

May 2025



The People's Choice 2025

We are pleased to announce the launch of our latest report, which details the results of our **People's Vote 2025/26**.

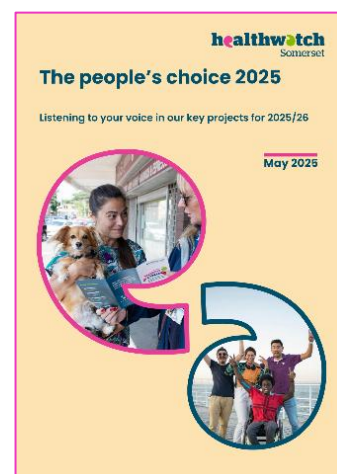
Every year, we share a list of the top project ideas with the public, and everyone gets a chance to pick their two favourite options.

This year, the shortlisted topics for the vote were:

- a. Waiting lists for procedures
- b. Hospital transport
- c. Transfer of Care/Discharge from hospital - excluding dementia
- d. Long wait for/no support for children and adolescents experiencing poor mental health

Discover how we reached out to people and what they told us.

Our report includes **a breakdown of the votes** and the **most voted for** topic by the people of Somerset. **Download our short report here: [The People Have Spoken](#)**



Out and about

Our staff have been out and about gathering feedback from the public in Somerset, taking feedback, engaging, discussing, giving people advice, and signposting them at various events and groups, including:

- **Cheddar** – Where we talked about public transport – the Wells to Weston bus that used to go directly to Weston Hospital and Weston Hospice has changed route, and no longer goes via the hospital. This affects many people in Cheddar.
- **GP carers Champions/Health Coaches conference** – We had a stand at this conference in Somerton.
- **Headway Somerset Conference** – the theme of this conference was 'on a good day' and it highlighted the fluctuating and unpredictable nature of brain injury, and the gap between capabilities on a good day versus a bad day.



Coming up:

- **Taunton Library** on 3rd June 11am-12.30pm.
- **Glastonbury Library** on 5th June 11am-12.30pm with our Volunteer Jill (*see photo*).
- **Farm Fest** on 8th June in Yeovil.
- **Collett Park Family Day** on 14th June in Shepton Mallet.
- **Caring for Carers** – an event for unpaid carers on 14th June at Watchet Methodist Church.
- **Living Well** on 18th June at Taunton Albermarle Centre.
- **Health Fair** on 20th June at Quaker Square, Minehead.
- **Bridgwater Cultural Festival** on 21st June in Bridgwater.
- **Carers Information Day** – an event for unpaid carers on 26th June at the Innovation Centre, Yeovil.
- **Bridgwater Armed Forces Day** on 28th June at Morganians Rugby Club, Bridgwater.



New Report on Mental Health for Young People

A new report developed by a multi-agency group including **NHS Somerset, Somerset NHS Foundation Trust, Healthwatch Somerset, Somerset Council, Somerset Parent Carer Forum** and **Spark Somerset**, has reinforced what young people, parents and professionals have previously shared: that there are **persistent barriers to finding reliable and accessible information about mental health services**.



The work sought to understand how people now access mental health support. **The report has revealed important insights into the experiences of children, young people, parent carers**, and those who support them in accessing emotional wellbeing and mental health services.

It also identifies that despite efforts to create online resources, many young people still turn to peers and parents for help, rather than professionals. This feedback reinforces **the urgent need to make high-quality information more accessible to families and young people**. You can read the report [here](#).

Urgent Dental Care Review and Survey



A national expert has been appointed to review urgent dental care in the Southwest, supporting Integrated Care Boards, as they work on their plans for offering additional appointments in 2025/26.

Yasmin Allen BEM, BDS PGCert PGDip, is an experienced dental clinician with a background of working in Urgent and Emergency Care and the wider Urgent Care System. She has

been part of a national urgent care review team and has more recently been working closely with NHS 111. We have had several meetings with Yasmin to discuss the dental feedback we have received from the public in Somerset.

