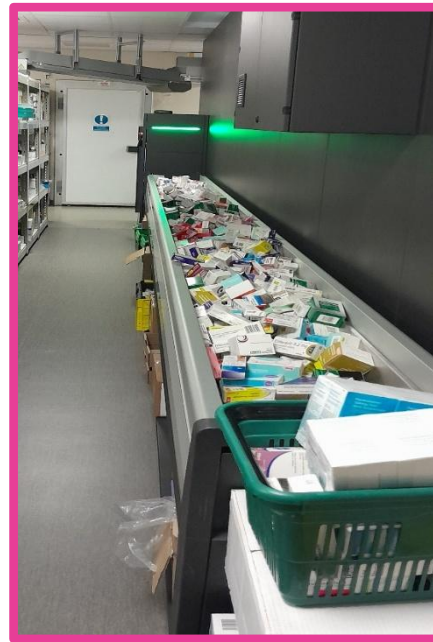
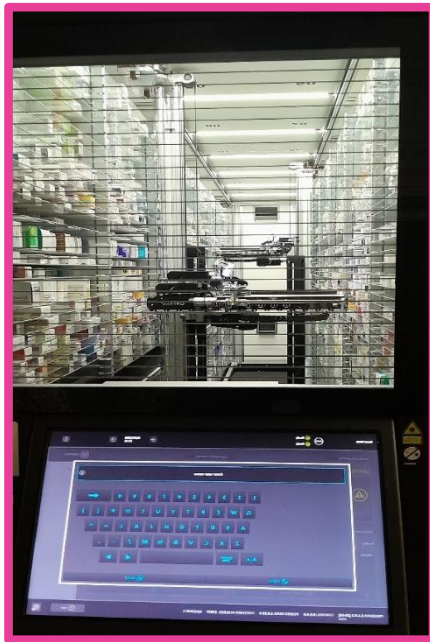


Pharmacy (NNUH)

Feedback



July 2026

In July 2026 we visited the pharmacy in the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital (NNUH) to speak with patients about their experience with the service. We also spoke to staff members in the department. During this visit we received 11 reviews from patients or family members and five from staff. The reviews have an average star rating of 4.5 stars out of 5.

The NNUH is a hospital in Norwich, Norfolk. Upon their last inspection in September and November 2023, the hospital received a rating of “Requires Improvement”, from the CQC. The pharmacy provides medication for both inpatients and outpatients. Earlier this year, work began to install a new robot replacing the previous model, and it came online in April. The robot named ‘Dorothy’ manages stock and

dispenses medications. Healthwatch Norfolk officers attended the pharmacy to gain the views of patients and staff on service provision since the introduction of this robot.



Healthwatch Norfolk Officers who visited the clinic noted:

We were told the robot is a layer of service delivery with human checks in place. On-site pharmacists review medication issued, ensuring it is allocated to the correct patient at the required strength, dosage and form.

The robot's priority task is dispensing:

- Items are selected in accordance with prescription instructions and released through chutes stationed at staff members' terminals
- Two 'arms' of the robot work simultaneously and can select multiple packs at a time
- Thousands of items are issued to inpatients, and around 250 to outpatients, every day
- Around 260 outpatient prescriptions remain uncollected each month. The team are assessing how to reduce this
- The robot cannot dispense items in very large or delicate boxes

When not dispensing, the robot manages stock

- 36,000 packs are held on the shelves which includes medication for ward top-ups, as well as availability for prescriptions
- Thousands of new items can be processed every day
- Packs are placed onto a conveyer belt where the box codes are read by the robot
- The medication is recorded on the system and filed in the appropriate area of shelving, in order of expiration date
- Medication at the end of its shelf life is identified and disposed of

We were also shown the controlled drugs safe which was implemented around the same time as 'Dorothy'. The secured room contains locked safes which only open at the point of dispensing medications. All safe entries and exits are logged on a computer system.

The team acknowledged the patient waiting room is too small and doesn't allow privacy for consultations. Plans are in progress to expand this area in the future.

Overall, most patients we spoke to on the day were positive about their experience, finding staff helpful. Many patients were satisfied with waiting times, with some reporting they were shorter than previous visits and several acknowledging the department's workload. A few said their prescription had not arrived despite clinicians elsewhere saying it would be available. One patient highlighted limited waiting area space.

Staff largely welcomed the new robot citing reduced noise and increased productivity. Greater accuracy was highlighted as its main benefit. The new controlled drugs safe was also praised for improving accuracy. Some reported occasional issues with the robot, although these were generally viewed as teething problems. One staff member stated additional workspace is needed for a comfortable working environment.

Comment from the provider:

"I think what is stated in the report is fair and I am pleased with the 4.5 out of 5 overall rating. Next, we would like to re-model the department to provide better waiting facilities with privacy and dignity for our patients, but before we can do any of that work, we do need to get a new production unit built to create some space for a better waiting room."

The reviews are displayed in the table below and can be found on our website www.healthwatchnorfolk.co.uk.

