

Guide for Trusted Community VCFSE Leaders

Supporting Somerset's Big Conversation 2025

What is Somerset's Big Conversation 2025 (SBC 2025)?

Somerset's Big Conversation 2025 (SBC 2025) is our county-wide engagement programme to shape the future of health and care in Somerset. From May to October, we are visiting over 30 local events and working with community groups to gather people's views. SBC 2025 is part of the national 10-Year Health Plan, which focuses on three big shifts: moving more care from hospitals into communities, making better use of digital technology, and focusing more on prevention to keep people well.

Our engagement so far

- **30+ local events** planned and attended across Somerset from May to October 2025 (e.g. Home Farm Fest, Minehead Health Fair, Frome Market, Bridgwater Armed Forces Day).
- **Thousands of conversations held** – capturing detailed feedback about people's experiences and ideas for future health services.
- **Online activities and surveys** run alongside events, including interactive exercises such as the *Pauline* scenario and the *Somerset Pound* budget activity.
- **Key themes raised so far:** GP access and appointments, waiting times, dentistry, community hospitals and community hospital beds, mental health support, older people's care, prevention, and workforce pressures.

What are the aims of our engagement?

- Our aim is to make sure people across Somerset – especially those whose voices are not often heard – can share their experiences, ideas and priorities for the future of health and care.
- We want to understand what matters most to communities, where care should be provided, and how NHS resources should be spent.

- We are particularly interested in people's views on the balance between care at home, neighbourhood services, community hospitals and acute hospitals, as well as priorities such as prevention, mental health, GP access, waiting times and dentistry.

What happens with the feedback we hear?

- All feedback is being collated, analysed and shared with NHS Somerset, Integrated Care System (ICS) partner organisations, and decision-making boards.
- Findings will inform priorities for community services and neighbourhood health centres.
- A report will be published showing what people told us and how it has influenced future plans.
- We will continue to feed back to communities on the changes made as a result of their input - 'You Said, We Did'

What is the small grants scheme and its purpose?

- We are offering small grants to community, voluntary, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) organisations across Somerset to support engagement.
- The grants recognise the time, effort and resources it takes to run conversations and ensure no group is left out of pocket.
- Each funded group will be asked to run a set number of conversations (e.g. 20–30 discussions) with their communities and provide feedback in an agreed format.
- This scheme helps us reach seldom-heard voices through trusted local leaders.

What is my role as trusted community leader?

- **Use your existing relationships and leadership skills** - As a trusted community leader, you play a vital role in connecting us to people who may not otherwise take part in NHS engagement. Your existing relationships, networks and credibility mean people are more likely to share honest views with you.
- **Create suitable, safe and effective engagement sessions** - We are asking you to create safe, informal and accessible opportunities for people to talk about health and care in ways that feel natural and comfortable.

- **Ensure everyone can access the resources** - As part of your role, we ask you to work with us to ensure that the resources we provide – such as activity guides, Mentimeter codes and supporting materials – are accessible and appropriate for your community.
- **Support members of your group** - We also ask that you support members of your groups to be able to complete the questions, whether that means reading them aloud, explaining them in simpler terms, or helping with digital access where needed. We want this process to be as inclusive as possible, and our team is happy to be contacted at any stage throughout the engagement phase to help with any queries or challenges you may face.
- **Communicate accessibility challenges** - We also ask that you highlight to us any accessibility needs within your group, so that we can work with you to make sure everyone is able to take part fully. This might include providing materials in alternative formats, offering additional support for people with sensory or learning needs, or adapting activities to suit different environments. By working together, we can ensure that any challenges are identified early and overcome, so that all voices are included in Somerset's Big Conversation 2025.
- **Promote SBC2025 - in-person and online ways that people can share their feedback** - We also encourage you to help promote the opportunity to your community by using the communications materials we will provide, such as posters, leaflets, or social media content. Alongside this, you can arrange meetings, workshops, or informal conversations to gather views in ways that work best for your group.
- **Use the small grant in ways that are best for you and your group** - The small grant scheme funding is designed to support this activity and can be used to cover reasonable costs such as room hire, refreshments, or any supplementary support needed from colleagues to make the engagement inclusive and effective.

How will we engage?

We will provide you with all the resources needed to run the engagement activities. These have been carefully designed to reflect the same approaches we are using at public events and in our online survey, so that the feedback you gather will be fully complementary. This means we will be able to bring together your community's views with those collected elsewhere, allowing us to identify themes and trends across Somerset using both quantitative and qualitative data.

Engagement can take place in whatever way best fits your community – for example:

- Hosting small group discussions in your regular meetings or activities.
- Introducing the SBC 2025 activities during a coffee morning, support group or drop-in.
- Having one-to-one conversations with people and recording their feedback.
- Using the *Pauline scenario* and *Somerset Pound* activities we provide, which are simple tools to explore where people want care delivered and how they would spend an NHS budget.

