

## **Patient Safety Partners in NHS Somerset**

*A patient safety partner is part of the healthcare team ensuring that patients stay safe, who can advocate on the patient's behalf and who shares their point of view to improve safety and care.*

### **What is patient safety?**

“Patient safety is making sure patients stay safe during their healthcare and avoid harm during their journey through the health care system. The concept of patient safety is preventing mistakes and ensuring that the patients well-being is upheld throughout any medical processes in any healthcare setting.” (Imperial College Healthcare. Trust Blog, Dec 2023. ‘Meet Asmahan, a patient safety partner.’)

For NHS Somerset, patient safety is one of their leading priorities. Past experience tells us that by involving patients, safety improves and as part of the Conservative government initiative ‘Framework for involving patients in patient safety ‘(part B) launched in 2019, NHS Somerset ‘employs us as patient safety partners to represent the community of Somerset through Healthwatch Somerset, who provides us with managerial support along with support from Somerset ICB Deputy Chief Nursing Officer and Director of Nursing, Patient Safety Specialist. This arrangement allows us the independence of being able to individually challenge outcomes and ensure that the patients voice is heard amongst all the professional voices.

We are employed for 22.5 hours per month and have been in post since July 2023.

We work in partnership with NHS Somerset, across the whole health and care system and attend quality and patient safety meetings.

### **What does a patient safety partner do?**

PSPs can act as ‘knowledge brokers’ as they often have the insight of a user of services across different parts of the NHS, or may have experience of avoidable harm and can therefore help inform learning and holistic safety solutions that cross organisational boundaries. They provide a different perspective on patient safety. By reinforcing the patient voice at all levels in an organisation and across integrated care systems, PSPs can support a patient-centred approach to safer healthcare. (Framework for involving patients in patient safety (June 2021 NHSE)

Unlike patient safety partners who work within hospital and other healthcare settings our role has limited opportunity for direct patient contact on individual patient safety

matters. Instead, we offer the patient voice and perspective into the overall health system and the strategic decisions that are made at this level. During our first year in role, we have had the opportunity to evaluate feedback, incident outcomes and regularly attend ICB quality and safety meetings providing a different perspective on patient safety work streams.

### **What has been the highlight in our first year?**

Reflecting on our first year together, we have had the opportunity to meet many members of the community through attendance at the Somerset Carers conference, Armed Forces conference and working with members of the Healthwatch Somerset team, as well as completing required core training including PSIRF (Patient Safety Incident Response Framework)

Looking forward we are keen to increase our liaison and partnership working with NHS Somerset patient safety teams and patient participation groups. We look forward to engaging further with learning experiences and making a lasting impact. We would love to focus on community engagement, simple steps, and co-designing patient safety strategies.

Ultimately our role is about asking questions, challenging when necessary, being a critical friend of the organisation and having some influence on varying levels of decision making within the ICB and above all ensuring that the patients and the public voice is heard.

August 2024