ID	Title	Review	Rating	Who?
457275	Hardly time to sit down	The prescription hasn't come down yet from the consultant I saw in a clinic this morning but they're going to keep checking their screens and let me know when it comes in. I was here two weeks ago and it was ready in two minutes. I wasn't expecting that, I hardly had time to sit down!	5	Patient
457269	Increased efficiency and productivity	The new robot is a lot more efficient, and it is quieter. The old robot measured between 50 and 90 decibels. It is more accurate, and means we can now look at reviewing systems and methods to increase productivity and accuracy further. In day-to-day working, we are now more efficient, productivity has increased, as well as workflows and systems. Staff morale has definitely improved. We have been able to add four new terminals so staff are not having to queue up, and we have new checking benches which is a nicer environment for staff, and better processes. The new robot is smaller so we have been able to readjust the space and I think we've done the best we can with the space we have.	5	Staff member

457268	Increased patient safety	The robot has enabled us to be below national benchmarking for errors. We are much quicker and more accurate, which is having a big impact on patient safety. It's great for staff, you don't have to run to other areas to find stock. The controlled drugs safe which was installed around the same time has also had a huge positive impact. Everything is recorded accurately and we have had zero errors in the last four months. For me, this is better than the robot in terms of safety.	5	Staff member
457265	Still getting used to the robot	It is quick when you want something and it's in there. The robot has 'alarmed' a bit more than we expected, which can slow things down and only certain staff members can rectify it. Sometimes the meds won't come out the chute at the terminal you're sitting at. Generally, it has made an impact on the speed of getting drugs in comparison to the old robot. It's a lot quieter which is much better, as it used to be difficult to hear in meetings. We're all still getting used to it.	5	Staff member
457264	Some breakdowns	The robot has broken down a couple of times which caused a few issues. It's difficult because some of the prescriptions are quite large, which takes longer.	5	Staff member

457261	It's a busy hospital	The last time I was here around eight months ago I was waiting around six hours on a ward and had to keep chasing it up as I wasn't allowed to go until I got the tablets. Today I was told by the doctor I saw to come down and get my medication but it hadn't been sent through. I had to go back to the clinic to sort it out. The pharmacy can only be as good as the information they get given. I've been waiting about 20 minutes now and they said it would be about 40-50 minutes. I'm OK with that, I know they're busy – it's a busy hospital.	5	Patient
457258	Efficient and pleasant	It seems a bit long-winded but I've never been here before. They said it would be about half an hour and it was 40 minutes, which was fine. They do seem efficient and the receptionist was very pleasant.	5	Patient
457257	They checked on me	Things are going well, everyone's rushed off their feet! Last time I waited about an hour. I've been told it will be about 30 minutes this time and I'm happy with that. The lady came and checked on me and said she'd chase it up, which is very kind. You hear people moaning but the staff are here to help.	5	Patient

457256	I like that they explain medications	It's my fourth time and I just plan an hour's wait, and that's OK, they're busy so I don't mind. It does seem slightly quicker than before. They're friendly and the items have always been correct. What I like is that they open the bag and explain it all to you again, which I think is lovely. People moan but what's the point in using all that energy to get cross? You just need to take it in your stride. I've noticed people go off for coffee and I've seen the lady call the numbers but they're not here, which makes more work for the staff.	5	Patient
457280	Amazingly quick	It was amazingly quick today. My husband's oncology nurse told me to come and pick up after 11am and it was ready. The person was very helpful and told me about the side-effects of the medicine. I'll give them four stars as nobody's perfect.	4	Family member
457279	Small waiting room	They're polite but not overly quick. The waiting room is very small for the size of the hospital and compared to other hospital pharmacies. I'm also not convinced it works to have one pharmacy serving both inpatients and outpatients. I actually came a few days ago and was told it would be 45 minutes which you know really means at least an hour. I chose to leave and come back today, and it took about 10 minutes.	4	Patient

457277	Friendly and helpful staff	The first couple of times during last year I was told the wait would be about 30-35 minutes, and I've been told the same today. It's understandable given the number of prescriptions they have to deal with. The items have mostly been correct although one time the amount wasn't right but I noticed on the day and they changed it. The staff have been friendly and helpful.	4	Patient
457276	Quite a long wait	We waited for about an hour and were told it would be 40-45 minutes. It's quite a long time and would be quicker to get it from my local GP. Last time I was here the consultant's instructions had gone horribly wrong and I had to trail round the hospital to get it sorted out, then I was told it would be another two hours. It was a Saturday before Christmas and the staff here were really rude. I asked for it to be sent to my GP but I was told that would take at least 48 hours which, because of bank holidays, would have meant I'd not get it until New Year's Eve.	4	Patient
457271	Items were correct	It was fine, I waited about 30-40 minutes and all the items were correct.	4	Patient

457270	Nice people	The first time we were here during last year we waited over an hour and this time seems a bit quicker. You've got to think though they're busy people, they've got to supply the whole hospital. The first time, my prescription hadn't been sent down so I had to go back and sort them out. The staff are good, they're nice people, but it does take a while.	4	Patient
457263	Need more space	I'm happier now the robot is in but the controlled drugs safe has had the biggest impact. We still need more space, sometimes we're on top of each other. And a bigger tea room!	3	Staff member