SWAG Cancer Alliance Newsletter

NHS Somerset, Wiltshire Avon and Gloucestershire Cancer Alliance

Leading and empowering excellence in cancer care for everyone across Somerset, Wiltshire, Avon and Gloucestershire.

Issued Wednesday 7 October 2026

A message from our Managing Director

Welcome to the October edition of the SWAG Cancer Alliance newsletter.

As we move into autumn, there is plenty of positive progress to share from across our region and beyond. This month, we celebrate the successful completion of our four Neighbourhood Cancer Care co-design events, which brought together colleagues, partners, patients and communities to help shape a shared vision for delivering cancer care closer to home.

The enthusiasm, innovation and commitment demonstrated throughout these events has been inspiring and will play an important role in informing the next phase of this work.

We're also delighted to see Bristol and BNSSG selected as one of only six national Neighbourhood Health Trailblazer sites. This significant achievement reflects the strength of partnership working across our system and presents exciting opportunities to tackle health inequalities and transform care within local communities.

At a national level, the establishment of the new National Cancer Board signals a renewed focus on improving outcomes and driving delivery of the ambitions set out in the Cancer Plan. We look forward to working closely with colleagues across the NHS and wider partners to ensure the voices and experiences of our South West communities help shape this agenda.

Alongside these developments, this edition highlights the outstanding work taking place across the Alliance, from innovation and data-driven improvement to workforce development, patient experience and early diagnosis initiatives.

Don't forget to register for our upcoming SWAG Innovates Together webinar on 15th October, this time focussed on a new accelerator digital innovation programme and digital inclusion in the NHS App.

Thank you for your continued commitment to improving cancer care and outcomes across our region.

Best wishes,
Ruth Carr
Managing Director

Alliance Updates

Bringing neighbourhood cancer care closer to communities

The SWAG Cancer Alliance Neighbourhood Cancer Care programme continues to build momentum, with more than 150 stakeholders taking part in four co-design events held across the region.

Delivered in partnership with the Health Innovation Network South West and Health Innovation West of England, the events brought together healthcare professionals, local authorities, voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations, patients and carers to explore how we can improve cancer outcomes closer to home.

Partners from organisations including NHS trusts, primary care, integrated care boards, local authorities, charities and community organisations shared learning, showcased innovative neighbourhood approaches already making a difference, and identified opportunities to strengthen prevention, early diagnosis, treatment support and personalised care.

The insights gathered will shape the next phase of the programme and help inform a more connected, equitable and community-focused approach to cancer care across the SWAG region.

One attendee summed up the spirit of the events perfectly: “Meeting so many amazing people - we need to do more of this - this is what the neighbourhood model is all about!”

A huge thank you to everyone who contributed their time, expertise and ideas to help shape the future of neighbourhood cancer care.

Welcoming New Primary Care Cancer Leads

We are delighted to welcome two new Primary Care and Neighbourhood Cancer Clinical Leads to the SWAG Cancer Alliance, who will help drive earlier cancer diagnosis, reduce health inequalities and strengthen collaboration across our region.

Jemma Penny has joined as the lead for Somerset. An Advanced Practitioner with experience in primary care, education and lecturing, Jemma is passionate about improving cancer care and supporting more joined-up, equitable services for patients. She is particularly keen to strengthen learning, collaboration and earlier diagnosis across primary care.

Dr Sarah Marshall joins as the lead for Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire (BSW). A GP in Swindon and GP trainer, Sarah has a strong interest in cancer, health inequalities, palliative care and research. Through her role, she aims to improve cancer awareness, increase screening uptake, support earlier diagnosis and ensure primary care voices are reflected in cancer service development.

Please join us in welcoming Jemma and Sarah to their new roles. For more information, contact jemma.penny1@nhs.net or sarah.marshall36@nhs.net.

Celebrating Successes

Multiple awards won by the Patient Experience and Cancer Services Teams in Bristol

A huge congratulations to the Patient Experience and Cancer Services teams from Bristol NHS Foundation Trust who had incredible success at the Picker Experience Network Awards in Birmingham on 1st October – winning not one, not two, but three awards, and a runner-up!

Together, they were shortlisted across an incredible eight categories, with two SWAG-funded projects being recognised:

'Improving patient experience of cancer care: Learning from insights shared by cancer patients at Southmead Hospital' won the 'Digital and Technology Innovation for Experience Award', the 'Leadership and Governance for Experience Excellence Award', and was runner up in the 'Support Operations Excellence in Improving Experience' category.

'Expanding the reach of reasonable adjustments: The Bristol North Somerset and South Gloucestershire (BNSSG) Cancer Improvement Collaborative' won the award for 'Equity in Experience'.

To be finalists across so many categories was a huge achievement in itself, but to bring home three national awards and a runner-up is truly outstanding and reflects the dedication, expertise and passion of everyone involved.

SWAG's Senior Data Analyst nominated in UK Top 100 AI Leaders

'Incredibly proud to see our Senior Data Analyst, Funmilayo Oladipo, MBA, nominated as one of the Top 100 AI Leaders in the UK and selected as a speaker ahead of the UK AI Hundred.

