

Healthier **Together**

Improving health and care in Bristol,  
North Somerset and South Gloucestershire



**HEALTHY WESTON** +

# Turning plans for Weston General Hospital into reality

**Short summary of what we heard between June and August 2022**



# What we did

Healthier Together is a partnership of organisations improving health and social care across Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire.

Our 'Healthy Weston Phase 2' programme is developing Weston General Hospital into a thriving hospital at the heart of the community. On top of routine ongoing service development, our Phase 2 plans focus particularly on three areas:

- 1 becoming a centre of surgical excellence so thousands more planned operations for adults of all ages can be carried out at Weston General Hospital
- 2 becoming a centre of excellence for older people's care so the Hospital provides more specialised care for older people, in addition to services for people of all ages
- 3 helping people go home from hospital quickly after an accident or emergency

Senior doctors, nurses and other health and care professionals are leading the planning.

More than 5,000 members of the public, patients, carers, staff, community organisations and others have helped to shape the plans over the past five years.



Between 20 June and 14 August 2022 we asked members of the public, staff, people who might be particularly affected and those who had not been involved before to help us plan practical next steps. We promoted opportunities to get involved by:

- **advertising** using newspaper articles, webpages, social media, pop-up stands at hospitals, videos, existing meetings, and the staff intranet and newsletters
- **directly inviting** community groups and partner organisations, members of the Healthier Together Citizens' Panel, hospital staff and people on our mailing lists
- **working with others**, such as placing leaflets, posters and website links in health and care organisations, and attending existing meetings of community groups and staff

**We heard from 890 people.** They were from different areas, age groups and roles:

- three quarters were members of the public, community groups or other groups (75%) and one quarter were NHS staff (25%)
- two thirds lived in Weston, Worle and villages (44%) or other parts of North Somerset (19%). The rest were mainly from Bristol (17%) and South Gloucestershire (11%)
- two thirds were women (69%). About 1 in 10 were from minority ethnic groups (9%). One third were aged under 50 years (30%), one third 50 to 65 years (36%) and one third older than 65 (34%). One quarter had a disability or long-term health issue (27%)

