NHS
Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent
Integrated Care Board

Integrated Care Board Briefing

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent ICB Meeting

20 November 2025

NHS Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care Board

This briefing aims to keep partners informed of the discussions at the NHS Integrated Care Board (ICB) meeting in public. To watch the recording and read the papers visit the ICB website.

ICB Chair and Chief Executive update

- Ian Green, Chair, and Simon Whitehouse, Chief Executive Officer, presented the report.
- The Chair paid tribute to outgoing interim leadership and welcomed new Chief Executive Officer, Simon Whitehouse.
- Simon Whitehouse noted that this continues to be a challenging and unsettling period due to the scale of organisational change underway. Simon highlighted that despite the uncertainty, senior colleagues have shown consistent professionalism on delivering for the residents of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.
- Simon Whitehouse confirmed that the joint announcement of future cluster ICB Directors and Executive Directors has been made with partners. Simon confirmed that these new leaders will take up post on 1 December 2025, signalling the next phase of transition towards the cluster operating model.
- Simon Whitehouse emphasised that further alignment of governance and operational processes will take place over the coming weeks as the new structure embeds.
- Simon Whitehouse assured the Board that the transition will be carefully managed to support colleagues and maintain organisational focus on improving outcomes and delivering the 10-year plan.

The Board thanked the Chair and Simon Whitehouse for the report. The Board noted that the ICB Constitution needs to be amended to incorporate the five new posts that will carry voting rights. The Board agreed to the proposed amendments to the Constitution to include the new cluster leadership roles, subject to NHS England's approval.

System Winter Assurance

- Phil Smith, Chief Delivery Officer, presented the report
- Phil Smith noted that the Board held a detailed discussion at the September Public Board, where the full winter plan was reviewed ahead of submitting board assurance statements to NHS England.
- Phil Smith outlined the approach taken to developing the winter plan, which is structured around 13 key pillars, with each area carrying equal importance in delivering a safe and responsive winter offer.
- Phil Smith advised that at the time of the September discussion, several elements of the plan were still under development, including demand-modelling assumptions, quality impact assessments for winter schemes, and funding linked to winter capacity.
- Phil Smith highlighted that the system had participated in a regional winter stress-test exercise with NHS England, which identified further opportunities to strengthen the plan.
- Phil Smith confirmed that these outstanding components have now been addressed and that the System Finance and Performance Committee formally approved the winter plan on 7 October. Phil noted that the plan has also been approved across relevant system forums, including ICB committees, provider boards and local authorities.
- Phil Smith reported significant increases in respiratory illnesses, including Flu A, Flu B and COVID-19 levels. Phil confirmed that, in response, several elements of the winter plan have already been brought forward to meet current demand.
- Phil Smith assured the Board that the plan will continue to be adapted through established system governance.

The Board thanked Phil Smith for the report. The Board sought assurance on provider engagement in the winter plan, noting West Midlands Ambulance Service was not listed, and asked whether any emerging risks were not yet reflected. Phil Smith confirmed the plan was developed collaboratively with all system providers, including West Midlands

Ambulance Service as part of a system learning event. The Board was assured that the plan has been approved by all provider boards and presented to Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Overview and Scrutiny Committees. Phil highlighted the rise in respiratory illness as a key emerging risk and confirmed ongoing focus on deploying capacity and ensuring supporting schemes deliver intended benefits. The Board confirmed their support and agreed to endorse the winter plan as recommended.

2026/2027 Planning

- Elizabeth Disney, Interim Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Transformation Officer, and Claire Finn, Interim Chief Finance Officer, presented the report.
- Claire Finn noted that the papers provide an update on the development of the 2026/27 plan and longer-term planning. Guidance is still being released, with templates and additional guidance received recently, including on Monday and yesterday.
- Claire Finn explained that teams are working to meet short planning timescales: first submission on 16 December covering finance, workforce, and performance for the first two years, with a full five-year plan submission due 13 February.
- Claire Finn confirmed that governance processes have been established to ensure alignment with provider colleagues and internal oversight.
- Claire Finn highlighted that commissioning intentions have been issued and are being developed with providers to integrate into commissioning services and contracts.
- Claire Finn emphasised key planning guidance messages, including the need to deliver the three strategic shifts in a financially balanced and sustainable way, and managing the removal of £95 million deficit support funding over the five-year period.
- Elizabeth Disney highlighted the focus on aligning multi-year planning with the 10-year plan and the three strategic shifts, ensuring clarity on delivery in years one, three, and five.
- Elizabeth Disney noted that the focus now is on expanding commissioning intentions into system-wide strategic programmes, ensuring clear delivery plans for next year while building trajectories for longer-term outcomes.
- Elizabeth Disney confirmed that governance arrangements and fundamental planning building blocks are in place, with ongoing work to operationalise both immediate delivery and longer-term strategic objectives.

