facilities on-site that one would require to get someone well and motivated. We have excellent, dedicated staff of all different professions, that are experts in their field and love coming to work.”

Antony Miller, Service Director, St Andrew's Essex

Experts in forensic care

Supporting people at every stage of the criminal justice system

Our Essex hospital has a long track record of working with liaison and diversion services, prisons, and courts to provide safe, effective, and compassionate care for people with complex mental health needs.

We support individuals detained under the Mental Health Act (MHA) at any stage of the criminal justice system (CJS), including those on remand, serving a prison sentence, or in probation services by offering rapid assessment, stabilisation, and treatment in environments designed to promote both safety and recovery.



“Our services help people address the root causes of their difficulties, build stability, and prepare for a safe return to society.”

Consultant Forensic Psychiatrist,
St Andrew's, Essex

Specialist forensic pathways

Patients arriving from prison or court often present with high levels of risk, behaviours that challenge, and co-existing needs such as substance misuse or personality disorder.

Our specialist teams are experienced in providing:

- ✓ Rapid admission and stabilisation for urgent cases requiring secure care
- ✓ Full psychiatric and structured risk assessments using internationally recognised tools
- ✓ Safe, structured environments built around relational, procedural, and physical security
- ✓ Dedicated offence-related interventions, trauma-informed therapies, and substance misuse programmes
- ✓ Tailored care pathways guiding patients from crisis management through to longer-term rehabilitation
- ✓ Mental Health Act and legal support – a dedicated in-house MHA team supporting legal requirements through court and hospital processes
- ✓ Medico-legal expertise – independent reports and recommendations to support sentencing, parole, and ongoing treatment planning

Who we support

We care for men and women in the CJS detained under the following sections of the Mental Health Act:

- ✓ **Section 37 –**
Hospital orders
- ✓ **Section 37/41 –**
Hospital orders with restrictions
- ✓ **Section 47/49 –**
Transfer of sentenced prisoners with restrictions
- ✓ **Section 48/49 –**
Transfer of remand prisoners with restrictions

“This is the first-place people really care about me, and want me to do things and to do well.”

Female patient on Frinton ward

Our PICU and acute services

For over 10 years, we've worked closely with the NHS and criminal justice partners to provide rapid access to short-term, high-intensity PICU and acute care in safe, therapeutic environments. We provide individual treatment programmes designed to reduce risk and stabilise a patient's mental state before transferring them back into the criminal justice system, or less restrictive and community settings to continue their recovery.

Audley ward

11 beds

Male PICU

A high-dependency service supporting men detained under the Mental Health Act.

We deliver stabilisation, intensive support and discharge planning for patients experiencing psychosis, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or co-existing personality disorder.



PICU admissions criteria

We can accept patients who:

- ✓ are detained under the MHA 1983 (amended 2007)
- ✓ present with high levels of risk to their self or others
- ✓ are experiencing acute mental illness, relapse or crisis
- ✓ have a forensic history, are on remand or in custody
- ✓ may present with behaviours that challenge or co-morbid needs.

All referrals are clinically reviewed. We aim to respond within 2 hours of receiving full clinical documentation.

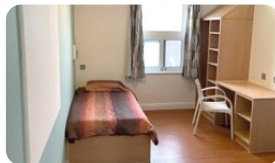
Benfleet ward

16 beds

Male acute

A short-stay recovery ward for men experiencing acute deterioration in their mental health.

We support stabilisation, risk management and community reintegration, with full MDT support.



Acute admissions criteria

We can accept patients who:

- ✓ are informal or detained under the MHA 1983 (amended 2007)
- ✓ are experiencing schizophrenia, bipolar disorder or drug-induced psychosis
- ✓ are at risk to themselves or others
- ✓ require short-term inpatient care to prevent escalation.

This service is not suitable for individuals with a primary diagnosis of dementia or a learning disability.

Frinton ward

12 beds

Female acute

Providing care for women requiring a step-up from community services or a step-down from more secure settings.

We deliver structured, therapeutic support and close collaboration with families and care coordinators.



“My care has been brilliant. I can now maintain my composure and manage my stress.”

Male patient on Audley ward

Sian's recovery story

After experiencing trauma in her life, Sian needed urgent specialist support to help manage her mental health and build the skills to move forward. Scan the QR code to watch her story or visit <https://youtu.be/UyG1Yoz3Nfo>

“If I wasn't in St Andrew's, I might have been struggling on my own. Thank you to the staff for giving me more of the tools I need to get over the trauma that I've been through.”

Sian, patient on Frinton ward



Our treatment and rehabilitation services

We have been supporting patients with complex mental health and personality disorder (PD) needs at our Essex hospital for over 25 years. Working with local NHS Provider Collaboratives, Integrated Care Boards (ICBs), prison and criminal justice partners, we deliver individual care that supports the recovery and rehabilitation of men back into the criminal justice system or less restrictive and community services.

Danbury ward

16 beds

Male low secure mental health and PD

Dedicated care for men with behaviours that challenge and those who require intensive relational security.

Danbury ward provides complex assessment of mental health and personality disorder symptoms before developing an individual rehabilitation framework of care.



Male low secure admissions criteria

We can accept patients who:

- ✔ are detained under the MHA 1983 (amended 2007)
- ✔ have a primary diagnosis of mental illness, personality disorder or co-morbid needs
- ✔ present with high levels of risk to self or others
- ✔ present with behaviours that challenge, alcohol or substance misuse
- ✔ have a forensic history, are on remand or in custody
- ✔ are unable to be managed in a less restrictive or community setting.

