


General Practice in Somerset

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Great Place, Great Potential



“One of the
beauties of
general practice
is the element
of surprise.”

Dr Nick Bray, Somerset LMC Chairman

We do things a bit differently in Somerset.

We believe in cooperation, supporting our GPs, and the importance of flexible working and career development.

Somerset is a great place to live with great potential for your future or existing career as a GP.

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What is the Somerset Local Medical Committee?

The Local Medical Committee is the body statutorily recognised by successive NHS Acts as the professional organisation representing individual GPs and GP Practices as a whole to NHS England and CCGs in their area.

Somerset LMC is based in Taunton with an office team of forward thinking and positive people. A combination of backgrounds, knowledge and insight built up over many years creates a reliable network to support and guide you through turbulent times as well as celebrate your successes and achievements.



Dr Nick Bray
Chairman



Dr Karen Sylvester
Vice Chairman



Jill Hellens
Executive Director



Dr Barry Moyse
Deputy Medical Director



Paula Messenger
Practice Nurse Advisor



Sarah Johns
Executive Officer



Erica Bailly
Executive Officer

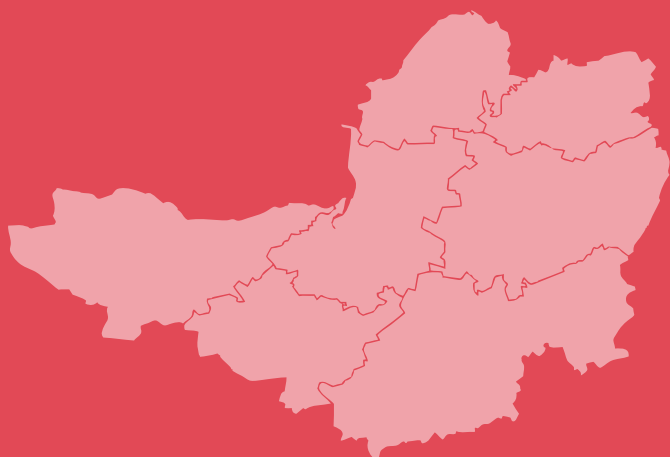


Claire Winchester
Finance and Admin Officer

Living and working in Somerset

With award winning schools, secluded beaches and rolling countryside it's no surprise that Somerset is the choice for those in search of the ultimate work-life balance.

Being a GP in Somerset will see you working in a largely settled but often diverse communities where you can build a long-standing relationship with your patients. Many of our existing doctors and registrars will tell you that although working in general practice can be challenging, your hard work is rewarded when you become the trusted medical adviser to families as they develop and grow. Here you'll be supported by one of the hardest working LMCs in the country and you can chase sunsets across the Quantocks when you leave work for the day.



Cheddar Gorge

Meet the GPs

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Somerset LMC Vice Chairman and GP at
Glastonbury Surgery



Dr Nick Bray

Somerset LMC Chairman and GP at North Petherton Surgery

What influenced your decision to work in general practice?

When I was an undergraduate studying medicine we had only four weeks general practice training, two of those were spent in Birmingham and the other two weeks were spent in Taunton. My Father was actually a GP in Ilfracombe and I always had a bit of a reaction against becoming a GP and following in his footsteps, but the more time I spent in a nice Somerset practice the more I realised that the family was the centre of everything and I just liked the way that the partners worked. It was my first time experiencing what we would now call patient centred care.

How has general practice changed since you first became a GP?

When I joined my practice in Somerset there was actually only one other practice that had a computer and we wrote all of our

notes on very small pieces of paper that we can still find in the records today!

What's the best thing about working in general practice?

One of the things that we all love about general practice is the fact that we have a continuity of care, so I will now be looking after people who I looked after 30 years ago and have looked after several generations of the same family, I think this is something that is unique to general practice. It is particularly valuable when a patient is worried about a condition; this was highlighted a few years ago when we had really severe floods in my practice area and every week I would be making a new connection between families and who related to who. When the floods happened and patients went to live with family members I discovered a whole load of relationships that I never knew existed and that was really useful.

If you could wave a magic wand, what would you do with it?

I think we would all like to see it return to a time when we had our teams built around us in the practices. It's lovely to have your nurses and social support staff on the same site so you don't necessarily have to do a formal referral; you would have what we call a corridor chat or a coffee room chat where you can get a bit of soft intelligence on people.

What do you like about living and working in Somerset?

I think some of the attractions in Somerset are obvious; we have the most dramatic scenery, it's a county of contrasts: you have the amazing levels, which surround my practice and then on the North coast of Somerset we must have some of the most beautiful walking country. We have a fantastic selection of pubs, of course we have the cricket and also Glastonbury.

Dr Berge Balian

Chair of the Symphony Programme Board

What influenced your decision to work in General Practice?

My intention when I was in medical school for the first few years, wasn't general practice, I was quite interested in neuroscience and my ambition was to be a neurosurgeon but then I went and spent a week working in Queens Square Hospital and at the end of that week I decided it wasn't for me because I like talking to people and being involved.