Funmilayo's passion for AI and innovation is helping drive improvements in cancer care, from developing tools that identify pressure points across pathways to championing the use of technology to improve patient outcomes.

This recognition reflects her dedication, expertise and commitment to making a meaningful difference in healthcare - we're incredibly lucky to have her at SWAG Cancer Alliance.

Well done, Funmilayo. We're cheering you on! 👏

Read about Funmi's work here: [SWAG's Senior Data Analyst Recognised Among UK's Top AI Leaders - SWAG Cancer Alliance]

SWAG Domestic Abuse and Cancer Practice Education Facilitator featured on Macmillan Cancer Professionals Podcast

Really fantastic to hear Lucy Angell-John talk about how domestic abuse can impact every stage of the cancer pathway, from delayed diagnosis and missed appointments to treatment decisions and recovery. The episode also features some powerful lived experience accounts from people who have navigated cancer while experiencing domestic abuse, highlighting the additional barriers and challenges they faced.

SWAG Cancer Alliance is unique in employing a dedicated Domestic Abuse and Cancer Practice Education Facilitator – the only role of its kind in the UK, and Lucy has worked closely with Macmillan and several other partners to support the creation of a Cancer and Domestic Abuse Toolkit for professionals, as well as delivering a specialist training programme to over 1,300 cancer professionals (so far) and launching a new animation titled 'Making a Difference'.

Lucy is available to deliver free training to all staff until March 2027. Please email her on Lucy.angelljohn@nhs.net to book.

🔗 **Listen to the podcast:** [Domestic abuse and cancer - The Cancer Professionals Podcast | Podcast on Spotify]

🔗 **Find out more about our Cancer & Domestic Abuse programme:** [Cancer & Domestic Abuse - SWAG Cancer Alliance]

Workforce Updates

Data Quality Driving Improvement: The South West Prostate Dashboard

High-quality data is helping drive improvements in prostate cancer services across the South West. Over the past 18 months, the South West Prostate Dashboard has brought together provider Trusts, Somerset Cancer Register and South Central and West to create a comprehensive regional dataset covering around 50 clinical, diagnostic and demographic measures across the prostate cancer pathway.

The dashboard has supported significant improvements in data completeness and consistency, with monthly record submissions doubling from around 300 in 2024 to 600 in 2026. Key fields such as ethnicity, postcode and clinical staging are now more complete, helping teams better understand variation, identify health inequalities and target service improvements.

Clinicians are using the dashboard to monitor pathway performance, benchmark against other providers, support quality assurance and evaluate pathway transformation initiatives. The dashboard's impact has also been recognised in a peer-reviewed journal publication, highlighting its role in improving collaboration, decision-making and service improvement.

For more information, contact the SWAG Cancer Alliance FDOP Team at SWAGCA@nbt.nhs.uk.

Children, Teenage and Young Adult Cancer Network Education Event

Last month marked Childhood Cancer Awareness Month and we wanted to take the opportunity to acknowledge the amazing staff delivering cancer care for patients in our hospitals across the South West. Children, Teenage and Young Adult Cancer Services across the region run as a network, supporting patients aged 0-24 years to have their treatment led by expert clinical teams whilst also receiving care closer to home wherever possible.

Once a year staff from across the services, along with key partners, meet for the Children, Teenage and Young Adult Cancer Network Education Event. This day is important for bringing professionals together for shared learning, connection and driving forward further improvements in the care for patients and families.

This year Ruth Carr, SWAG Cancer Alliance Managing Director and Mark Cartmell, Peninsula Cancer Alliance Joint Clinical Director, opened the event with an overview of planning for delivery of The Cancer Plan in the region, and updates on how the Network and the Alliances are working in collaboration to ensure the voice of younger patients and their families is represented.

To find out more about the Network or services in the region then visit SWCTYACancerNetwork.nhs.uk or contact Amanda Saunders, Network Manager at Amanda.Saunders2@uhbw.nhs.uk.

ACCEND-Funded Cancer Care Courses Open for Applications

Healthcare professionals across the region can now apply for a range of ACCEND-funded courses delivered by UWE Bristol, designed to support professional development and enhance cancer care skills.

The PG Cert in Cancer Care includes three 20-credit modules covering the fundamentals of cancer care, evidencing work-based learning, and communication skills in supportive and end-of-life care. Teaching takes place between September 2026 and March 2027 through a blend of campus-based, online and practice learning.

Applications are also open for Clinical Leadership and Professional Development in Cancer Care, a programme running from October 2026 to February 2027, supporting clinicians to develop leadership skills and drive improvements in cancer services.

These courses provide an excellent opportunity to build expertise, gain academic credits and strengthen the delivery of high-quality cancer care.

For further information or to apply, visit the UWE Bristol CPD website or contact pd@uwe.ac.uk.

Early Diagnosis and Prevention

Small Grants Scheme Project Exploring Cancer Screening Barriers

A project funded through the SWAG Cancer Alliance Small Grants Scheme is helping to improve understanding of the barriers that can prevent people from taking part in cancer screening.

