

**Report for Children, Adults, Health and Wellbeing Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel –  
Monday 13 October 2025**

**Chief Executive of new ICB cluster appointed**

Earlier this month, Jonathan Higman was appointed as the new chief executive for the recently-established integrated care board cluster covering Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire, Dorset and Somerset.

Jonathan, who is currently chief executive of Somerset ICB, has more than 25 years of experience in both NHS provider and commissioning organisations.

He has been the chief executive of Somerset ICB since its inception in 2022, and has focused on developing neighbourhood models of support, shifting care closer to people's own homes, while also maintaining financial balance and delivery of the key national targets.

Prior to joining the integrated care board, Jonathan was chief executive of Yeovil District Hospital NHS Foundation Trust.

Rob Whiteman, Chair of the new integrated care board cluster, said: "Jonathan's extensive knowledge and experience within the NHS make him extremely well-suited for the role."

Speaking about the appointment, Jonathan said: "I truly believe there is a bright future for ICBs, working to improve the health and wellbeing of the people we are here to serve."

Sue Harriman, former Chief Executive Officer of BSW ICB, announced her departure from the organisation earlier this year, and formally stepped down from the role at the end of September.

**Launch of winter vaccinations**

Eligible groups are now able to receive a free flu and Covid-19 vaccination.

Pregnant women, along with children aged two and three, were among the first to be called forward in early September.

On Wednesday 1 October, the flu vaccination offer was widened to include over-65s, people with a weakened immune system, care home residents and frontline health and social care workers.

While most people in these groups should have already received an invitation from the NHS to book their vaccination, individuals do not need to wait to be contacted before making an appointment.

There are a number of different ways in which people can arrange their flu vaccine appointment, with bookings available online through the NHS App and at [www.nhs.uk/bookflu](http://www.nhs.uk/bookflu), or over the phone by calling 119.

People looking to get their flu vaccine quickly and without delay can use the pharmacy finder tool on the NHS website to see which sites near them are offering on-the-day walk-in appointments.

The eligibility criteria for Covid-19 vaccines has been changed, following a review by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation.

Now, only those people aged 75 and over, as well as older care home residents and those who are immunosuppressed, will be offered a vaccination against Covid-19.

A more detailed overview of recent vaccination performance in Bath and North East Somerset is included as an appendix.

## Closure of the outpatients medicine courier service at the RUH

**Author:** Uzoma Ibechukwu, Director of Pharmacy, Royal United Hospitals Bath

**Date:** 3 October 2025

### Overview

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the Royal United Hospital in Bath introduced the outpatients medicines courier service to support vulnerable patients who were shielding.

It helped to ensure that they were able to receive their RUH-prescribed medication safely, without needing to leave home.

As of 2025, the service is still in operation and currently carries out between 300 and 350 deliveries each month, mainly for oncology, haematology and dermatology patients.

In June of this year, the RUH agreed to decommission the service, and transition to a modern, digitally-enabled model, which aligns with the requirements of the government's 10-Year Plan for the NHS.

### Rationale for change

- Improved patient experience: The current model supports only a small number of patients. An electronic prescribing service will be able to support a wider cohort of patients.
- Also, due to multiple supply routes, the medicine supply is fragmented and confusing, and there are incidences of delays and missed medication in the current service.
- Digital misalignment: Reliance on paper prescriptions inconsistent with NHS digital strategy and not supportive of providing care closer to home.
- Equity and sustainability: RUH is the only acute provider in BSW offering this service, while courier emissions conflict with wider net-zero goals.
- Cost effectiveness: The current service costs between £35 and £45 per delivery, with the majority of users able to access medicines through other means, such as their local community pharmacy

### New model

- Electronic Prescribing Service (EPS): Prescriptions sent directly to a community pharmacy of the patient's choice for collection following an outpatient appointment.
- Improved access: Faster, more convenient medicine collection, especially for virtual outpatient appointments.
- Enhanced governance: Digital audit trails, reduced risk of lost prescriptions, and better safety oversight.

### Benefits

- For patients: Greater convenience, reduced delays and improved virtual care.

- For system: Financial savings, reduced emissions and better alignment with regional and national strategy.

### Impact and mitigations

- Patients affected: Fewer than one per cent of outpatients (40 out of 5,900 seen by the RUH every month), mainly in haematology and oncology. This cohort consists of patients who have a virtual appointment and are prescribed a medicine that can only be collected from hospital.
- All other patients can collect medicines at the same time as receiving RUH care or via their community pharmacy.
- Mitigations include volunteer delivery for exceptional clinical needs, targeted communications, escalation pathways for stock issues, staff training, and patient helpline.

### Equality considerations

- EQIA identified potential impacts on elderly, rural, and carer-dependent patients.
- Mitigations include accessible patient information and case-by-case delivery from RUH volunteers.
- Ongoing monitoring via governance and patient experience frameworks.

### Next steps

- Implementation is under way. Scrutiny committee feedback is welcomed to ensure continued protection of patient interests and service quality.
- Patients directly affected will receive a letter describing the change to their current service and an opportunity to discuss any concerns with the RUH's Patient Support and Complaints Team.
- Staff directly impacted by the change to service have been engaged with by the senior pharmacy team over the summer.
- The RUH will also share opportunities to feed back on the new service before its launch during winter 2025/26.