Yasmin has also created a new survey about Urgent Dental Care South West England. This survey aims to gather views on urgent care dentistry from people who live in the South West. The feedback is anonymous and will be used to inform a review of Urgent Dental Care for the South West. The survey can be found here: [Urgent dental care SW public survey](#), or you can click on the QR code.

Urgent Dental Care South West
England public survey



Online survey – GRACEFUL study

NHS Somerset is **looking to recruit participants for their study**. The GRACEFUL study aims to investigate patient attitudes to the location of care for people with, or who have, been investigated for a gynaecological cancer.

NHS Somerset knows that **a diagnosis of a gynaecological cancer can have a major impact on psychological wellbeing**. Previous studies have shown that where care is given is important for promoting a sense of support. The quality of consultation can be improved by reducing the stress caused by a patient's surroundings. However, no one has formally looked at the views of people investigated for, or with a diagnosis of, a gynaecological cancer. A gynaecological cancer can result in loss of fertility, or a sense of identity. They know from our preliminary work that services being located insensitively can have a major impact on many people. They want to understand this impact in more detail from a wide range of people. The information gathered can ensure gynaecological services are centred around patient needs.



Anyone over the age of 18, who is at risk of a gynaecological (womb, ovaries, vulva, vagina or cervical) cancer can participate. This includes those who have been referred to cancer exclusion, rapid access or colposcopy clinic or those with a diagnosis of a gynaecological cancer.

Please use the link to complete the online survey: [**Graceful Study Survey**](#)

You can contact the Team for more information, or support by email: [**gracefulstudy@somersetft.nhs.uk**](mailto:gracefulstudy@somersetft.nhs.uk). The study runs until 29 August 2025.

Discharge to Assess

NHS Somerset, on behalf of One Somerset, would like people to participate in an online survey that will play a key role in shaping the future of the Somerset **Discharge to Assess (D2A) Service**. Input is invaluable, as they strive to provide safe, effective, and high-quality healthcare services.

The D2A Service **helps people return home from hospital quicker**, with the support they need to regain their independence. It offers a variety of support, including physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and care provider teams to help people in their recovery after being in hospital. The service supports individuals in acute hospitals, community hospitals, rehabilitation units, and care home settings. The survey can be found: [**here**](#). **The closing date of the survey is 20th June.**



Carer Information Roadshow

Somerset Carers are hosting a series of **Carers Information Days** around Somerset from June – November 2025.

Somerset Carers Agents, Village Agents and Adult Social Care Workers will be on hand to talk about the services they offer and answer questions. They will be supported by other organisations, including:

- Alzheimer's Society
- Healthwatch Somerset
- Medequip
- Somerset Foundation Trust Carers
- Somerset Independent Living Centres and more.

They will also be showing carer-specific webinars from Somerset Council on subjects such as lasting power of attorney, finances, direct payments and more. **You can find out more about the events, and when they will take place [here](#).**



The poster for Carers Information Day features the Somerset Carers logo (part of CCS) and a photo of an elderly couple. The main heading asks, 'Do you look after a friend or family member?'. Below this, three bullet points with plus signs list the benefits: viewing webinars (e.g., Lasting Power of Attorney, Guardianship, Direct Payments, Finances etc.), talking to agents, and dropping in for direct support. A grid of partner logos follows, including Somerset Village & Community Agents, Somerset Age UK, Alzheimer's Society, Medequip, Healthwatch, NHS Somerset, Somerset Energy, Headway Somerset, and Somerset Council. Contact details (email, phone, website) and the Somerset Council logo are at the bottom, along with a small disclaimer.

Connect Somerset's Impact Report

Connect Somerset has published its **Impact Report for 2024**. Connect Somerset has been developing neighbourhood working across children's and adult services for the last two years. By working closely with schools and health services, and linking with local VCFSE (voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise) partners, they are able to improve and increase the early help for families and residents.

Building trust across local practitioners and communities is important, but Connect Somerset has also been unpicking the issues that get in the way. Such as different case management systems, data sharing, understanding, which families and residents need help, for example, mapping and working with 100 community hubs, identifying local resources, and aligning processes.

