

Report to the NHS Somerset Integrated Care Board on 30 November 2023

Title: Chief Executive's Report	Enclosure G
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Version Number / Status:	v1
Executive Lead	Jonathan Higman, Chief Executive
Clinical Lead:	Not applicable
Author:	Jonathan Higman, Chief Executive

Summary and Purpose of Paper

This paper sets out key items for the Board to note and discuss, arising since the last meeting of the Integrated Care Board (NHS Somerset) on 28 September 2023. It focuses on relevant changes in the National and Regional context and highlights key issues to note pertaining to the Somerset Integrated Care System.

Recommendations and next steps

The Board is asked to **Note and Discuss** the Chief Executive's report.

Impact Assessments – key issues identified

Equality	To note the implications for Somerset of the Chief Medical Officer's recent report highlighting recommendations to improve the quality of life for older adults			
Quality	Nothing identified			
Safeguarding	Nothing identified			
Privacy	None. This is a public document.			
Engagement	To note the launch of the engagement and consultation around NHS Somerset's new operating model and phase 1 restructure together with the areas highlighted in the media spotlight and the awards presented to SPARK(for their digital inclusion work in Somerset) and Bridgwater and Taunton College (for their innovative nurse training programmes)			
Financial / Resource	To note the financial implications of the recent replanning exercise and the intention of NHS Somerset to maintain delivery of a breakeven position for 2023/24			
Governance or Legal	To note the outcome and next steps resulting from the ICB Annual Assurance process			
Sustainability	Nothing identified			
Risk Description	To note the areas of performance risk highlighted as part of the recent replanning exercise			
Risk Rating	Consequence	Likelihood	RAG Rating	GBAF Ref
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CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of key items of strategic and operational note for the ICB Board for the first period since its last meeting on 28 September 2023.

2 NATIONAL CONTEXT

Addressing the financial challenges created by industrial action in 2023/24

- 2.1 On 8 November 2023, NHS England issued a letter titled "Addressing the significant financial challenges created by industrial action in 2023/24, and immediate actions to take". This letter, and subsequent guidance, provided clarity on the funding and actions the NHS had been asked to take to manage the financial and performance pressures created by industrial action following NHS England's discussions with Government.
- 2.3 In response to the letter, integrated care systems have been asked to complete a two-week exercise to agree actions required to deliver the priorities for the remainder of the financial year.
- 2.4 The Board of NHS Somerset met on 20 November 2023 to consider the outcomes from the work and our submission was made on 22 November. This confirms:
- That Somerset has a plan which will deliver a balanced financial position for 2023/24, as a result of the additional funding being allocated to systems.
 - Our commitment to delivering the following objectives, which were set out in our 2023/24 operational plan:
 - Urgent and Emergency care***
 - 4-hour A&E performance as described in our winter plans
 - Average category 2 performance reduction as described in our ambulance service plans
 - Elective and Cancer***
 - Faster diagnosis standard performance, set out in the 2023/24 operational plans
 - Components of the winter plan and linked ambulance trust submissions***
 - Planned bed capacity growth over the winter and the ability to open additional escalation capacity as required
 - A commitment to deliver our ambitions to develop virtual ward capacity
 - Confirmation that the system will continue to focus on the timely discharge of patients, maximising flow through inpatient acute and community setting
 - Our submission reflected:
 - Support for the reprofiling of our elective recovery trajectory over the remainder of the financial year with a continued commitment to the achievement of 848 >65 week waiting patients at 31 March 2024 which was the ambition we agreed in our original plan.

- Further clarification that we expect 35 people waiting > 78 weeks as at 31 March 2024 taking into account the impact of industrial action,
- Support for a request for a reduction in the 62-day cancer backlog reduction from 144 to 172 at 31 March 2024, reflecting the impact of the transfer of the skin cancer service from University Hospital Bristol NHS Foundation Trust and a number of other specific speciality issues
- Further discussion relating to the change in the target for average ambulance handover times from 40 to 30 minutes, which has been derived by NHSE and SWAST.

