

Survey Report: Changes to the NHS Podiatry Service in Somerset

June 2019

Snapshot of findings:

- The survey was distributed to patients and carers in April and June 2019, outlining the proposals and asking for views. A total of 152 completed surveys were received.
- The majority of patients and carers (81%) considered that they would be able, although some with some difficulty, to attend the clinics under the new proposals.
- A smaller number of patients (9.4%) noted that they felt they would be unable to attend their appointment under the new proposals.
- Free parking was considered the most important factor to patients and carers accessing the service, a private consultation room, a 'local' service and good transport links were also considered important to patients and carers.
- Clear information needs to be provided to patients and carers on the various locations, accessibility, parking (included disabled parking) and access via public transport.

Summary:

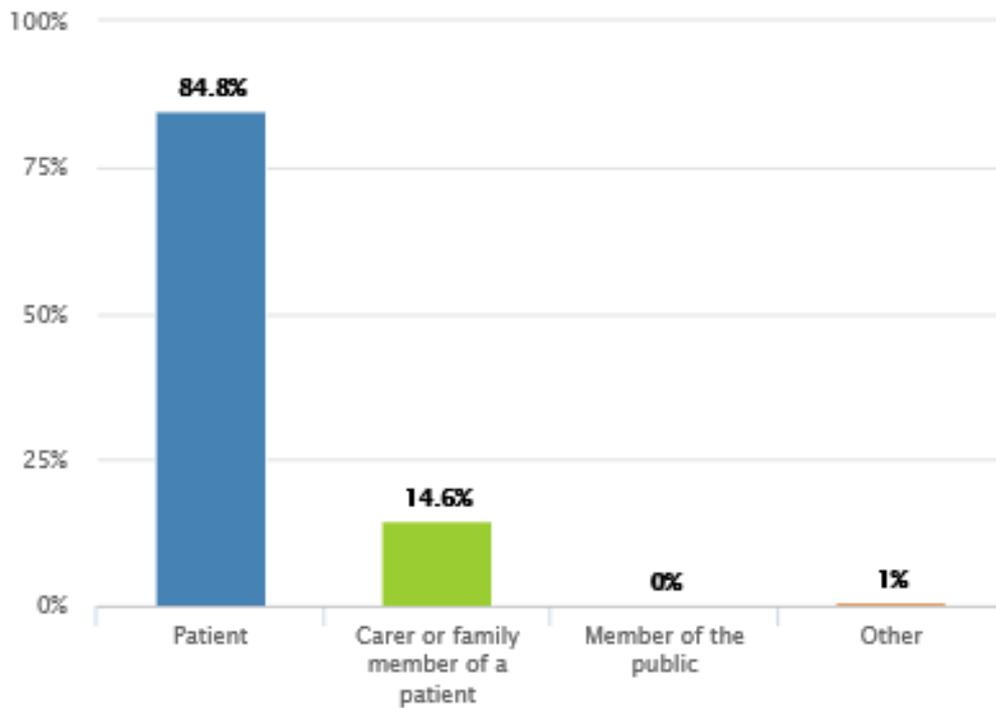
The Podiatry Service are planning to reduce the number of sites where care is provided from 22 to 13. This may mean that some patients will need to travel further for their podiatry appointments.

An outline of the proposals, along with a survey, was distributed to patients and carers in April and May 2019 to gather views and opinions of the plans for the service.

A total of **152** surveys were submitted. The majority of patients and carers (81%) noted that they would be able to attend the clinics outlined in the proposals. Free parking was considered one of the most important factors in attending appointments. Consideration needs to be given to accessibility for disabled patients, access to locations using public transport and those who are relying on Carers to bring them to appointments. A number of patients and carers (9.4%) said they would not be able to attend their appointments under the new proposals. Patients and Carers had useful ideas going forward.

