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## Update from Chief Executive Peter Lewis

### Dear Members

Welcome to the members' newsletter which I hope you find interesting and informative.

I am pleased to say that during June 2022 the acute pressures of the pandemic have alleviated, which has enabled us to move our focus to recovery. The winter period, combined with COVID-19, created an extremely challenging period in healthcare but we are committed to reducing the impact as much as possible for our patients, many of whom have been waiting far longer than we would want to receive their planned care.

Throughout the pandemic we have continually reviewed our visiting guidance, prioritising the safety of patients and staff. These have been extremely difficult decisions as we know how important the support from loved ones can be for our patients. Our team has worked hard to ensure that, during times of limited visiting, families have been kept informed of their relatives' condition by facilitating phone and video calls for patients who do not have access to their own mobile phones. As we have moved to 'living with COVID' across the country and the NHS, we are pleased to have re-introduced open visiting in most areas between 10am and 8pm. Patients can also be accompanied by a friend or relative at most outpatient appointments, although rules for the emergency department differ to ensure we can keep the area safe in terms of space within the department. This will be kept under constant review and the most up to date guidance is available by clicking [here](#)

We are continuing with our plans to bring together Somerset and Yeovil District Hospital NHS Foundation Trusts to form a new, single organisation in April 2023, which will be responsible for Somerset's acute, community and mental health services, as well as a number of GP practices. Teams across the trusts are working together closely to begin integrating processes and resources where appropriate, with some patients in services such as maternity, urology, and cardiology already benefitting from joint working. Colleagues are also working together to develop the values of the new

organisation – which will employ around 12,000 people – to ensure our culture reflects the best of both trusts and is a supportive, vibrant place to work.

This work is of even greater importance as we have now decided – following engagement with colleagues – that the name of our new organisation will be Somerset NHS Foundation Trust, reflecting the cross-county breadth and reach of our services. It is important to clarify that central to our plans for the future is the continued success of Yeovil Hospital, and the services which sit at the heart of local communities. Whilst we intend to use the name Somerset NHS Foundation Trust for our new organisation, our individual sites will retain their identities which we know is important, both for staff and local people.

When we bring our trusts together ours will be an organisation that touches the lives of every family in Somerset, and those in parts of neighbouring counties. Therefore, whilst this change does not require a formal consultation, we are very keen to engage with you, the public, local interest groups, and partners to ensure you can have a voice in shaping our future.

Please get involved by completing our quick and simple five-question survey – just click [here](#) and let us know what is important to you when it comes to healthcare in Somerset.

I'd also like to remind you that you can follow the trust's social media channels on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for photos, news updates about our services and our people – it's one of the best ways to stay informed.

Thank you for your continued support as a member of our trust.

With best wishes

*Peter*

**Peter Lewis**  
**Chief Executive**

## **Merger Update**

### **Update on the merger between Yeovil District Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (YDH) and Somerset NHS Foundation Trust (SFT)**

Since our previous updates regarding our plans to bring together the two providers in Somerset, both trusts have continued to progress the programme of work to create a unique trust that will deliver acute, mental health, learning disability and community services across Somerset, and a proportion of GP practices in Somerset.

The drafting of the full business case is underway, and a key element of this is the clinical strategy, which is supported by a patient benefits case. The patient benefits case will draw on a number of service-level case studies to illustrate the benefits to patients of bringing our trusts together.

A number of key themes are emerging as we develop these case studies:

- There are some services, at both trusts, which are unsustainable. In many cases, this is due to long term staffing gaps.
- There are inequities across the county, where some patients can access specialist care more readily than others, depending on where they live.
- Many YDH and SFT services are already working closely together e.g., to cover staffing gaps, align policies etc.
- But different IT systems, employment contracts, governance arrangements and budgets hamper this collaboration.

Bringing the two trusts together offers the opportunity to:

- make better use of our combined estate and provide more care closer to people's homes
- tackle inequities of care that currently exist e.g., by improving access to specialist care
- streamline our processes and do things only once freeing up more time for front line care
- increase our resilience and deploy our combined resources to where they are needed most
- share good practice, learning and skills development amongst a wider colleague group

### **Maternity clinical case study**

One of the developing case studies relates to maternity services. Both trusts provide comprehensive consultant and midwife led maternity services before, during and after birth, with both services are rated 'Good' by the Care Quality Commission. The size and rurality of Somerset makes it challenging to provide maternity care and although we have relatively low birth rates, we need to maintain two consultant-led units (in Yeovil and Taunton) to ensure safe care across our large, rural geography.