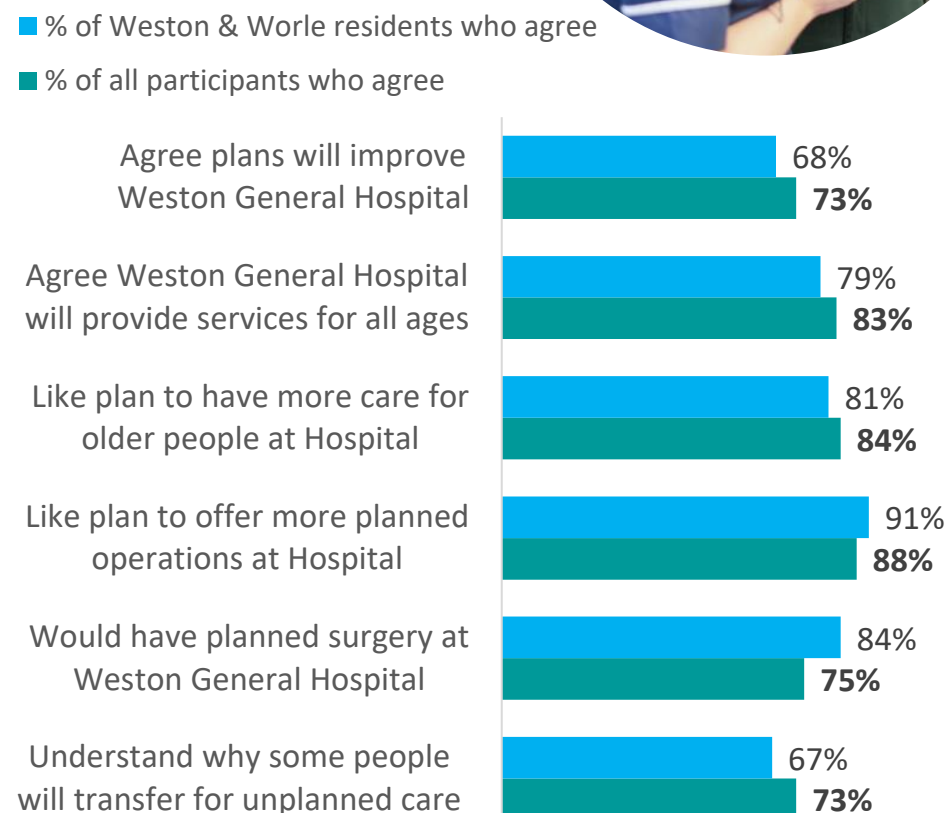
# What we heard

## Overall views about the plans

People providing feedback were usually positive about plans for Weston General Hospital overall:

- Of 376 people responding to a survey question, **three quarters thought the plans would improve Weston General Hospital (73%)**.
- Two thirds of people living in Weston, Worle and surrounding villages thought the plans would improve the Hospital (68%). Even greater proportions of people from other parts of North Somerset (87%), Bristol (83%) and South Gloucestershire (90%) thought this.
- People were equally positive no matter what their age, gender or ethnicity; whether or not they had a long-term condition or disability and whether they were NHS staff or members of the public.

The main area of concern with the plans was that some patients, loved ones and staff would need to travel to another hospital. People were concerned about the impact of travel on patients' and family members' wellbeing and quality of life, the environment, costs for families, and the availability of ambulances and patient transport. They said that we should consider the impact on loved ones and visitors, in addition to patients themselves. People suggested that the NHS should work with local authorities, transport companies and voluntary and community groups to identify solutions.



Note: proportions are based on the number of responses that commented on a specific topic. The numbers ranged from 397 to 527. Most were survey responses. 'All responses' also include Weston, Worle and surrounding villages.

## Sharing information about the plans

At meetings and in surveys and emails, people said that it was important to raise awareness in the community about what was planned and why. The most common ways that people thought we should communicate about next steps were:

- **general promotion** and media campaigns using local tv, radio and newspapers (45% of responses that commented about this), social media campaigns (44%) and placing leaflets and posters in local venues (29%)
- **direct communication** such as posting leaflets to every letterbox (18%) and emailing and texting everyone that the health service holds contact details for (15%)
- **working through others**, such as placing items in the newsletters of local authorities, retirement villages and community groups (11%) and communicating with health and care staff so they can share messages with patients (6%)



Most people said that we were describing the plans clearly. The main things that people suggested that we could provide additional or clearer information about were:

- more clarity about **which services** will be available at Weston General Hospital and who they will be for, such as whether maternity and children's services will be provided (32% of the 129 responses that suggested extra information)
- the **quality and safety** of care provided at Weston General Hospital, including good news stories to counteract past negative press (21%)
- more **specifics** about the plans, such as defining what we consider 'older' or 'frail' people (7%), what a centre of excellence is (5%), and more details about how patient transport will work (5%)



## Supporting people of all ages

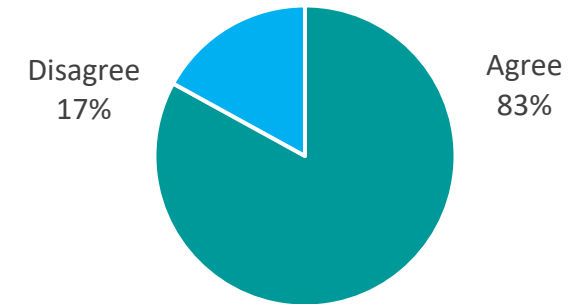
One of our plans is for Weston General Hospital to become a centre of excellence in caring for older, frail people who are less likely to bounce back after being unwell. This is in addition to continuing to provide a range of services for people of all ages.

When we talked about this in the past, some people thought that this meant that Weston General Hospital would focus mainly on older people and not care for the whole population. Healthier Together has changed the way that we describe the plans to make it clearer that Weston General Hospital will continue to support people of all ages.

