

**Report for Children, Adults, Health and Wellbeing Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel –  
Monday 14 April 2025**

**Transfer of community-based care services to HCRG Care Group**

Community-based care services across Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire are now being provided by HCRG Care Group.

Since 1 April, the group has taken on the day-to-day running of the services, and partnered with the NHS, local authorities and charities to transform the way in which community care and support is provided across the region.

Patients have been advised that there will be no immediate changes to current services, and care will continue to be provided as before.

This is an exciting time for community-based care in BSW, as the new partnership will be focussed on delivering better outcomes for the local population, providing greater support for people to live healthier lives, spot the signs of ill health earlier and help those with existing health and care needs live independently for longer.

Over the last six months, the ICB has worked closely with colleagues from across the local health and care system, including both HCRG and the previous providers, to ensure that the handover was able to take place as smoothly and as seamlessly as possible, and without any interruption to patient-facing services.

The gradual transformation of community-based care is now beginning, with HCRG committed to involving patients, staff and the wider population in any proposed changes, as well as working with the ICB on plans for formal consultation, should a need for such a process arise.

Further information about our vision and ambition for the future of community-based care is available on our website at [www.bsw.icb.nhs.uk/news-and-events/integrated-community-based-care](http://www.bsw.icb.nhs.uk/news-and-events/integrated-community-based-care).

**Future of integrated care boards**

Over the last few months, both NHS England and the Department of Health and Social Care have been discussing closer working and avoiding duplication.

Work is now under way to reform the NHS to best support the frontline to deliver for patients and drive the government's reform priorities.

Changes are expected to take place, at pace, over the coming months.

As part of the need to make best possible use of taxpayers' money to support frontline services, NHS England has informed us that the running and programme costs of ICBs will need to be reduced by around 50 per cent.

While these plans are currently at an early stage, it has been confirmed that ICBs will continue to exist and work around developing a new ICB model, which outlines future functions and responsibilities, is already under way.

Ensuring that services are not disrupted and continuing to deliver ambitious transformational improvements locally, in collaboration with local partners, while also providing support to colleagues, will remain the focus of the ICB throughout this upcoming period of change.

Updates on the future of the ICB and the wider NHS will be shared with members as and when developments are announced, and plans put in place.

### Eligible groups urged to come forward for vital Covid-19 booster vaccine

Local people who are most at risk of falling seriously ill from Covid-19 have been urged to book an appointment to receive their spring booster vaccine.

All adults aged 75 and over, as well as those over the age of six months and living with a weakened immune system, are eligible for the free vaccination.

Older adults living in care homes will also be offered the vaccine within their place of residence.

Having the booster vaccine is seen as the most effective form of protection for people who are more susceptible to the effects of Covid-19, especially as immunity from previous vaccinations fades over time.

Vaccination appointments are now open for booking, and can be arranged either over the phone by calling 119 or online at [www.nhs.uk/bookcovid](https://www.nhs.uk/bookcovid).

Invitations to book a booster vaccine are also being sent – either in the form of a text message or letter in the post – to all who are eligible.

Some vaccinations are being carried out at designated walk-in clinics, for which a pre-booked appointment is not required.

During the most recent Covid-19 booster drive, which took place between October 2024 and February 2025, more than 9.8 million vaccinations were administered across the country, including approximately 218,000 across Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire.

### Patient survey aims to find out why people visit A&E

Patient visits to accident and emergency departments within local hospitals rose by 5.6 per cent during 2024, mainly due to a rise in the number of walk-ins.

In order to bring waiting times down, the ICB needs to understand why more people are going to A&Es instead of using other NHS services, especially as the local population continues to grow.

Over the next three months, BSW ICB will be working with local Healthwatch groups, along with hospitals in Bath, Swindon and Salisbury, to conduct the Big A&E Survey.

Face-to-face questionnaires will be handed out at all three A&Es in BSW, with a digital survey also being launched across social media.

This survey will explore why patients choose accident and emergency departments and their awareness of other treatment options, while also looking for any health inequalities and service gaps.

The findings will be analysed and shared with system partners to understand the reasons behind the rising visits, to make recommendations on plans to reduce this demand and to improve communication with specific population groups who need support.

### Residents of BSW help shape new 10-Year Plan

Over the last few months, the ICB has been actively gathering and speaking to local residents about what they would like to see in the forthcoming 10-Year Plan.

First announced by the Secretary of State in October of last year, the new plan aims to outline how the NHS will evolve into a truly modern health service, and one that can successfully meet the changing needs of the population.

The plan will focus primarily on three shifts that the government, along with clinical experts, agree need to happen. These are:

- Moving care from hospitals to communities
- Making better use of technology
- Focussing on preventing sickness, not just treating it

In Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire, the ICB has held meaningful conversations with a range of diverse and dynamic community groups, including people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, those from our local Muslim population and refugees and asylum seekers currently living in Swindon.

Engagement work has also been carried out with the Gypsy, Roma, Boater and Traveller communities in Bath and Wiltshire.

Their thoughts, feelings and opinions have now been shared with our national colleagues for inclusion in the plan, which is expected to be published in May.

Much of the feedback generated by these conversations centred around:

- Praise for the NHS, particularly:
  - That it's a universal service, available to everyone, free at the point of use.
  - That its staff are hardworking and dedicated, often doing incredible things in difficult circumstances.
  - That it's there when patients really need it, with emergency services saving lives every day.
- An acknowledgement of current challenges, such as:
  - A lack of available GP appointments.
  - Long waiting times in emergency departments.
  - Services not working together to support patients.
- Things that would help make the NHS better, including:
  - Easier and quicker access to appointments.
  - Better coordination between different health and care services.
  - Greater investment in staff recruitment and retention.

An online survey, in which people can share their ideas for how the NHS can be improved, is currently live at [www.change.nhs.uk](http://www.change.nhs.uk).