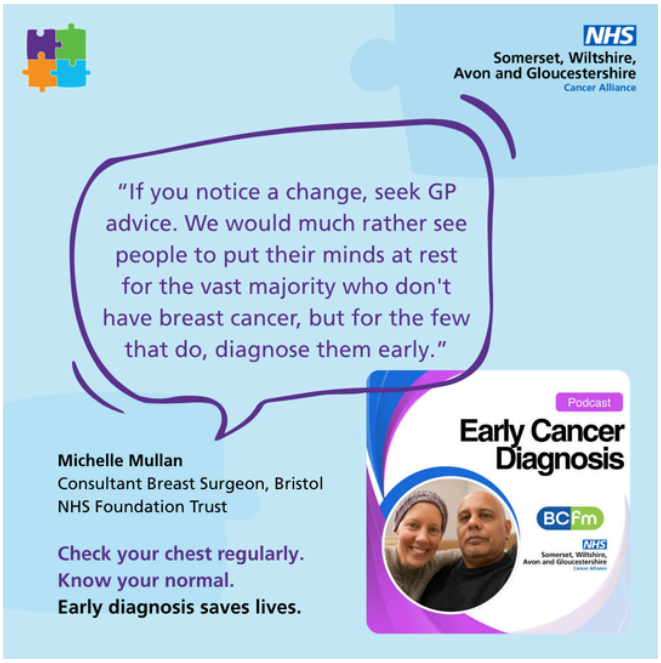
Lesley Johnson, a Social Prescriber with the Living Well Team in the Chippenham, Corsham and Box Primary Care Network, is leading a community engagement project focused on breast, bowel and cervical cancer screening. Through informal one-to-one conversations, community drop-in sessions and a specially designed questionnaire, the project aims to better understand the concerns, misconceptions and practical challenges that can affect screening uptake.

The initiative has also developed a series of myth-busting information sheets to help answer common questions and provide reassurance about cancer screening.

The project highlights the value of listening directly to communities and using local insight to help improve access, tackle inequalities and encourage more people to participate in life-saving screening programmes.

For more information, contact lesley.johnson26@nhs.net.

Breast Cancer Awareness Month: Listen to the Early Diagnosis Podcast



This Breast Cancer Awareness Month, we're shining a spotlight on the latest BCfm Radio Early Diagnosis Podcast, featuring Michelle Mullan, Consultant Breast Surgeon, who shares expert advice on the importance of recognising breast cancer symptoms and seeking help early.

Around 1 in 7 women in the UK will develop breast cancer during their lifetime, but when diagnosed at the earliest stage, the five-year survival rate is almost 99%. The podcast explores why early diagnosis matters and how being aware of what's normal for your body can help identify changes sooner.

Breast Cancer Awareness Month: Listen to the Early Diagnosis Podcast

The Data and Analytics Team has had a productive month, with several key pieces of work directly supporting patient pathways and decision-making across SWAG:

New BI System for FDOP: A new dashboard now enables monitoring of median waiting times against national standards across tumour groups and treatment types, helping identify where delays occur within pathways.

National Cancer Patient Experience Survey: The latest SWAG NCPES report has been completed, including demographic analysis to support targeted improvements in patient experience.

Breast Cancer PTLF Rollout: The Patient Tracking List Flow Tool has now been implemented for breast pathways, providing earlier visibility of emerging pressures and variation.

South West Prostate Dashboard: The dashboard continues to support providers in identifying variation, understanding demand pressures and targeting improvement work.

Improving Data Quality: New SCR developments will enable the inclusion of additional information, including ethnicity and performance status data, strengthening analysis of inequalities and variation.

Information Governance: All analytical work continues to operate within robust information governance arrangements, ensuring data is used securely and appropriately.

For more information on any of the above, please contact the Senior Analyst at Funmilayo.Oladipo@nbt.nhs.uk

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📚 Resources, Training & Events

SWAG Innovates Together, Thursday 15 October, 1pm | Online

Our fifth SWAG Innovates Together session will be held via Teams on Thursday 15 October 2026 from 1.00 pm - 2.00 pm, and is open to anyone interested in cancer innovation.

Register here: SWAG Innovates Together

CTYA Cancer Network Education Event, Thursday 17 September | Exeter

The South West Children, Teenage & Young Adult Cancer Operational Delivery Network are pleased to invite you to the annual Network Education Event, to be held on Thursday 17th September 2026, from 9:30am – 4:00pm at Sandy Park, Exeter.

Reserve a spot: Primary Care Funding Call Application Process Webinar

NHSE Gateway C Supporting Lung Cancer Screening Webinar and Q&A, Thursday 24 September, 12.30pm | Online

Join GatewayC in partnership with NHSE on 24 September 2026 for a free webinar on supporting lung cancer screening, smoking cessation and earlier diagnosis in primary care. This webinar is aimed at all primary care professionals. Register to receive clinical updates and and ask questions direct to our specialists.

Register here: NHSE webinar series: supporting lung cancer screening, smoking cessation and earlier diagnosis in primary care

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