

# Reconfiguration of stroke services in Somerset

## Stakeholder update #3 – November 2025

*This stakeholder update is jointly produced by NHS Somerset Integrated Care Board, Somerset NHS Foundation Trust (Somerset FT) and Dorset County Hospital (DCH) NHS Foundation Trust to support the implementation phase of work to reconfigure and improve stroke services in Somerset.*

### 1. Background

Following a full statutory public consultation in early 2023, NHS Somerset made a formal decision in January 2024 to provide hyper acute stroke units (HASUs) at Musgrove Park Hospital in Taunton, Dorset County Hospital in Dorchester, an acute stroke unit (ASU) at both Musgrove Park and Yeovil District hospitals and a TIA (Transient Ischemic Attack) service seven days a week at MPH and five days a week at YDH. The decision was taken after full consideration of the Decision-Making Business Case (DMBC).

The project is now in its implementation phase.

### 2. Updates from Somerset NHS Foundation Trust

#### Clinical pathways

Work continues to ensure that clinical pathways deliver seamless care for patients, regardless of where they live. Stroke clinicians from all three hospitals (Yeovil District Hospital, Musgrove Park Hospital and Dorset County Hospital) are working together with colleagues from other departments such as imaging and emergency departments to work on the detail of how patients will receive care. This work also includes partners such as South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SWAST), community services and neighbouring trusts.

#### Building work

Work to refurbish the stroke unit at Musgrove Park Hospital is planned to begin in the near future.

A start date for building work on the ASU at Yeovil District Hospital is not yet confirmed. This is due to the complexity of new regulations that were introduced as part of the Building Safety Act following the Grenfell tragedy. These new regulations mean that any work in tower blocks has to be approved by the Building Safety Regulator before building work can be carried out. Due to the complexity of the new requirements, it is taking longer than expected to submit our plans to the Building Safety Regulator. Work will start as soon as approval is received from the regulator.

### **3. Updates from Dorset County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust**

Building works to expand Dorset County Hospital's (DCH) Stroke Unit and create additional Hyper Acute Stroke Unit (HASU) capacity are progressing well.

Contractors Westmade Ltd have removed the existing internal walls and the floor levelling and new partition wall installation works are now underway. The contractor is due to hand over the space on 27 March 2026.

While the refurbishment taking place, the existing Stroke Unit team has relocated to our Mary Anning Unit.

To support the increasing number of patients that we anticipate will attend DCH, the Trust will also be recruiting additional staff and this will include medical, nursing, allied health professional, radiology and stroke pathway roles.

The team at DCH are continuing to work closely with colleagues in Somerset to make sure pathways are seamless for patients, regardless of where they live. The plans to extend stroke services will ensure the national standards of care continue to be met.

### **4. Call-in request update**

As covered in previous editions of this stakeholder update, several requests were made to the Secretary of State to review the decision taken in March 2024 to implement the new model of hyper acute stroke services for the population of Somerset. However, the Secretary of State made the decision that the call-in requests did not meet the criteria for ministerial intervention and took the view that NHS Somerset is best placed to determine the needs of our local population.

More recently, in September 2025, Minister of State for Health Karin Smyth turned down a further call-in request from Yeovil MP Adam Dance saying The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care 'remains content for any decisions relating to the proposal to be taken by the ICB as the local commissioning body for hospital-based stroke services in Somerset'.

NHS Somerset and Somerset FT are continuing to engage with Mr Dance to discuss his concerns.

### **5. Stroke Stakeholder Reference Group updates**

Since the start of the implementation phase the Stroke Stakeholder Reference Group (SSRG) has been led, co-ordinated and supported by an effective and close working relationship between the Transformation Management Office, the NHS Somerset Engagement Team and an independent chair from Healthwatch Somerset. However, due to recent changes at Healthwatch, the role of chair has been taken on by Jo Garbett of the Stroke Association, who continues to be supported by NHS Somerset colleagues, as above. This forum provides a two-way flow of information with the JCSB and is one way in which the voice of service users and local people is heard by project leaders.

The SSRG met in October and discussed the following:

- The Stroke Stakeholder Reference Group (SSRG) has undergone key leadership changes, with Jo Garbett appointed as the new Chair following Gill Keniston-Goble, and Caroline Greaves assuming the ICB liaison role as Julie Jones departs. Kat Tottle will continue to provide engagement team support.
- Current workstreams remain active across several areas:
- Ambulance and Transfer Workstream: South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust presented data on ambulance handover processes and 'hear-and-treat' pathways; further data on Somerset response-time outliers will be shared.
- Training and Clinical Equity Workstream: Cross-county collaboration continues to align nurse and medical stroke-care training; confirmation of carer inclusion in the package is expected at the next meeting.
- Patient and Carer Information Workstream: Work is underway to produce stroke-survivor information videos and use iPads (funded by the League of Friends) to support patient communication during transfers.
- Transport and Access Workstream: The Red Cross has withdrawn from the proposed transport pilot; alternative operators and options will be explored at the November meeting.
- Site Visits and Transparency: Members supported arranging both pre- and post-refurbishment visits to stroke units at Somerset FT and DCH. A virtual video tour is being developed to address infection control and confidentiality concerns.
- Implementation Oversight: The group will continue to monitor progress towards the April 2026 implementation date, providing feedback to the Joint System Board on communication, engagement, and patient experience.
- Future Meetings: The next meeting is scheduled for 10 November 2025, with planned agenda items including transport solutions, site visit arrangements, and updates on implementation progress ahead of the April 2026 go-live.

## 6. Previous stakeholder updates

Previous stakeholder updates on the reconfiguration of stroke services in Somerset [can be read here](#).

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