2.5 A verbal update will be provided at the meeting. The system will be meeting with colleagues from the national NHS England team following today's Board meeting.

Chief Medical Officers Report

2.6 The Chief Medical Officer for England's annual report 2023: *Health in an ageing society* was published in early November and can be accessed via the link [Chief Medical Officer's annual report 2023: health in an ageing society - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/121421/Chief-Medical-Officer-annual-report-2023-health-in-an-ageing-society)

2.7 Professor Chris Whitty's annual report recommends actions to improve quality of life for older adults and prioritise areas with the fastest growth in older people. With the focus on an aging population in rural and coastal communities there is much in the report for us to reflect upon in Somerset.

Provider Selection Regime

2.8 NHS England has written to ICB and Trust leaders to advise that the Department of Health and Social Care has developed a new Provider Selection Regime, and, subject to parliamentary process, this will come into force on 1 January 2024.

2.9 The Provider selection regime covers the commissioning of all health services by NHS England, ICBs, NHS trusts/foundation trusts as well as local authorities (including children health visits, sexual & reproductive services and substance misuse services). A review of the changes and implications will be discussed at the December Finance Committee.

3 REGIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

Specialist Commissioning Delegation

3.1 Following submission of our pre-delegation assurance framework, noted in this report last time a decision has been made to delay the delegation of specialist commissioning to all South West Integrated Care Boards until April 2025. This will allow more time to work with the NHS England Regional team prepare for this transfer in responsibilities.

4 SOMERSET SYSTEM

Somerset Integrated Care Board Annual Assessment for 2022/23

- 4.1 NHS England has a legal duty to undertake an annual assessment of each Integrated Care Board's performance, as set out in the Health and Care Act 2022.
- 4.2 NHS England South West made their first formal assessment of NHS Somerset Integrated Care Board (ICB) using evidence from our 2022/23 annual report and accounts; other available data; feedback from stakeholders including the Somerset Health and Wellbeing Board and Integrated Care Partners; and discussions that have taken place throughout 2022/23.
- 4.3 The first assessment reflects how the ICB has discharged our statutory duties during the 9 months from 1 July 2022 and is based on an assessment of key duties set by NHS England and the Secretary of State for Health and Care.
- 4.4 The assessment considers the overall leadership function of the ICB and its contribution to the four core purposes of an ICS:
 - system leadership
 - improving population health and health care
 - tackling inequalities in outcome, access and experience
 - enhancing productivity and value for money
 - helping the NHS to support broader social and economic development.
- 4.5 The assessment outlines areas where NHS Somerset ICB is displaying good practice and also provides feedback on areas that NHS England feel further progress is required.
- 4.6 The assessment has also taken into consideration the relative infancy of Integrated Care Boards which were only been statutory bodies for nine months at the point that the assessment was made.
- 4.7 The headline feedback was that for 2022/23 NHS Somerset ICB is considered to have been working in compliance with its statutory duties.
- 4.8 NHS Somerset ICB is considered to be strong with regards to system leadership, especially associated with our work with partners. The ICB was particularly commended for its work in developing new career pathways across health and care and received positive feedback for our Committee in Common approach to governance noting the development of the new Somerset Board which, as a committee in common with Somerset Council, acts as both our Integrated Care Partnership and Health and Wellbeing Board.
- 4.9 The assessment also highlights that NHS Somerset ICB has increased its focus towards prevention.
- 4.10 The assessment notes that whilst the ICS and the ICB achieved our planned financial outturn for the year, as well as our headline efficiency plans, progress is required regarding identification of recurrent efficiencies and reducing temporary workforce spend.

- 4.11 It also noted that particular challenges remain around Urgent and Emergency care services access, and this will continue to be a key area of focus for the ICS.
- 4.12 NHS Somerset ICB is currently in NHS Oversight Framework segment 2, and the areas that are highlighted within the end of year assessment will be part of NHS England's considerations for the ICB to potential move to segment 1 (the highest rating of the four possible segments) during 2023/24.
- 4.13 The summary letter dated 22 September 2023 from NHS England South West regional director is enclosed as Appendix 1 of this report.
- 4.14 NHS Somerset ICB has considered the End of Year Assessment 2022/23 and actions required during 2023/24 and will take these forward, working with our system partners as appropriate. This will also inform our Board governance self-assessment.

