

HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD



Report subject	Better Care Fund 2026-27 Planning Documents/Better Care Fund 2025-26 End of Year Report
Meeting date	29 June 2026
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	<p>This report provides an overview of the planning document of the Better Care Fund (BCF) for 2026-27, as well as the 2025-26 End of Year Report.</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 documents are part of the requirements set by Better Care England and the Department of Health & Social Care. These documents need to be jointly agreed and signed off by the Health and Wellbeing Board as per 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 2026-27 Plan• Better Care Fund 2026-27 Narrative• Better Care Fund 2025-26 End of Year Report
Reason for recommendations	<p>NHS England (NHSE) requires the Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) to approve all BCF plans and report, these are part of the national conditions within the Policy Framework. This includes planning documents at the beginning of a funding period, template returns reporting progress against the plans quarterly, and a report at the end of each financial year.</p>

Portfolio Holder(s):	Cllr David Brown, Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing
Corporate Director	Laura Ambler, Corporate Director for Wellbeing
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Wards	Not applicable
Classification	For Decision

Background

1. This report is a covering document for the content of the Better Care Fund 2026-27 Plan and the 2025-26 End of Year Report. The 2026-27 plan is made up of two documents that was submitted to Better Care England on Tuesday 19 May 2026. 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 2026-27 Planning Template
 - Better Care Fund 2026-27 Narrative
2. The 2025-26 End of Year Report was submitted to Better Care England on Friday 5 June 2026.
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. Additionally, 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.
5. The ICB discharge funding has been consolidated into the NHS minimum contribution to the BCF, forming one allocation with a value of £41,659,768 in 2026-2027.
6. 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 2026-2027.

Better Care Fund 2026-27 Plan

7. The Policy Framework was published by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) on 17 February 2026.
8. For 2026-2027, the Government have revised the objectives of the Better Care Fund as follows:
 - 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
9. The funding allocation for 2026-2027 is detailed in the Expenditure sheet of the planning document. Local Authority Better Care Grant has not received an uplift from 2025-2026 allocation and has remained cash flat since the 2024-2025 BCF planning period.
10. In 2026-2027, the NHS minimum contribution to adult social care has been uplifted by 4.4% (in line with the Spending Review 2025 commitment of an increase to the NHS's minimum contribution to adult social care via the BCF), Discharge and remaining ICB contributions by 2.1% in line with Community Services inflation growth
11. BCP Council and NHS Dorset are contributing at least the minimum amounts set by the DHSC. However, a £470,000 shortfall has been identified due to system pressures in our Intermediate Care services, that will need to be addressed by Quarter 2 2026-2027.
12. To address this, BCP Council Strategic Adult Social Care (ASC) Commissioning and NHS Dorset are currently reviewing several schemes and will work with system partners to address the shortfall. An update will be presented to the following Health & Wellbeing Board meeting.
13. For 2026-2027 there are three 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
14. This plan shows the forecasted expenditure of all the schemes that are funded through the Better Care Fund.

Better Care Fund 2026-27 Narrative

15. Alongside the overall Better Care Fund 2026-2027 planning template, Health & Wellbeing Boards 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 the 2025-2026 Better Care Fund plan.
 - How the Dorset Integrated Care System (ICS) will collaborate to achieve ambitions.
16. 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 2026-27 Planning document.
17. The narrative outlines key priorities across the ICS for 2026-27, including aligning services towards prevention, reviewing hospital discharge pathways, and promoting alternative pathways for urgent and emergency care.
18. Further details on the implementation of the BCF objectives, including how partners will collaborate to support the shift from sickness to prevention, with the FutureCare 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 End of Year Review

19. This report is a covering document detailing the content of the Better Care Fund 2025-2026 End of Year Report. The report is made up of a single document template.

The template is provided by NHS England and is completed jointly between BCP Council and NHS Dorset. The document is as follows.

 - Confirmation that National Conditions are being implemented.
 - Reporting of local performance against the BCF Metrics year to date.
 - Confirmation of expenditure.
 - Year-end Impact summary
20. The planning requirements dictate that this document is presented to the Health & Wellbeing Board on Monday 29 June for approval.
21. The health and social care landscape continues to challenge performance, but BCP Council achieved the 2025-2026 targets for:
 - Emergency admissions to hospital for people aged over 65 per 100,000 population

- Long-term admissions to residential care homes and nursing homes for people aged 65 and over per 100,000 population

Performance is not on track for:

- 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.

Summary of Financial Implications

22. BCP Council and NHS Dorset will monitor BCF budgets and activity according to the 2026-27 Plan.

23. 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	£4,522,369
Minimum NHS Contribution	£41,659,768
Local Authority Better Care Grant	£16,578,901
Additional LA Contribution	£2,182,000
Additional NHS Contribution	£15,679,163
Total	£80,622,201

Summary of Legal Implications

24. 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

25. 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

26. Services are only sustainable if funding is available.

Summary of public health implications

27. 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

28. 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 2026-2027](#)

Appendices

Appendix 1: [BCP Council BCF 26-27 Numeric Plan](#)

Appendix 2: [BCP Council BCF 2026-27 Narrative Return](#)

Appendix 3: [BCP Council BCF End Of Year Report 25-26](#)