This criteria is a guide for assessing suitability. Each patient will be considered individually and in consultation with the local NHS Provider Collaborative where necessary.

Tiptree ward

16 beds

Male rehabilitation service

Tiptree ward offers three clinical rehabilitation treatment streams in one setting, including a fast-track rehabilitation pathway designed specifically for men stepping down from PICU or acute wards, and supportive rehabilitation streams focussed on community re-integration and sustainable recovery.



Male rehabilitation admissions criteria

We can accept patients who:

- ✔ are detained under the MHA 1983 (amended 2007)
- ✔ have an enduring primary diagnosis of mental illness or co-morbid needs
- ✔ present with high levels of risk to self or others
- ✔ present with behaviours that challenge, alcohol or substance misuse
- ✔ have a forensic history, are on remand or in custody
- ✔ are treatment-resistant
- ✔ are unable to be managed in a less restrictive or community setting.

This criteria is a guide for assessing suitability. Each patient will be considered individually and in consultation with the local NHS Integrated Care Board where necessary.

Dean's story

Before his admission to St Andrew's Essex, Dean had served multiple custodial sentences and moved between prison psychiatric wings and secure hospitals. On arrival, he presented as socially withdrawn and was experiencing psychosis with hallucinations and paranoid delusions.

The multidisciplinary team worked to build rapport, identifying that Dean's offending was influenced by a desire to live a wealthy lifestyle seen in violent movies and computer games, alcohol misuse, and to escape social anxiety. Therapy focused on addressing this anxiety and isolation through cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT) informed sessions, and weekly 1:1 work, supported by an incentive scheme to reinforce progress.

“Through CBT we were able to help Dean recognise that his anxiety came from a fear of being judged. Using role play, we helped Dean to change his beliefs, and he saw that negative outcomes rarely occurred.”

Consultant Forensic Psychiatrist, St Andrew's Essex

Over his first year, Dean completed 28 CBT sessions. Though still anxious, he joined ward activities, attended daily living skills groups, supported peers in therapy, and was granted unescorted community leave. With continued psychology and occupational therapy support, Dean was able to transfer nearer home to continue his recovery in a less restrictive environment.

Designed to support recovery, resilience and independence

At St Andrew’s Essex, we believe hospital wards should do more than provide safety. Our therapeutic environments are designed to inspire confidence, promote personal development, and support long-term reintegration into community or other appropriate settings.

Therapeutic and recovery-focused activities

Our recovery programme combines evidence-based therapies with creative, vocational, and wellbeing-focused opportunities that help patients develop resilience and real-world skills.

Patients can access:

- ✓ Psychological therapies including CBT, DBT-informed approaches, and trauma-focused interventions
- ✓ Structured occupational therapy such as cooking, budgeting, shopping, and personal care
- ✓ The award-winning “Green Gym” therapy garden, offering horticulture and nature-based rehabilitation
- ✓ Vocational and educational groups, including IT, music, art, and baking
- ✓ Fitness and sport programmes, from gym sessions and yoga to football and walking groups



“There’s an aspect of just being yourself and the staff here help you be that.”

Male patient on Danbury ward



“The staff were amazing during my stay. They believed in me. I truly don’t know where I’d be without them.”

Male patient on Tiptree ward

Supportive ward environments

The design of our wards underpins recovery. Each space offers structure, dignity, and opportunities for engagement, following Safewards principles to create calmer, safer care.

Key features include:

- ✓ Private single en-suite bedrooms for dignity and safety
- ✓ Calm and sensory rooms for emotional regulation and de-escalation
- ✓ Communal lounges and therapy rooms to encourage social connection
- ✓ Dedicated activity and fitness areas for creative, social, and physical therapies

Multidisciplinary expertise at every step

Recovery is supported by the expertise of our full on-site MDT, who work collaboratively to deliver holistic care. Each patient is supported by an MDT that includes:

- ✓ Consultant (forensic) psychiatrists and psychologists
- ✓ Specialist mental health nurses and healthcare assistants
- ✓ Occupational therapists and technical instructors
- ✓ Social workers and family liaison support
- ✓ Sport and exercise therapists
- ✓ Clinical pharmacists

With access to additional services, including on-site physical healthcare nurses, dieticians, speech and language therapists, physiotherapists and general practitioners.

Why commissioners choose us

- ✓ Specialised services for complex mental health and personality disorder
- ✓ CQC rated 'Good' for PICU and acute services across all domains
- ✓ Strong multidisciplinary expertise in supporting forensic and high-risk patients
- ✓ Comprehensive MDTs with an emphasis on skills development through daily psychology and occupational therapy interventions
- ✓ Facilities that support a person's recovery, including a low secure boundary which allows patients to develop skills off the ward and a positive risk-taking approach
- ✓ Regulated and nationally accredited by quality networks, including the RCPsych* and the National Association of PICUs (NAPICU)
- ✓ Length of stays that are shorter than national benchmarks
- ✓ Comprehensive psychiatric assessment and medication management guided by the NICE standards
- ✓ Carer, family and friend involvement, with open communication, emotional support and collaboration throughout a patient's care
- ✓ A focus on discharge and community re-integration with social work embedded into our MDTs, and home teams regularly invited to ward rounds

* Applies to Audley male PICU and Danbury male low secure wards.



Making a referral

PICU and acute referrals

 0800 434 6690

 sah.picuacute@nhs.net

 stah.org/picu-acute

Low secure and rehabilitation referrals

 0800 434 6690

 sah.admissions@nhs.net