Could you describe what Symphony is?

It is a Vanguard programme, which are areas of the country that have been selected to try different stuff out and we're something called the

PACS Vanguard, which is bringing hospitals and GPs closer together. Our ambition is to bring all parts of the system together. The main aim of the Vanguards is to change how the NHS system works for patients. We have the ability to move resources from one part of the system to the other. The ambition is to take the most expensive part of the system – which is the hospital and reduce the activity in the hospital and move the savings into primary care. If you invest money in primary care, your pound goes further and so we have already put our money where our mouth is and have invested about £10million worth into GP practices in Somerset. There are 19 GP practices in

South Somerset and 18 of them are involved in the Symphony programme.

What's the best thing about being a GP?

The power of general practice is that you have a relationship with patients, you get to know them, they get to know you over a long period of time and that allows you to help them manage their lives and their medical condition. It's a sort of hybrid between classical scientific medicine but also social work, mental health work and there's a huge attraction to having that variety in your career, particularly one that you're going to have for thirty years.





Dr Jenny Capps

GP registrar in final year at Dunster and Porlock Surgeries on Exmoor

What influenced your decision to work in General Practice?

My background is actually in emergency medicine and I chose to switch to general practice, mainly because of continuity – I like the fact that you get to see your patients and follow them up and actually get the results back from the investigations that you order. You follow people on a journey and you can pick up on the small things if they're unwell.

You never know what's coming through the door and that keeps me interested.

What's the worst thing about being a GP?

The paperwork!

If you could give GPs of the future one piece of advice, what would it be?

Make sure you have a good work life balance. I think that's what's appealing about general practice – you can make it work around your life. Choose GP because it gives you the work life balance.

What do you get up to when you're not working?

I love being outdoors – I have two very excitable working cocker spaniels who need a lot of exercise. I go horse riding, walking over the moors and I am also a member of the Exmoor search and rescue team.

If someone was considering a move to Somerset, what would you say to convince them to move?

If they came to Somerset they would convince themselves, so I would

say take the plunge and come and visit this beautiful area. I am biased towards West Somerset because it's got the moors, Quantocks, Blackdown Hills and there's an abundance of outdoor activities. If you're active, there is absolutely everything that you could possibly ever want to do around here, we've got the sea, we've got mountain biking, horse riding, shooting, fishing, you name it you'll find it in Somerset. So, come and visit and you won't want to leave.

Could you try and describe General Practice to us in three words?

Varied, challenging and satisfying.



Dunster Castle

Dr Tom Langston

Crown Medical Centre, Taunton

What influenced your decision to work in General Practice?

General Practice for me is a really nice thing to do. I like that I get to know a family and the connections around the area and to help people with many different health problems – not just focus on one thing but to be generalist and know little bits about lots of things.

What made you decide to live, train and work in Somerset?

Myself and my now wife decided to apply to training in Somerset together after having both worked here as F1s and F2s and we really enjoyed it here. We went away to New Zealand for a year and we decided to come back for our training and so by applying to the same area we thought that would guarantee living together and not having to commute large distances – so it was a combination of convenience for the two of us as

well as already knowing Somerset and really liking it here.

What's the best thing about being a GP?

Having your own office and space. Seeing patients that have no idea what's going on, helping them to understand what's going on – hopefully making them better. It's really nice to be a part of their whole journey and not just focussing on one small part of it. We get the long-term satisfaction.

What's the worst thing about being a GP?

The general pressure is the hardest part of being a GP at the moment. The underfunding and the lack of a workforce. I don't think we're any worse than anywhere else here in Somerset and perhaps we're slightly better than some places but it's a very difficult time at the moment and we're very much feeling that.

Our appointment waiting times are long and people get quite frustrated with that and people can be quite aggressive with us when they do get to see us – I think that's the hardest part of it at the moment.

If you could wave a magic wand, what would you do with it?

I would make everyone appreciate the issues in the system at the moment and not just the politicians but the patients who come to see us as well.

If you could give GPs one piece of advice, what would it be?

Just take on the challenge and become a GP, you won't regret it and if you want to come and work in Somerset then even better.

What do you like about living and working in Somerset?

Somerset is a place that people don't really stop in – they go through on their way to Devon and Cornwall so it can be a bit quieter than those places but it's just as beautiful and as amazing, in terms of the scenery and the things you can do here. You can go for amazing walks on tops of hills or you can go to the beach or you can go for long walks in the forest, it's a lovely pace of life. It's also really close to Bristol and Exeter, if you want to visit a busy city.

How did you find the training to be in Somerset?

It was really good, it was well structured and friendly; the trainers were really experienced and there was a nice blend of experienced GPs and younger GPs. It also had an open and relaxed atmosphere, which I liked.

Could you try and describe general practice to us in three words?

Bloody good fun.





Dr Cathryn Dillon

Cranleigh Gardens Medical Centre, Bridgwater

What influenced your decision to work in General Practice?