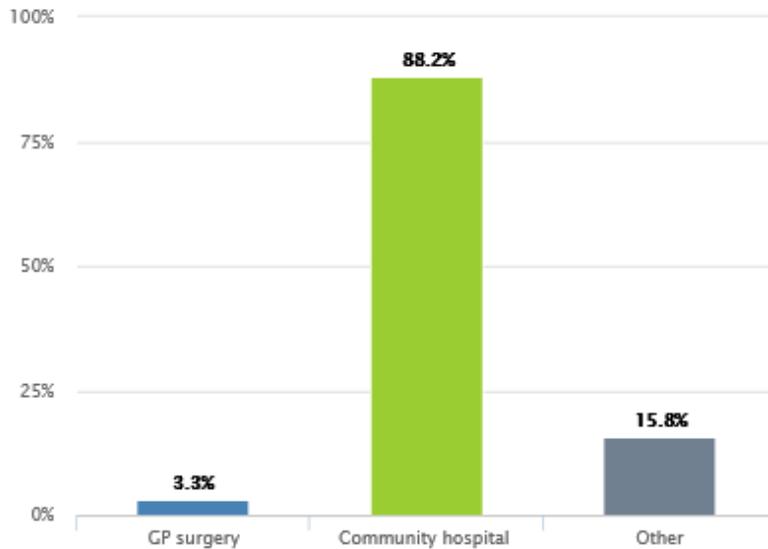
Findings:

Q1. I am a...



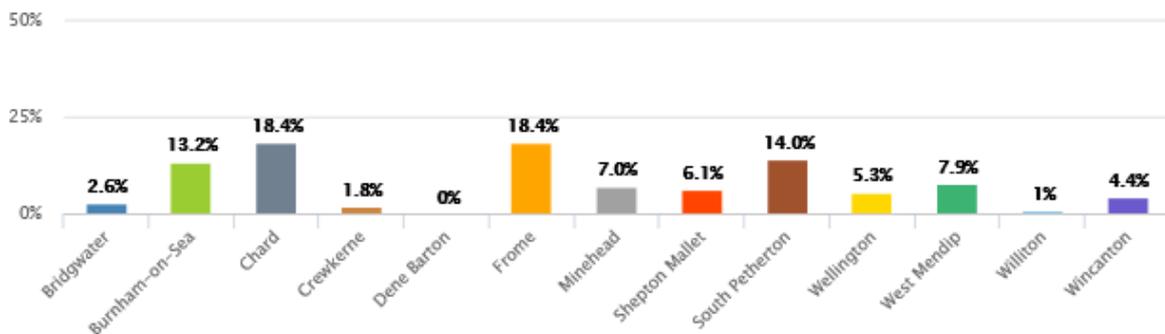
84.8% (128) of the responses were patients, **14.6%** (22) were carers/family members and 1% (1) noted as 'Other'. This respondent noted themselves as a Carhampton Parish Council Member. Carhampton is a village in West Somerset.

Q2. Where do you normally travel for your Podiatry appointments?



- The majority of appointments were taking place at a Community Hospital (88.2% / 134).
- 3.3% (5) had their appointments at a GP Surgery.
- 15.8% (24) noted that their appointment took place at an ‘other’ location.
Locations noted included:
 - Bartec 4 (Yeovil)
 - Parkgate House (Taunton)
 - At Home.

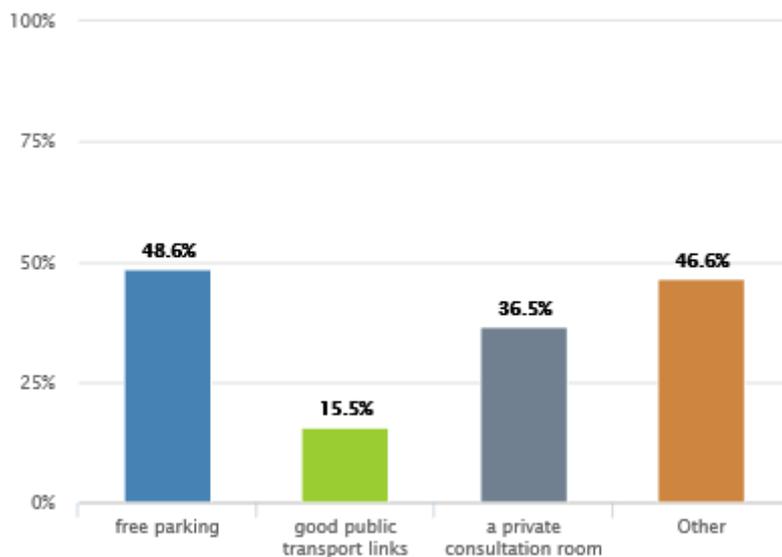
Q3. Please select which Community Hospital:



Patients and Carers completing the survey were asked to select the hospital that they attended for treatment.

- The highest number of responses were from Chard (18.4%), Frome (18.4%), and South Petherton (14%).
- All the community hospitals, except Dene Barton, had responses.

