

HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD



Report subject	Better Care Fund 2025-26 Plan
Meeting date	24 March 2025
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	<p>This report provides an overview of the planning document of the Better Care Fund (BCF) for 2025-26.</p> <p>The BCF is a key delivery vehicle in providing person centred integrated care with health, social care, housing, and other public services, which is fundamental to having a strong and sustainable health and care system.</p> <p>The report is a part of the requirements set by the Better Care Fund 2025-26 Policy Framework. The report needs to be jointly agreed and signed off by the Health and Wellbeing Board as one of the planning requirements.</p>
Recommendations	<p>It is RECOMMENDED that:</p> <p>The Health and Wellbeing Board is invited to comment on the plan and narrative, with agreement that it can be finalised in time for the deadline by officers outside the Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Better Care Fund 2025-26 Plan• Better Care Fund 2025-26 Narrative• Better Care Fund 2025-26 Capacity & Demand Plan
Reason for recommendations	<p>NHS England (NHSE) require the Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) to approve all BCF plans, this is one of the national conditions within the Policy Framework. This includes planning documents at the beginning of a funding period, and template returns reporting progress against the plans quarterly.</p>
Portfolio Holder(s):	Cllr David Brown, Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing

Corporate Director	Jillian Kay, Corporate Director for Wellbeing
Report Authors	Scott Saffin, Commissioning Manager – Better Care Fund and Market Management Becky Whale, Deputy Director, UEC and Flow - NHS Dorset
Wards	Council-wide
Classification	For Decision

Background

1. This report is a covering document for the content of the Better Care Fund 2025-26 Plan. The plan is made up of three documents that will be submitted to Better Care England on Monday 31 March 2025.
The documents were provided by NHS England and completed by officers in BCP Council and NHS Dorset. The documents are as follows:
 - Better Care Fund 2025-26 Planning Template
 - Better Care Fund 2025-26 Narrative
 - Capacity and Demand (C&D) Hospital Discharge & Community 2025-26 Planning Template
2. The BCF is a Programme spanning both the NHS and Local Government which seeks to join-up health and care services, to promote people's ability to manage their own health and wellbeing and live independently in their communities for as long as possible.
3. The BCF pooled resource is derived from existing funding within the health and social care system such as the Disabled Facilities Grant and additional contributions from Local Authority or NHS budgets. In addition, grants from Government have been paid directly to Local Authorities i.e. Local Authority Better Care Grant, which is used for meeting adult social care needs, reducing pressures on the NHS, and ensuring that the social care provider market is supported.
4. The ICB discharge funding has been consolidated into the NHS minimum contribution to the BCF, forming one allocation with a value of £40,466,631 in 2025 to 2026.
5. Local authority discharge funding has been consolidated into the Local Authority Better Care Grant, formerly known as the improved Better Care Fund, to form the minimum local government revenue contribution to the BCF, with a value of £16,578,901 in 2025 to 2026.

Better Care Fund 2025-26 Plan

6. The Policy Framework was published by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) on 30 January 2025.
7. For 2025 to 2026, the Government have revised the objectives of the Better Care Fund:
 - Objective 1: Reform to support the shift from sickness to prevention
 - Objective 2: Reform to support people living independently and the shift from hospital to home
8. The funding allocation for 2025 to 2026 is detailed in the Expenditure sheet of the planning document. Local Authority Better Care Grant has not received an uplift from 2024 to 2025 allocation. Minimum NHS Contribution has had a 1.7% uplift from 2024 to 25, but DHSC has mandated that a 3.9% uplift should be allocated to adult social care services.
9. BCP Council and NHS Dorset are contributing at least the minimum amounts set by the DHSC. However, a £329,000 shortfall has been identified due to the annual inflationary uplift being less than the uplift required to meet cost pressures faced by providers. The minimum contribution from NHS Dorset does not meet these pressures.
10. To address this issue, Adult Social Care (ASC) Commissioning is currently reviewing several schemes and will present decommissioning recommendations to NHS Dorset for the £329,000 shortfall. These discussions are ongoing, and we will provide an update at the meeting.
11. For 2025 to 2026 there are 3 headline metrics to help local areas focus on impact and outcomes, aligning to the revised objectives of the Better Care Fund, and the Government's vision for neighbourhood health.
 - Emergency admissions to hospital for people aged over 65 per 100,000 population
 - Average length of discharge delay for all acute adult patients, derived from a combination of:
 - Proportion of adult patients discharged from acute hospital on their discharge ready date (DRD)
 - For those adult patients not discharged on their DRD, average number of days from DRD to discharge.
 - Long-term admissions to residential care homes and nursing homes for people aged 65 and over per 100,000 population
12. This plan shows the forecasted expenditure of all the schemes that are funded through the Better Care Fund.