Take a look at **[Connect Somerset Impact Report 2024](#)**. For more information visit: **[Connect Somerset](#)** or email the team at **hello@connectsomerset.org.uk**.



Suicide Alertness training

This funded training **is free to school staff and those working with children, young people and their families in Somerset.**

The 4-hour training session is aimed at anyone who wants to **understand more about suicide**, how to know when someone may be having thoughts of suicide, how to talk directly and comfortably about suicide, and what we can all do to offer practical support.

The training will take place on **Tuesday 10th June** from 9.30am to 1.30pm at The Mendip School, Prestleigh, Shepton Mallet, BA4 4NJ.

Please click on the following link to register to attend this training: **[Suicide Alertness on 10th June - Eventbrite](#)**



Development of a Men's Health Strategy

The Government have launched a **call for evidence** to inform the **development of a Men's Health Strategy for England.**

This will seek the views of the public, health and social care professionals, academics, employers, and stakeholder organisations.

Men face unique challenges throughout their lives:

- Men are disproportionately affected by a number of health conditions, including cancer, cardiovascular disease, and type 2 diabetes.
- Life expectancy data also shows that men live on average four years fewer than women (79.1 versus 83.0 years in England, respectively).



The Government **want to hear from anyone aged 16 and over and who live in England.** To complete the survey click **[here](#)**.

An easy-read and British Sign Language version of the call for evidence will be made available shortly. **You can share your views by 17 July 2025.**

Unbreakable Men

New Unbreakable Men Manual: The Unbreakable Men Manual has been updated with a new design and version. This resource is a practical guide for participants to use throughout their journey to improve and sustain their mental health. It includes tools, prompts and reflective exercises to help men open up and feel more connected. These are the basis of the sessions. You can access the Unbreakable Men Manual [here](#).

New Online Group Launching on 3rd June. A new online Unbreakable Men group will begin on Tuesday, 3rd June 2025, from 7pm to 8 pm. This monthly virtual session is ideal for men who may be unable to attend in person or prefer to engage in a more private or flexible setting. It's free to attend, but early sign-ups are encouraged. The session, which will be led by Aden Watkins, will follow the structure of the new manual, and will target a new audience as it will occur outside of the Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm working hours. The Expression of Interest Form can be found [via this link](#).



Mental Health Awareness Week Blog – The Power of Community in Strengthening Men's Mental Health in Somerset: It was Mental Health Awareness Week from 13th to 19th May, and the theme this year was community. To mark the occasion, SASP have published a blog reflecting on the role Unbreakable Men plays in creating meaningful connections and peer support amongst men. Take a moment to read it and share it – [Read here](#).

There are face-to-face sessions in the following areas, with a view to developing more in Somerset this year – Wells, Wellington, Taunton, Bridgwater and Minehead. All information on the programme can be found here: [Unbreakable Men](#)



Do you have any health and care news?

If you have any health and care stories you would like included in our next Newsletter please email Karen: karen.ball@healthwatchsomerset.co.uk by **16th June 2025**.

Share Your Feedback

Get in touch to share your feedback and help make health and social care better for you and your community.

Talk to us and help make health and social care better for you and your community.

Healthwatch Somerset is the county's health and social care champion. We're here to listen to your experiences of using local health and care services, and to hear about the issues that really matter to you. We are independent and impartial, and anything you share with us is confidential. We can also help you find reliable and trustworthy information and advice to help you to get the care and support you need. As an independent statutory body we have the power to make sure that NHS leaders, and other decision makers listen to your feedback and use it to improve standards of care.

We are part of a network of over 150 Healthwatch across the country. We cover the unitary local authority area of Somerset Council. We work together through Healthwatch England to make sure your feedback creates positive change in health and care nationally as well as locally.



The **Healthwatch Somerset** service is run by **The Advocacy People**, an independent charity – Charity No. 1080679 limited by guarantee and registered in England and Wales with Company No. 3963421. The registered office is at PO Box 375, Hastings, East Sussex, TN34 9HU

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