Why photographs are useful

Where appropriate consent has been given, photographs of people taking part in discussions or group sessions are extremely valuable. They help bring the engagement to life, showing the diversity and energy of local communities involved. Images make reports, presentations and communications far more engaging and relatable, and they help demonstrate to decision-makers and the wider public that real people are shaping Somerset's health and care strategy. Photographs also provide a lasting record of community involvement and help celebrate the contribution of groups and individuals who have given their time to Somerset's Big Conversation 2025.

How you will capture feedback

You can capture feedback by:

- Using Mentimeter codes we provide to log votes and responses

or, following discussion with us:

- Taking notes during discussions.
- Recording people's comments in their own words.
- Summarising key themes from your conversations

We will work with you to ensure you use the methods that best suit you and your group. It's important that feedback reflects people's views accurately, whether positive, negative or mixed.

Information governance

All feedback collected through Somerset's Big Conversation 2025 will be non-patient identifiable. This means we do not collect names, NHS numbers, or any personal details that could identify an individual. Instead, we ask people to share their experiences, opinions and priorities in a way that protects their privacy. Any demographic information (such as age group or broad location) is optional and only used to help us understand whose voices we are hearing and where we may need to do more to reach seldom-heard groups. All information will be stored securely and used only for the purposes of analysing engagement and shaping Somerset's future health and care strategy.

Please ensure that you store all feedback safely if you do capture feedback on paper, in audio recordings or electronically.

Consent

It is important that everyone taking part in Somerset's Big Conversation 2025 understands how their feedback will be used and that their rights are respected. Please ensure that all participants have access to the Participant Information and GDPR guide, which explains how we collect, store and use information. Participants should be made aware that their feedback will be analysed and used to shape Somerset's future health and care strategy, but no information will be personally identifiable. If photographs or videos are taken as part of your engagement activity, individuals must complete and sign a Photo/Video Consent Form before images are used in any reports, publications or communications.

Patient Advice and Liaison (PALS) support

During your engagement activities, you may find that some individuals share specific personal issues or concerns about their own health or care. If this happens, please let them know that we are here to help signpost them to the right place. You can refer them directly to the NHS Somerset Engagement Team, and if we are unable to provide the support they need, we will connect with our NHS Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) colleagues who can offer further guidance and assistance. This ensures that anyone raising a personal concern is listened to and receives the right support, while keeping the focus of your engagement on gathering wider community views.

How you will pass feedback to us

At the end of your engagement, please share your feedback with the NHS Somerset Engagement Team by the agreed deadline. This can be done by:

- Sharing Mentimeter results - there is nothing for you to do as we will pull all data from the Mentimeter webpage, from your group's presentation
- Sending written notes, transcripts or summaries.
- Submitting any additional comments collected.

We will then analyse all the information alongside other feedback from across Somerset and share back with you how people's views are shaping the future health and care strategy.

Reporting back

Following the engagement phase, we would like to ask you to complete the section on the Financial Information form, outline all engagement activity you have carried out, including the number and type of conversations held, who took part, and any key themes raised. We would also welcome reflections on what worked well, any challenges you experienced, and your suggestions for how future engagement could be improved. This information is extremely valuable to us, as it helps shape not only the current Big Conversation but also the way we design and deliver future engagement across Somerset.

Overview of roles and responsibilities

NHS Somerset Engagement Team	VCFSE Leaders / Organisations
Provide clear guidance and resources for engagement activities (Pauline scenario, Somerset Pound, supporting materials).	Promote the opportunity to take part in SBC 2025 within your networks using materials provided.
Ensure resources are accessible and adaptable for different community needs.	Arrange and host conversations, workshops, or small group discussions that are appropriate for your community.
Offer training, briefing sessions, or one-to-one support to help groups feel confident delivering activities.	Use the SBC 2025 engagement resources provided, ensuring consistency with wider engagement activities.
Be available throughout the engagement period to answer queries and troubleshoot challenges.	Support members of your groups to take part, making sure questions are clear and accessible.
Provide communications materials (e.g. posters, leaflets, social media content) to help groups promote activities.	Highlight any accessibility needs and work with the Engagement Team to address them.
Administer and oversee the small grants scheme, including payment and reporting processes.	Capture feedback accurately, reflecting people's views in their own words (positive, negative or mixed).
Ensure information governance standards are met, collecting only non-patient identifiable data.	Submit feedback to the Engagement Team by the agreed deadline, using Mentimeter or written summaries.
Analyse and bring together all feedback collected across Somerset (events, online survey, VCFSE engagement).	Use small grant funding responsibly to cover costs such as room hire, refreshments, or supplementary support.
Share back findings with groups and communities, showing how feedback has influenced decision-making.	Keep in contact with the Engagement Team if queries or challenges arise during the engagement phase.
	Encourage participation by building on your trusted relationships and ensuring seldom-heard voices are included.