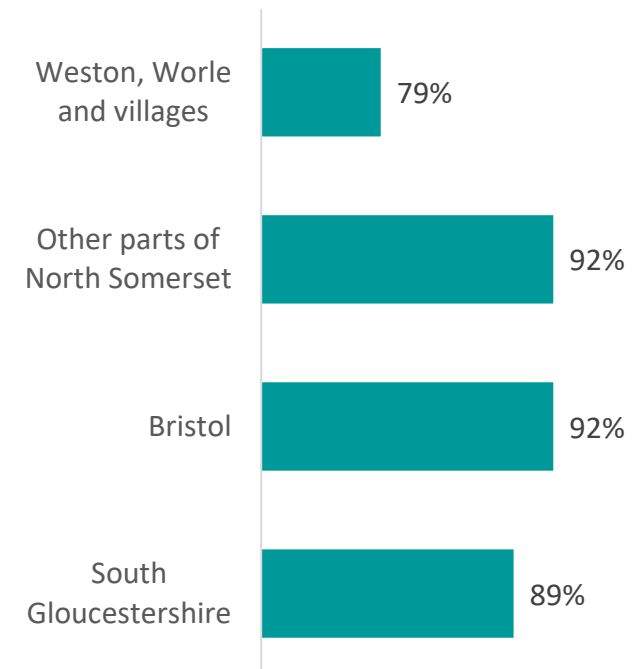
- In the 396 surveys and meetings that commented about this, **8 out of 10 of responses understood that Weston General Hospital will continue to provide care for people of all ages (83%)**.
- 8 out of 10 said they were pleased with plans for additional support for frail and older people at Weston General Hospital (84%).
- 8 out of 10 responses from Weston, Worle and surrounding villages liked the idea of offering more care for older people, though this was less than the proportion from other areas. This is probably because some people from Weston, Worle and surrounding villages were concerned that care would mainly be for older people, not available for those of all ages.



### Hospital will include services for all ages



### % agreed Hospital will include services for all ages

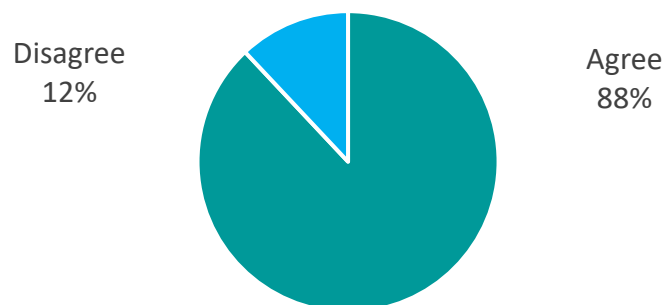


## Planned surgery

Healthier Together wants to increase the number and type of planned operations at Weston General Hospital and give people from a wider area the chance to have their surgery here.

- In 527 surveys and meetings that commented about this, **9 out of 10 were positive about offering more planned surgery at Weston General Hospital (88%)**.
- **Three quarters of people surveyed said that they would be happy to have planned surgery at Weston General Hospital (75%)**. People living in Weston, Worle and surrounding villages (84%) and other parts of North Somerset (85%) were more positive about this than people living in Bristol (49%) or South Gloucestershire (64%).

Like plan to have more planned operations at Weston General Hospital



People thought that we could do practical things to encourage people to choose Weston General Hospital for planned surgery, including:

- a widespread **promotional campaign** to build up awareness of the quality and safety of the Hospital and enhance its reputation (48% of those who commented about this)
- publicising **shorter waiting times** for planned operations (41%)

The main things that people thought would get in the way of people choosing to have planned surgery at Weston General Hospital were:

- the **time and distance travelling** to and from the hospital for patients, especially following surgery (60% of responses that commented on this)
- **lack of confidence** in Weston General Hospital's reputation based on press reports and/or past experience (34%)
- difficulty, cost and inconvenience of **travel for loved ones** who want to visit (28%)



## Specialist care after an emergency

We plan that Weston General Hospital will help people get home quicker after accidents, emergencies or other unplanned care, with special units for assessing and treating people promptly.