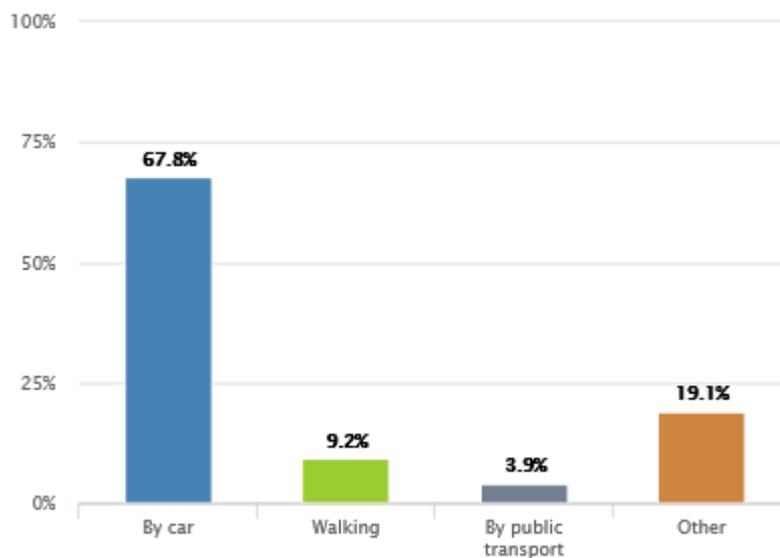
Q4. What is important to you in visiting the Podiatry Service?



- **Free parking** was the most important to nearly half (48.6% / 72) of the respondents.
- **A private consultation room** was also considered important by 36.5% (54) of patients.
- **Good transport links** were considered important for fewer respondents (15.5% / 23)
- **46.6% (69) selected something else 'Other' as important when visiting the service. These are listed below:**
 - **24 patients noted that a local service was the most important aspect.**
"Being close to where I live"
"Not far from home"
 - **13 patients noted the quality of the service was the most important.**
"Excellent advice and treatment"
"To have a good and informative consultation"
 - **11 patients noted availability of parking, including disabled parking spots.**
"Ease of parking with wheelchair access"

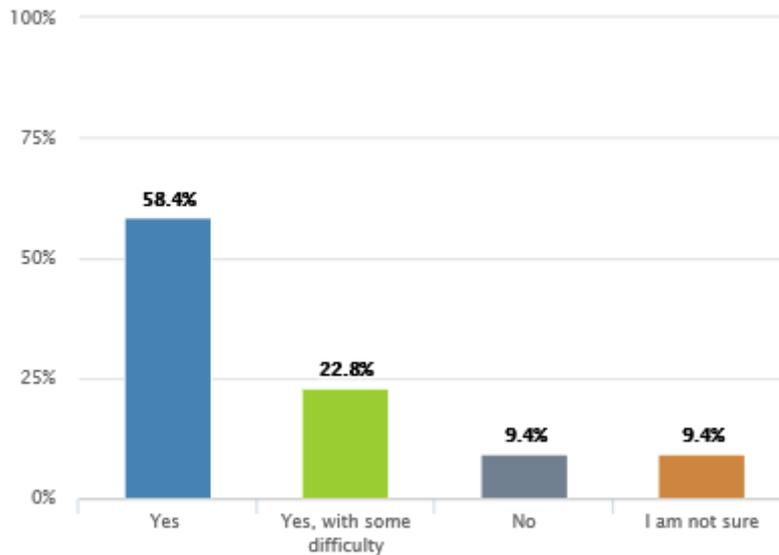
- *“Parking very close to Podiatry with level access”.*
- **8 patients noted the availability of appointments.**
“Regular appointments with no cancellations”
“Access to treatment without a long waiting list.”
- Other comments **included accessibility using public transport, continuity** with the same Podiatrist and a competent Podiatrist.

Q4. How do you usually get to Podiatry appointments?



- Most patients (67.8% / 103) attend their appointment using a car.
- 9.2% patients (14) are able to walk to their appointment.
- A small number of patients (3.9%/6) attend their appointments by public transport.
- 19.1% (29) noted ‘other’ which included attending appointments by:
 - Taxi
 - Local transport schemes
 - Mobility scooters
 - Friends/family driving.

Q5. If we changed the clinics to the proposed locations, would you be able to attend your appointments?



- 58.4% (87) of respondents stated that they would be able to attend appointments in line with the location changes.
- 22.8% (34) stated that they would, with some difficulty, be able to attend appointments.
- 9.4% (14) stated that they would not be able to attend.
- 9.4% (14) were not sure.

Please could you explain your answer:

Generally, those who said yes, stated that one of the locations listed in the proposal would suit their needs.