Around 15% of women (who live in the middle of the county) receive a blend of care from both trusts. The trusts' maternity teams have collaborated for the last few years as part of the Local Maternity and Neonatal System; however, collaboration is hampered by different policies and protocols, different IT systems and different governance arrangements. Under our plans we will retain two high performing maternity units at Yeovil and Taunton, working under single leadership, governance, and policies.

### **Maternity case study – patient benefits**

The patient benefits which will result from combining the two maternity teams include:

- Standardised county wide protocols and ways of working which will help streamline pathways and improve clinical decision making, especially for patients with complex needs.
- We will be able to increase the maternity care taking place in community settings or at home, for low-risk births. This will improve patient experience and free up capacity in the inpatient units for more complex cases.
- We will implement an integrated accessible digital maternity care record which will help us provide improved patient care and experience, support clinical learning and increase efficiency.
- Merger will increase our scale and ability to implement national requirements (Ockenden and Better Births), including midwife continuity of carer and personalised care.
- The integrated team will increase our resilience and enable us to better deploy our combined resources to where they are needed most.

The other case studies will cover the following services: Oncology and Haematology, Stroke, Peri-operative care (supporting patients prior to planned surgery to improve patient outcomes), and Cardiology.

## Taunton Diagnostic Centre reopens to patients

We have welcomed colleagues who worked in the Rutherford Diagnostic Centre Taunton to Somerset FT and to the NHS in Somerset.

Our colleagues, and colleagues from the centre, have worked incredibly hard to maintain the facility for NHS patients in Somerset after we heard the sad news in early June 2022 that Rutherford Health, and its subsidiaries, was going into liquidation.

The centre has made a real difference to our ability to scan patients quickly. Since it opened at the end of September last year, the percentage of NHS patients in Somerset who are waiting longer than the national standard for a diagnostic test has reduced considerably. It was therefore very important for us to maintain this centre for our patients in the west of the county while, at the same time, look to develop additional diagnostic capacity in the east of the county.

We are delighted that, thanks to the incredible work of both our colleagues, and former Rutherford colleagues who have now joined Somerset FT, we have been able to step in to run the service on a short-term basis with only minimal disruption for patients.

The centre, now renamed as the Taunton Diagnostic Centre, was closed for only two days as planned, and successfully reopened on 14 June 2022 – a remarkable achievement in such a short amount of time.

Further information on the centre is now available on our trust [website](#)

## Somerset Trusts launch plan to achieve a greener future

To mark the Clean Air Day on 16 June 2022, NHS trusts across the country launched green plans that will help to support the NHS to cut more than 1m tonnes of CO2 emissions in the next three years; the equivalent of taking 520,000 cars off the road.

One of more than 200 green plans put forward, our new joint plan for Somerset FT and Yeovil District Hospital aims to tackle the climate emergency and sets out how we will reduce our environmental impact, while also delivering in three key areas: improving patient care, saving lives and reducing costs and waste.

Actions will include reducing our reliance on single use plastics, improving biodiversity on our hospital sites, and seeking to improve resilience for climate related weather events such as heat waves. In addition, the delivery of the green plans will be boosted by a recent £329 million Government investment in hospital energy efficiency and decarbonisation, which is predicted to achieve NHS carbon savings equivalent to powering 900,000 homes for a year.

Somerset FT and Yeovil District Hospital have been awarded a combined grant of £10,925,939 through the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) as part of its Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS), delivered by Salix Finance. This includes a range of measures to improve energy efficiency, including insulation, LED lighting, metering, and building energy management systems upgrades. The funding will install air source heat pumps at three sites to reduce the carbon emissions from heating our buildings.

### Key projects will include:

- A brand-new power supply will be put into Yeovil District Hospital which in the future will allow the site to become fully electric.
- All windows on the south side of Yeovil Hospital and women's hospital will also be replaced. Currently these windows are only single glazed units. They will be replaced with doubled glazed reflective units which will not only make the building more energy efficient it will also significantly reduce noise and glare for patients helping to improve their hospital stay. This was trialled on one ward in the trust last year and improved the experience for our patients, making the space warmer in the Winter and cooler in the Summer. It will also reduce noise levels from the main road and the wind.
- Lighting throughout Yeovil Hospital will be replaced with LED lighting. LED lights are significantly more energy efficient and last longer, therefore more cost efficient.
- The Building Management System at Yeovil Hospital will be updated. The new system will help our buildings to be more efficient. A Building Management System controls ventilation, heating, and the cooling of a building.

