

Public questions submitted to BSW ICB Board (January 2025)

For conciseness, questions on the same subject have been grouped together. A single answer has been issued in response.

From the Chairman of Patford House Patients Group:

“Patford House - the site of our surgery has been declared unfit for use.

“To ensure that all patients may enjoy the same level of care, instead of the two tier service that is currently being provided, the Wiltshire and Swindon Integrated Care Board (ICB) recommended and supported the need for a new medical centre to be built in Calne.

“A parcel of land was offered by Bowood Estate and Planning permission for a new build was granted in 2020. Following the Covid pandemic and an increase in the cost of the build, the ICB put a hold on their financial support. As a result the project ground to a halt - and after the prolonged inaction of the ICB - planning permission lapsed, Assura, the project managers stepped back from the project and Bowood Estate withdrew their generous offer of a plot of land for the medical centre.

“However, the Patford House Patients Group has renegotiated with all the stakeholders and we are confident that they will re-engage and complete the project. But we need a firm commitment that the necessary financial support is in place.

“On the subject of finance, in November 24 at the Calne Area Board, the ICB stated “a cash injection of £14 million has enabled three new community diagnostic centres to open across the region, with each of the sites providing the type of diagnostics that once would have taken place inside a hospital.”

“Progress indeed, but a far cry from our Patford House premises which had to be temporarily closed in 2020 because it was not compliant with infection control measures during the pandemic and could not safely remain open for patients.

“Our key stakeholders are awaiting a date to meet and discuss the recommencement of the project, but I need your assurance today that the funding is available.”

From member of the public:

- “As I hope you will know, there is great concern about the delayed decision on a new building to replace the Patford House Partnership’s unsuitable Patford surgery building in Calne, Wiltshire. So that the public can understand how the ICB is addressing this issue, could you please summarise the Board’s decision process for handling this issue? Specifically, in which committees in your organisation will this be reviewed and decided? And what is the formal process for making a request? And is planning approval required before the ICB could allocate resources?
- “In that context, can I ask why the Primary Care Commissioning Committee seems not to have met since August 2022? Does this reflect a lack of priority for Primary Care within the ICB?
- “Whilst the September 2024 proposals for improved public engagement are welcome, and in my opinion much needed, could you please arrange for your web site to provide an email address and phone number under the Contact Us heading? At the moment it seems not to provide any basic routes for contact, except under Complaints (which anyway signposts PALS) and Compliments.
- “Given the importance of transparency and public engagement for building public trust, would it not be possible for the Board to review improvements in public engagement regularly and in public, perhaps as a standing item?”

Response from the ICB:

“General practices are independent contractors and run like small businesses. In most cases, the doctors own or rent their premises.

“The ICB has delegated responsibility from NHS England for reimbursing GPs for costs relating to premises, such as rent and rates.

“During 2024, the ICB carried out a comprehensive assessment process - Primary Care Network Services and Estates Toolkit - to review all primary care estate solution schemes, which included the plans to replace the current premises of Patford House Surgery in Calne.

“It should be noted that as all GP practices are now working together as part of joined-up primary care networks, each project was considered on how it would benefit the PCN as a whole, rather than the impact it would make on one single surgery.

“There are significant gaps in the proposed plans for the new premises, all of which need to be addressed by the practices that belong to the Calne PCN before the scheme can progress further.

“It is essential for all practices in the Calne PCN to work through these issues together and agree a suitable way forward before the ICB can commit to any next steps.

“There is currently no additional revenue allocation for primary care and the message from NHS England is that no additional revenue funding is proposed.

“This means that the ICB must consider very carefully where to invest what limited resources are available, which is very complex as there are many projects across all of Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire requiring financial support.

“With this in mind, the focus of the ICB has been to support PCNs to establish their estate plans and have their proposals mapped out in a way that would allow a more formal business case to be produced, should funding become available.”

Further information on funding estates projects within primary care

Unlike NHS trusts and other health and care providers, primary care has a number of options available when it comes to the provision of their estate. This can include NHS capital, but more often is focused on a third party developer building the estate, and primary care taking a lease of the space, or partners within the practice borrowing the capital.

Whichever option is followed, the ICB is required to fund the revenue of this through reimbursement under the [Premises Cost Directions](#), which includes rents, rates, water, sewage and clinical waste.

It's important to note that at this point, the only schemes the ICB can support are those for minor improvement grants involving internal reconfigurations, which increase clinical capacity or allow for more effective use of the existing estate, and do not have an additional revenue consequence for the ICB.

NB:

- Funding for community diagnostic centres derives from money – approximately £2.3 billion – put forward by central government. Local health and care systems are then required to commission CDCs in their specific area using the NHS Standard Contract.
- The former Primary Care Commissioning Group was replaced by the new Primary Care Executive Group, which meets on a monthly basis.
- Patients and members of the public wishing to contact the ICB are encouraged to do so through the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). The contact details for this service, including an email and telephone number, are listed on the ICB website.

- The ICB has a Non-Executive Director for Public and Community Engagement, who ensures that involvement of members of the public is a consistent theme among all Board discussions. Minutes from all ICB Board meetings are available to view on the ICB website.

From Clinical Director, Limbic AI:

“With the upcoming rollout of Limbic Access – an AI-powered digital front door for mental health talking therapies – in the ICB region, how can the ICB support wholesale adoption of this technology to provide equity of access so that all citizens, regardless of location and point of entry, receive the same high level of service when self-referring to talking therapy services?”

Response from Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Foundation Trust:

“Digital front doors are recommended for consideration in talking therapies best practice guidance as they collect advance screening information about possible presentations which will inform and facilitate the client led assessment.

“The evidence suggests they improve service efficiency and are well-received by clients. However, it is important to ensure a range of equitable access methods, as digital solutions may not be suitable for everyone.

“Currently, BSW Talking Therapies offers telephone, online self-referral, and professional self-referral routes.

“These will remain available even if a digital assessment tool is introduced. Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership is exploring the possibility of adding an AI solution, but no final decision has yet been made.

“The process will ensure the right system is chosen while maintaining other equitable access methods.”

Supplementary response from ICB:

“The ICB is keen to further develop its digital front door, especially via the NHS App.

“However, we will continue to ensure that existing non-digital access routes are maintained for those less digitally-able.

“We are also working with the national team behind the NHS App to get better reporting, which will enable us to better identify areas of digital exclusion.”

From member of the public:

“Many residents in Harnham believe that the current size of Harnham, its predicted future growth, along with the traffic congestion problems that are increasingly problematic, mean that Harnham deserves to have its own surgery south of the river running through Salisbury.

Please can you confirm:

- At what scale of population does the ICB believe a community merits a doctors surgery?
- Will preparations be made to consider optimal location for a surgery in Harnham and how might this be taken forward?

Response from ICB:

The ICB has delegated responsibility from NHS England for primary care, and this includes decisions relating to the commissioning and management of services, as well as planning new services and carrying out needs assessments.

However, such decisions, including those around new health and care facilities, are made in collaboration with other partners from within the integrated care system, including town and parish councils, Healthwatch groups and local VCSE organisations, and in accordance with the local Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

The two primary care networks in south Wiltshire, which cover the Salisbury area, did not engage with the ICB when carrying out an assessment of primary care estates, which included looking at local population growth and demographics.

The ICB will speak with the PCNs on the issue of population growth in and around the Harnham area.