NHS Somerset operating model and organisational restructure

- 4.15 Following the establishment of NHS Somerset ICB in July 2022 there is now a need to review our ways of working and associated structure to ensure that the organisation operates in a way which delivers our statutory aims and functions.
- 4.16 Additionally, NHS England have set a challenge for all ICBs to reduce running costs by 30% by 2025/26.
- 4.17 NHS Somerset is now considering a new operating model which underpins how we are going to work and deliver on our objectives and a new structure for the organisation that helps us to achieve this.
- 4.18 The development of how NHS Somerset will operate needs to be considered together with ICB colleagues and system partners. This is because the development of NHS Somerset and any changes to our way of working impacts the whole health and care system. A new operating model has been developed and a four week engagement process concluded in early November. The feedback from this in the process of being collated,
- 4.19 In addition, a formal consultation in respect of a proposed new structure was launched on 15 November of the organisation with ICB colleagues and system partners. This will take place in two phases, with the first phase relating to Executive portfolios and roles that report directly to an ICB Director. It is planned that phase two will take place from February 2024.

Digital Inclusion Award

- 4.15 A digital inclusion project led by SPARK Somerset has recently won a national Internet Service Providers Association (ISPA UK) digital inclusion award. Further detail is available via the SPARK website.
<https://sparksomerset.org.uk/spark-it-digital-inclusion-project-shortlisted-national-award>

- 4.16 The project provides support to anyone in Somerset who wants to access the internet, but can't currently get online, by working in partnership with VCSE organisations to:
- Operate and support Digital Cafés and other drop-in services in key towns across the county.
 - Accept referrals from health professionals and charities for skills support or a loan device.
 - Partner with community organisations and businesses to help low-income families access digital devices and data.
 - Train and support staff and volunteers from community organisations to deliver digital support.
 - Provide basic digital skills advice by telephone to any Somerset resident who needs it via a Helpdesk.
- 4.17 The project has enabled almost 2000 people to be supported to get online and 8 regular digital cafes have been established in community spaces.
- 4.18 This has very much been a collaborative project working closely with colleagues from across the system.



Queens Anniversary Award

- 4.19 Congratulations also to Bridgwater and Taunton College (BTC) who have been awarded the Queen's Anniversary prize in recognition of the pioneering nurse education programmes being delivered through University Centre Somerset on the Taunton campus.
- 4.20 The prize acknowledges outstanding work by UK colleges and universities and is a result of a great partnership between the NHS in Somerset and BTC. This is an example of groundbreaking work which is providing opportunities for local people to access apprenticeships and degree level training right here in Somerset.

Communications and Engagement Activity

- 4.20 Our communications and engagement spotlight is attached as Appendix 2.

Jonathan Higman
Chief Executive
22 November 2023

To: Jonathan Higman (CEO)
cc. Paul von der Heyde (Chair)

Elizabeth O'Mahony Regional Director
South West
South West House
Blackbrook Park Avenue
Taunton
TA1 2PX

22nd September 2023

Dear Jonathan,

Somerset Integrated Care Board Annual Assessment High-Level Summary for 2022-23

I am writing to you pursuant to Section 14Z59 of the NHS Act 2006 (Hereafter referred to as "The Act"), as amended by the Health and Care Act 2022. Under the Act NHS England is required to conduct a performance assessment of each Integrated Care Board (ICB) with respect to each financial year. In making an assessment I have considered evidence from your annual report and accounts; available data; feedback from stakeholders and the discussions that my team and I have had with you and your colleagues throughout the year.

This letter sets out my assessment of your organisation's performance against those specific objectives set for it by NHS England and the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, its statutory duties as defined in the Act and its wider role within your Integrated Care System across the 2022/23 financial year.

