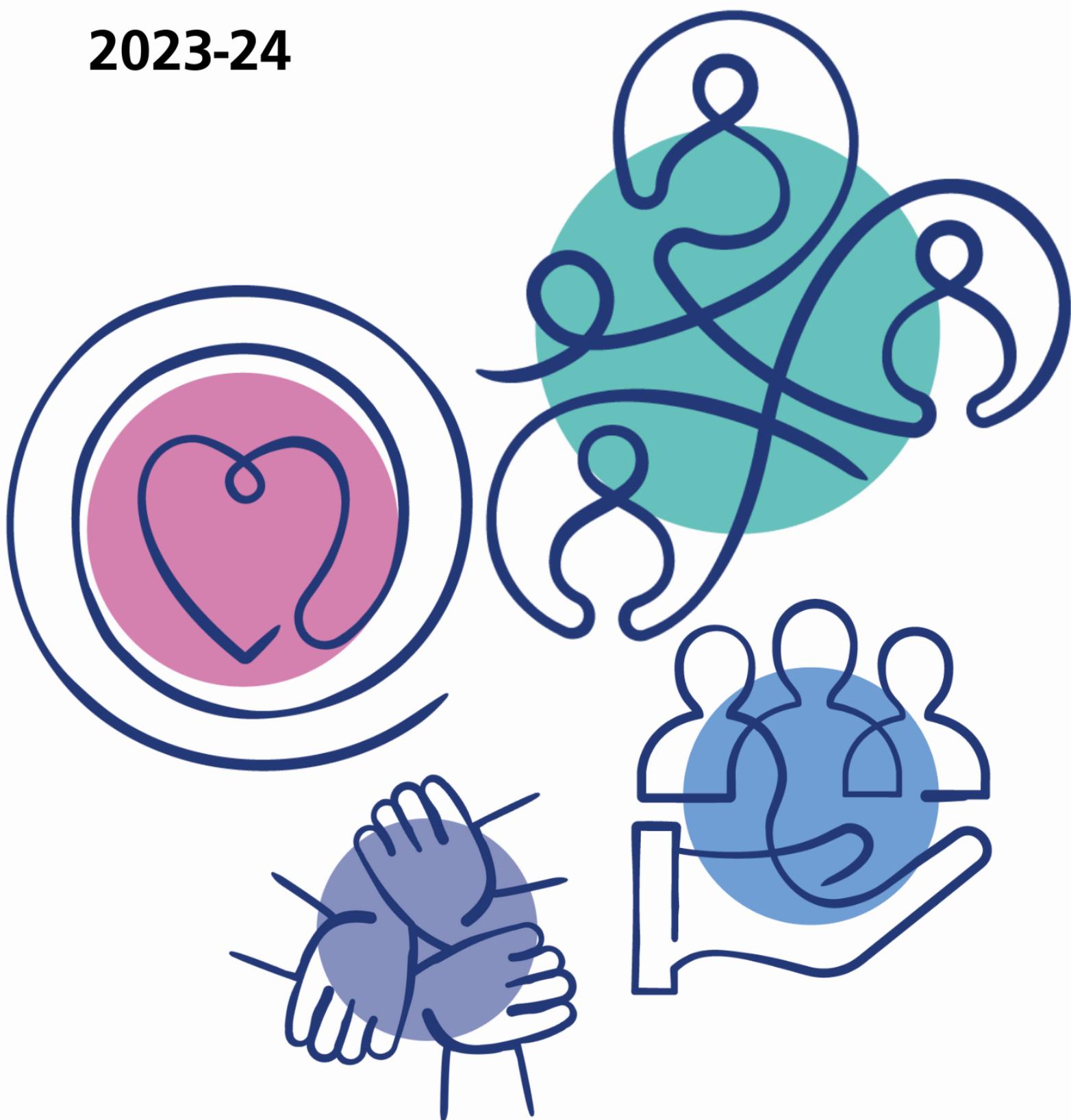


SUMMARY ANNUAL REPORT

2023-24



Contents

Introduction	Page 3
How NHS Cheshire and Merseyside's budget was spent in 2023-24	Page 5
Performance in 2023-24	Page 6
Diagnostics	Page 6
Planned care	Page 7
Cancer	Page 8
Urgent and emergency care	Page 9
Primary and community care	Page 10
Mental health	Page 12
Learning disability and / or autism	Page 13
NHS industrial action	Page 14
Engaging people and communities	Page 15
Digital	Page 17
Tackling health inequalities	Page 19
Looking Ahead 2024-25	Page 20
Continuous improvement	Page 21
NHS Recovery in 2024-25	Page 22
NHS Dentistry	Page 23
Keep in touch	Page 24



