

## February 2025



### Accelerating the impact of volunteering in health & care



Sheila, our Volunteer Officer, recently **spoke on a national webinar** organised by **Helpforce**, who work with partners across health, care and the community to develop and evaluate services that optimise the difference volunteers can make.

The audience consisted mainly of NHS and Trust colleagues from across the country. Sheila talked about our **Healthwatch volunteers**, how they are recruited, and the roles they carry out.

For more information on volunteering with us visit our webpage: **[Volunteer with us](#)**.



### Musculoskeletal Community Appointment Day

Somerset Foundation Trust's Physiotherapy Team, working in partnership with Somerset Activity Sports Partnership (SASP) invited us to **host a stall at a community-centred approach to musculoskeletal (MSK) care** event at Victoria Park Community Centre in Bridgwater in February.

On the day **patients were guaranteed a physio appointment** to discuss their MSK condition. Patients were then able to visit the community village to talk with a variety of local community groups including **SASP, Age UK** and **Village Agents**.



# A unique resource for cancer journeys launched on World Cancer Day



We were excited to be invited to the launch of an innovative resource for children and young people, who have an adult going through treatment for colorectal cancer. The event took place on **World Cancer Day at Yeovil District Hospital (YDH) Wellbeing hub.**

The resource is an **interactive journal packed full of information and support.** It includes images of hospital staff, treatment areas, QR codes for videos, and space throughout to record how they are feeling, and any questions they may want to ask. It comes in the form of an A5 folder with additional inserts as the journey progresses.

It was created by YDH Colorectal Cancer Support Worker, Amy Harper who designed it to be an adult's cancer journey, through a child's eyes. Amy said:

***"I was inspired to begin this passion project of mine because I was a parent with cancer myself and I had a real understanding of how hard a conversation of this kind can be."***

This journal is **designed for families dealing with colorectal cancer**, and it is hoped they will share their thoughts based on their experiences. After a year, the creators will look at the feedback to make improvements, to expand the resource **to cover all types of cancer care** in the Somerset NHS Foundation Trust.



These resources were developed with the **support of Somerset NHS Charity**, The FruitFly collective – Parenting with cancer<sup>1</sup>, and Sarah Temple ECHAP – Somerset Mindful Emotion Coaching<sup>2</sup>.

**To read more about this project go to: [www.somersetft.nhs.uk/first-of-a-kind-cancer-journey-scrapbook-launches-on-world-cancer-day](http://www.somersetft.nhs.uk/first-of-a-kind-cancer-journey-scrapbook-launches-on-world-cancer-day)**

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fruitflycollective.com/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://mindfulemotioncoaching.co.uk/>

## A 15-step report for maternity and neonatal care

**Somerset Maternity and Neonatal Voices (SMNV)** has published a **15-step report for maternity and neonatal care in Somerset**.

SMNV is commissioned by the Somerset NHS Integrated Care Board to fulfil its responsibility to involve service users and communities in maternity and neonatal services.



The 15-Steps template is an NHS England toolkit that looks **at improving the quality of services**, usually in hospital settings, by bringing in 'fresh eyes' to visit, observe and spot things that staff might walk past. First impressions can have a big effect on people's confidence in the space where they are being cared for and the services being provided.

You can read their report here: [15-Steps-report.pdf](#)

## GP says 28-day plan helps to reverse health issues



Dr Campbell Murdoch, a GP from Wincanton Health Centre, has developed a 28-day plan, which is helping to **reverse preventable health problems** such as pre-diabetes and joint issues. His diet-focused scheme concentrates on metabolism – how well we process food. As part of **Metabolic Health 28 Day Plan**, patients attend metabolic health coaching sessions every two weeks, and **are encouraged to commit to long-term changes**.

The scheme is **endorsed by the local NHS in Somerset**, and since it started in 2024 around 150 patients have signed-up to the programme. This means that they adjust their diet and avoid certain complex carbohydrates, such as potatoes.

Patients who have a high body mass index, and signs of inflammatory disease, are referred to a metabolic health **peer support group**, that holds sessions every two weeks in Wincanton Surgery. **The role of health coaches**, as part of the wider GP practice team, **is also important** in helping patients improve their metabolism.

Many of the common problems that bring patients to GPs include aches and pains, feeling fed up, joint problems, skin problems, and excess belly fat. All of these problems could be linked to poor metabolic health.



# 3-minute Young Carers Action Day (YCAD) survey

**Young carers and young adult carers can feel overwhelmed by their caring responsibilities** and balancing this with other areas of life, such as school. They need a break, and that's why this year's YCAD takes place under the theme of 'Give me a break'.

The Young Carers Alliance's theme also highlights **the importance of giving young carers a break in life, and the chance for them to succeed when given the proper support**. That could be at school with teachers giving young carers more support to help balance caring responsibilities with schoolwork; or it could be employers giving young adult carers access to mentoring schemes, career insight days or internships.

As part of this, they've **launched a quick 3-minute survey for Young, and Young Adult Carers** ahead of Young Carers Action Day on the challenges of taking a break.



The Young Carers Alliance would be grateful if you could share it with the Young, and Young Adult Carers: **3-minute Survey**. **The survey closes on 2nd March.**

## Young Carers Action Day – Give Me a Break!

**Young Carers Action Day 2025 is on 12th March**, and this year's theme is "**Give Me A Break**", focusing on the importance of rest and respite for young carers. Following consultation with hundreds of young carers and with input from our Young Carers Advisory Panel, 'Give Me A Break' has been chosen as the theme for Young Carers Action 2025. The 'Give Me A Break' theme for this year's Young Carers Action Day allows us to **explore two crucial areas of support young carers need**.