I have structured my assessment to consider your role in providing leadership and good governance within your Integrated Care System as well as how you have contributed to each of the four fundamental purposes of an ICS. For each section of my assessment (see below), I have summarised examples of those areas in which I believe your ICB is displaying good practice and also provided examples of programme/workstream themes in which I feel further progress is required and any support or assistance being supplied by NHS England to facilitate improvement towards meeting the statutory duties.

In making my assessment I have sought to take into account the relative infancy of ICBs, having only been statutory bodies for nine months of the 2022/23 financial year. I am also mindful of the developing local strategic aims of ICS' set out in the Integrated Care Strategy for your system and articulated through your recently published Joint Forward Plan.

I thank you and your team for all of your work over the 2022/23 financial year in what remains challenging times for the health and care sector and I look forward to continuing to work with in year ahead.

Yours sincerely,



Elizabeth O'Mahony
Regional Director, NHS England – South West

Summary 2022/23

SECTION 1: SYSTEM LEADERSHIP

The ICB has led its system, working with partners to improve outcomes through greater integration of services. The system is particularly proud of its excellent working relationships with the voluntary, community, faith, and social enterprise (VCSFE) sector and its key partner, SPARK. In 2022/23 Somerset ICB was successful in their bid to host the Podiatry, Optometry and Dentistry (POD) team with the delegation of staff for 2023/24 on behalf of the seven ICB's in the South West.

Somerset ICB system has proactively looked at the governance between their ICB and ICP and has a real clarity of the purpose, difference, and interdependencies of both. Good practice shown through the Somerset System Quality Group (SQG) being established and mature and it is noted that the group has good representation and engagement from system partners.

As part of the establishment of ICSs in 2022, the system produced a clinical and care professional leadership framework and engaged with regional discussions about this. As a result, the region shared developmental feedback with system colleagues, and it is expected that systems will continue to focus on the development and implementation of these frameworks over the coming years.

SECTION 2: IMPROVING POPULATION HEALTH AND HEALTHCARE

During 2022/23, the NHS Somerset Quality and Safety Framework was produced with its foundations set around the National Quality Board's Shared Commitment to Quality focussing on quality improvement and assurance as the Integrated Care System is developed. Improvement areas include diagnostics, Primary Care, Learning Disability and autism services, and projects such as Education, Health, and Care Plans. Significant improvements are noted for eating disorder services for children and young people.

There have been many changes over the previous 12 months, in terms of preparing for a new model of care with the introduction of a single provider model for Acute, Community and Mental Health services, which has the potential to ensure equity of access to services during 2023/24.

With regard to mental health and community services, the system continued to face challenges with access times for some mental health services. However, it is recognised that the ICB demonstrated strong leadership and innovation through its Open Mental Health programme of work.

Throughout 2022/23 the ICB maintained a rigorous approach to Elective recovery but has been unable to deliver zero 78ww as at the end of March 2023. However, the position delivered was better than the system's original plans. The ICB holds a formal monthly Planned Care Board in which key stakeholders are represented and a joint Director of Elective Care spanned both acute trusts in 2022/23. The provider trusts held weekly operational delivery reviews of all longest wait patients, with positions played back internally to support a high level of check and challenge.

Whilst the recovery of elective services has been strong, significant challenges remain around Urgent and Emergency services access, and this will need to be a focus in the next period.

The restoration of cancer services has been mostly led by the provider trusts, who worked collaboratively with the Cancer Alliance. However, Faster Diagnosis Standard (FDS) performance is off trajectory and did not meet the national milestone for year end.

It is clear that Primary Care forms an integral part of the ICB's integrated care model for Somerset, with a priority to increase the primary care workforce. Progress has been made and number of GP appointments (face-to-face, remote, and home visits) have increased significantly.