Introduction

NHS Cheshire and Merseyside was formally established on 1st July 2022 and is one of the largest Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) in England, working within and across nine local authority areas known as Places.



NHS Cheshire and Merseyside is the statutory NHS organisation responsible for planning and arranging for the provision of healthcare services for more than 2.7 million residents, whilst also supporting the integration of NHS services with our partners.

The core priorities of all Integrated Care Boards are:



We are proud of what NHS Cheshire and Merseyside has achieved in its first two years – a period in which the NHS has continued to experience a challenging journey of recovery, post COVID-19, combined with the impact of multiple rounds of NHS industrial action.

Reducing waiting times for those waiting the longest for treatment continues to be a key priority and we are particularly proud of improvements in access to cancer services. We have also made significant improvements in reducing paediatric dental waiting lists and have launched a major oral health strategy for two to seven-year-olds.

NHS Cheshire and Merseyside and its health and care partners across the Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care System delivered many successes in the last year, achieved a number of ambitious targets, received recognition for innovation and expertise and demonstrated our ability and commitment to continually improve.

This report shares several key highlights from 2023-24 about what the NHS has achieved in Cheshire and Merseyside. Please refer to our full, corporate Annual Report ([available via the NHS Cheshire and Merseyside website](#)) for further information about our delivery against a number of statutory duties – including detailed reports about activity in each of our nine Places.



Graham Urwin – Chief Executive



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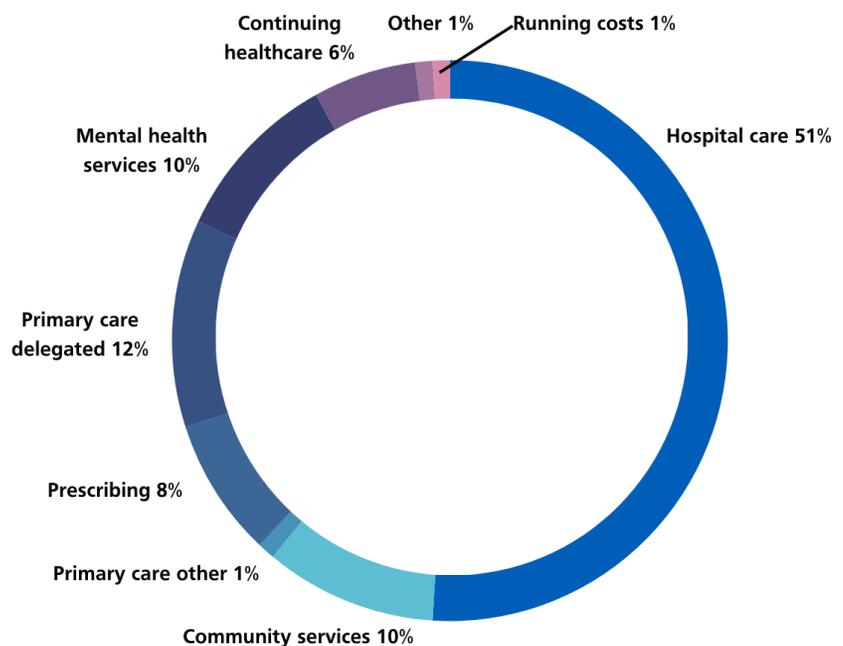
How NHS Cheshire and Merseyside's budget was spent in 2023-24

From a budget of £6.7 billion, NHS Cheshire and Merseyside delivered a year-end surplus of £3.219 million in 2023-24.

More than half of NHS Cheshire and Merseyside's budget was spent on hospital care.

NHS Cheshire and Merseyside also met all four key financial duties for Integrated Care Boards in 2023-24 as required under the NHS Act 2006 (as amended).