It wasn't my first career choice, I was a plastic surgeon before I did general practice. I was a registrar and was moving around the country with my husband. So, it mainly came down to family reasons why I eventually chose general practice but also, things in the hospital were getting somewhat repetitive and I didn't particularly like the way autonomy was taken away from consultants and the way we were working. General practice and the ability to own your own business and work the way you wanted to and operate in your own surgery building was a great balance for me, so after I had my son I moved to GP training and I haven't looked back since.

How did you find the training in Somerset?

It was fantastic. I had originally applied to Bristol because I grew up around there but was given Somerset, it wasn't my first choice – I hadn't even really been here, but now I am so glad this was the case, I love it here. There was a real comradery associated with it, I felt supported and a part of the team.

How would you describe the community around you?

The community in Bridgwater is hugely diverse, we have a farming community out in the villages, there are very affluent areas but we do serve a fairly deprived population. We have had a lot of immigration over the years so there is a lot of

health education and it's nice to have that challenge. There is a deep sense of community here in Bridgwater and we frequently look after extended families who have stayed locally. This allows wonderful continuity to the relationships with patients, which brings the greatest enjoyment. It is generally a very warm and friendly community here.

Could you try and describe general practice in three words?

Diverse, rewarding, autonomous.



Dr Will Harris

Wells Health Centre

What's the best thing about being a GP?

Everybody I meet knows that I am trying to help them and I am able to treat every single person equally, regardless of background or wealth and that's a huge luxury.

What are the worst things about being a GP?

Being a GP over the past five years has been really tough. There are demands on all aspects of the public sector but the ones I know about the most are growing and the ability and willingness of the tax payer or the government to meet that with a corresponding increase of funding has not kept pace. Many people with jobs like GPs don't have defined boundaries and they find

that they're being stretched to cover gaps. When you're face to face with human beings who have a need, it's impossible not to work a little bit longer and harder each year to continue to meet those needs. This means the workload and working day is tough and a lot of GPs will tell you that's one of the hardest things about the job.

If you were to give future GPs one piece of advice, what would it be?

Be really careful to consider what your own passion is alongside the needs that are dictated by purpose because by bringing what you're passionate and interested into your job you're able to give more, with it taking less from you. I think that's

really important to stay fresh and have the stamina and the longevity to stay interested in people in the way that you need to do the job well.

Could you try and describe general practice in three words?

Diverse, meaningful and passionate.



Dr Karen Sylvester

Somerset LMC Vice Chairman and GP at Glastonbury Surgery

What's the best thing about being a GP?

I am very much a people person and it's being able to meet someone and listen to their story and hopefully help them at the end of that, which I think is an amazing opportunity. That's what keeps me going and the bit I love most about my job.

What are the worst things about being a GP?

Because of your availability you've got a continuous demand on you as a doctor and as a resource. It's not just about the medicine, but patients might also come for support with their housing benefit. There's a lot of mental health involved in general practice, it can be really hard to help them, so that for me is quite difficult.

What do you like about living and working in Somerset?

I am really lucky where I live, it's semi-rural so I am just behind some farmers fields at the edge of a town. When I go for a run I occasionally say hello to the farmer in his tractor who knows me well now. I have two children who are quite sporty and we play a lot of tennis, we have done a lot of cricket and we have been quite involved with the local hockey club as well. If you have active children and if you're active yourself it's brilliant – it's great for outdoor life and activities here.

If you could give future GPs one piece of advice what would it be?

Be sure of who you are as a person, because it's at times quite an emotionally challenging job that

taxes your mind - you see a variety of patients at every stage of their life. Just because you made it through medical school doesn't necessarily make you a good GP, being good with patients and knowing who you are will help you do that to the best of your ability. If you're a well-grounded person, then this is the job for you.

How would you describe the community that surrounds you?

It's brilliant here...we've got a nice mix of patients in Glastonbury, we've got the eccentric lot that you all know and see on television but we have quite a large farming community, plus the Clarks factory nearby and a plastics factory. We've got quite a range of patients with different problems that are all very unique. One lovely aspect is the baker who brings us treats at Christmas and Easter. It's got a lovely community feel.

The other bit that has taken off in the last couple of years is a network of female GPs who meet at least twice a year for extra support.

If you could wave a magic wand, what would you do with it?

The one bit that would make a change to general practice would be improving public health and patient self-management. We don't have that community that we had before and so people don't talk to each other and solve simple problems that perhaps your grandmother might have dealt with in the past. We're not eating well, we're not exercising and life is so stressful now there's a huge increase in mental health problems.





Next steps: get in touch, find a job

Start your journey towards living and working in Somerset today by visiting gpinsomerset.com, speak with the Somerset LMC team on 01823 331 428 or email lmcoffice@somersetlmc.nhs.uk

Go to our Facebook, Instagram and Twitter pages to find videos and even more Q&As with our GPs in Somerset.



General Practice in Somerset



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“Everybody I meet knows that I am trying to help them and I am able to treat every single person equally, regardless of background or wealth and that’s a huge luxury.”

Dr Will Harris, Wells Health Centre



Catherine Street, Frome



General Practice in Somerset

Great Place, Great Potential

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