



John Short 'Yankee Jack' – Watchet Harbour

July 2026

June 2026 in numbers

A short summary of team achievements in June.



- **One** report launch
- **One** Enter and View (E&V) visit
- **Three** requests for our volunteer Readers Panel to review NHS documentation
- **20** Events
- **25** Meetings
- **312** direct engagements with people

These figures may be higher as it can be hard to record all contact and all feedback.

How your feedback is making a difference

Our new [Annual Report 2025/26](#) is now live. It showcases how your experiences have helped improve health and care services across Somerset and highlights the issues that matter most to our communities.

Over the past year, **more than 2,000 people told us about their care**, and we supported **over 3,000 people with information and advice**.

Take a look and see the impact of speaking up.

If you have an experience you'd like to share, [we'd love to hear from you](#).



Supporting the armed forces community



Armed Forces Week is a national opportunity to recognise and thank serving personnel, veterans, reservists, and military families for their contribution. It ends with Armed Forces Day (AFD), a celebration of service and community.

This year, we attended both Bridgwater AFD and Somerset AFD in Taunton. We spoke with members of the Armed Forces community about their experiences of health and care services, while also providing information, advice, and signposting to local support.

These events are about more than displays and entertainment. They help bring military and civilian communities together, creating opportunities for people to share experiences, build understanding, and learn about the support available to serving personnel, veterans, and their families. Somerset Armed Forces Day also highlights the important role of veterans' organisations and the [Armed Forces Covenant](#) in supporting those who serve or have served.

Keeping children with allergies safe

From September 2026, all schools in England will be required to keep emergency adrenaline auto-injectors (allergy pens) on site to help treat severe allergic reactions.

Under new [Department for Education guidance](#), schools will also need to train staff to use the pens, have a whole-school allergy policy, and create individual healthcare plans for pupils with allergies.



The change follows **years of campaigning** by the parents of Benedict Blythe, who died from an allergic reaction aged five. They have worked to introduce [Benedict's Law](#) to help ensure that no child is put at risk because of gaps in allergy support and safety at school.

The new requirements aim to improve preparedness, provide greater reassurance for families, and **help keep children with allergies safe** while they learn.

Image credit: [Free Food Image on Unsplash](#)

Hospital parking: Could you get a discount or free parking?

Many people tell us that **hospital parking can be expensive**, especially if you need to visit regularly. The **good news** is that some patients, visitors and carers may be able to park for free or pay less.

You may be able to get help if you are:

- A Blue Badge holder.
- Visiting a relative who is gravely ill.
- Visiting someone who has been in hospital for an extended stay.
- A registered carer.
- A parent staying overnight with a child under 18 in hospital.
- Attending hospital appointments frequently.

Musgrove Park Hospital



Musgrove Park Hospital has **certain arrangements** for people who qualify for **free parking**.

Blue Badge holders

- Park in **Duchess 1 car park only**.
- **Display** your valid Blue Badge clearly.
- The barrier should lift automatically on entry and exit.
- **Parking in another car park** may mean you have to pay.

Frequent outpatients

- Pick up a form from reception and **keep all parking receipts**.
- Pay for parking as normal during your first visits.
- After **nine visits within 90 days**, ask your clinic to sign the form.
- Take the **completed form and receipts** to the General Office (Duchess Building, Level 0) to start the refund process.
- **On your ninth visit**, you can get an exit pass for free parking that day.

Parents staying overnight with a child

- Ask ward staff for a **paediatrics patient permit**.
- **Before leaving**, take the permit to the General Office or Q-Park Lodge.
- You can get free parking between **7.30pm and 8am**.

Carers can refer themselves in advance of their visit, or by ward staff, through the Carers Support email: CarersSupport@somersetft.nhs.uk

For questions about parking at Musgrove, contact the Q-Park office on **01823 344758**.

Yeovil District Hospital

Yeovil Hospital also **offers concessions** for:

- Blue Badge holders.
- Registered carers.
- Parents and guardians of babies in the Special Care Baby Unit (SCBU).
- Parents staying overnight with children on the Children's Ward.
- Frequent outpatients (**more than three visits in 30 days**).
- Visitors carrying out bedside vigils.
- Cancer patients having chemotherapy or active treatment.



Ask a member of staff in the department you are visiting for a parking support slip or visit the Welcome Hub for further information.



For more information, visit the [Somerset NHS Foundation Trust](#) hospital parking webpages or read the [NHS car parking guidance](#) on GOV.UK.