HOSPITAL CARE	51%
COMMUNITY SERVICES	10%
PRIMARY CARE OTHER	1%
PRESCRIBING incl. associated costs	8%
PRIMARY CARE DELEGATED	12%
MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES	10%
CONTINUING HEALTHCARE	6%
OTHER	1%
RUNNING COSTS	1%



Performance in 2023-24

Diagnostics

More patients now have their health conditions diagnosed more quickly in Cheshire and Merseyside than in almost any other area of England.

Cheshire and Merseyside was the first and is one of only a handful of Integrated Care Systems, to be re-achieving (post-COVID) the national waiting list target for 90% of patients to receive a diagnostic test within six weeks.

This target encompasses 15 key test areas – many linked to cancer diagnosis – including CT and MRI scans, colonoscopy and gastroscopy.

In part, this achievement was down to the work of Cheshire and Merseyside's network of Community Diagnostics Centres (CDCs), which delivered 279,000 additional tests in 2023-24 (15% of all CDC activity in England).

Shorter waiting times mean patients receive test results sooner and help to ensure that they receive the correct treatment as quickly as possible – leading to better outcomes.

However, there is more to do.

The focus for the Cheshire and Merseyside Diagnostic Programme in 2024-25 is to increase the proportion of patients who receive their diagnostic test within six weeks to at least 95%.



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Planned care

Planned, or elective care, covers a broad range of 'non-urgent' services, usually delivered in a hospital setting - including outpatient care, surgery and cancer treatment.

COVID-19 had a significant impact on planned care, meaning many patients have had to wait longer for treatment since the pandemic, and the Government challenged all Integrated Care Boards to ensure that nobody would have to wait 65 weeks or more for planned care treatment by the end of 2023-24.



At the beginning of the year, 207,824 patients across Cheshire and Merseyside were at risk of waiting more than 65 weeks if left untreated. Despite the impact of multiple rounds of NHS industrial action, significant progress in reducing very long waits meant just 2,195 patients (c1%) - out of those 207,824 - breached 65 weeks last year.

The Cheshire and Merseyside Acute and Specialist Trusts (CMAST) provider collaborative, which hosts and delivers our Elective Recovery Programme, also helped more than 9,000 patients to receive faster care courtesy of our Trusts working together to level out waiting lists and delivering theatre improvement training to 50 Trust staff.

The use of AI and 'pre-habilitation' to both identify and support patients at highest risk of post-op complications helped to reduce the average length of stay for our highest risk patients by at least two days.

