

HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD



Report subject	Better Care Fund 2025-26 Quarter 3 Report
Meeting date	09 March 2026
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	<p>This report provides an overview of the Quarter 3 Report 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 maintaining 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 must 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 retrospectively approve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better Care Fund 2025-2026 Quarter 3 Report
Reason for recommendations	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.
Portfolio Holder(s):	Cllr David Brown, Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing
Report Authors	<p>Scott Saffin, Commissioning Manager – Better Care Fund and Market Management</p> <p>Becky Whale, Deputy Director, UEC and Flow - NHS Dorset</p>
Wards	Not applicable
Classification	For Decision

Background

1. This report is a covering document for the content of the Better Care Fund (BCF) Quarter 3 Report. The report is made up of a single document template. The template was provided by NHS England and completed collaboratively by officers from BCP Council and NHS Dorset.
2. The document details the following:
 - Confirmation of National Conditions agreed by partners
 - Quarter 3 Performance of Better Care Fund metrics
 - Expenditure update
3. 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.
4. 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, short-term 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. The Adult Social Care Discharge Fund is also now incorporated into the BCF and is subject to quarterly reporting against spend and activity.
5. In Bournemouth, Christchurch, and Poole - the Better Care Fund totals £79,272,349 for the year 2025/26.
6. In 2026/27, the NHS minimum contribution to Adult Social Care will increase by 4.4%, reflecting the Spending Review 2025 commitment to uplift the minimum NHS contribution to Adult Social Care via the BCF. In addition, in line with the Department of Health and Social Care's SR settlement, the Discharge Fund and remaining ICB contributions will rise by 2.1%, aligned to Community Services inflation growth.
7. Details on the BCF objectives and conditions for 2026/27 will be shared with the BCP Council Health & Wellbeing Board when available. The Department of Health and Social Care has recently published the guidance for the Better Care Fund for 2026/27. However, due to the short timeframe between its publication and the date of this meeting, it has not been possible to provide the Board with a comprehensive update. This approach has been agreed with the Corporate Director for Wellbeing.
8. The submission deadline for the 2026/27 Planning Documents is 19 May 2026 and will therefore be presented to the BCP Council Health & Wellbeing Board on 29 June 2026.

Better Care Fund 2025-26 Quarter 3 Report

9. The planning requirements dictate that this document is presented to the Health & Wellbeing Board on Monday 09 March 2026 for approval.
10. The Health and Social care landscape continues to present performance challenges; however, BCP Council are currently on track to meet the 2025/26 targets for:
 - Emergency admissions to hospital for people aged 65+
 - Long-term support needs for people aged 65+ met by admission to residential and nursing care homes, per 100,000

Performance is not on track for:

- Average length of discharge delay for all acute adult patients

11. All schemes are being implemented as outlined in the BCF Planning Template 2025/26 that was approved at the 24 March 2025 Health & Wellbeing Board meeting.

Options Appraisal

12. Option 1: Approve the Better Care Fund 2025–26 Quarter 3 Report

The report demonstrates that the majority of performance targets are on track and all schemes are being implemented as planned. Board approval will provide assurance to NHS England and the Department of Health & Social, avoiding any delays in funding or governance processes.

13. Option 2: Do not approve the Report

This will risk non-compliance with national conditions and potential reputational impact.

14. **Recommended Option:**

The recommendation is Option 1 and to approve the Better Care Fund 2025–26 Quarter 3 Report, as it ensures compliance, supports continued delivery of integrated care objectives.

Summary of financial implications

15. The Better Care Fund Group comprises of members from BCP Council and NHS Dorset who continue to monitor BCF budgets and activity for the 2025-26 Plan.

16. The previously approved plan provides a granular breakdown of the spending by scheme type, source of funding and expenditure (See Appendix 2).

A high-level view of this is detailed in the table below:

Source of Funding	Planned Income
DFG	£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	£15,679,163
Total	£79,272,349

Summary of legal implications

17. Section 75 agreements, (in accordance with the 2006 National Health Service Act), are in place as prescribed in the planning guidance for each of the pooled budget components in the fund.

Summary of human resources implications

18. 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

19. Services are only sustainable if funding is available.

Summary of public health implications

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

Summary of equality implications

21. An Equalities Impact Assessment was undertaken when the Better Care Fund schemes were implemented and there have been no changes. Additional Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) will be undertaken if there are any proposed future changes to policy of service delivery.

Background papers

[Better Care Fund policy framework 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK](#) – Published by Department of Health & Social Care.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - [BCP Council BCF 2025-26 Q3 Report](#)

Appendix 2 - [BCP Council BCF 2025-26 Planning Template v1.5](#)