If hospital parking has affected you, we would like to hear about your experience and suggestions for improvement.

Free support to help you stop smoking



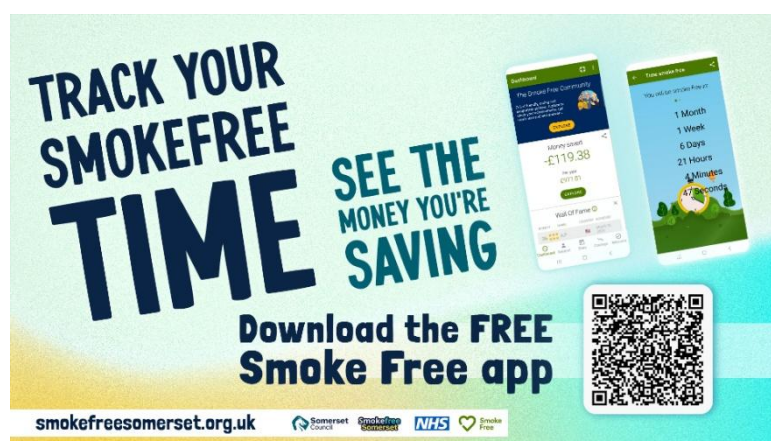
Quitting smoking is one of the best things you can do for your health, but we know it can be difficult to take that first step. Having the right support can make all the difference and the **Smokefree Somerset** service are there to help.

The service have introduced a free **Smoke Free app** which is designed to help people stop smoking **anytime and anywhere**, making it a great option for those with busy schedules or who prefer support that is flexible and easy to access.

The app offers **personalised quit plans**, motivation tools, and progress tracking, to help you stay focused and see how far you've come. It also provides access to **trained advisers** through a 24/7 chat service, so support is available whenever you need it.

Users can also **access stop smoking aids** to help manage cravings and increase their chances of quitting successfully.

Alongside the app, Smokefree Somerset provides **expert advice and tailored support** for people who want help to stop smoking for good.



Every step towards becoming smokefree is a positive one. To find out more about the support available or to get started, visit the **Smokefree Somerset website**.

Millions of unpaid carers to get earlier support



The government has published its **first cross-government action plan** for unpaid carers, focusing on helping people get recognised and supported sooner. Nearly **one in 10 people** in England provide unpaid care for a family member, friend or loved one.

The **Unpaid carers action plan: recognise, refer, reach** includes new ways for carers to identify themselves through the NHS App, improved information sharing across health and care services, and a carers' charter setting out carers' rights. **Young carers** will also be identified earlier and offered better support in school.

Many carers tell us they struggle to find information and feel overlooked. We welcome steps that improve recognition, make it easier to access support, and help carers balance caring with their own health, education and work.

Is your online pharmacy safe?

If you don't use a registered pharmacy, you won't know what's inside your medicine.



Before you buy from an online pharmacy:
Check it's on the pharmacy register.

Protect your health.  [pharmacy register](#) General Pharmaceutical Council

All legitimate pharmacies in Great Britain have to be on the register.

Thousands of fake online pharmacies are operating and sell fake or unsafe medicines that don't work or are harmful to your health.

Before you buy, take a moment to check the pharmacy is registered, so you can be confident you will get medicines that are safe and right for you. All legitimate pharmacies in Great Britain have to be registered with the **General Pharmaceutical Council**.

- Look for the pharmacy's registration details on the website
- Search for them on the official pharmacy register
- Check the details match before making a purchase

These simple steps will help protect your health.

Be cautious if a website offers prescription medicines without a prescription, makes exaggerated health claims, or does not provide a physical address. These can be signs of a fake pharmacy.

Find out more and check a pharmacy's registration at: [How to check an online pharmacy is on the register | General Pharmaceutical Council](#)

Have your say about SEND services in Somerset

If you are a parent or carer of a child or young person aged 0–25 with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), **Somerset** wants to hear about your experiences of local SEND services over the past year. **Your feedback will help** Somerset Council, NHS Somerset, and Somerset Parent Carer Forum **understand** what is working well and where improvements are needed.

The survey covers education, health, independence, and how well children and young people feel supported. The findings **will be used** to shape future support services for families across Somerset.

The survey is confidential, and there is also an opportunity to enter a prize draw.

Click the link to take part in the [Somerset SEND Annual Satisfaction Survey 2026](#).