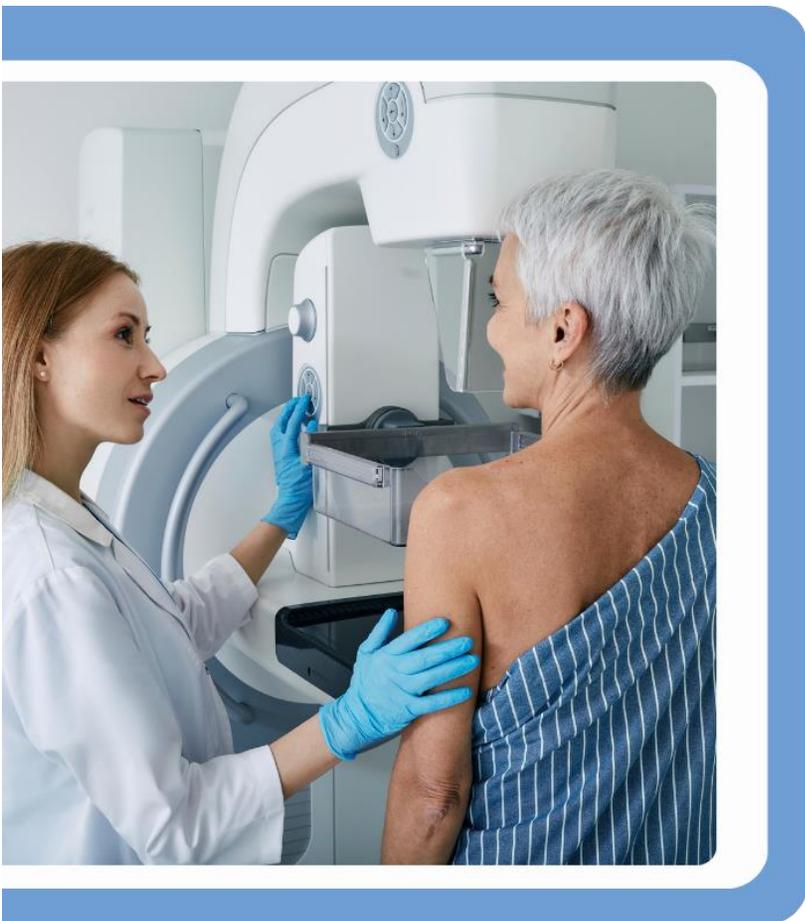


Cancer

Cheshire and Merseyside Cancer Alliance lead on developing and improving NHS cancer services on behalf of NHS Cheshire and Merseyside.

Nationally, Cheshire and Merseyside were the first cancer alliance to return the average waiting time between diagnosis and first cancer treatment to pre-COVID levels.

The alliance oversees a variety of programmes leading on prevention, earlier diagnosis, improving operational performance, developing the workforce and addressing health inequalities. Its focus is on creating better cancer services, better cancer care and better cancer outcomes for the people of Cheshire and Merseyside.



Cheshire and Merseyside Cancer Alliance was also shortlisted for a national Health Service Journal Patient Safety Award in 2024 for its work with communities to promote cancer awareness and the benefits of screening.

As a direct result of its work with community and voluntary sector organisations, in the space of just 18 months 12,000 individual cancer conversations were conducted with Cheshire and Merseyside residents.



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Urgent and emergency care

Urgent and emergency care performance remained challenging for Cheshire and Merseyside health and care services last year and is recognised as our most significant operational challenge in 2024-25. Our ambition must be to eliminate ‘corridor care’ altogether – not to normalise it.

The health and social care system prepared extensively for last winter, ensuring the additional bed capacity which was opened in 2022-23 was maintained, along with initiatives to both prevent unnecessary admission and facilitate discharge from hospital.

However, a combination of pressures from respiratory illnesses - including COVID-19 - and issues discharging patients to the most appropriate settings resulted in an extended period of intense pressure.

NHS Cheshire and Merseyside continued to develop its System Co-ordination Centre capabilities throughout 2023-24. A key element of this was the implementation of a new reporting system, accessible to all partners across Cheshire and Merseyside, which displays a wide range of key urgent care data and updates in real-time.



Primary and community care

In November 2023, NHS Cheshire and Merseyside set out its response to the national Primary Care recovery plan, with more than 15 million appointments made available in general practice across Cheshire and Merseyside in 2023-24, which exceeded the national target by more than 140,000 appointments.

In March 2024, for example, practices delivered more than 1.2 million patient appointments (including more than 800,000 face-to-face appointments), which is nearly 250,000 more than in the same period pre-pandemic.



Cheshire and Merseyside benchmarked slightly higher than the national average in the 2024 Patient Survey with 76% of patients reporting a good experience of GP practices (compared to 74% nationally) and 70% a positive dental experience.

88% of respondents reported a good experience of pharmacy services, with more than 95% of all pharmacies across Cheshire and Merseyside now offering Pharmacy First - an initiative designed to make it easier and more convenient for people to access care in a pharmacy setting.



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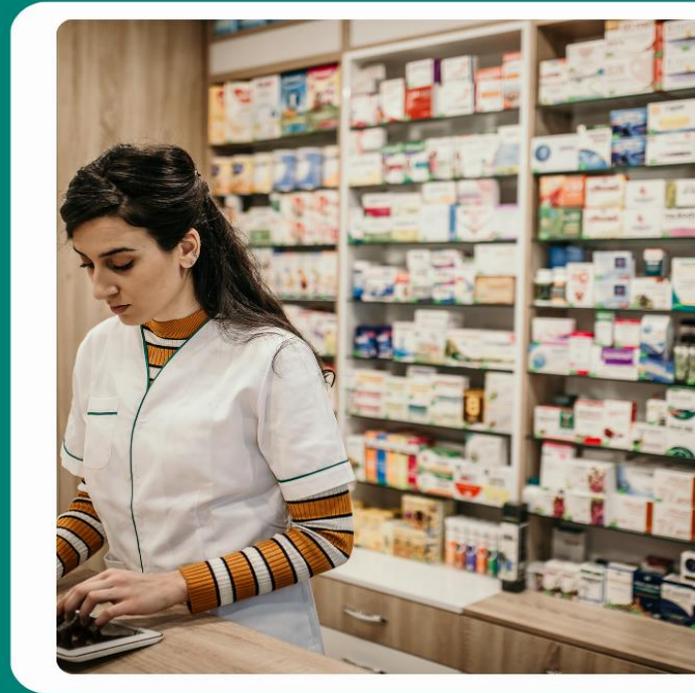