- Wincanton Community Hospital and Priorswood Medical Records warehouse in Taunton will have new solar panels installed to provide a source of renewable energy. This is predicted to generate approximately 76,000 electricity kWh, which would cover a quarter of Wincanton Community hospital's annual electricity use.
- Older existing fossil fuel heating systems on the sites will be replaced with air source heat pumps which reduce carbon emissions and have less impact on local air quality. Air source heat pumps use heat from the air to warm the buildings

You can find out more about the [joint green plan](#) or access the full [press release](#) by clicking on the links.

## North Sedgemoor patients get access to tests closer to home

Patients in the North Sedgemoor area can now get a range of blood tests and investigations at their local community hospital.

It is all part of a new community investigation hub that has launched at Burnham-on-Sea Hospital and means that many patients no longer need to travel to Musgrove Park Hospital for hospital-related blood tests.

The service is run by the North Sedgemoor primary care network with assistant practitioner Debbie Sinclair providing the lead role.

The overall vision for Somerset is for all 13 primary care networks in the county to have their own similar hubs and is in line with the NHS' move towards giving patients access to diagnostic tests at facilities away from busy district general hospitals – which was recommended by former national cancer director Professor Sir Mike Richards in his report on diagnostic centres: Diagnostics: Recovery and Renewal.

The hub is in effect a walk-in service so patients can attend it any day of the week and means that patients can access diagnostics closer to home without needing to travel long distances to the district general hospital.

Funding was awarded by NHS England to establish health and wellbeing hubs within the Somerset system, and this is the first of more to come.

To read more please visit the Somerset FT [website](#).

## Results of the 2021-22 NHS Staff Survey

In March 2022 the trust saw the release of the results from the latest NHS staff survey. The survey remains one of the most effective ways for us to learn about the experiences of staff, and provides us with important insights, which we can use to improve the ways we work and support our staff. Because the survey is anonymous,

it enabled our staff to be honest about their concerns and the challenges they may face at work, as well as the things that make them proud to be part of the NHS family.

This year, as the trust works more closely with our colleagues at Yeovil District Hospital, we have combined our results for this overview, helping you understand the areas in which the trust has excelled and those where we need to make improvements.

Given the enormous pressures, the trust has faced during 2021 and continue to face this year, we are pleased to see that so many of our staff still found the time to complete the survey: 57% of staff from YDH and 45% of staff from Somerset FT responded. Therefore, the results provide meaningful information about what it is like to work for the Trusts.

All trusts' results are benchmarked against those of similar trusts so the Trust can see how they are doing when compared with our peer-organisations; these similar trusts are known as our 'comparators'. We are pleased to report that our results remain overwhelmingly more positive than those of our comparators.

**The areas where both trusts benchmark very well against comparators are:**

- Opportunities for flexible working.
- Team working; with staff saying they feel valued by their team, and work effectively with other teams.
- Line managers; with staff saying they feel valued by their manager and that their manager is interested in their wellbeing.
- Taking positive action on wellbeing.
- Access to learning and developing, with support for career development.
- Acting on concerns.

**Things the trusts need to get better at:**

- Annual appraisals. We need to ensure all colleagues have an annual appraisal: 77% of colleagues from YDH and 71% of colleagues from Somerset FT reported that they have had an annual appraisal in the last 12 months compared with 80% in our comparator group of trusts.
- Tackling harassment at work: Of those staff who reported experiencing harassment at work, 56% of YDH respondents and 40% of Somerset FT respondents said this was on the basis of ethnic background; 22% of YDH respondents and 27% of Somerset FT respondents reported harassment on the grounds of gender; and 21% of YDH respondents and 20% of Somerset FT respondents reported harassment on the basis of age.

Across the two trusts, we will be working together to:

- Continue with wellbeing support for staff, sharing and building on best practice from both trusts
- Encourage and support good management practice,
- Build on our inclusion work to ensure all colleagues feel they belong and are valued.
- Eliminate harassment in the workplace and ensure staff know how to report incidents so we can swiftly address them.
- Support team working and team effectiveness.
- Ensure more staff benefit from an annual appraisal to support their professional development.

## **Winner at the Bridgwater and Taunton College Apprenticeship Awards**

We were excited to hear that the trust had won the 'Large Employer of the Year' award at the recent Bridgwater and Taunton College Apprenticeship awards.