HAVE YOUR SAY!
Somerset's Special Educational Needs and/or Disability annual satisfaction survey (2026)
Parent carer and practitioner survey

The new Somerset's Special Educational Needs and Disability annual satisfaction survey (2026) is open to all parent carers of children and young people aged 0–25 years with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) and practitioners to share their experiences of services over the last 12 months.

- The responses are anonymous and will be used to improve services for all families and recognise services families' value.
- The survey is open until **Monday 24 August** and a report of the findings will be shared in September.
- It only takes a **few minutes** to complete – your time makes a **big difference**!

WHO IS IT FOR?

- PARENT CARERS
- PRACTITIONERS & PROFESSIONALS

Share your views & enter our prize draw!

Scan the QR code to take part or use the survey links provided.

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SEND Somerset's Local Offer

Community 'angels' move into Angel Place

Sedgemoor Community Connector CIC is a Bridgwater-based community organisation working to reduce loneliness, build confidence, and create welcoming spaces where people feel connected and supported.

Over the past year, they have developed a range of groups and projects including Connect drop-ins, family cooking sessions, adult neurodivergent social groups, men's cooking sessions, and cost-of-living support. Their work **brings people together** through practical, friendly activities that help build skills, confidence, and community.



They are now preparing to open a new community space in **Angel Place, Bridgwater**. The space will support local people of all ages, including families, older residents, neurodivergent adults, carers, and anyone experiencing isolation or needing a friendly place to connect.

Ann-Marie Gould, Director of Sedgemoor Community Connector CIC, told us:



We hope the space will become a welcoming, accessible base for activities, support, conversations and community-led ideas.

The space will **officially open in August**. To find out more visit the **[Sedgemoor Community Connector website](#)**.

Image credit: © Sedgemoor Community Connector

What is NHS Quicker?

NHS Quicker is a **free** tool that helps people find and access the right NHS service for their needs. It can be used on your **computer** or as an app on your **phone**.

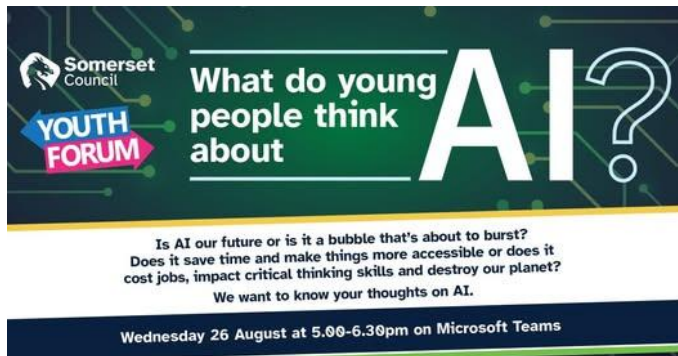
It provides **information about local health and care services**, including Urgent Treatment Centres, pharmacies, GP services, and other support available in your area.

NHS Quicker is **simple to use** and helps people make informed choices about where to go for advice, treatment or support. By helping people find **the right service**, the app can get them care sooner and help reduce A&E demand.



AI: Love it or hate It? Have your say

Artificial intelligence (AI) is everywhere right now – from helping with homework and creating content to powering apps and games. But **what do you think** about it?



Somerset Youth Forum wants to hear from young people aged 11–18 (up to 25 for those with SEND). Are you excited about AI and the opportunities it brings, or concerned about its impact on jobs, mental health, the environment and learning?

This is your chance to share your views, influence local discussions, and make sure young people's voices are heard.

The next Youth Forum session takes place on **Wednesday 26 August, from 5.00–6.30pm on Microsoft Teams**. Get involved: <https://tinyurl.com/JoinYouthForum>

Can't make it? You can still share your views through the [Youth Forum Linktree](#).

Somerset Youth Alliance action day

On 7 July, we attended the [Somerset Youth Alliance](#) (SYA) action day: **Navigating Emerging Challenges**. The event brought together Somerset organisations to share learning, build connections, and discuss the challenges facing young people today.



The day included workshops on neurodiversity from [Bibic](#) and [NeuroConnect](#), Somerset's Violence Reduction Hubs from [Young Somerset](#) and [In The Mix Project](#), and the influence of the online "manosphere" from [M-Path](#).

Jack Harrison, workshop facilitator at **M-Path**, highlighted the importance of listening to boys and young men. **He said:**



If we start talking to our boys, instead of just talking about them, you'll find they have quite a lot to say about it.