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Participating pharmacies are now able to assess and treat patients for conditions including sinusitis, sore throat, earache, infected insect bites, impetigo, shingles and uncomplicated UTIs either via walk in or referral from GP practices, NHS 111 and NHS Walk-in Centres / Urgent Treatment Centres.

In community care, Cheshire and Merseyside's Urgent Community Response services exceeded the national ambition to respond to at least 70% of calls within two hours, achieving 83%.

Cheshire and Merseyside's virtual ward 'bed' capacity increased from 340 to 448 in 2023-24. Virtual wards enable people to get the care they need, at the place they call home, via a mixture of home visits and easy-to-use remote technology. The focus continues to be on supporting patients with respiratory conditions, frailty, heart failure and cancer.



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Mental health

During 2023-24, Cheshire and Merseyside health and care services supported 71% of people who experienced a first episode of psychosis to begin treatment within two weeks - compared to a national target of 60%.

National targets focused on access to perinatal mental health services were also exceeded.



Delayed transfers of care remained an ongoing challenge, however progress on implementing new integrated models of community and crisis care continued.

Children and Young People's mental health service access rates improved month-on-month. In January 2024, 33,065 local children and young people had received at least one contact by a community mental health support service – compared to 27,995 12 months earlier.

Separately, NHS Cheshire and Merseyside engaged with children and young people, parents and carers to better understand where improvements can be made. This included under-represented voices from the deaf community, LGBTQ+ and those living in areas of high deprivation.



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Learning disability and / or autism

The Cheshire and Merseyside health and care system has a Transforming Care Partnership, comprising the nine local authorities in Cheshire and Merseyside, NHS Cheshire and Merseyside and the two NHS Trust mental health and disability providers.

This partnership aims to reduce admissions and inpatient numbers of those with a learning disability and / or autism of all ages, help to reduce health inequalities and improve provision and support available in the community.

In the 2023-24 period, the key national ambition that at least three quarters of people aged 14+ with Learning Disabilities receive an annual health check was achieved by February 2024 in Cheshire and Merseyside.



NHS industrial action

As a Category 1 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act, NHS Cheshire and Merseyside has developed a strong track record of protecting the safety and quality of care during multiple rounds of NHS industrial action.

In total, NHS Cheshire and Merseyside led the response for the 67 days of NHS industrial action during 2023-24.



Other incident responses co-ordinated by NHS Cheshire and Merseyside during 2023-24 included:

- Temporary loss of 999 system (25 June 2023)
- M53 Road Traffic Collision (September 2023)
- Storm Babet (October 2023)
- Firearms incident - Showcase Cinema, Liverpool (January 2024)
- Unknown Contaminant - Belle Vale Park, Liverpool (January 2024)



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Engaging people and communities

Working in partnership with people and communities helps lead to better decisions about how health and care services are designed, delivered and used and how money is spent - while also helping to improve safety and patient experience.

As an organisation which is responsible for ensuring high-quality and accessible health and care services for 2.7 million people, it is critical that NHS Cheshire and Merseyside's involvement approach complements existing groups and networks across our footprint, including:



- **Healthwatch** - Key partners at both Place and system level. Healthwatch organisations occupy a unique position as local health and care champions.
- **Place communications and engagement collaboratives** - During 2023-24, NHS Cheshire and Merseyside supported the development of communications and engagement collaboratives – groups that bring together different partners at Place to plan and deliver local communications and engagement activity.