Those who selected **yes, expressed the following thoughts:**

- **Location preference:**

*“Obviously I **prefer** South Petherton, but Crewkerne is **not far away**, (I could go to Wellington if necessary).”*

“Yes provided that my appointments for my father are in Frome”

*“Bartec 4 is **close and convenient**.”*

- **Already attending the clinics listed:**

*“There would still be a clinic in Frome **where I currently attend**. I had not heard of West Mendip hub before and have never been there so not sure where exactly it is located”*

“Already attend Bartec 4 - so hopefully will still be able to get there.”

- **Able to travel** to the clinics:

“I *have a car* and can drive.”

“I would have to be *driven further*.”

“Live within *walking distance* of hospital.”

Those who selected **yes, with some difficulty**:

- **Dependant on Carer, friend or Family Member**

“No transport in my area so I *rely on my daughter*.”

“I am *reliant on lifts*. It is not possible to get public transport.”

“I, the carer, work. The further I have to travel to appointments, the *harder to fit this in*.”

- **Dependant on Public Transport or Community Transport**

“Transport for Bridgwater Hospital is *not easy or quick* from Burnham”

“I expect I would have to use *two buses*.”

“*Community transport could make Wincanton easy*, If I can drive Yeovil ok”.

- **Disabilities and Illness**

“Getting to Crewkerne would mean two bus changes for me as I *am visually impaired this makes it more difficult*. At present, getting to Chard is almost door to door with a bus.”

“If I *didn't feel well enough to drive*, I don't know how I would get there.”

Others noted the availability of parking, the accessibility of the venue and the inconvenience of travelling further.

Those who selected **no** or **not sure** had had concerns with these themes:

- **Travelling a **further distance** to attend an appointment.**

“Not able to travel far because of *health problems*.”

*"I am still able to drive but because of my age, I now **only drive short distances**. When I can no longer drive, I intend to purchase a mobility scooter to get me to doctors, podiatrist, dentist etc, so will only be able to get to the Taunton clinic. I **only drive around the Taunton area**."*

*"83 years of age; **cannot drive far**."*

"I like South Petherton hospital as it is near to my home and nice people."

- **Dependant on Carer, friend or family member.**

"Taken to appointments by family and so needed to be local."

"My husband has serious mental and physical problems and is seldom well enough to travel to Taunton. It would require me taking an extra carer with me. I too am not in full health and would find that drive with the responsibility of my husband a huge strain."

- **Transport, including the cost to get there was noted as a concern.**

*"All the hubs are **too far** with no community transport."*

*"I am disabled - **cannot walk any distance**, if I had to travel to Yeovil it **costs about £18- each way**- I cannot travel on public transport."*

*"I **do not have transport**. **Public transport is limited** and does not reach some locations at all. **Plus takes all day**".*

Q8. If you have concerns about the changes, do you have any ideas about things we could do to make the changes easier for patients or carers?

The responses had various suggestions to make it easier for patients and carers to access the Podiatry Service.

- **Provide hospital transport**

"For those who do not have their own transport, it would be really good to have more hospital transport available. Especially if there problem is making them mobile."

"A lot of patients don't drive so further to pay for a taxi etc, or even getting to an appointment at all. Arranging transport would help but I'm sure that's not an option."

- **Use clinics in locations which are accessible by public transport**

"Good transport links are important"

- **Easier booking process with fewer cancellations**

“Easier access to appointments at present, it is very difficult due to the long waiting time for calls to be answered by phone, due to the larger number of patients also trying.”

“To only cancel/rearrange appointments when absolutely necessary. As I am reliant on lifts it is very difficult to rearrange them.”

- **Improving parking at Burnham Hospital and using venues with good parking facilities for disabled patients and carers.**

“Better parking facilities for Burnham - parking at the hospital is a nightmare.”

“Any change to Crewkerne or Yeovil would mean I have to drive there, need access to go disabled parking (wide bays)”

- **Text reminders.**

“Run clinics at different times e.g. earlier or later in the day. Send out text reminders like a lot of medical services now do - it would definitely cut down on no show rates.”

- **Provide clear information on locations**

“Provide good clear information on the location of the venues new to patients. Ensure that patients who do not drive or have anyone to take them have access to good economic transport system to get to appointments.”

Q9. If you have any concerns about these proposals that relate to any equality issues (e.g. age, sex, nationality), please let us know:

- A small percentage (5%) of respondents noted concerns in relation to **age**.
- A very small percentage (1%) of respondents noted concerns in relation to **disability**.