The Board thanked Claire and Elizabeth for the report. The Board stressed co-creation of commissioning intentions with providers, local authorities, and primary care, ensuring alignment across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent and Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin, and noted the need for provider and partner sign-off before the final February submission. The Board acknowledged the scale of work and noted the update with appreciation for all involved.

Quality and Safety Report

- Lynn Tolley, Director of Nursing, Maternity and Safeguarding, presented the report.
- Lynn Tolley noted the 2021 independent hospital closure and the resulting strengthened Home and Host Commissioner guidance. Lynn confirmed that North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare NHS Trust (NSCHT) and Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (MPFT) took part in the pilot, completed self-assessments, and received positive outcomes.
- Lynn Tolley reported the opening of a 31-bed women's acute mental health and rehabilitation unit in May, with site visits completed in October and two further hospital visits in September.
- Lynn Tolley highlighted that although the system ranks second nationally for Learning from the Lives and Deaths of People with a Learning Disability and Autistic People (LeDeR), the priority is using learning from reviews to improve patient education. She

noted recent work including face-to-face dysphagia and epilepsy training and cancer awareness videos on breast and bowel cancer.

- Lynn Tolley outlined growth in Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) activity delivered jointly with Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin, with an increase of 43% to 784 members, additionally supported by NHS England investment in Bands 6 - 8 roles.
- Lynn Tolley updated on Children in Care health assessments, with initial assessments at 84% (target 85%), review assessments at 15% (target 85%), and backlog improvement from six months to six weeks. Lynn advised that monitoring continues through MPFT Risk and Performance Meetings and the Corporate Parenting Board.
- Lynn Tolley confirmed that quality impact assessments continue following NHS England's feedback, with collaborative workshops and stakeholder questionnaires taking place.
- Lynn Tolley advised that monthly meetings chaired by the Chief Nursing Officer maintain oversight of statutory duties during the transition period.
- Lynn Tolley confirmed that the Right Care, Right Person report has been to the Quality and Safety Committee and will return to the Board in January in summary form to protect confidentiality.

The Board thank Lynn Tolley for the report. The Board discussed the health assessments for children in care, noting that current compliance at 15% is significantly below the 85% target. Lynn Tolley confirmed that while no harm has been identified and the backlog and delays are being actively managed. The Board requested an update at the next meeting with a clear trajectory and action plan to improve performance. Additional points noted included perinatal quality surveillance, ongoing monitoring of media-sensitive gynaecology risks, and assurance on the SEND alternative provision strategy, which the Board agreed to ratify subject to circulation of the final document.

Quality and Safety AAA Chairs Report – October 2025

- Siobhan Heafield, Non-Executive Chair of Quality and Safety Committee, presented the report.
- Siobhan Heafield noted ongoing monitoring of Perinatal Quality Surveillance, with a scheduled visit recently stood down due to a doctors' strike. Siobhan advised there is a level of assurance that has been taken regarding actions taken from previous work.
- Siobhan Heafield highlighted that the SEND Alternative Provision Strategy was approved by the Quality and Safety Committee and requires Board ratification.
- Siobhan Heafield praised the Right Care, Right Person report as excellent work, noting it will be shared regionally in a non-patient identifiable way.
- Siobhan Heafield provided an update on the media-sensitive gynaecology surgeon report at Derby Burton, confirming ongoing monitoring of progress and associated risks.
- Siobhan Heafield explained that two risks are under review to assess mitigation impact, while one proposed risk was not added to the register as it stemmed from a general coroner comment elsewhere.

