

Case study

SUDBURY COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE, SUDBURY

Maximising primary care space without expanding the estate

Sudbury Community Health Centre supports a growing population in Suffolk. It delivers a wide mix of clinical and non-clinical services and is used by multiple NHS organisations, including **West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust** and **Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust**. The site supports priorities set by the local Integrated Care Board (ICB).

The challenge

Although the site **appeared busy on paper**, there was **limited evidence** to confirm how efficiently space was being used in practice. With primary care demand rising, system leaders needed clarity on whether additional activity could be accommodated within the existing building or whether costly expansion would be required.

The approach

The **NHS Open Space team** carried out a **three-month digital utilisation study** between May and August 2024:

- Motion sensors installed across **61 rooms**
- Desk sensors installed across **78 desks**

Usage data was captured during core hours and reviewed by **NHS Property Services' Estates Strategy team**. They analysed room performance by type and identified practical opportunities to support service growth within the existing estate.

What the data showed



Overall utilisation:
36.7%



At peak times, only
37 rooms were occupied



40% of rooms remained vacant



35 rooms operated **below 45% utilisation**, including 16 clinical or group rooms

Key spaces, including examination, counselling and group rooms, were among the most underused.

The outcome

The findings confirmed that Sudbury could **support additional primary care services** within the existing estate. Resulting in a **£1.5m cost saving** due to the extension not being needed, and reduce reliance on poorer-performing properties elsewhere in the system.

Partners **avoided unnecessary capital expansion, repurposed underused rooms and made better use of shared space.**

The data also supported more collaborative decision-making across the ICB, trusts and estate teams, backed by clear, objective evidence.

The impact of utilisation monitoring

This case study shows how combining **digital utilisation insight** with expert estate strategy review strengthens decision making.

A building that appeared busy was shown to be significantly underused once real world data was analysed. This helped estate leaders challenge assumptions, unlock hidden capacity and support service growth **without expanding the estate.**



For estate leaders, the benefits are clear:

- Objective utilisation data, reviewed by estate experts, **de-risks major decisions**
- Hidden capacity can often meet demand **without new capital spend**
- A shared evidence base supports **system-wide collaboration**
- Smarter use of space **improves productivity, value for money and patient care**

By combining NHS Open Space data with NHS Property Services' estate strategy expertise, systems can move faster from insight to action and ensure the NHS estate is fit for the future.



property.nhs.uk/utilisation/



openspacepartnerships@property.nhs.uk



0808 196 2045