The nomination recognised the support and investments we have made across the trust to support the learning and development of our apprentices, particularly through the pandemic. The award also highlighted the progress we have made on a number of initiatives over the past year such as; enrolling 43 non-nursing apprentices across admin, leadership, and healthcare programmes, supporting 18 T-Level industry placements across our services and supporting the college to enrol the first ever University Centre Somerset cohorts of nursing associates (34 apprentices) and registered nurse apprentices (41 apprentices).

Alongside all of the above, we have seen exponential growth in our allied health professional apprenticeship pathways, with 23 allied health apprentices now in place across occupational therapy, physiotherapy, diagnostic and therapeutic radiography, operating department practitioners, podiatry, and prosthetics and orthotics. This sits alongside similarly great workforce development activity done by our healthcare science teams (audiology, neurophysiology, cardiology, Somerset lung centre, sterile services, medical electronics, ophthalmology and many more), and the wealth of non-clinical work undertaken across the whole trust on administration, leadership and other professional development pathways.

## **Additional health hubs launched in Somerset for farmers to access vital health checks**

Two additional health hubs were launched in Somerset for farmers to access vital health checks. This means that farmers and agricultural workers who visit livestock markets in Somerset can now access health and emotional wellbeing support while they buy and sell their produce.

The new health hub locations at Frome Livestock Market and Exmoor Farmers Livestock Auction have been set up following the success of the Derek Mead Health Room – the first health hub of this type that opened in 2018 at the Sedgemoor Auction Centre in Bridgwater.

Operated by our team of NHS nurses with support from many different farming and community-based charities and local businesses, the hubs will offer general health checks and specialist health advice about lifestyle, emotional wellbeing and mental health.

Jane Fitzgerald, Somerset NHS Foundation Trust’s manager responsible for the health hubs, explains:

*“Many people who work in the farming community often put the health and welfare of their livestock above that of their own wellbeing and therefore tend to put off seeking help, when it could help to save their life.*

*“We know that farmers often live and work in isolated communities and we are proud that our teams are taking services to locations that are easy for them to access, and where there is no need to make an appointment, which can be a barrier to seeking advice.*

*“Feedback from the first hub – the Derek Mead Health Room in Bridgwater – shows that having nurses and volunteers who understand farming communities really helps farmers to connect and engage with health services where they may not otherwise have thought about doing so”.*

You can hear more about the health hubs by visiting our [website](#) or looking out for media coverage on BBC Points West and BBC Radio Somerset.

## Work starts on new ophthalmic diagnostics centres in Somerset

Ophthalmology patients in Somerset will soon be able to be assessed at two brand new diagnostic centres in Yeovil and Taunton.

The multimillion-pound project has been partly funded by money received from NHS England and both centres are expected to be open for patients in spring/summer 2022.

To read more click [here](#)



## New discharge lounge opens at Musgrove Park Hospital

The new discharge lounge opened at Musgrove Park Hospital on 16 May 2022 - to help make it that little bit easier for our patients to return home from hospital.

The lounge is open seven days a week, from 8am to 7pm, with colleagues in the lounge able to care for medically-fit patients who are due to go home that day – they provide a comfortable space for patients to wait for their transport.

Using the discharge lounge provides a safe way of caring for patients who are ready and waiting to start their journey home or being transferred to another care facility, while also freeing up much-needed beds on wards across the hospital.

## Developing Somerset's perinatal mental health service

Somerset's perinatal mental health service works closely with maternity teams and health visitors across the county, providing advice and support to women with mental health needs before they conceive a baby, during their pregnancy, or in the 12 months after they have given birth.

This year marks the service's three-year anniversary, and the team has needed to adapt its ways of working to continue supporting women during this time of huge change. Many women and families were isolated during the pandemic, and the team continued to offer COVID-secure face-to-face appointments throughout, as well as setting up walk and talk sessions for those that preferred a different way of meeting. The team continues to develop its service to provide various ways for women to get in touch, including offering video or telephone appointments, and also setting up a daily duty line for women to call when they need additional support.