SECTION 3: TACKLING UNEQUAL OUTCOMES, ACCESS, AND EXPERIENCE

There have been a number of areas of developing good practice: Expediting the care of vulnerable patients on the waiting list (i.e., patients with learning difficulties and patients with open mental health referrals who live in the more socially deprived areas of Somerset), treating these groups of patients as urgent rather than routine; the piloting of Interventions to support patients attending hospital appointments, focusing on patients from the more deprived areas of Somerset, which from analysis are more likely to DNA their appointment; an in-depth analysis undertaken of the factors influencing or associated with differences in access to cancer diagnosis and treatment, including social deprivation, ethnicity, gender, travel distance etc; Digital Cafes have been established as part of an ambition to provide support for 95% of Somerset residents within a 5-mile radius and communities can be referred for 1:1 or café style support in access and use of digital technology, such as mobile phones and iPad.

All these initiatives are valuable, with the next phase for the system being to focus on scaling up the roll out geographically and to patients with different needs.

SECTION 4: ENHANCING PRODUCTIVITY AND VALUE FOR MONEY

It is noted that both the system and ICB achieved their planned revenue positions as well as their headline efficiency plans. However, there is need in the future to improve identification of recurrent efficiencies (£8.9m off plan) and a reduction in agency spending, which was above the ceiling in 2022/23.

In relation to workforce, a number of encouraging initiatives are noted: New roles/ways of working to improve service delivery and make best use of scarce specialist skills. Examples include Physician Associates, ward-based discharge facilitators, peer support workers, lived experience workers/carers, business support officers, social prescribing services/health coaches, GP Assistants; Talent Hub activities are part of a Collaborative Bank approach. Early examples of impact and innovative practice (e.g., SWAPs scheme) are already evident and 'stay conversation' pilots are being launched system wide. Generally, it seems that staff have a good experience in Somerset, with staff survey results being above the median in virtually all categories.

In respect of digital transformation, there are a number of initiatives being implemented including: a three-year digital maternity strategy, which included the procurement of one maternity software system, which was implemented in February 2023, and a new Somerset maternity website with a single point of access, which was in development moving into 2023/24; the ongoing use and expansion of SIDeR Shared Care Record, as a system wide tool to improve information sharing and continuing to establish Population Health and analytics programme, and the ICB is starting to see the transformational efforts for change being used in making a difference to care across Somerset.

SECTION 5: HELPING THE NHS SUPPORT BROADER SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

We commend Somerset's programme approach to creating new pathways into health and care roles, giving opportunities to a wider range of people particularly from marginalised communities/areas of deprivation. More than 170 individuals completed the course from its inception in May 2021 and this has achieved retention rates of 88% of all participants for at least 12 months.

For the launch of South West as a Marmot Region, Somerset ICB and partnership colleagues shared their approach and learning for population health, including anchors work.

The responses from the Somerset Health and Well-being Board demonstrate very effective system working and commitment to implementation of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Quite innovatively, it has been agreed that the Integrated Care Partnership and the Health and Wellbeing Board will be run as a Committee in Common, an approach that other systems may wish to consider.

CONCLUSION

In making an assessment of Somerset ICB's performance, I have reviewed the collective data and feedback from NHSE and the ICB's stakeholders.

For the year 2022/23, I am pleased to confirm that Somerset ICB is considered to have been working in compliance with its statutory duties. Please continue the good work that has been identified throughout this assessment, as part of your sustainable ICB development journey.

The assessment process identifies that the ICB remains strong with regards to system leadership and especially where working with partners, as outlined above. The ICB is commended for the work undertaken around new pathways into health and care roles. Furthermore, positive feedback is outlined linked to the Committee in Common approach.

The assessment highlighted where the ICB has improved its integrated approach towards prevention and patient care, noted improvement includes diagnostics, primary care, Learning Disability and Autism services. In addition, significant improvements are outlined for eating disorder services for children and young people. Several encouraging initiatives are noted in relation to workforce and, similarly, the ICB's Open Mental Health work continues to be very positive. Both the system and ICB achieved their planned revenue positions, as well as their headline efficiency plans. Progress is required regarding identification of recurrent efficiencies and to reduce agency spending. Particular challenges remain around Urgent and Emergency services access, and this will continue to be an area of focus, in the next period. I recognise that there is work underway to support these areas.

The ICB is currently in NHS Oversight Framework segment 2, and the areas highlighted above will be part of considerations for the ICB potentially being considered for a move to segment 1 during 2023/24.