The Board thanked Siobhan Heafield for the report and discussed the SEND Alternative Provision Strategy, noting that the full Board had not yet seen the final document. It was confirmed that the strategy had previously been considered by the Quality and Safety Committee. The Board agreed to ratify the strategy subject to circulation of the final document to ensure full oversight and endorsement.

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Health and Care Senate AAA Chairs Report – September and October 2025

- Rachel Gallyot, Interim Chief Medical Officer, presented the report.

- Rachel Gallyot noted that the papers summarise approvals from the September and October Health and Care Senate meetings, particularly from the Intubated Medicines Optimization group.
- Rachel Gallyot highlighted that the Self-Care Toolkit for Care Homes was approved, enabling support for residents with minor conditions.
- Rachel Gallyot confirmed that Mounjaro remains classified as a red drug, in line with previous discussions and national directives for hub-based administration.
- Rachel Gallyot reported that the Infertility Pathway and Prior Approval Process was clinically approved to standardise assessment for this restricted procedure, following discussions linked to the winter plan.
- Rachel Gallyot noted the October Integrated Medicines Optimisation Group (IMOG) approvals, including NICE/TA guidance for specialised NHS-funded drugs, treatment for Crohn's disease, Pain Management Guidance and the Minor Hand Surgery Specification.

The Board thanked Rachel Gallyot for the report. The Board noted the implementation of the Self-Care Toolkit and Homely Remedies Toolkit for care homes stating that while guidance is clear, practical adoption across homes has been variable. Rachel Gallyot advised that work is underway with Medicines Optimisation teams to actively support and monitor implementation, ensuring that the approvals and guidance are enacted rather than simply communicated. The Board noted the two Senate reports and acknowledged the ongoing support provided through the Senate to embed these initiatives across the system.

ICS Finance and Performance Report

- Claire Finn, Interim Chief Finance Officer, and Phil Smith, Chief Delivery Officer, presented the report.
- Claire Finn advised that months six and seven were slightly ahead of plan, with year-to-date efficiency £16.6m behind target and ongoing work to recover.
- Claire Finn noted the unmitigated financial risk has reduced from £25m to £13m due to recovery plans, with continued collaboration to bring the remaining risk down to zero.
- Claire Finn highlighted the underlying £139m deficit that will require planning and mitigation, emphasising the expectation from NHS England that submitted plans must be delivered.
- Phil Smith commended the system-wide response to industrial action, noting minimal impact on planned care and no effect on longest-wait patients.
- Phil Smith reported 52-week waits are narrowly off track, with plans in place to ensure all first appointments are completed by March, and 65-week waits totalled 139, with challenges in Ear Nose and Throat (ENT), ophthalmology, and orthopaedics being addressed.
- Phil Smith noted cancer performance as below plan for August and September, noting the main driver being increased demand for skin cancer referrals, and therefore additional capacity being deployed. Phil highlighted successful awareness campaigns reaching nearly one-million users supporting prevention and early detection.

The Board thanked Claire Finn and Phil Smith for the report. The Board raised concerns about low Oliver McGowan training completion rates as noted in the report and requested further clarification and benchmarking. The Board asked the Finance and Performance Committee to focus on top priority actions addressing underperformance to provide clear assurance.

Finance and Performance Committee AAA Chairs Report – 7th October and 29th October

- Mike Lawton,

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ICS People, Culture and Inclusion Committee Assurance and Performance Report

- Mish Irvine, Chief People Officer, presented the report.
- Mish Irvine advised that the report focuses on workforce position against plan, noting a transition of workforce assurance responsibility from the ICB to the region.
- Mish Irvine reported that the system is 182 Whole Time Equivalent (WTE) over plan at month six, primarily at UHNM due to bank usage, with all trusts slightly over plan in substantive staff to support vacancy management and sickness.
- Mish Irvine noted that MPFT is over plan due to upcoming corporate management of change activity in December, which is expected to reduce staffing pressures by year-end.
- Mish Irvine highlighted significant bank usage despite recent bank payment changes, with the region meeting directly with providers to address issues and creating a support network for trusts with particular workforce challenges.
- Mish Irvine confirmed that agency usage is at its lowest since March 2019, currently at 1.4% of total pay spend.