Jack explained that M-Path's approach is rooted in **empathy, curiosity, and listening**, helping young people feel heard while encouraging open conversations about masculinity and online influences.

Thank you to all the facilitators, and to [Somerset Youth Theatre](#) for starting the day with an engaging networking activity.

What to expect while waiting for NHS treatment



People waiting for **planned NHS treatment** should soon receive clearer information and better support thanks to **new standards introduced by NHS England**. The standards set out what patients and unpaid carers can expect from the moment a referral is received until treatment begins, is no longer needed, or a patient chooses not to continue.

Under the new standards, patients should hear what happens next **within 28 days** of their referral being received. They should also be **told who to contact** if they have questions about appointments, accessibility needs, or their care.

Patients can expect information in formats that meet their needs, including large print, braille, audio, or British Sign Language support. With consent, information can also be shared with a trusted family member, friend, or unpaid carer.

While waiting, patients should receive advice on managing their condition, guidance on what to do if their health changes, and updates **at least every 12 weeks** confirming they remain on the waiting list.

The standards sit alongside [existing NHS rights](#), including the right to clear information, involvement in decisions about care, and fair treatment without discrimination.

Healthwatch tips

- Keep your **contact details** up to date with your GP practice and hospital.
- Read and **respond promptly** to letters, texts or NHS App messages.
- **Let the hospital know** if you no longer need an appointment or cannot attend.
- **Ask for information** in a format that works for you.
- If your **symptoms get worse** while you are waiting, contact your GP practice or NHS 111 rather than waiting for your next update.
- **Keep a note** of any questions you want to ask at your next appointment.



Find out more: Visit our website [Information and Advice](#) pages to read our plain language summary of the [full NHS guidance](#).

Image credit: [Free stock photo by Samia Javed from Pexels](#)

Free MenB Vaccine for Young People

A free vaccine is now available to help protect young people from **MenB**, a serious infection that can cause **meningitis** and **sepsis**.

You may be able to get the vaccine if you:

- Live in England or Wales and were born between **1 September 2007 and 31 August 2008**.
- Are **under 25** and starting university or living away from home in further education for the first time in autumn 2026.

Starting college or university often means meeting lots of new people and living in shared accommodation. This can make it easier for infections to spread. Having the MenB vaccine before you start can help protect both you and the people around you.

What you need to know

- You need **two doses** for the best protection.
- The doses must be at least **28 days apart**.
- The first dose is available from **community pharmacies in England from 20 July 2026**.
- If you are an international student, try to get vaccinated in your **home country before you begin your studies**.

Getting vaccinated is a simple way to help protect your health as you start a new chapter at college or university.

Book your free vaccine online with [MenB NHS vaccination appointment](#), at a [pharmacy near you](#), or by calling **119**.

The leaflet is titled "Who is eligible to have their MenB vaccines?" and features the NHS logo in the top right corner. On the left, the UK Health Security Agency logo is displayed. A QR code is provided for more information, with the text "Find out more: You can read the leaflet here: qrco.de/havemenb". The eligibility criteria are listed in three bullet points: young adults in the school year 13 age group (born between 1 September 2007 and 31 August 2008); young people born on or after 21 July 2001 and starting as undergraduates at university for the first time in autumn 2026; and young people born on or after 21 July 2001 living in further education accommodation or halls of residence for the first time in autumn 2026. A link is provided to find out where to have the vaccine: nhs.uk/book-menb. A photograph of a smiling young woman with curly hair is on the right side of the leaflet.

UK Health Security Agency

NHS

Who is eligible to have their MenB vaccines?

- young adults in the school year 13 age group (born between 1 September 2007 and 31 August 2008)
- young people born on or after 21 July 2001 and starting as undergraduates at university for the first time in autumn 2026
- young people born on or after 21 July 2001 living in further education accommodation or halls of residence for the first time in autumn 2026

Please visit this link to find out where to have your MenB vaccinations: nhs.uk/book-menb

immunisation
the safest way to protect your health

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Around and about in August 🧐

Come and talk to us about your experiences or for information and advice about health and care services in Somerset.

