

Update from NHS Devon – Health & Wellbeing Board January 2025

Finance

The NHS in Devon was forecasting a £80.0m deficit at year-end (31 March 2025), with an efficiency savings target of £213.3m to achieve the plan.

At month 6 (30 September 2024), NHS England provided a £80.0m one-off payment for deficit support, with an expectation that the One Devon Integrated Care System (ICS) will achieve financial balance by the end of the year.

The NHS in Devon has achieved £66.6m efficiency savings in the first six months of this financial year 2024/25. This is £5.7m above plan and the forecast is to achieve the plan of £213.3m in efficiency savings.

Organisational change

NHS Devon is undergoing an organisational change process in line with an NHS England requirement for all integrated care boards to reduce their running costs by 30%. The implementation period for phase two of the process is nearing completion and the organisation is now working through internal and external recruitment for unfilled roles.

NHS England require all integrated care boards to implement to provide greater control and oversight over performance during winter, and therefore Sam Wadham-Sharpe (Director of Performance and Assurance) has been temporarily appointed as Winter Director.

NHS Devon has successfully completed a chair recruitment process, and an announcement will be made shortly. There have been some changes to the organisation's executive team with Anthony Fitzgerald, chief operating officer, having left at the end of December 2024.

Bill Shields, deputy chief executive and chief finance officer, has also taken on the acting chief executive role at Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust as of 1 January, following Liz Davenport's retirement and ahead of the trust's new chief executive, Joe Teape, starting in March 2025.

General Practice Collective Action

GP practices began taking collective action across the country on 1 August 2024.

The local picture in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay is dynamic and is being monitored by NHS Devon Integrated Care Board. The 22 GP practices in Plymouth (117 GP practices across Devon) may take a variety of actions at their discretion as part of collective action and gauging the impact remains complex. NHS Devon's Primary Care team logs intelligence and impacts to inform the system's wider response to GP Collective Action.

We continue to aim to ensure care continues to be delivered safely and that reasonable needs of patients continue to be met per contractual requirements and that care for patients is provided by the right organisation at the right time.

Weekly incident management meetings with primary care and other providers within the Integrated Care System (ICS) help us to understand the implications of collective action for patients and the ICS and what mitigating actions need to be taken. Examples of collective action include those relating to care shared between primary care and a hospital, where the GP practice is not contractually responsible for this. Where mitigations cannot be immediately put in place, a process has been implemented to escalate specific risks to Devon ICB Executive Committee.

Bulletins and briefings continue to be sent to GP practices and stakeholders on the latest position and supporting materials – as well as a website page for the public.

The key message in our communications is that GP practices are open, and that people should continue to access them. Practices continue to provide their own messaging to patients on practice-specific arrangements.

NHS local 10 year engagement plan

The NHS in Devon has launched a local engagement programme on the 10 Year Health Plan, which will run in parallel with the national Change NHS campaign.

Between November 2024 and 28 February 2025 members of the public and patients in Devon, as well as NHS staff and health and care experts, are being invited to share their experiences, views and ideas for improving the NHS.

So far, there have been more than 1,400 responses to the online survey and more than 50 events are taking place across Devon, Plymouth and Torbay for the public and staff to get involved in.

A series of engagement days are taking place across Devon in January 2025.

- Paignton Library – 17 January 2025
- Ivybridge Library – 24 January 2025

- Exeter Library – 28 January 2025
- Barnstaple Library – 30 January 2025
- Plymouth Methodist Church – 31 January 2025

Healthwatch Devon, Plymouth and Torbay are collaborating with the NHS on this engagement and are chairing the public workshops, collating patient feedback, and holding targeted events with children and young people.

A small grants scheme has been made available to local VCSE organisations and they will run bespoke sessions with people they work with.

Minor Injuries Unit (MIU) – service review

NHS England has funded a review of the MIUs across Devon to understand the range of services and address inconsistencies in service provision. The Commissioning Support Unit (CSU) have been appointed to undertake this piece of work.

This review has been progressing and the CSU has provided NHS Devon with the first draft of the outputs from the review.

Once this has been reviewed with the relevant stakeholders and through the relevant governance channels – a publicly shareable document will be made available over the next couple of months.

NHS dental services

NHS Devon is working to support dental services on the following priority areas:

- Commissioning additional urgent dental care appointments that people can access by calling NHS111 with an urgent dental need.
- Commissioning ‘stabilisation sessions’ across Devon – we are in the early stages of procurement for a 2025/26 offer. These are for patients who seek urgent care and who are identified as having several additional dental issues that need addressing imminently. Patients can access stabilisation dental care by calling 111.
- Commissioning additional children’s orthodontic capacity in Devon.
- An oral health improvement initiative called First Dental Steps with local authorities.
- Supervised toothbrushing programmes are running in schools in areas of deprivation across the South West and NHS Devon is working with the Local Authorities across Devon to invest in further schemes.
- Supporting Devon recruitment by utilising the national ‘golden hello’ scheme – NHS Devon has invested £276,500 in posts across Devon.

Winter pressures

The NHS system within Devon has been operating under significant pressure through what continues to be a challenging winter period.

Early in the new year the rise in cold weather illnesses, including flu, vomiting and diarrhoea bugs meant all of the county's NHS services, including the main hospitals – in Plymouth, Exeter, Torbay and Barnstaple – were under severe pressure all week.

The region's ambulance service had also been experiencing significant and sustained demand across its 999 services.

As a result of strong partnership working and a reduction in pressures there has been a return to normal activity, but we envisage continued pressure throughout this winter.

Local people can do their bit by:

- Going to NHS 111 online if you need medical help or advice, or you are unsure about whether you should go to hospital; you can also phone 111
- Check local hospital trust websites for information on Minor Injury Units and Urgent Treatment Centres. Further information can be found here: [Health Pressures – One Devon](#). Within Plymouth we have invested in increased staffing within the Cumberland Centre Urgent Treatment Centre to ensure service resilience.
- Play your part by taking simple steps during the cold weather to look after themselves and loved ones, checking in on vulnerable family members and neighbours. Wrap up warm, wear sensible footwear in icy conditions and make sure your medicine cabinet is well-stocked.
- Please pick up loved ones who are ready to be discharged from hospital.
- Make use of community pharmacies, which can advise on minor illnesses and provide medications. Details about local pharmacies be found via the interactive map here: [Find a pharmacy – NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)
- If you, or someone you know, experiences a mental health crisis you can access support from 111.

Improved discharge capacity (P1)

The Plymouth Intermediate Care Plan set a clear ambition to increase the proportion of individuals who are discharged directly back home after a hospital stay and reduce the proportion of people who enter bedded settings.

There continues to be significant work focussed on delivering against this through partnership working between NHS Devon, Plymouth City Council, University Hospitals Plymouth and Livewell Southwest, and we are increasingly seeing the successful delivery of this work.

We have secured significant additional care capacity and a focused programme of activity to ensure a culture of 'homefirst' is embedded in the Plymouth system.

We have seen an increase in the proportion of people who return straight home by 150%, and there is clear evidence that this leads to better longer-term outcomes for individuals.