People experiencing stroke, serious heart attack and major trauma already go straight to another hospital with specialist services. This will not change.

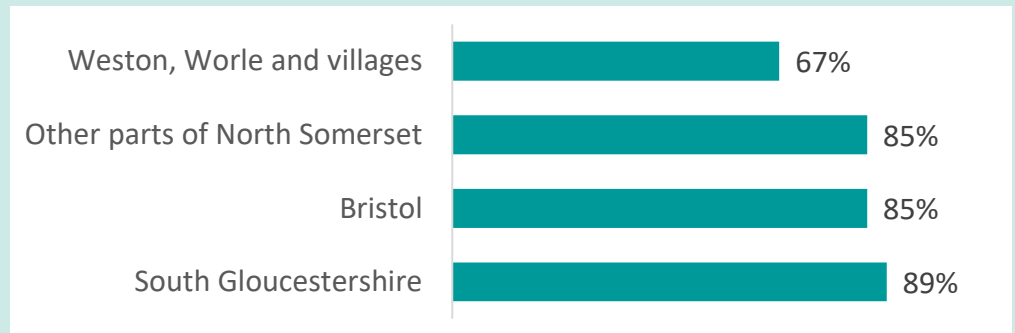
Ambulances will take everyone else to Weston General Hospital to be assessed and get immediate care, as usual.

Older people who are frail and need to be admitted will stay at Weston General Hospital, the same as now. Adults of any age who need emergency surgery will have their operation at Weston General Hospital. They will stay for as long as they need to recover, exactly like now. A dedicated patient transport team will take anyone else who needs a longer stay in hospital to a neighbouring hospital providing the specialist care they need.



413 people commented about transferring for unplanned care. **Three quarters understood why we want to do this (73%).** 6 out of 10 people living in Weston, Worle and surrounding villages said they understood the reasons for this plan compared to over 8 out of 10 people from other areas.

### % understand why some people may transfer for unplanned care



In surveys and meetings, people said we could support people who are transferred by:

- providing a free or subsidised **shuttle between hospital sites** that visitors and patients can use (38% of responses that commented) and direct **public transport routes** (13%)
- giving people **access to technology** to contact loved ones when in hospital and help to use technology if needed (35%)
- providing access to laundry services, newspapers and **toiletries** if people have no visitors to bring things. This may include having volunteers or the League of Friends visiting wards to provide books, papers and conversation (10%)

## Feedback from NHS staff

221 NHS staff provided feedback by email, survey or taking part in meetings at Weston General Hospital and Bristol Royal Infirmary. NHS staff were just as likely as members of the public to be positive about the plans to offer more planned surgery and care for frail and older people at Weston General Hospital and understand the reasons why we are considering changes to unplanned specialist medical care.

People did not give much feedback about parts of the plan that they thought would particularly impact on NHS staff. Some suggested that it was important to communicate clearly and quickly with staff about how the plans might affect them, clarify arrangements for working across hospitals and recognise the need to build up staff morale.

## Next steps

The key things that we learnt from this period of engagement were:

- There was **a lot of positivity** about the plans for Weston General Hospital. People think we are on the right track to redevelop and sustain a thriving local hospital. There is more we could do to communicate clearly because one quarter of responses were not clear about some of the plans. People wanted to be involved and wanted us to **extend how we communicate**.
- People's main concerns were about how to put the plans into practice, including ways to help people with travel, make sure care stayed joined up, address staff shortages and get funding. People were particularly concerned about the physical, emotional and financial impact of **additional travel** for those transferred to another hospital for unplanned care and their loved ones. They thought that older people, children and those reliant on public transport may be particularly affected. People proposed having a free shuttle service between hospitals and campaigning for improved public transport.
- People want us to consider in detail the **impacts of the plans for loved ones** and carers.
- There is work to do to **build up the reputation** of and trust in Weston General Hospital amongst the public and staff. People suggested that an extensive promotional campaign might showcase the Hospital facilities and teams.

Healthier Together will use people's ideas when refining plans and communicating next steps.