This high-level summary of the 2022/23 ICB Annual Assessment can be shared with your leadership team and the ICB should consider publishing this, alongside your annual report, at your Annual General Meeting. NHSE will also publish a national summary of all ICB annual assessments as part of its 2022/23 Annual Report and Accounts.



Communications and engagement spotlight

1 September - 31 October 2023

Welcome to our communication and engagement spotlight report, highlighting our activity over the past two months. It features 'In The News' showcasing highlights from our recent media coverage.

Highlights include the NHS Apps roadshow and 'Know your numbers' campaign covered by local media. We also saw press releases on patient safety day, signing of the VCFSE MOU, the Somerset Community Foundation grant awards, and the Homeless Health Service.

Our PALS team saw a huge increase in calls and emails around COVID-19 vaccinations, particularly from people who are housebound.

In the news



NHS App drop in sessions

The Digital Team have been running drop-in sessions across Somerset to help people use the NHS app. Allison Nation spoke to BBC Somerset.

Featured on: BBC Somerset

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p0gfm0f>



Know your numbers

Somerset Council's Public Health Team worked with Somerset Libraries UK to establish an easy and free to access service – providing blood pressure monitoring kits that can be loaned from libraries across Somerset.

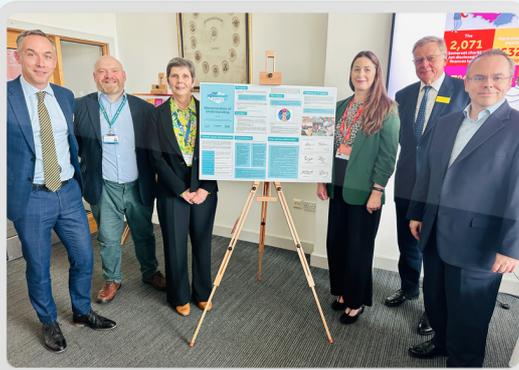
Featured on: BBC West





Communications and engagement spotlight

1 September - 31 October 2023



Signing of VCFSE MOU

Leaders from the voluntary sector, NHS and Somerset Council, gathered in Taunton to sign an historic document outlining a shared vision and commitment to work more closely together to achieve better health and wellbeing for the people of Somerset.

[Read more](#)



Somerset Community Foundation awards over £150k

Somerset Community Foundation, in partnership with Somerset Council and NHS Somerset, awarded over £150,000 in grants to 44 local community groups.

[Read more](#)



Patient Safety Day - Patient Safety Partners

NHS Somerset and Healthwatch Somerset are shining a spotlight on patient and family engagement for safer care across Somerset for World Patient Safety Day on 17 September.

[Read more](#)





Communications and engagement spotlight

1 September - 31 October 2023



Reducing health inequalities

Earlier this year, NHS Somerset's Homeless Health Service won the 2023 NHS Parliamentary Health Equality award, which recognises organisations that work collaboratively to "reduce health inequalities and prevent ill health in their community". Laura Devlin, an inclusion and homeless health GP, explains how the service works.

[Read more](#)



EMED to provide non-emergency patient transport

NHS Somerset has successfully concluded a procurement exercise, awarding a 5-year contract to EMED Patient Care for the non-emergency patient transport service.

[Read more](#)

We would like to thank our colleagues across health and care who have taken the time to share their stories. If you have a story you'd like us to highlight, or have a colleague you think we should celebrate, please get in touch with our communications team at: somicb.communications@nhs.net

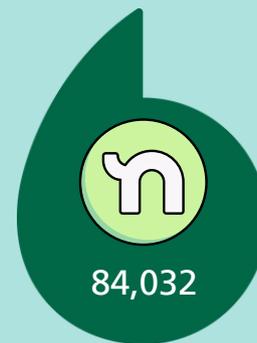


Communications and engagement spotlight

1 September - 31 October 2023

Social media highlights

Followers



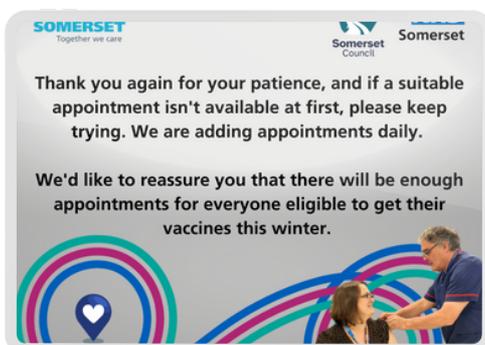
Our social media posts which received the most engagement:



Covid vaccination - appointments, the NHS will contact you

Our post received:

- 17,026 people reached
- 33 comments
- 12 reactions



Covid vaccinations - thank you for your patience

Our post received:

- 4,097 people reached
- 290 link clicks
- 15 shares
- 25 reactions





Communications and engagement spotlight

1 September - 31 October 2023

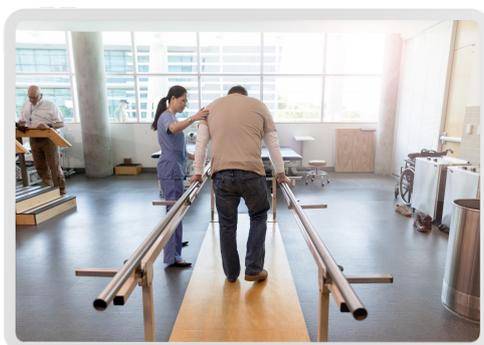
Engagement highlights

2 Citizens' Hub working groups	4 issues of the engagement bulletin
5 engagement events	1 PPG Chairs' meeting



ED Engagement

We supported Healthwatch Somerset to undertake engagement in our Emergency Departments. Patients were asked to complete a survey to find out what had brought them to ED. 283 surveys were completed. The insights gathered will be themed and the report will help to inform our winter planning.



Neuro rehabilitation services review

We delivered a Lived Experience workshop to hear more from people with lived experience of neuro rehabilitation services and ran a specific online session with the FND Support Group. We also continued our one-to-one engagement with people and communities. The feedback gathered will help shape the future direction of neuro rehabilitation services.



Communications and engagement spotlight

1 September - 31 October 2023

Research Engagement Network funding bid successful



We applied to and were successful in our bid for NHS England and the Department of Health and Social Care funding to deliver a Research Engagement Network project in Somerset.

The funding will provide the foundations for building an effective Research Engagement in Somerset.

Over the next 6 months, we will work with partners across Our Somerset to deliver the project. The aim of the project is to work in partnership with voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) organisations, to engage under-represented groups and communities to improve research participation.

The National Institute for Health and Care Research has identified that UK geographies with the highest burden of disease also have the lowest numbers of people involved in research. We find that this is similar for engagement in health and care conversation.

The project group will seek to understand the barriers to participating in research among adults in Somerset. These insights will help to develop a framework to increase active participation in research from under-represented communities, encouraging people to join a research network.



Communications and engagement spotlight

1 September - 31 October 2023

Engagement insights



A spotlight on: Taunton and Bridgwater deaf club

We were invited by Healthwatch Somerset to attend the October meeting of the Taunton and Bridgwater Deaf Club.

The group are passionate about the issues they have with accessibility and living their best life, from making GP appointments, transport issues, lack of translators and lack of awareness.

As a consequence of these, and other recent discussions, we are currently looking into our translator service and exploring how we can help to ensure emergency calls and visits to A&E departments can be less traumatic for anyone with a hearing impairment.