Better Care Fund 2025-26 Narrative

13. Alongside the overall Better Care Fund 2025 to 2026 planning template, HWBs will need to submit a short narrative plan, providing details of:
 - The approach to meeting the objectives of the BCF, including priority outcomes and the changes they are planning to achieve those outcomes.
 - Key changes since previous 2023 to 2025 Better Care Fund plan.
 - How the Dorset Integrated Care System (ICS) will collaborate to achieve ambitions.
14. The narrative is a collaboration with input from key stakeholders from BCP Council, Dorset Council, and NHS Dorset, with greater detail into the rationale of the ambitions of the metrics that are set in the BCF 2025-26 Planning document.
15. The narrative outlines key priorities across the ICS for 2025-26, including aligning services with the Home First Agenda, reviewing hospital discharge pathways, and promoting alternative pathways for urgent and emergency care.
16. Further details on the implementation of the BCF objectives, including how partners will collaborate to support the shift from sickness to prevention, with the Future Care Programme and Integrated Neighbourhood Teams leading as examples. Additionally, it explains how the ICS will continue to help people remain independent for longer, reducing time spent in hospitals and long-term care, and utilising services such as reablement at home, integrated community equipment, care technology, and housing adaptations funded via the Disabled Facilities Grant.

Better Care Fund 2025-26 Capacity & Demand Plan

17. As part of the national conditions, HWBs will be required to submit a plan showing projected demand and planned capacity for intermediate care services (and other short-term care) to help people to remain independent or regain independence at home (including support aimed at avoiding unnecessary hospital admissions and support following discharge from hospital).
18. These plans cover all intermediate care services and other short-term care across the system, whether they are funded from the BCF or from other sources.

Summary of Financial Implications

19. BCP Council and NHS Dorset will monitor BCF budgets and activity according to the 2025-26 Plan.
20. The plan provides a breakdown of spending by scheme type, source of funding and expenditure (See Appendix 1). A high-level view of this is detailed in the table below:

Source of Funding	Income
Disabled Facilities Grant	£4,365,654
Minimum NHS Contribution	£40,466,631
Local Authority Better Care Grant	£16,578,901
Additional LA Contribution	£2,182,000
Additional NHS Contribution	*TBC*
Total	*TBC*

Summary of Legal Implications

21. New Section 75 agreements, (in accordance with the 2006 National Health Service Act), will be put in place as prescribed in the planning guidance for each of the pooled budget components within the fund.

Summary of human resources implications

22. The services funded under the BCF are delivered by a wide range of partners some of whom are employed by BCP Council and many who are commissioned by BCP to deliver these services. There are no further human resources implications to note.

Summary of sustainability impact

23. Services are only sustainable if funding is available.

Summary of public health implications

24. The BCF is a key delivery vehicle in providing person centred integrated care with health, social care, housing, and other public services, which is fundamental to having a strong and sustainable health and care system.

Summary of equality implications

25. An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken when the Better Care Fund schemes were implemented. Additional EIAs will be undertaken if there are any proposed future changes to policy of service delivery and or decommissioning of service(s) because of funding reductions.

Background papers

[Better Care Fund Policy Framework 2025 to 2026](#)

Appendices

Appendix 1: Bournemouth, Christchurch, and Poole BCF 2025-26 Planning Template

Appendix 2: [Better Care Fund 2025-26 Narrative](#)

Appendix 3: Better Care Fund 2025-26 Capacity & Demand Planning Template