Q10. Please add any other comments or suggestions here:

Full comments are available in Appendix 2.

A total of **41** extra comments or suggestions were received.

20 of the comments had **negative** themes, including concerns already noted in previous questions such as lack of public transport to some of the locations, distances to travel to clinics.

The other **negative** comments included themes as follows:

- **Booking system and the difficulty in accessing the service**

“Apart from the changes, there is a matter of actually getting through on the phone to make next appointment - today's appointment for me was a month overdue.”

“Appointments are so difficult to get and are always changing. Older patients have lots of other appointments and cancelling does not always fit into these.”

- **Worries about staff wellbeing**

“Members were concerned that there was such a shortage of podiatrists which meant that those who were currently providing the service were doing so for long hours and in many locations across the county especially as it was a service to maintain the well-being of the residents of the area.”

- **Coordination of other appointments**

“Having several hospital appointments. Am worried podiatry visits could clash.”

Concerns about Chard Hospital in general were also noted, the loss of local services and the feeling that the survey would not make a difference.

10 comments were **positive** comments about the Podiatry Service in general as well as the proposals.

- **Valuable service**

“I have been very impressed by the knowledgeable extremely friendly and capability of the specialists.”

“Wonderful team of podiatrists. We thank them for their alertness, professionalism and caring attitude.”

- **Positive proposals**

“Sounds like a very sensible plan. Lone working is a problem in many areas of the NHS.”

“At present it is very difficult to get an appointment at Wellington. If these proposed changes improved this then I would be in favour although it is further to travel.”

“Much better for staff to have contact with team members. Will improve service and probably staff retention.”

11 comments included **suggestions** or preferences to consider alongside the proposals. Some of the suggestions included themes already noted about parking, accessibility and

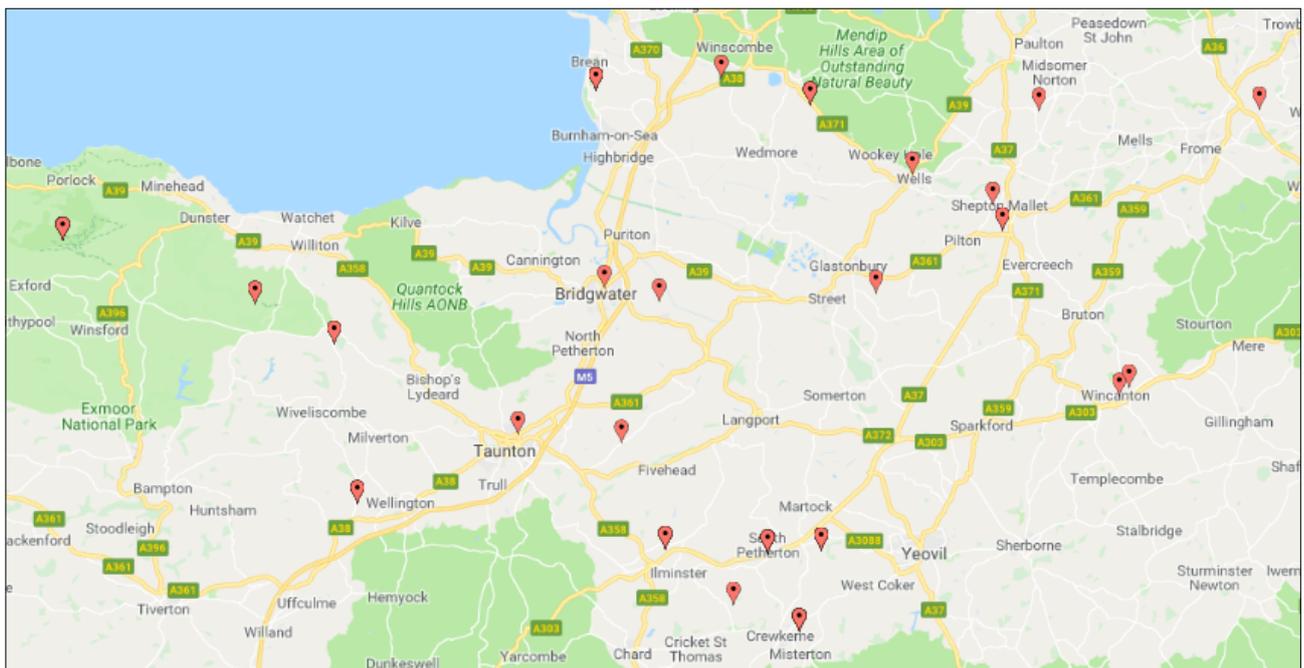
- **Using local GP Surgeries as venues or ‘mobile clinics’.**
“Local Surgery used to be available. Is this not possible for the future?”

