**NEWS RELEASE**

Date: xxxxxx

Somerset’s people asked to ‘Sign Up to Safety’ and help the ones they love

Somerset’s family doctors are adding their voice to a national campaign aimed to ensure safe care and treatment is always at the heart of local health services and potential risks of harm or injury to patients are spotted before they take place.

They also want patients, carers and their relatives to recognise when someone might be at risk of harm or injury whether in the home, care home or the community.

As a signatory to the national “Sign-up to Safety” campaign, Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), is placing campaign information in GP surgeries and talking to patient and carer groups about the role they can play identifying risks to loved ones.

Karen Taylor, Head of Patient Safety with Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group explained:  “Every day hundreds of thousands of patients benefit from our excellent NHS care and treatment, improving their lives and those of their families and friends. But sometimes things can go wrong with a devastating effect for all involved. If people know how to spot warning signs early on, they can help prevent harm from happening.

“The elderly and disabled can also be prone to harm and injury in their own home; injuries like falling, failing to take their medicines correctly or failing to drink enough water during the day, which can lead to complications or worsening of existing conditions.

“With a bit more awareness we hope everyone will start to play a part in helping to prevent the common causes of injury and harm.”

Top of the list of Somerset CCG’s “Sign-up to Safety” campaign messages are those aimed to reduce the most common causes of painful and debilitating harm, they include:

* **Pressure ulcers** are caused by sitting or lying in one position too long, or pressure from living aids. People who are in wheelchairs are particularly prone to such injury. Look out for red areas where bones are close to the skin. Try to keep moving and change position regularly when sitting and in bed.

* **Falling at home**is amongst the most frequent reasons for all admissions to hospital.  You can reduce the risk of falling by taking regular exercise; checking eyes and hearing; looking after your feet; avoiding sedating medicines; checking for tripping hazards in the home, like frayed carpets and trailing wires.

(See the Age UK publication, ‘Staying Steady’. Available to download from the internet at: <http://www.ageuk.org.uk/Documents/EN-GB/Information-guides/AgeUKIG14_staying_steady_inf.pdf?dtrk=true>)

* **Problems with medicines.** Keep a record of all the medicines you are taking, including any you are buying direct from the pharmacy.  Show it to anyone who is involved in your treatment or care, even if you think they already know.  Read information leaflets with your medicines for any special instructions, side effects and what to do if they occur. If you do not understand the information ask your pharmacist, doctor or nurse.

* **Kidney injury.** Avoid infection or harm to your kidneys. Drink plenty of water throughout the day. Watch out for signs of dehydration - confusion, vomiting, diarrhoea, fever, sweats and shaking, and if you are not producing much urine, contact a doctor urgently.

* **Sepsis**is rare, can develop quickly and can be difficult to diagnose. Symptoms can feel just like flu or a minor infection. Warning signs are any of these symptoms - slurred speech; extreme shivering or muscle pain, passing no urine (in a day); severe breathlessness; skin mottled or discoloured; an intense feeling that you might die. If you think you or a loved one may be affected telephone NHS 111 or your family doctor as soon as possible.

* **Break-downs in communications.**  Although it’s a national service, the NHS is a network of thousands of different services. Patients, carers and relatives can help spot when things don’t happen as planned. Don’t be afraid to ask and check out if something has not happened as expected, or something seems to not be correct.

There is plenty of helpful information on these health issues and many more. Visit the NHS Choices web site for more information:  [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

To find out more look out for the Sign Up to Safety messages and leaflets and visit the NHS Somerset website @

**Note to Editors:**

To find out more about the national NHS “Sign up To Safety” campaign visit: [www.england.nhs.uk/signuptosafety/](http://www.england.nhs.uk/signuptosafety/)