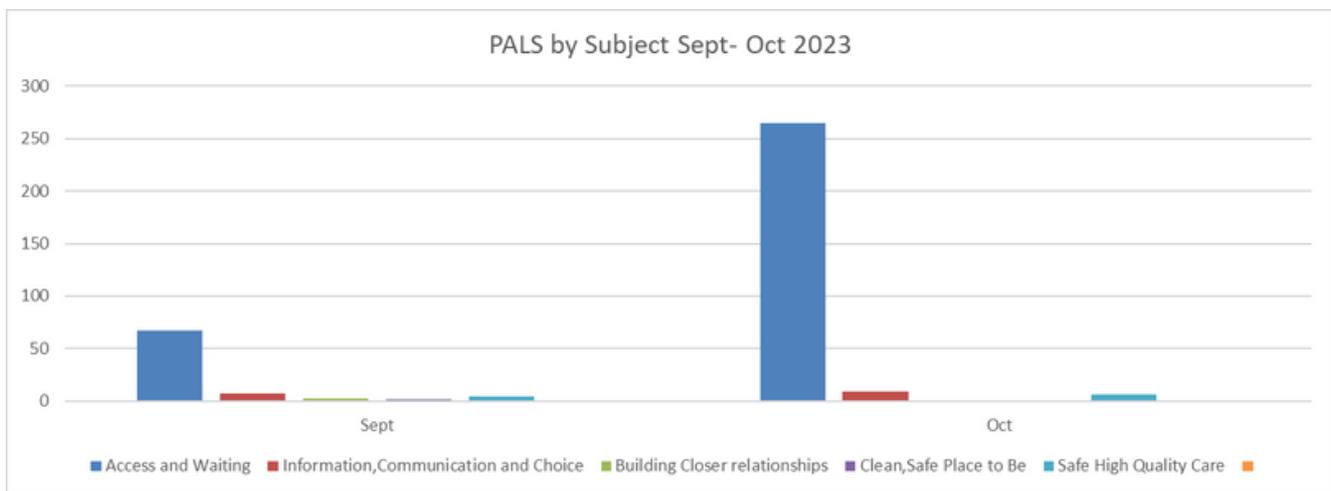
[Read more.](#)

Communications and engagement spotlight

1 September - 31 October 2023

PALS insights

364 enquiries for September and October 2023. Up from 118 enquiries for July and August.



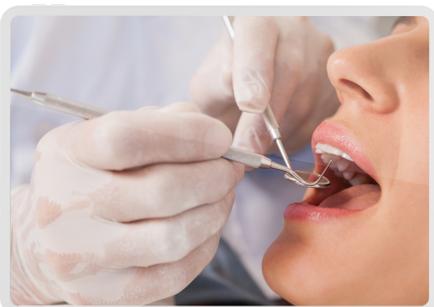
An overview of the main topics arising:

Patient transport



Patients are still experiencing difficulties getting through to the Patient Transport Advice Centre and after numerous unsuccessful attempts are coming to PALS to ask for help.

Dentistry



Lack of NHS dentistry in Somerset continues to be cause for concern, especially for children and patients on benefits who are entitled to NHS dentistry.





Communications and engagement spotlight

1 September - 31 October 2023

PALS insights

Covid-19 vaccinations for the housebound



PALS saw an increase in calls in October relating to the Autumn/Winter Covid Vaccination Programme for people who are housebound. Patients were contacting their GP practices and 119 who were advising them to contact the PALS Service.

Patients were seeking reassurance that they were on the list. We also received calls from carers of housebound patients requesting that they be vaccinated at the same time. Our comms messages have now been updated and we expect to see a decrease in calls relating to the A/W programme.

- Shirley, age 100, is partially sighted and lives alone. Her son lives out of county and contacted PALS as he was concerned that his Mum had been overlooked regarding the vaccine. PALS confirmed that she was on the housebound list.
- Mary, age 94, is housebound and has carers coming in 3 times a day. Her daughter contacted PALS as she was concerned that Mary has not had the vaccine yet.
- John is newly diagnosed with a health condition and believes he should be on the housebound list. He contacted 119 and they advised him to contact PALS.
- Charlotte contacted PALS as her daughter (age 6) is eligible for the vaccine. She had an appointment for the vaccine and Charlotte was checking that the centre had a suitable vaccine for her daughter.
- George has had his A/W covid vaccine and could see it on his NHS App but not his Covid Travel Pass. PALS advised him that The National Covid Vaccination Team has decided that the AW23 programme will not be added to the Covid Pass but only to the NHS App. As a Covid Pass is no longer a requirement for travel abroad.