“Would it be possible to have podiatry clinics at local medical centres?”
- **Improvements to overall system**
“Please improve your telephone appointments system.”
“I think it’s nice to start with a podiatrist and carry on treatment with the same one.”
“Finally Members expressed the expectation that the merger of Sompar with the Taunton and Somerset NHS Foundation Trust would provide an improvement to the service.”
- **Praise for specific locations**
“South Petherton hospital is a good venue with good facilities, having been recently built. I have had very good service there on both occasions I have visited the Podiatrist.”
“Lovely to keep Minehead going.”

There were also queries about the specific details of the clinics, amount of clinics per month and precise locations.

Q11. Please tell us the first 4 digits of your postcode:

Patients were asked to note the first 4 digits of their postcode on the survey. As can be seen on the map, surveys were returned from patients and carers from all areas of the County and are fairly evenly spread.



Overall, the Podiatry Service is noted as a valuable service and generally, most patients attend their appointments by car, whether they are driving themselves or relying on someone else to drive them, using a taxi, or using community transport schemes. Free parking is considered an important factor for those attending appointments. The majority said that they would be able to attend their appointments, although some with some difficulty, with the proposed changes. Those patients who stated they would be unable to attend, or would be able to attend with some difficulty, noted their understandable concerns including inability to travel long distances, cost of travel and inaccessibility of locations using public transport. This should be considered alongside the patient groups who use this service.

Recommendations:

1. Consider accessibility of any venue for those who may have mobility problems.
2. Produce clear documents with information about the venues for appointments including information on parking and access using public transport.
3. Use venues with free parking where possible.
4. Provide information about local transport schemes.
5. Try to reduce cancellations for those using local transport schemes.
6. Share information about eligibility to the Healthcare Travel Costs Schemes.

APPENDIX 1: SURVEY DOCUMENT

We want your views



Changes to the NHS Podiatry Service in Somerset.

We need to make changes to our podiatry service. We would like to know what you think of our plans and how this might affect you.

What changes are planned to Podiatry services?

BRIDGWATER HUB/CLINIC Burnham-on-Sea Clinic Minehead Clinic	WEST MENDIP HUB/CLINIC Frome Clinic Wells Clinic
TAUNTON HUB/CLINIC Wellington Clinic	YEovil HUB/CLINIC Wincanton Clinic Crewkerne Clinic



Alongside the above community-based clinics, patients with more complex foot care needs may be referred to Musgrove Park Hospital and Yeovil District hospital clinics.

How will this help?

At the moment, staff often have to work on their own in a clinic. This is not best practice and not what staff feel most comfortable doing; this is particularly important when patients may be at risk of becoming unwell.

We are planning to reduce the number of sites where we provide a podiatry service from 22 to 13. This may mean that some patients will need to travel further for their podiatry appointments.

Why do you need to change the service?

The NHS does not have enough staff. This situation is not improving nationally or locally. Trained staff such as nurses, doctors and podiatrists are very hard to recruit, and we have many vacancies. Because we are unable to fill these vacancies, we are unable to run a full service in the way we would like.

In addition, the number of people who require our services is increasing alongside the complexity of their foot problems. This means we need to work differently to maintain a good quality service for all our patients.

Which clinics will you move?

We plan to have four "Hubs" where patients can receive all types of podiatry treatments, and smaller clinics where patients will attend for their regular treatments.

This will mean that some patients may need to travel further for their treatment.

Ideally, we would like the service to be delivered by four teams from the locations below. We think these are the ideal locations, because they will be in areas where more of our patients are from. However, these are just our current ideas and we will need to find suitable premises if these changes are to happen.

morale and we hope will encourage more staff to stay working for the service in Somerset.

Experienced staff will also be able to support less experienced staff to carry out podiatry tasks, which will help us to look after as many patients as possible.

With more staff on each site, staff will also be able to cover when a team member is unwell, which means we will not have to cancel appointments as often.

Why are you asking for views?

We want to know if patients and the public have other ideas about how we could manage the podiatry service. We also want to know how our proposed changes might affect patients. This will help us make sure that patients can still get the care they need.

Where can I find out more?

If you have any questions or would like to receive updates or the report from this survey, please email myvoice@sompar.nhs.uk.

Where can I get help or advice if I am affected by these changes?