The Board thanked Mish Irvine for the report. The Board commented that although robust plans are in place, some targets are ambitious and may require further review. The Board recognised ongoing support from Deloitte and the need to carry forward unresolved workforce plans into next year. The Board also highlighted the importance of linking workforce data with finance, productivity, and performance to provide a holistic view, with implementation of productivity reporting through the Finance and Performance Committee to ensure regular oversight and escalation to the Board as needed.

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent ICB Audit Committee AAA Chairs Report – October 2025

- The Chair noted an escalation around capacity issues and the process of change.
- Claire Finn, Interim Chief Finance Officer, highlighted the ISFE2 implementation, noting the significant work undertaken to ensure a smooth transition to the new ledger.
- Mike Lawton emphasised the alert regarding the NHS Reset Transition update, highlighting potential ICB-related issues that require serious attention and review.

The Board noted that the matters raised regarding the NHS Reset Transition update would be considered in more detail during the closed session of the Board.

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent ICB Remuneration Committee AAA Chairs Report

- Shokat Lal, Non-Executive Chair of People, Culture and Organisational Development Committee, presented the report.
- Shokat Lal noted that there were no alerts to raise. Shokat advised that the main item of business to highlight was the formal ratification of the appointment of the Cluster Chief Executive.

The Board thanked Shokat Lal for the report.

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent ICB Strategic Commissioning and Transformation Committee – September, October and November

- Mike Lawton, Non-Executive Chair of Strategic Commissioning and Transformation Committee, presented the report.
- Mike Lawton noted no significant alerts in the initial month and highlighted efforts to give the VCSE sector a clear voice to maximise their contribution.

- Mike Lawton reported that the Committee approved the memorandum of understanding with local authorities and substantial changes, supporting collaborative working.
- Mike Lawton highlighted an alert regarding children and young people's access to services, identifying five areas requiring further consideration, with mitigation and executive discussions planned to address these issues.
- Elizabeth Disney, Interim Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Transformation Officer, added that follow-up actions sit with the Children and Young People Portfolio Board, which reports to the Strategic Commissioning and Transformation Committee, ensuring appropriate governance and escalation to the Board when necessary.
- The Chair emphasised the importance of aligning these actions with medium-term planning, procurement activities, and local authority partnerships to optimise resource use and achieve the best outcomes for patients.
- Elizabeth Disney highlighted that the Strategic Commissioning and Transformation Committee had considered Section 75 agreements with local authorities for recommendation to the Board. Elizabeth confirmed that the funding linked to these agreements had been approved previously during budget setting, but full Board ratification is required, and action will be taken outside of the meeting to address this.

The Board thanked Mike Lawton and Elizabeth Disney for the report. The Board noted the referral from the Strategic Commissioning and Transformation Committee regarding the ratification of Section 75 agreements and agreed that this should be formally circulated and approved outside of the meeting.

ICB's Commercial Sponsorship Policy

- Paul Winter, Associate Director of Corporate Governance and ICB Data Protection Officer, presented the report.
- Paul Winter advised that the Commercial Sponsorship Policy had been approved by both the Audit Committee and the Strategic Commissioning Committee at their most recent meetings.
- Paul Winter explained that the policy had been reworked due to the significant business implications for the ICB within the ICS landscape, covering commercial sponsorship for posts, meetings, and other activities. Paul Winter stated that the policy is presented to the Board for formal ratification, noting its prior approval by the two committees.

The Board thanked Paul Winter for the report. The Board sought assurance on how declarations of interest are audited, with confirmation that annual audits are undertaken by local counter-fraud specialists and cross-checked against external records. The Board emphasised the need for clear staff understanding and practical application of the policy. The Board also highlighted the value of engaging primary care contractors, recognising that while they are not bound by ICB policy, consistent understanding of expectations, particularly regarding pharmaceutical sponsorship, would be beneficial. Subject to assurance around auditing and dissemination, the Board approved the policy.

Date and time of next meeting in public: 15 January 2026 at 1pm held in public, in person at Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust Headquarters Boardroom, Stafford, ST16 3SR.