

Minutes of the meeting of the Health, Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee held in Conference Room 1 - Herefordshire Council, Plough Lane Offices, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Monday 27 October 2025 at 2.00 pm

Committee members present in person and voting:

Councillors: Simeon Cole, Pauline Crockett (Chairperson), Dave Davies, Richard Thomas, Kevin Tillett (Vice-Chairperson) and Rebecca Tully

Others in attendance:

S Assinder	Associate Chief Operating Officer	Wye Valley NHS Trust
J Bailey	Press and Publicity Officer	Herefordshire Council
Councillor C Gandy	Cabinet Member Adults, Health and Wellbeing	Herefordshire Council
H Hall	Corporate Director Community Wellbeing	Herefordshire Council
H Merricks-Murgatroyd	Democratic Services Officer	Herefordshire Council
S Shingler	Managing Director	Wye Valley NHS Trust
D Thornton	Democratic Services Support Officer	Herefordshire Council
D Webb	Statutory Scrutiny Officer	Herefordshire Council

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr Mark Dykes.

2. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no named substitutes.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 July 2025 were received.

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 July 2025 be confirmed as a correct record.

5. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

No questions were received from members of the public.

6. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

No questions were received from councillors.

7. WYE VALLEY TRUST WINTER PLAN 2025/26

The committee received a detailed presentation from Sarah Shingler, Managing Director of Wye Valley NHS Trust, accompanied by Sarah Assinder, Associate Chief Operating Officer, outlining the Trust's Winter Plan for 2025/26.

The principal points of the discussion are summarised below:

1. The committee welcomed the development of the National Neighbourhood Health Programme pilot and requested that a future update be provided on the progress and delivery of the programme.
2. In relation to the Discharge to Assess (D2A) process, it was noted that the entire pathway is currently under review to ensure the system operates as efficiently as possible. It was added that as the existing D2A process has been in place for a considerable time, it is appropriate to reassess it and implement a model that remains effective and sustainable for the future.
3. It was acknowledged that national targets continue to be set, and regardless of current performance, the Trust is required to establish recovery trajectories outlining how it will achieve the target thresholds. At present, Wye Valley has submitted plans addressing handover times and the Emergency Access Standard (EAS). While the Trust is committed to improving outcomes for the local population, some challenges lie beyond its control, such as delays in Powys, which have hindered progress toward EAS improvements. Discussions are ongoing with national teams regarding the EAS, and revised trajectories have now been agreed upon and are being achieved.
4. It was noted that, in relation to demand and attendances at the Emergency Department (ED), the majority of patients brought in by ambulance are appropriate for that pathway. It was also highlighted that a new process is being introduced to address patients directed to ED via NHS 111. Currently, many of these patients are automatically referred to ED, even when it may not be necessary. To improve this, a pilot pathway is being tested whereby 111 calls are diverted to the Single Point of Access (SPA) within the community. Clinicians within the SPA can then assess and direct patients to more suitable providers where appropriate.
5. In relation to partnership working with Powys County Council, it was noted that while 20% of admissions originate from Powys, these account for approximately 50% of discharge delays. The plans outlined in the presentation represent Powys' own initiatives, rather than those of Wye Valley, and demonstrate how Powys intends to help reduce demand and expedite discharges. It was also noted that the Powys management team has become more receptive to learning from Wye Valley Trust's approaches and exploring how these methods can be tested and supported collaboratively.
6. In response to a question regarding the need for additional capacity during the winter months and the potential purchase of empty care beds from the private sector, it was noted that when Hillside and other Discharge to Assess (D2A) capacity are at full occupancy, the Trust is required to procure additional beds from the market to maintain patient flow. However, it was acknowledged that this approach is costly, and efforts are ongoing to reduce reliance on such external capacity.
7. In response to a question regarding staffing levels, it was noted that the Trust's overall staffing position remains strong. From a nursing perspective, the Trust is

now fully staffed. Within Accident and Emergency (A&E), the consultant team has expanded from six to ten, with all ten expected to be in post by the end of the winter period. Recruitment across several specialty areas has also been successful, further strengthening the workforce.

8. WORK PROGRAMME 2025-26

The Statutory Scrutiny Officer presented the draft work programme for the Health, Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2025/26.

Resolved

That:

- a) The committee agree the draft work programme for Health, Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee contained in the work programme report attached as appendix 1, which will be subject to monthly review, as the basis of their primary focus for the remainder of the municipal year.**
- b) The committee note the forward plan attached as appendix 2 and identify any opportunities for collaboration or alignment of work.**

9. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting is Monday 24 November 2025, 2.00 pm.

The meeting ended at 3.54 pm

Chairperson