Young carers have so much responsibility on their shoulders that they often have little time for themselves and are at serious risk of burnout. They need a break. We know that young carers are significantly more likely to report severe psychological distress than their peers without a caring role. **They need time out from their caring responsibilities** to rest, recharge and focus on themselves – be it for a hobby, or just spending time with friends, like other people their age.

The theme also speaks to young carers' need for education professionals and employers to give them a break in life. **This could be offering more support at school to young carers, recognising that their responsibilities at home** can mean they often feel overwhelmed at having to juggle their caring responsibilities with schoolwork. By understanding these pressures, and helping young carers manage them, education professionals can give young carers the break they need to succeed at school, and in further, and higher education.



# Find out about the Learning Disability Register

If your child has a learning disability, **it is important they get the right help and support so they can live their best life**. Organisations like the NHS are here to help. If your child is on the Learning Disability (LD) Register, they will be able to get **extra health support from your GP Practice**. This also includes an Annual Health Check from the age of 14 onwards.



This information is to **help you have a talk with your Doctor (GP)** about your concerns and if your child should be on the LD Register. **The LD Register is for** babies, children, young people and adults who have a learning disability, and are registered as patients at their local GP practice.

The LD register lets the health staff at the GP practice know that a person has a learning disability and that the person may need reasonable adjustments.

## Some examples of reasonable adjustments are:

- offering longer appointments
- having a quiet room waiting room
- information in easy-read or large print
- having a carer or support worker attend
- having a choice of a face-to-face or virtual appointment



## What are the benefits of being on the Learning Disability Register?

- an annual Health Check from the age of 14 and older
- a Health Action Plan
- NHS Flu vaccine
- NHS COVID-19 vaccine



**If you are their main carer, you should also be registered as a carer**, to make sure that you can support them to attend appointments, or to talk professionals on their behalf.

- you may also be entitled to a free NHS carer's health check

**You can find out further information here: [Find out about the Learning Disability Register](#)**

# Pre-assessment Autism and ADHD Pathway

Pre-assessment pathway documents for Autism and ADHD, (also known as Neurodevelopmental Pre-Assessment Pathway) can be found on Somerset Council's website: [Pre Assessment Autism and ADHD Pathway](#)



The documents on their website have been developed in collaboration with education, health, and care colleagues, as well as parent carers, children and young people. They have been developed to support education settings, practitioners, and parent carers, so that everyone better understands the pre-assessment pathway.

## Learning Disabilities, Autism and Diabetes – Training



It is recognised nationally that there is a lack of training for Healthcare Professionals, Carers, and Support Workers to enable them to support people with a diagnosis of diabetes, who also have a diagnosis of Learning Disabilities, or Neurodiversity.

**Cambridge Diabetes Education Programme (CDEP)** offers Diabetes Training for Professionals working with People with Learning Disabilities, or Neurodiversity.

**Somerset has worked with the CDEP to develop eLearning to raise awareness for anyone working with a person who has a diagnosis of Learning Disabilities, or Neurodiversity**, to assist in their consideration of what support they need with their diabetes. The course features patient stories from people with lived experience.

The programme is commissioned by Somerset and **anyone who wishes to access the programme can contact CDEP**, and ask for a log-in to complete the training. The training is now available nationally for anybody to access.

Find out more about this here: [\*\*Cambridge Diabetes Education Programme\*\*](#).

## Launching Helplines Awareness Day video

Helplines Partnership is excited to launch its video for **Helplines Awareness Day 2025**, highlighting the vital role helplines play in supporting people every day.

For many people, **helplines are often a lifeline**, ensuring they get the support they need when they need it most.

As we lead up to **Helplines Awareness Day on Sunday 23 February**, Helplines Partnership want to reach as many people as possible with their video, raising awareness of the importance of helplines.

**Please show your support** by watching, sharing, liking, and commenting on the video using the hashtag **#HelplinesAwarenessDay2025**.

**The video is available on YouTube here:**

[\*\*#HelplinesAwarenessDay2025\*\*](#)





## Do you have any health and care news?

If you have any health and care stories you would like included in our next Newsletter please email Karen: [karen.ball@healthwatchsomerset.co.uk](mailto:karen.ball@healthwatchsomerset.co.uk) by **17<sup>th</sup> March 2025**.

## Share Your Feedback

**Get in touch** to share your feedback and help make health and social care better for you and your community.

**Talk to us and help make health and social care better for you and your community.**

**Healthwatch Somerset** is the county's health and social care champion. We're here to listen to your experiences of using local health and care services, and to hear about the issues that really matter to you. We are independent and impartial, and anything you share with us is confidential. We can also help you find reliable and trustworthy information and advice to help you to get the care and support you need. As an independent statutory body we have the power to make sure that NHS leaders, and other decision makers listen to your feedback and use it to improve standards of care.

We are part of a network of over 150 Healthwatch across the country. We cover the unitary local authority area of Somerset Council. We work together through Healthwatch England to make sure your feedback creates positive change in health and care nationally as well as locally.



The **Healthwatch Somerset** service is run by **The Advocacy People**, an independent charity – Charity No. 1080679 limited by guarantee and registered in England and Wales with Company No. 3963421. The registered office is at PO Box 375, Hastings, East Sussex, TN34 9HU

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