If you are a patient or carer who is affected by these changes and you need support or advice, we can help you.

Podiatry Survey
for patients, carers and local people

This survey is anonymous. Please do not include personal information that might identify you.

1. I am a...

- Patient
- Carer or family member of a patient
- Member of the public
- Other, please specify

2. Where do you normally travel for your podiatry appointments?

- GP surgery
- Community hospital
[Please state where:.....]
- Other
[.....]

3. What is important to you in visiting the podiatry service?

- free parking
- good public transport links
- a private consultation room
- Other [.....]

9. Please let us know the first four digits of your postcode:
(you do not have to give this information if you prefer not to do so)

9. Do you have any concerns about these proposals that relate to any equality issues (e.g. age, sex, nationality)?

About you

You do not have to answer these questions, but doing so will help us ensure that our decision takes into account the different groups of people that may be affected by these proposals. This information will be used for a report called an 'Equality Impact Assessment'. You are welcome to answer as many or as few questions as you like.

What is your sex?
 Male Female Other _____

What is your age?
 Under 25
 25-44 years old
 45-64 years old

4. How do you usually get to your Podiatry appointments?

- By car
- Walking
- By public transport
- Other: please specify below:

5. If we changed the clinics to the proposed locations, would you be able to attend your appointments?

- Yes
- Yes, with some difficulty
- No
- I am not sure

6. Please could you explain your answer?

7. If you have concerns about the changes, do you have any ideas about things we could do to make the changes easier for patients or carers?

8. Please add any other comments or suggestions here:

If yes, how would you describe your disability?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Sensory	<input type="checkbox"/> Learning	<input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health
<input type="checkbox"/> Physical	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	

Thank you!

Please return the completed questionnaire to our staff or send via FREEPOST to:

FREEPOST RSXK-USUL-SUHY
Somerset Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
Mallard Court, Express Park
Bristol Road, Bridgwater TA6 4RN

How else can I have my say?

You can give us your views in a number of ways:

By survey: You can drop this completed survey in at one of our reception desks or post to our FREEPOST address above. It is available in large print and other languages on request.

By telephone: You can complete the survey or give your views by telephone by calling the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) Service on 01278 432022 and asking to complete the Podiatry Survey.

Online: This survey can be completed online at:

<https://response.questback.com/sompar/podiatry2019>

For more information:

Appendix 2 Comments from Question 9

Please note: the full data set of all responses, including comments, is available upon request.

- By centralising into already bus traffic centres plus parking costs often increases waiting times. You make a visit re podiatry much more time consuming and possibly more expensive. resulting in patients not bothering to attend and resulting in more intensive costly health problems as a result
- Local Surgery used to be available. Is this not possible for the future?
- Appointments are so difficult to get and are always changing. Older patients have lots of other appointments and cancelling does not always fit into these. Home visits I'm sure are much easier for elderly who have difficulty getting in.
- I think it is a good idea to concentrate on holding clinics in the most used towns and cities. To consolidate means that hopefully we as the patients do not suffer with getting cancellation letters and arranging appointments which is not always convenient and in some cases delaying appointments can cause me a lot of discomfort so I hope this new initiative will be successful and a good step forward.
- Yes, age travelling further afield could prove extremely difficult.
- The west Mendip is too far as an alternative could I go to bath ruh. which is not too far. Before going to Frome I went to go bath ruh. if I went to west Mendip my time on the bus return journey would be 8 hrs which limits my appointment time
- Apart from the changes, there is a matter of actually getting through on the phone to make next appointment - today's appointment for me was a month overdue. My sister in law has been trying to get through since February - now has an appointment for July!
- This reduction will only put more people with foot complications having to have treatment in NHS hospitals because they can't access regular check-ups. Rubbish idea - it is not saving money.
- Mum needs constant care as she has leg ulcers (on both ankles), is diabetic, has various veins, a hip replacement and cannot walk very far, gets short of breath, she has a wheelchair but doesn't travel well. We are up and down Frome medical practice twice a week and sometimes we have podiatry app and practice nurses app one after another, as podiatry have to cut off bandages to get to corn/ ulcers on mum's feet and then we go straight across to F.M.P to get her compression bandages redressed straight after her podiatry appointment. We could not do this if the location was changed.
- Need to keep our Frome branch going. Please do not close.
- None.