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Examples of involvement activity co-ordinated by NHS Cheshire and Merseyside in 2023-24, included:

- **Women’s Hospital Services in Liverpool Programme** – In March 2024 we shared plans to recruit two public advisors, a lived experience panel and a virtual reference group. We also established a communications and engagement group, reporting to the programme board, which brings together Healthwatch and key NHS organisations to plan and deliver involvement activity
- **Children and Young People’s Mental Health** - In early 2024, engagement took place to support the development of a refreshed Children and Young People’s Mental Health Transformation Plan. Feedback was received from 10 existing groups for children, young people, parents and carers across Cheshire and Merseyside - and more than 200 health professionals.
- **Harmonisation of clinical policies** – To support more equal access to health care, by March 2024 NHS Cheshire and Merseyside had published a further 84 Cheshire and Merseyside-wide clinical policies for treatments and procedures. This work includes assessing the level of public involvement required for each policy.
- **Pulmonary rehabilitation** - In autumn 2023 we engaged with patients around a Cheshire and Mersey-wide specification for pulmonary rehabilitation services.



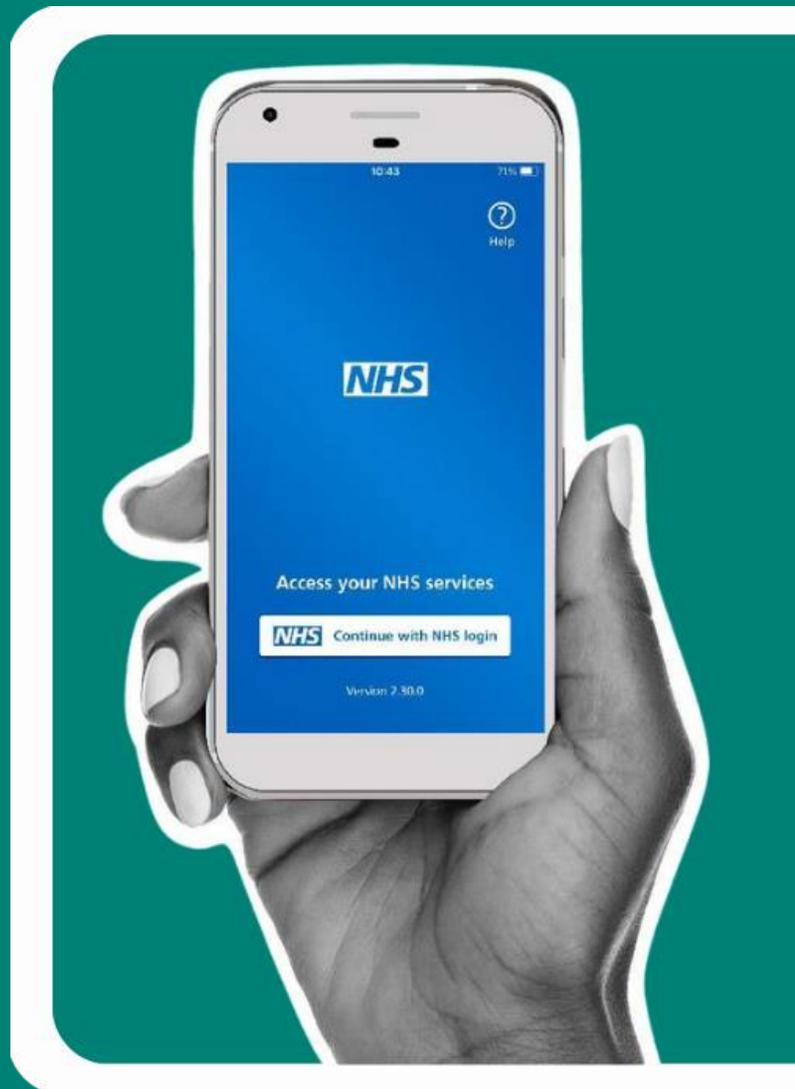
Digital

Cheshire and Merseyside's Digital and Data Strategy continued to shape our digital and data transformation priorities during 2023-24.

90% of people across Cheshire and Merseyside are now using at least one form of NHS online service - a 13% increase since 2022.

