

Monday 07 September 2026

New stroke services launching in Somerset and Dorset

The NHS in Somerset and Dorset is introducing improved stroke services designed to ensure patients can access specialist emergency hyper acute stroke care more quickly, 24/7.

This follows significant work by NHS partners across Somerset and Dorset to develop, test and prepare for the new services to open for patients. Investment has been made in workforce, facilities and clinical pathways, including refurbishment of stroke units, recruitment of additional nursing and medical staff, development of a new standard operating procedure and simulation testing to support implementation.

Clinical and operational leaders from Dorset County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, Somerset NHS Foundation Trust and South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust have confirmed their readiness to open the new units for local patients.

Dr Bernie Marden, Chief Medical Officer for Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire, NHS Dorset and NHS Somerset Integrated Care Boards, said

“We would like to thank the clinical, operational and support teams whose hard work, expertise and commitment have helped make these improvements possible. We would also like to thank those groups who helped to design the new services including patients with lived experience of stroke, carers, The Stroke Association, Healthwatch and many others who've helped to shape these developments.

We all know that getting timely treatment, and importantly in the right place, is in the best interest of a stroke patient and this system helps us to make that judgement much quicker. We are committed to finding the best solution for all stroke patients in Somerset and Dorset.”

The new service will go live on **Wednesday 9 September 2026**.

Key information for stakeholders

- From 9 September 2026, emergency stroke care will be provided through two 24/7 Hyperacute Stroke Units (HASUs) at Musgrove Park Hospital in Taunton and Dorset County Hospital in Dorchester.



- Yeovil Hospital will continue to provide an Acute Stroke Unit and stroke rehabilitation services, enabling many patients to continue their recovery closer to home following their emergency care.
- Significant investment has been made to support the new model, including:
 - refurbishment of the stroke unit at Musgrove Park Hospital to provide new hyperacute stroke beds, improved rehabilitation facilities and a ward layout that enables the service to operate as a single unit;
 - creation of a new rehabilitation gym and improved therapy facilities at Yeovil Hospital, including an activities of daily living (ADL) flat with lounge, kitchen and bathroom facilities to support rehabilitation;
 - refurbishment of the Stroke Unit at Dorset County Hospital to support delivery of the new service model.
- Additional nursing and medical staff have been recruited to support delivery of the new service.
- Partners have developed a new standard operating procedure covering the stroke pathway. This has been agreed by stroke teams at Musgrove Park Hospital, Yeovil Hospital, Dorset County Hospital and the South Western Ambulance Service, and has been tested through simulation exercises.
- Dorset County Hospital and Somerset teams have worked together to establish a collaborative pathway for stroke patients across Somerset and Dorset.
- Following successful recruitment, training and refurbishment work, Dorset County Hospital is extending its services to patients living in Somerset and north Dorset.
- Clinical and operational teams have confirmed that the necessary staffing, training, protocols, estate improvements and operational processes are in place to support a safe go-live.
- Following implementation, teams across Dorset County Hospital, Musgrove Park Hospital and Yeovil Hospital will continue to work closely together. Daily huddles have been established to support the transition and ensure patients receive joined-up care.
- Teams will meet daily to discuss patients admitted to Dorset County Hospital and plan for their return to Yeovil Hospital at the earliest appropriate stage of their stroke care pathway.
- The new pathways have been developed collaboratively by Somerset NHS Foundation Trust, Dorset County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust, Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust, NHS Somerset and NHS Dorset.

- The new service will be monitored closely following implementation and will include a range of patient safety measures. Providers will work together to support patient safety and monitor delivery of the benefits set out in the Decision-Making Business Case.
- Public communications will continue to reinforce the FAST message and encourage people to call 999 immediately if they suspect a stroke.

How stakeholders can help

We would be grateful for your support in continuing to **remind people to call 999 if they think they, or someone they know, are having a stroke**:

- Raising awareness of the signs and symptoms of stroke and the importance of acting FAST.
- Encouraging people to call 999 immediately if they suspect a stroke, even if symptoms seem mild or temporary.
- Sharing information about the new stroke services through your networks and channels.

Resources [Stroke Pathway and ACT Fast - Google Drive](#)

NHS partners will continue to keep stakeholders informed of implementation progress and key developments as the new stroke service becomes established across Somerset and Dorset.

PVT

A new **Pre-Hospital Video Triage (PVT)** system is also being introduced across Somerset and Dorset, enabling ambulance clinicians to consult stroke specialists via video link while assessing patients. Hospital specialists can assess patients remotely and prepare scans, including CT and MRI scans, before arrival, helping to reduce the time taken to make a diagnosis. Initial trials of PVT in Dorset helped get patients to the right place first time and, in some cases, enabled stroke to be ruled out without the need for a hospital admission.

ENDS

Notes:

Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire (BSW), Dorset, and Somerset Integrated Care Boards are working closely together as part of a regional cluster. This collaborative approach supports shared planning and coordinated responses to system pressures.

Clustering is designed to lead on to formal mergers, however, this is not expected to take place until April 2027.

For more information on BSW, Dorset and Somerset ICBs visit our websites at:

BSW: <https://bsw.icb.nhs.uk/> Somerset: [NHS Somerset ICB](#) Dorset: [NHS Dorset – Integrated Care Board](#)