- One or two of the podiatrists I am seeing are looking for posts in Bridgwater Community Hospital and have been told no vacancies.
- None.
- "It has been clear that the service has been under pressure because of the number of cancelled appointments. While it makes operational sense to centralise it this may make access more difficult for some patients and increase the demand for home visits which may put more stress on the system.
- The treatment and help the I have received from the podiatry service has made a big difference to my mobility and I very much value continuing to be able to access the service."
- I have been very pleased with the Podiatry service.

- I have been very impressed by the knowledgeable extremely friendly and capability of the specialist.
- I recently had an ulcer and have high regard for the treatment I have received from a young lady at your Frome clinic, together with good advice for foot care and prevention of problems I consider this service invaluable.
- Sounds like a very sensible plan. Lone working is a problem in many areas of the NHS
- "would like wheelchair to be available because of very limited mobility"
- I think it's nice to start with a podiatrist and carry on treatment with the same one.
- I couldn't attend any of the other locations. No transport.
- Parking needs to be available as I'm sure, many are disabled. So not necessarily free parking, just enough spaces.
- South Petherton hospital is a good venue with good facilities, having been recently built. I have had very good service there on both occasions I have visited the Podiatrist.
- Much better for staff to have contact with team members. Will improve service and probably staff retention.
- Could you please make me an appointment for orthodontics? I have got purpose made shoes but the left foot shoe does not seem to be big enough hurting my left toes.
- Just to say how well I have found the service. Thankyou
- For a lot of people to find the right quality person near you is hard if you end up having to pay.
- You have a changing patient list; as such it is a changing goal post situation to deal with.

- I am fortunate that I still have a driving license. If I was totally dependent on public transport appointments other than in Frome would be next to impossible to attend.
- At present it is very difficult to get an appointment at Wellington. If these proposed changes improved this then I would be in favour although it is further to travel.
- Please improve your telephone appointments system.
- Only what I said in questions. I really don't know why this questionnaire is being given to the public. Because in the end the powers that be will make their own decisions.
- It is sad to lose a local service which is essential to older people.
- South Petherton has good patient facilities whereas Crewkerne is very limited. The service at South Petherton is much valued by local residents and the surrounding villages served by SPH.
- Some days with C O P D I get very breathless, quick and it's hard work getting out house to hospital.
- Having several hospital appointments. Is worried podiatry visits could clash?
- "I have noted driving ability, lack of public transport, length of journey.
- Public transport not on route to the department."
- Keep it as it is- a perfectly good venue. South Petherton hospital is on a bus route and even has good free parking. I see no need for change- why not use a new hospital no rent to pay as you would for Bartec 4.
- I would to go Crewkerne for service, there are only two or three disabled parking spaces near the entrance.
- As we get older, things get harder. Don't make things impossible for some of us
- If the podiatry service moved to Crewkerne, I would not attend - not with a 45 minute round trip for an appointment lasting less than 15 minutes.
- Wonderful team of podiatrists. We thank them for their alertness, professionalism and caring attitude.
- Would it be possible to have podiatry clinics at local medical centres?
- "Members were invited to make comment on the proposal of the Somerset Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (Sompar) to consolidate the Podiatry Service into fewer locations.
- Members were concerned that there was such a shortage of podiatrists which meant that those who were currently providing the service were doing so for long hours and in many locations across the county especially as it was a service to maintain the well-being of the residents of the area.
- On the specific proposals, Members asked if the proposed withdrawal of the once a week clinic at Williton Hospital would lead to an increase in the number of clinics at Minehead Hospital.

- Finally Members expressed the expectation that the merger of Sompar with the Taunton and Somerset NHS Foundation Trust would provide an improvement to the service.
- Members AGREED that these comments be fed back to Sompar."
- Fear for the continual existence of Chard Community Hospital.
- Lovely to keep Minehead going.
- "My husband is 93 and I'm 84 - he's having problems with his feet. He has pressures points on his toe, he's had an ulcer under his toe. He's been having to see the podiatrist fairly often but quite recently there have been cancellations and he's gone three months instead of one month before he's been seen. The questionnaire was asking how it would affect us if we have the four main centres. I've said in the survey that the nearest one would be Wellington - we don't drive and we rely on Slinky buses and they don't go out that far. It would be difficult for us to get anywhere. Would it be possible to have a bus or a mobile clinic which could be based in different places around? When appointments were made they could arrange the appointments so that people living in similar areas could have them on the same day and get to a mobile place nearer. We live outside a small village in Exmoor. I can walk the mile into the village but my husband can't. He can scarcely walk at all now. He's got a rotator thing but he's got worse over the last few months. The Slinky bus goes to Minehead and that would be okay."