
Report to Brighton and Hove HOSC

February 2026

NHS Sussex Integrated Care Board (ICB) Update

Summary

This paper summarises the latest key areas of focus for NHS Sussex Integrated Care Board, including its delivery of NHS reform, planning for the next three to five years, and current operational management of winter demand.

Recommendation(s) to the Board

The Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to note the update.

1 NHS Sussex - Transition Update

Since the last update, there has been appointment processes for the Executives and Non-Executives for the current Surrey Heartlands ICB and Sussex ICB cluster and for the future organisation. The Boards of both organisations are now meeting in common, with a meeting in November last year and January 2026. From April 2026 we will be forming a new organisation – NHS Surrey and Sussex Integrated Care Board.

As part of this NHS reform, Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) were directed to significantly reduce their operating costs by an average of 50% and focus on their critical role as strategic commissioners.

We have an established transition programme to oversee and drive our work forward, both in terms of creating our new organisation and making the necessary reductions.

Recognising the significant reduction that will be required within those structures, over recent months we have offered a Mutually Agreed Resignation Scheme (MARS) process, and a further Voluntary Redundancy scheme. Members of staff who have taken these options are expected to leave by the end of March 2026. The ICB is working to manage the impact of departures. Further to this, we will launch a consultation period with all staff on new structures within the target operating costs in the coming weeks, this will result in further significant reduction.

Supporting staff remains a key commitment, and we continue to take proactive steps to engage and support our workforce. This includes the availability of practical advice, training and support. We are working closely with our Staff Networks and Trade Unions to ensure our staff feel heard, valued, and supported throughout this time.

2 System Update - Planning and Commissioning Intentions

2.1 Planning - In October 2025 NHSE and the Department of Health and Social Care jointly published the Medium Term Planning Framework covering the financial years

2026/27 to 2028/29. This sees a shift from annual planning cycles to a rolling five-year horizon to better support long-term, strategic change.

The Framework focuses on a three year roadmap with ambitious targets across cancer, urgent care, waiting times, access to primary and community care, mental health, learning disabilities and autism and dentistry, with an ambition to achieve constitutional standards by 2028/29 where possible. There is also a big focus on digital technology, particularly the NHS App, reflecting the key priorities set out in the 10-Year Plan.

We have been working across Surrey Heartlands and Sussex to develop our joint Medium Term Plan. The plan will outline how the future ICB will improve health outcomes for the population of Surrey and Sussex through commissioning actions, underpinned by the development of key enablers and transformation priorities.

At the same time, work is starting on developing our broader five-year strategic commissioning narrative plan which will reflect key priorities set out in respective health and wellbeing strategies across Surrey and Sussex.

Work is underway across our organisations and with system partners, including a system workshop that took place this week, engagement with partners, and we will be submitting one plan for the deadline in February.

2.3 Strategic Commissioning Framework - NHSE recently published the Strategic Commissioning Framework, which aims to support all ICBs to adopt a strategic commissioning approach from April 2026.

The document sets out the principles of strategic commissioning, clarifies expectations of ICBs as the commissioners of most NHS services, and situates the approach within the emerging NHS operating model and the ambitions of the 10-year health plan. The framework builds on the Model ICB Blueprint, which outlines how ICBs' role should evolve, updating the traditional commissioning cycle to align with the emerging NHS operating model and the government's three shifts.

As signalled in both the Model ICB Blueprint and the 10-year health plan, the framework also recognises a growing role for providers in strategic commissioning and encourages ICBs to support providers in developing commissioning and integrator capabilities, including for multi-neighbourhood provider and integrated health organisation contracts.

3 System performance (including industrial action and winter planning)

Since November we have been implementing our winter plans with seven-day winter reporting. Key areas of focus include vaccination, discharge, urgent and emergency care performance and mental health support.

Hospital bed occupancy remains high, with patient discharge – across the whole patient pathway – also remaining challenging, with ongoing work with providers to increase discharge levels wherever appropriate.

Positively, South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SECAmb) continues to report average category 2 response times above trajectory, with latest figures for ambulance handovers also tracking above the planned trajectory, ranking 3rd out of 11 ambulance trusts nationally.

In terms of vaccination, across Sussex, as of 06 January, 61.7% of the eligible population had received a Covid vaccination, and at the start of December, 55% of those eligible had received a flu vaccination. These are both marginally lower than the regional average, but higher than national averages. Clinics and sessions continue to be available, and the NHS continues to encourage those eligible to book an appointment and receive their vaccinations as community rates remain high.

During the winter period, our system has also worked to maintain services through five days of industrial action by junior doctors, from 14 to 19 November 2025 and from 17 to 22 December. This was expected to be challenging during the periods leading up to Christmas but the NHS in Sussex put in place tested plans to ensure patients could receive the care they needed during this period.

5 Conclusion

This paper provides a summary of the key priorities for NHS Sussex since our last update, including the latest on ICB reform and creation of a new organisation from 01 April 2026, and delivery of our operational plans, including winter.

Overall, there continues to be significant progress in implementing change across the NHS to enable us to improve the health outcomes, reduce the health inequalities and secure the best value for money from the delivery of high-quality NHS services.

