

Request for consideration of an issue by Overview and Scrutiny

Guidance on the use of this form:

This form is for use by councillors and members of the public who want to request that an item joins an Overview and Scrutiny agenda. Any issue may be suggested, provided it affects the BCP area or the inhabitants of the area in some way. Scrutiny of the issue can only be requested once in a 12 month period.

The form may also be used for the reporting of a referral item to Overview and Scrutiny by another body of the council, such as Cabinet or Council.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee receiving the request will make an assessment of the issue using the detail provided in this form and determine whether to add it to its forward plan of work.

They may take a variety of steps to progress the issue, including requesting more information on it from officers of the council, asking for a member of the overview and scrutiny committee to 'champion' the issue and report back, or establishing a small working group of councillors to look at the issue in more detail.

If the Committee does not agree to progress the issue it will set out reasons for this and they will be provided to the person submitting this form.

More information can be found at Part 4.C of the BCP Council Constitution
<https://democracy.bcpCouncil.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CommitteeID=151&Info=1&bcr=1>

Please complete all sections as fully as possible

1. Issue requested for scrutiny

In light of the recent revelations about Lifeways and it's treatment of vulnerable people AH&SC O&S should examine the scale of and connected risks linked to the use of unregistered health and social care providers by BCP Council, with a specific focus on Lifeways and similar providers

2. Desired outcome resulting from Overview and Scrutiny engagement, including the value to be added to the Council, the BCP area or its inhabitants.

The scrutiny should aim to:

- Ensure that all care providers commissioned by BCP Council meet high-quality care standards and are properly monitored.

- Identify whether BCP Council has contracts with Lifeways or any other providers with similar issues.
- Review the safeguards in place to prevent service failures, abuse, or neglect in supported living arrangements.
- Recommend improvements to oversight, accountability, and response mechanisms for safeguarding concerns.

This scrutiny would add value by protecting vulnerable residents, ensuring taxpayer money is spent on safe and effective care, and maintaining public confidence in council-commissioned services.

3. Background to the issue

An investigation by ITV and reports from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) have highlighted serious failings in care provided by Lifeways, one of the UK's largest supported living providers. Issues include inadequate staffing, failure to meet residents' care needs, and safeguarding concerns. Despite receiving nearly £1.5 billion in taxpayer-funded contracts, Lifeways had 366 safeguarding concerns raised with the Care Quality Commission in 2024, a 33% increase from the previous year. A recent case involving Somerset Council led to a £3,000 payment to a family due to service failures. Given these concerns, it is essential to determine whether BCP Council commissions Lifeways or similar providers and whether proper oversight mechanisms are in place.

4. Proposed method of scrutiny - (for example, a committee report or a working group investigation)

A committee report should be requested to:

- Confirm whether BCP Council commissions services from Lifeways and or similar providers.
- Assess the quality and safeguarding record of commissioned providers.
- Identify gaps in contract monitoring and safeguarding oversight.
- Recommend improvements to ensure all care providers meet high standards.

If significant concerns are identified, a working group investigation could follow.

5. Key dates and anticipated timescale for the scrutiny work

- Initial report to be prepared within three months.
- If a working group is required, findings should be reported within six months.

6. Notes/ additional guidance

- The scrutiny should include consultation with affected families, advocacy groups, and the Care Quality Commission where possible.
- If BCP Council does not commission Lifeways, the review should still assess monitoring procedures for all supported living contracts to prevent similar failings.

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Contact – democratic.services@bcpcouncil.gov.uk