



Norfolk and Suffolk Health and Care Awards 2026

Research and Innovation Award

Amanda Keighley and Shelley Lee

West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust

Amanda Keighley and Shelley Lee, Senior Matrons for Community Integrated Teams, led the development and implementation of a Safe Decision-Making Tool to support the deferral of planned care during periods of high system pressure. Working collaboratively with multidisciplinary teams—including district nurses, therapists, managers and governance leads—they created a structured Red/Amber/Green (RAG) framework to prioritise patient care based on clinical risk, urgency and potential harm. The tool balances standardisation with professional judgement, reflecting real-time practice and supporting consistent, safe decision-making.

This innovation addresses a key challenge in modern healthcare: maintaining patient safety and equity under significant demand pressures. It embeds a person-centred approach, ensuring patients are informed, appropriately safety-netted and able to raise concerns, while also acknowledging and mitigating the moral distress experienced by staff when care is deferred. The tool incorporates strong governance, audit, and continuous improvement processes, ensuring it remains dynamic and responsive.

By replacing informal approaches with an evidence-based, standardised framework, the Senior Matrons have strengthened clinical accountability, reduced variation, and supported staff confidence. Human factors principles underpin its simple, colour-coded design, reducing cognitive load and enabling effective teamwork in high-pressure situations.

The tool has delivered measurable impact, improving patient safety, communication, and reassurance, while reducing staff uncertainty and moral injury. With ongoing training, audit cycles and stakeholder engagement, it is both sustainable and scalable, enhancing service resilience and establishing a model of best practice for wider adoption.