Date and times	Details
August 4, 2026 11:00 am to 12:30pm	Taunton Library Paul Street, Taunton, TA1 3XZ
August 5, 2026 10:00 am – 4:00 pm	Bridgwater Play Day St Mathews Field, Bridgwater, TA6 7BT
August 14, 2026 11:00 am – 2:00 pm	Blackbrook Community Fun Day – booking required, call 01823 333435 Blackbrook Leisure Centre, Taunton, TA1 2PX
August 17, 2026 10:00 am – 12:00 pm	Minehead Talking Café Methodist Church, 31 The Avenue, Minehead, TA24 5AY
August 19, 2026 1:00 pm – 3:30 pm	Berrow Talking Café at Berrow Village Hall Parsonage Road, Berrow, Burnham-on-Sea, TA8 2NL
August 25, 2026 10:00 am – 12:00 pm	Waffle over waffles at The Waffle Hub Community Café Methodist Church, 35A College St, Burnham-on-Sea, TA8 1AS



Bridgwater Playday 2026

Get ready for a fantastic day out!

Join us at this **free** family on Wednesday 5 August.

With activities for every age, this is guaranteed to be one of the standout days of the summer!

Other important dates

Date	What	Find out more
1 to 7 August	World breast-feeding week	https://waba.org.my/wbw/
18 August	Never Give Up Day	https://nevergiveupday.com/
31 August	International Overdose Awareness Day	https://www.overdoseday.com/
31 August	Summer bank holiday UK	https://www.worldhepatitisday.org/

Want us to share your news?



Do you have any health and care news or events you would like us to include in our **July 2026** newsletter? If so, please send us your text with an accompanying image to info@healthwatchsomerset.co.uk **before Friday 15 August 2026.**

Get in touch

Share your experiences of health and care services in Somerset so we can help influence change and make services better.

Have your say using our website contact form, or call us free on **0800 999 1286.**

Do you **have questions** about health and care 'jargon'? **We can help**, email your enquiries to info@healthwatchsomerset.co.uk or call us free on **0800 999 1286.**

Our website

Visit our [website](#) to:

Find out what we do in a variety of accessible formats	https://www.healthwatchsomerset.co.uk/about-us
Read our news and reports	https://www.healthwatchsomerset.co.uk/newsandreports
Volunteer with us	https://www.healthwatchsomerset.co.uk/volunteer
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If you have been sent this newsletter and would like to join our mailing list, please follow this [sign up to our newsletter](#) link.

Healthwatch Somerset, Suite 12, Wellworthys Business Centre, Parrett Way, Colley Lane, Bridgwater, TA6 5LB

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

Links in this newsletter

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1	https://www.healthwatchsomerset.co.uk/post/speaking-up-for-better-care-healthwatch-somerset-annual-report-2025-26
1	https://www.healthwatchsomerset.co.uk/have-your-say
2	https://www.somerset.gov.uk/community-leisure-and-tourism/somerset-armed-forces-covenant-partnership/
2	https://www.gov.uk/government/news/stronger-protections-for-children-with-allergies-in-school
2	https://benedictblythe.com/benedicts-law/
4	https://www.somersetft.nhs.uk/
4	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nhs-patient-visitor-and-staff-car-parking-principles/nhs-patient-visitor-and-staff-car-parking-principles
5	https://link.smokefreeapp.com/somersetcomms
5	https://smokefreesomerset.org.uk/
5	https://www.gov.uk/government/news/millions-of-unpaid-carers-to-get-recognition-and-earlier-support
5	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/unpaid-carers-action-plan-recognise-refer-reach
6	https://www.pharmacyregulation.org/
6	https://www.pharmacyregulation.org/how-check-online-pharmacy-register
6	https://www.somerset.gov.uk/news/have-your-say-in-somerset-s-send-annual-satisfaction-survey-2026/
6	https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2026SENDsurvey
7	https://angel-place.co.uk/
7	https://www.sedgemoorcommunityconnector.org.uk/
7	https://nhsquicker.co.uk/
8	https://linktr.ee/SomersetYouthForum
8	https://somersetyouthalliance.org.uk/
8	https://bibic.org.uk/
8	https://www.neuroconnect.org.uk/
8	https://www.youngsomerset.org.uk/
8	https://www.inthemixproject.org.uk/
8	https://m-path.co.uk/
8	https://somersetyt.co.uk/
9	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-nhs-constitution-for-england/the-nhs-constitution-for-england
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11	https://bridgwater-tc.gov.uk/bridgwater-playday/
11	https://www.facebook.com/61579623464512/photos/blackbrook-leisure-centre-spa-is-delighted-to-be-hosting-a-free-community-fun-da/122167617470987448/
12	https://www.healthwatchsomerset.co.uk/have-your-say
12	https://www.healthwatchsomerset.co.uk/
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