Debbie Bunce, our service lead for perinatal mental health, explains how the team has evolved since its launch:

*"The team has grown hugely over the past three years, forming a multidisciplinary approach that includes a pharmacist, consultant, speciality doctor, nurses, social workers, clinical psychologist, nursery nurses, occupational therapist, and secretaries.*

*"We also have three peer support workers, who have their own lived experience and can support women in different ways. Listening to their advice and working closely with Somerset Maternity Voices to learn from the feedback provided from others with lived experience, means that we can continue to develop the service to make sure we're providing the best care possible.*

*"Our support expands wider than the women that come to us, and it's important that we support the other parents and wider family members too. We try to get out into the community as much as possible, and so each month a few colleagues from the team attend the mental health swim meets at Lyme Regis. The meets are year-round, and we often get to see women who use, or have used, our service, as well as their partners, families, friends and lots of others who join in.*

*“As our maternity teams at Somerset FT and Yeovil District Hospital have now come together, we’re working closer than ever before to ensure women and families across Somerset get the support and advice they need throughout their maternity journey. In line with the NHS Long Term Plan, we’re developing a maternal mental health service in Somerset, which will bring all of these services together to support women with their maternal mental health.”*

The three lived experience peer support workers have joined the perinatal mental health team as an extra intervention support, to help women recover from mental health issues. Christina is one of the support workers on the team, she said:

*“As a peer support worker, we reflect on our own lived experiences, and can empathise with what women are going through. This means that pregnant women, or mums with a newborn baby, get the support and understanding of someone who has been in a similar position to them.*

*“We don’t have experience of all mental health issues, but between us we have experience of birth trauma, birth loss, postnatal depression, isolation, and single motherhood. We can listen, chat and share experiences when appropriate – by sharing evidence of our own recovery, it can offer hope to those currently struggling themselves.*

*“While we don’t provide clinical support, we can support in the day-to-day things – going out for a walk, having a sling fitted, attending a baby group or helping with support and finances. We’re often a good link between midwives, health visitors, and care co-ordinators, and can signpost to helpful services. The women we work with allow us into their homes when they are at their most vulnerable, so being a peer support worker is a real privilege. As people with lived experience, our recovery journeys are still ongoing ourselves, but being able to support our colleagues and the women we work with, helps us in our own journeys.”*

## **Somerset’s maternity teams celebrate top survey results from mums in the South West**

Maternity teams at Yeovil Hospital and Somerset NHS Foundation Trust have received outstanding feedback for the care they provide families across the county.

Results from the NHS Patient Survey Programme positioned our hospitals among the highest scoring trusts in the region for many areas of maternity care.



Click [here](#) to find out more.

## International Day of the Midwife 2022

### Words from Sallyann King the Interim Director of Midwifery for Somerset

*“The 5<sup>th</sup> May 2022 was International Day of the Midwife, a day recognising worldwide for the brilliant hard work midwifery teams do daily for mothers, their babies, and their families. Our midwifery teams have worked harder than ever to make sure every family has received the support and care they needed over the last few years. The trust has had some great reasons to celebrate this year, but my favourite moment was finding out that both maternity teams at Yeovil Hospital and Somerset NHS Foundation Trust received outstanding feedback on the care we provided to families across the county in the national [NHS Patient Survey Programme](#). I am delighted by these results and just wanted to reiterate how exceptionally proud I am of our maternity teams and how they have responded to the feedback, using it to help us improve further.”*

In celebration of the International Day of the Midwife 2022, the trust asked some of our fantastic midwives why they became a midwife, the answers are inspiring. Click the image to find out what our midwives said!

Chief Medical Officer Dan Meron, joined the team for a hands-on experience by becoming a shadow midwife for the morning at YDH, while Chief of People and Organisational Development Isobel Clements, was shadowing midwives at Musgrove Park Hospital, learning more about how the teams run the services and getting to meet a few members of our great team. During the day, there was individually wrapped cakes given to our teams.



## New and Re-elected Governors

Following the recent elections, below a summary of the results and details of the new and re-elected Governors.

### **New Public Governors:**

Nick Crow – South Somerset  
Paull Robathan - South Somerset  
Michael Beales - South Somerset  
David Recardo - South Somerset

### **Re-elected Public Governors:**

Bob Champion – Mendip  
Judith Goodchild – Sedgemoor  
Alan Peak – Outside Somerset  
Sue Steele - South Somerset  
Jeanette Keech – West Somerset and Taunton  
Kate Butler - West Somerset and Taunton

**New Staff Governors:**

Joe Silsby  
Shabnum Ali

**New Appointed Governors:**

Cllr Ross Henley – Associate Lead Members for public health, equalities and diversity

*We hope you have found the briefing interesting and informative and would welcome your feedback. Do let us know if there is anything else you would like to see included in future editions or that you thought wasn't interesting or helpful. Please leave your comments at [members@somersetft.nhs.uk](mailto:members@somersetft.nhs.uk). Thank you.*

**Keep in touch with us**

Website [www.somersetft.nhs.uk](http://www.somersetft.nhs.uk)

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