

South West Clinical Senate Citizens' Assembly

Summary for Individual Healthwatch Annual Reports:

An invaluable contribution is made by Healthwatch and the South West Citizens' Assembly to the work of the South West Clinical Senate. The Senate's purpose is to collaborate with commissioners to establish the best possible setups for services, all in the pursuit of providing high-quality, long-lasting healthcare. To accomplish this, the Senate creates inquiries related to specific service areas, and these questions are deliberated upon during Senate Council meetings. Through this process, the Clinical Senate aspires to become a valuable ally, offering essential insights and guidance to the entire healthcare system.

The role of Healthwatch is to bring together representatives with lived experience in order to monitor and improve services across the South West, and to identify opportunities for change at the highest level. As Chairs of the Senate and the Citizens' Assembly we appreciate the involvement of our Healthwatch colleagues in this mission.

Citizens' Assembly Annual Report 2024-25

In 2024 -25 the Citizens' Assembly met monthly alternating between business meetings and development sessions for our members. Our hot topics included:

- **Mental Health** – All of our members reported delays for care and treatment for Children and Young People delivering mental health services. Healthwatch Wiltshire published a report following engagement with CYP, gathering views on their mental and emotional wellbeing. We considered the impact of in rural areas including access to services, rural transport, and locations. NHS commissioners were invited to our meeting to help us understand the All-age Mental Health Strategy, and NHS England Patient Participation Team shared their 'Crowd sourcing' work, which involved reaching out to young people to gain greater insight into care and treatment. The clinical senate agreed to consider this topic for a deliberative topic on 28 November 2024 and a final report with suggested outcomes was published on 20 February 2025. You can read the report [here](#).
- **Virtual Wards** - No place like home . Virtual wards, also known as Hospital at Home, treat patients in their own homes who would traditionally be cared for in hospital. This approach aims to improve patient outcomes, reduce hospital bed occupancy, and enhance the patient experience. Dr Jim Moore a GP in Gloucestershire and the National Clinical Co-Lead (Primary Care) for the National Cardiac Transformation Programme gave us a presentation and answered questions. This programme has worked closely on NHSE initiatives such as Managing Heart Failure @ Home and more recently developed the National (NHSE) guidance for the Virtual Ward

care for people with heart failure. 23% of patients treated in a virtual ward achieved a more independent social care outcome than they would have in an acute setting.

- **Developing Positive Organisational Cultures** – In the wake of the Lucy Letby trial the Citizens' Assembly discussed the meaning of culture promoting a “just culture” and the importance of embedding organisational culture within healthcare, particularly during times of transformation. The topic of culture needs to remain a focus area in light of current circumstances regarding the “abolishment” of NHSE. We have asked the Clinical Senate to consider action locally to promote specific cultural change. We have also encouraged organisations to recognise the importance of organisational culture and reflect on how it might be integrated into their engagement strategies.
- **Patient Participation Groups (PPG)** – Our members reported challenges with accessing PPGs and understanding how learning is shared. We invited the Chair of a local PPG network to explain the contractual requirement for GP surgeries to have a PPG, and to discuss how an increasing number of practices are merging and establishing joint PPGs. We recognise that not all practices have active PPGs, therefore we have asked the Clinical Senate to support and encourage active participation and shared learning among local practices.
- **NHS App** – In June 2024, a local acute Trust expressed concerns about the NHS App, noting that the availability of abnormal test results before discussing them with patients had caused distress and anxiety. The Clinical Senate asked NHSE's SW Digital team to review current best practice and seek assurance that safeguards are in place to ensure results with concerns are discussed before they are available on the NHS App. We have asked the Clinical Senate and SW Cancer network to work with NHS Digital to ensure safe outcomes.

In 2025 – 2026 we plan to explore additional aspects of the [Darzie Report](#) published in October 2024 and also focus on the three big shifts: moving health and care from hospital to the community, moving from analogue to digital and from sickness to prevention. Additionally, we aim to gain deeper understanding of the End-of-Life Care Bill. The Citizens' Assembly also wants to continue strengthening our membership and representation, expand our network connections, and further develop our strategic offer.



Debbie Rigby
Chair of the SW Citizens Assembly



Dr Marion Andrews-Evans BEM
Chair of the SW Clinical Senate