More than half of all residents have downloaded the NHS App (55% of all GP-registered patients aged 13+) - which now enables users to access estimated waiting times for treatment at their local hospital/s.

This is in addition to enabling patients to book appointments, order repeat prescriptions and access personal medical records and GP practice messages.



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GPs estimate that for every 1,000 prescriptions ordered online approximately 50 hours of time is saved.

In July 2024, there were more than 1.6 million log ins to the NHS App across Cheshire and Merseyside - with more than 9,000 medical appointments managed via the App.

Digital inclusion initiatives are in place across Cheshire and Merseyside and a related communications campaign drove more than 10,000 people to NHS App tips and case studies in 2023-24.

Other initiatives led by NHS Cheshire and Merseyside's Digital team include work to support GP practices on digital transformation, shared care records and patient portals.



Looking ahead – 2024-25

Cheshire and Merseyside Health and Care Partnership will oversee the delivery of the programmes aimed at tackling health inequalities, including:



All Together Smokefree – Ending smoking everywhere, for everyone, and creating a tobacco free future for our children.



Supporting Healthy Weight – Additional funding will be targeted towards supporting residents in disadvantaged communities.



The Health and Housing Collaborative – Investment in partnership working between the health and housing sectors to provide warmer homes, tackle damp and mould and improve specialist housing for people with neurodiversity and mental health needs.



All Together Fairer – Improving health outcomes for children and young people - targeting the most deprived communities within each of our nine 'Places'.



Continuous improvement

All NHS Trusts rated 'outstanding' by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) have at least one thing in common – a commitment to Continuous Improvement, the ongoing process of analysing performance, identifying opportunities and making incremental improvements.

In March 2024, the Board of NHS Cheshire and Merseyside confirmed an ambitious commitment to Continuous Improvement to help the local health and care system respond to today's challenges, deliver better care for patients and improve services for the future.

The following month, we co-ordinated a first-of-its-kind 'Leading for Improvement' event which brought together system leaders to focus on how to consistently embed Continuous Improvement across Cheshire and Merseyside.

A Cheshire and Merseyside Improvement Network (CaMIN), which supports improvement leads to share best practice and reduce duplication, is now taking this work forward.



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NHS Recovery in 2024-25

With demand for health and care services and inflationary cost pressures rising faster than budgets, NHS organisations across Cheshire and Merseyside face a really significant challenge to both live within the resources available and increase productivity in 2024-25.

The scale of this challenge requires us to work differently this year. NHS Cheshire and Merseyside has agreed a 2024-25 financial plan with NHS England on behalf of the Cheshire and Merseyside system and will focus on two defining priorities - fixing urgent care and improving the use of resources.

At the same time, we are working on several programmes around NHS back-office efficiency and the further integration of NHS provider governance - to reduce bureaucracy, make decision-making easier and reduce costs.



Key to the system's success in meeting the challenge is effective joint working, system-wide partner engagement and collaboration.



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We know that improving access to NHS dentistry is a key priority for local people.

In May 2024, NHS Cheshire and Merseyside published its Dental Improvement Plan 2024-26, which builds on the national Dental Reform Plan via a range of additional local dental improvement actions, backed by a multi-million pound increase in funding this year.



The number one priority is to increase access to both urgent and routine dental appointments.

The plan is being delivered by NHS Cheshire and Merseyside in close collaboration with the Local Dental Network, Local Dental Committees and NHS England's North West Dental Public Health team - as well as Healthwatch to help ensure that the experiences of patients inform improvements.



A supervised toothbrushing programme, targeted at young children, is being mobilised via Cheshire and Merseyside's Beyond Programme, hosted by Alder Hey Children's Hospital. Over the next three years, more than 200,000 toothpaste and brush packs will be distributed to children across Cheshire and Merseyside as part of a drive to encourage better oral health.



Keep in touch

For general enquiries, or to share a comment, complaint or compliment about our work, please email: enquiries@cheshireandmerseyside.nhs.uk or write to us at the following postal address:

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To receive updates about our work, please either sign up to receive regular briefings via our website or keep an eye on our website and social media channels:



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Interested in having your say on our work?

Why not sign up for our Community Voices reference group via email at: engagement@cheshireandmerseyside.nhs.uk



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