

Our guide to our merger

'Getting it right for our patients, our colleagues and our communities'

Somerset Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (SPFT) and Taunton and Somerset NHS Foundation Trust (TSFT) are planning to merge. SPFT runs community services, community hospitals and mental health services and TSFT runs Musgrove Park Hospital which provides acute services. The planned merger will bring into one organisation all of Somerset's NHS community and mental health services and a large proportion of the county's acute hospital services. This guide explains why the two trusts are merging, how and when we are merging and the benefits for patients, their carers and colleagues.

1. Why are the two trusts merging?

We want to ensure that we can meet the needs of the people of Somerset and we believe that by forming one organisation we will be better able to do this now and in the future. Working as one organisation, in partnership with the other health and social care organisations in Somerset, we will provide better and more joined up care closer to patients' homes, with more focus on preventing ill health, and early support to enable people to stay well for longer.

By merging we will remove the barriers that currently add unnecessary cost and delay to providing care. We have a shared mission to deliver outstanding care to the people of Somerset. We want to be a merged organisation that gets it right first time for our patients, carers, colleagues and communities.

2. Why do we need to merge?

Struggling to meet patients' needs

Health and care services in Somerset are struggling to meet the increasing needs of our ageing population and the rising number of people with complex or long-term health conditions. We currently provide much of our care to patients in inpatient settings, relying on bed-based care. This is not always appropriate and prevents us from focussing attention and resources on providing earlier intervention to support people stay well for longer. As a result, some people don't get the help they need when they need it which can make their mental or physical health problems worse. This can result in people having to access care in a period of crisis, or urgently, for matters which could have been managed more effectively sooner.

Facing staffing shortages

Both our trusts have staffing shortages which make it harder to deliver services. Gaps in staffing have led us to temporarily close some community hospital beds and reduce the opening hours of some of our minor injuries units. Both trusts spend significant sums on temporary staff, for example in 2018/9 TSFT spent £19.6 million while SPFT spent £10.9m.

Struggling to make ends meet

The health and social care system in Somerset is struggling to make ends meet. Both of our trusts run cost improvement programmes every year to ensure that we work as efficiently as possible but we have reached a point where we cannot continue to deliver the necessary efficiencies without changing the way we deliver services.

If SPFT and TSFT continue as separate organisations the financial performance for both organisations will deteriorate. We forecast that by 2024/25, SPFT's deficit will be £3.2m, and TSFT's deficit will be £15.4m. By merging we believe we will be able to have an organisation that is financially sustainable (not in deficit). This will be achieved by reducing the demand on services, thereby avoiding additional expenditure as well as reducing the amount we spend on agency costs and some of our corporate services.

By merging our two organisations we can remove the barriers that currently add unnecessary cost and delay to providing care and we will be better able to get it right for our patients.

3. How will the merger benefit our patients?

We will improve care for patients by integrating community, mental health and hospital services where that supports the needs of patients and the wider population. This will include removing the duplication and inefficiencies that frustrate patients and delay their treatment. Patients, their families and carers will only have to tell their story once and they will have a better experience.

Our aims are to:

- Aim 1: Provide safe, effective, high quality, person-centred care in the most appropriate setting.
- Aim 2: Deliver care closer to home in neighbourhood areas with an emphasis on self-management and prevention
- Aim 3: Give equal priority to physical and mental health, and value all people alike
- Aim 4: Improve outcomes for people with complex conditions through personalised, co-ordinated care.

A team of seven clinicians from both our trusts has worked with a large number of colleagues and stakeholders to ensure that our plans for integrating community, mental health and hospital services will meet the needs of the population of Somerset. We will continue to work with the other health and care organisations in Somerset, and with patient and carer groups, as we develop further detailed plans and make improvements to our services.

4. How will the merger benefit our colleagues?

We believe that empowered, well supported colleagues are fundamental to our mission to provide outstanding care. Both organisations have extremely dedicated colleagues who go the extra mile but they are frequently frustrated by the same things as our patients. We believe, from reviewing the evidence, that they will gain greater job satisfaction from working in integrated community, mental health and hospital services that provide outstanding care and a better experience for patients and carers.

Colleagues will also have the opportunity to extend their knowledge and experience by working in different settings. For example, a physiotherapist who has worked in Musgrove Park may want to gain experience of working in the community and vice versa. Instead of

resigning and getting a new job in a different organisation, they will be able to find opportunities either within their own team or a similar one elsewhere within the shared merged trust.

We believe our merged trust will be an organisation that people want to work for, helping to attract new colleagues, reducing staffing gaps and ultimately reducing some of the pressure on our colleagues. In fact this has already begun to happen at all levels of the organisation.

5. When will we merge?

In September 2019 both our Trust Boards signed off the business case that sets out why we want to merge, how we will do it and our vision for the merged trust. Both our Councils of Governors agreed that the Trust Boards have conducted the due diligence necessary to take this significant step. We subsequently submitted our business case to the regulator NHS Improvement (NHSI) to consider.

If NHSI agrees to the merger, both our Trust Boards and Councils of Governors will then formally consider the transaction. We hope to merge in the first few months of 2020.

6. How will we merge?

Our two trusts are coming together as equals with a shared mission to deliver outstanding care to the people of Somerset through a culture of listening, learning and continuous improvement. We want to be an organisation that gets it right for our patients, carers, colleagues and communities.

For pragmatic reasons of time and cost, the merger will be a merger by acquisition with SPFT acquiring TSFT. However, we have worked hard to make sure the way the Trust works fairly represents our current organisations and the communities we work in. The merged organisation's Trust Board will have non-executive directors drawn from both SPFT and TSFT's boards and we will hold elections to the Council of Governors shortly after the merger to ensure representation from all the constituencies set out in the revised constitution.

*You can keep up to date on our progress by following
our social media channels or visiting our websites.*

Facebook: @MusgrovePark, @SomParNHS

Twitter: @MusgrovePark, @SomParNHS

Instagram: @musgrovesomparnhs

Websites: <https://www.tsft.nhs.uk/> <http://www.sompar.nhs.uk/>