

Become a Healthwatch Somerset Board member - Help shape health and social care in Somerset



We're looking for new volunteer Board members to help make the NHS and social care system work better for local people.

The Healthwatch network is the only patient and public representative group with a presence in every local authority area in England, with a direct link to local health and care leaders and, through Healthwatch England, to national bodies and the Government.

The Healthwatch Somerset Board plays a vital role in leading this work locally. Our volunteer Board members guide and monitor our strategy, work and organisation, and represent the voice of local people at strategic meetings with health and care partners.

Maybe you have been volunteering during the pandemic and want to support ongoing health and social care development in Somerset, or you may have a particular area of interest, for example mental health. Whatever your knowledge,

experience, and skills, if you live in Somerset and are passionate about helping local communities shape their health and social care services, we'd love to hear from you.

[Find out more on our website](#) or email to request a recruitment pack: sheila.burridge@healthwatchesomerset.co.uk.

Help shape Somerset's vision for community hospitals



Somerset's NHS wants to hear what local people think about the role of community hospitals to inform their plans for the future of healthcare in the county. You can share your views by signing up for one of the interactive online workshops that will be held in June:

- Thurs **17 June**, 3.30pm-5pm, [eventbrite.com/e/156475210567](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/156475210567)
- Weds **23 June**, 1pm-2.30pm, [eventbrite.com/e/156708554505](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/156708554505)
- Tues **29 June**, 6pm-7.30pm, [eventbrite.com/e/156709041963](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/156709041963)
- Weds **30 June**, 1pm-2.30pm, [eventbrite.com/e/156710718979](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/156710718979)

If you are unable to get involved online or have further questions about the event, contact: somccg.fitformyfuture@nhs.net.

Dental reform

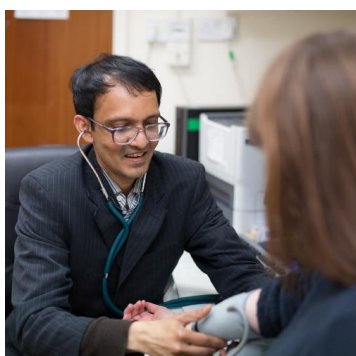
Since the start of the pandemic we have continued to hear from local people about difficulties accessing dentistry in Somerset. Many people aren't able to register with a dentist and struggle to get support when their dental needs become urgent.



A new report from Healthwatch England (24 May), shows that access to NHS dental care continues to be a problem for people across the country, with Healthwatch recording a 22% rise in calls and complaints about dentistry between January and March 2021. [Read more from Healthwatch England.](#)

We will continue to monitor the situation locally, working with other regional Healthwatch to encourage NHS England to prioritise plans to improve access for local people. If you have an experience of dentistry, good or bad, then please tell us about it. [Share your views.](#)

Accessing your GP



We looked at access to GP services last year and found that people were struggling to see a GP face to face. This has been an issue across the country and the guidance for GPs has now changed. The Royal College of Physicians and Healthwatch England have issued guidance about what patients can now expect: [NHS appointments and remote care: Knowing your choices.](#)

Read our reports:

- [Access to primary care GP surgeries in Somerset: What local people told us](#)
 - [Accessing health and social care during COVID-19: A Somerset perspective](#)
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Have your say on specialised services...



Apply to become a Patient and Public Voice partner today.



NHS England and NHS Improvement is recruiting to a range of Patient Public Voice (PPV) partner roles on groups with responsibility for commissioning specialised services. This includes, for example, services treating complex conditions like rare cancers and genetic disorders, and other rare medical conditions or surgical procedures. The closing date for applications is 20 June.

[Find out about the roles and how to apply.](#)

Celebrating our volunteers: Volunteers' Week 2021

A TIME TO SAY
THANKS

**1-7
JUNE**

Get involved!

VOLUNTEERS' WEEK

It's time to celebrate and say thanks for the contribution millions of people make across the UK through volunteering - including those who support our work.

Currently we have 39 volunteers, including nine Young Listeners who recently joined us to work on our new youth engagement project. We want to say a huge thank you for all you have done this year:

- Helping people have their say by carrying out surveys over the phone, taking part in online forums and meetings.
- Reviewing and improving public information about local services.
- Helping with the local volunteering efforts during the pandemic, supporting people who were self-isolating or shielding, and helping at vaccination sites.
- Supporting the review of a new nursing training programme across the county.

Healthwatch Somerset Volunteer Officer, Sheila Burridge, said: "Our volunteers are at the heart of what we do, and we are so grateful for their support. Volunteering is a great way to make a difference, and we like to support our volunteers in their work through the development of new skills and knowledge. During Volunteers' Week we will be taking part in an online training session about wellbeing and mindfulness. We will also, finally, be meeting in small groups face-to-face to enjoy tea, cake and a chat!"

If you are interested in volunteering, or you know someone who is, visit our website to [find out about our volunteering opportunities](#), or [contact us](#).

Speak up and help make health and social care better
for you and your community

Healthwatch Somerset is the county's independent health and social care champion. We exist to ensure that people are at the heart of care. Our dedicated team of staff and volunteers listen to what people like about local health and care services, and what could be improved. These views are then shared with the decision-making organisations in the county, so together we can make a real difference. We serve the geographical area of Somerset County Council, which includes the districts of Mendip, Sedgemoor, South Somerset and Somerset West and Taunton.



The **Healthwatch Somerset** service is run by Evolving Communities CIC, a community interest company limited by guarantee and registered in England and Wales with company number 08464602. The registered office is at Unit 2 Hampton Park West, Melksham, SN12 6LH.



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