

Care Dorset Shareholder Committee

24 March 2025

Care Dorset Update

For information and assurance

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Date: 5 March 2025

Report status: **PUBLIC**

Brief summary:

This paper provides an update for shareholder members on matters relating to Care Dorset following the last meeting.

Recommendation:

The Shareholder Committee is asked to note the report and the updates contained therein.

Reason for recommendation:

Care Dorset serves as a vital delivery partner to Dorset Council for adult social care and support. There is still considerable effort required to enhance Care Dorset's operations and to expand the organisation both in terms of scale and revenue.

INTRODUCTION

1. This report provides an update on key developments within Care Dorset since the last Shareholder Committee report. It outlines the organisation's financial and operational performance, workforce trends, governance matters, and strategic risks. Additionally, it highlights ongoing property-related issues, stakeholder engagement efforts, and future priorities.
2. Care Dorset continues to navigate a challenging operational environment while maintaining its commitment to high-quality care and service improvement. This report presents an overview of the current position and actions being taken to address financial pressures, enhance occupancy rates, strengthen governance, and support workforce development.
3. Care Dorset was delighted to be asked to be part of the recent Dorset Council Adults & Housing celebration event. Chris Best presented the award of Supportive Colleague. The positive atmosphere in the room was really noticeable.
4. A colleague from Stour Connect – Trudi Gosney won the Connecting People Award at the recent NHS-backed South West Integrated Personalised Care Awards. In receiving the award, Trudi said *"We had a lovely evening together and it was a real surprise to win the award. It's a real privilege to be recognised for the work we've done but to us, it's not work, as we enjoy every event as much as the people, we organise them for"*.

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

5. For the period October 2024 to January 2025 there has been an operating loss of £57.7k against a budgeted surplus of £146k, a year-to-date deficit variance of £204.7k. This position is impacted by higher agency costs than expected, additional cleaning costs to maintain and enhance infection prevention control measures and professional fees associated with growth opportunities.
6. Revenue year-to-date is £10.4m against a budget of £10.8m. The £411k less than budget is as a result of St Martin's occupancy being lower than had been expected at this point in the year, a provision for bad debt and block contract phasing. However, there is an additional £115k of private funding in registered care.
7. Colleagues across Operations are focused on driving improvements to reduce the use of agency.
8. It is anticipated that St Martin's occupancy will increase in the coming months and therefore the revenue from additional, individual hours will increase.
9. There is outstanding rent owed to Dorset Council, and this is associated with the occupation agreement. Care Dorset and colleagues within the Place Directorate are in discussions about this as there is an eagerness to resolve this ahead of concluding the year-end audit.

OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE

10. For the three months to end of February 2025, occupancy across the residential care homes averaged 84%. This is lower than the previous three months.

Occupancy levels have been impacted by some respiratory infections which have prevented new admissions.

11. Occupancy across the reablement beds for the three months to end of February 2025 has averaged 61%. This is lower than the preceding three months. Occupancy has been impacted by challenges with local general practice provision for one setting resulting in admissions not being possible and taking a more measured approach to admissions in another home. However, occupancy levels have picked up significantly during the first part of March with an average occupancy across the three settings of 79%. The average length of stay across the 30 beds has been 24 days.
12. Community reablement has delivered an average of 1,971 hours of support per month for the three months ending January 2025 (February's data was not available at the time of writing).
13. During this reporting period, the CQC conducted routine inspections at two registered locations. The Regulator's report for Castleman House has been released, rating the service as "Good" across all five domains. The report for the second inspected location is pending.

WORKFORCE

14. Voluntary turnover has reduced by 3% over the last three months and is now at 15%.
15. Sickness is currently at an average of 13 days of per colleague per year which is a reduction of 1 day from the previously reported position.
16. Care Dorset has recently launched its emerging leaders programme which is designed to provide colleagues with a desire for progression to secure the necessary skills and attributes to be successful as they progress with their careers.
17. The organisation has also been developing its internal training team to reduce its reliance on external training providers. As part of this work, a new induction programme for all joining colleagues launches in March 2025 designed to provide a consistent and thorough introduction to the organisation.

GOVERNANCE MATTERS

18. Further changes have taken place in the first few months of 2025 to introduce a suite of internal committees chaired by Executive Team members and providing regular assurance and reporting to the Board. Each Committee has a set of key performance indicators and will regularly report to the Board offering assurance.
19. The four committees are:
 - 19.1. Business Development Committee
 - 19.2. Property & Assets Committee
 - 19.3. Clinical Governance and Best Practice Committee
 - 19.4. People and Resources Committee

20. Recruitment will also commence in the next period for a new non-executive director with clinical experience. The Board of Directors has concluded this is a necessary appointment given the strategic ambition to operate nurse-led services.

PROPERTY MATTERS

21. Discussions with Place Directorate colleagues continue to progress in relation to the occupation agreement.
22. Fire prevention works in the residential care settings are moving to completion with the replacement fire doors in the communal areas of one care home due to finish during March 2025, later than planned and so fire wardens remain in place at that home and in other locations where fire works haven't yet been certificated.
23. Fire door repair and replacement works have not yet started at the day services.
24. Repairs and maintenance works identified by Dorset Council's appointed contractors in their condition services carried out in November 2023 are largely overdue.
25. The big six property compliance areas (Gas, Electric, Fire Safety, Asbestos, Water Hygiene and Lifts) are largely well managed. The new Property & Assets Committee are now monitoring this on a regular basis.

PEOPLE WE SUPPORT INVOLVEMENT & ENGAGEMENT

26. During January 2025, Care Dorset conducted a survey of stakeholders. The survey asked a series of questions focused on Care Dorset's quality pillars (Safe, Caring, Professional & Expert, Person-centred and Transparent, Reliable and Responsible).
27. Over 300 responses were received across all the service types.
28. Analysis of the feedback is still being undertaken but the headline analysis significant positive responses. The breakdown under each quality pillar is summarised in the table below:

Quality pillar	Percent of positive response
Safe	77.5%
Caring	80.5%
Professional & Expert	78.5%
Person-Centred	76%
Transparent, Reliable & Responsive	78%

29. The feedback from the survey is being presented to a number of different forums to generate ideas and commitment in using the results to inform change.

STRATEGIC RISKS

30. The strategic risk areas remain unchanged.

31. Care Dorset has introduced a new strategic risk register following the input from Gallagher Bassett in late 2024. The register is supplemented by issues and opportunity logs.

APPENDICES

32. There are no appendices to this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

33. There are no background papers.