

Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd

24 March 2025

Commissioners' Update

For Review and Consultation

Cabinet Member and Portfolio:

Cllr S Robinson, Adult Social Care

Local Councillor(s):

All

Executive Director:

J Price, Executive Director of People - Adults

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Report Status: Public

Brief Summary:

This update presents the developments on the part of the Council relevant to Care Dorset. This report summarises significant developments in the 2-3 months since the last Shareholder Committee.

Recommendation:

1. For Committee to note the continued progress made in development of the relationship between Commissioners and Care Dorset.
2. For Committee to note the priority areas being addressed and plans in place to further develop Care Dorset priorities in line with Dorset Council 'A Better Life' Commissioning Strategies.

Reason for Recommendation:

Care Dorset is a key part of delivering the Council's 'Commissioning for A Better Life' strategies, and for improving the quality and sustainability of the care and support delivered to adults in Dorset.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides an update on work with Care Dorset since the last Shareholder Report, and relevant developments in the wider commissioning landscape.

2. Significant service developments since the last report

- 2.1 The Council's Cabinet received and noted Care Dorset's annual performance report at its meeting of 28 January 2025.

Development of new reablement centres

- 2.2 Work continues under RIBA Phase 2 design on the development of the new reablement centre in Bridport, on the site of Sidney Gale House.
- 2.3 Commissioners are starting working on a more detailed service model. To support that, discussions are being initiated through the Future Care programme to ensure that the service model is well-embedded in the future of out-of-hospital care in Dorset.

Day services

- 2.4 On 11 March consultation events began across the county on the impact of the new model of day opportunities on current service commissioning. The focus is on how we will change the Care Dorset contract to create hubs, and respecify day services. This is part of the on-going and much longer process of co-production that is driving the change to the new model. This part of the consultation will inform Cabinet decisions to be taken on changes to contracted services. It runs for 90 days.
- 2.5 There will be events in all of the current day centres commissioned through Care Dorset. Changes are being proposed and discussed for each, which would see some being potentially expanded into hubs, and would see others being relocated or re-provided in different forms. We are very clear on the responsibility to ensure that people have the support that they need, and the emphasis is on doing that more efficiently, with less of the spend being about managing and running large buildings for relatively few attendees.
- 2.6 Once the Council has made some commissioning decisions, informed by the discussions with people in the coming months and reflected in the Care Dorset contract, it will be for Care Dorset to consider what this means for some of the existing services. This may mean, in some cases, that services are run on a more commercial basis, with the Council as an occasional spot purchaser rather than under block contract.

Reablement

- 2.7 Linked to various of the transformation and saving programmes outlined below, the Council is beginning to scope an approach to deploying reablement services more comprehensively at its own 'front door'. By doing so, the intention is to ensure that people are "at their best" and with maximised independence at the point of assessment, so that the care arrangements put in place continue to build on this. Care Dorset's reablement services will be drawn on to deliver this ambition in the coming months.

Castleman House

- 2.8 Council colleagues were pleased to see the Care Quality Commission report published into the services at Castleman House in Blandford, rating the service as Good in all domains. It is a tribute to the staff team that they continue to deliver a service that is safe and caring, and to the quality standards expected. Comments on the positive engagement of Care Dorset leadership in the service are also noted and welcomed.

Care Quality Commission: local authority inspection

- 2.9 The Council is yet to be notified of CQC inspection of its adult social care services. Work continues in preparation, with a draft Self-Assessment document well-developed and under continued review, together with the supporting evidence. The decision to create Care Dorset, and the work that has been done in partnership with the company, of course form a key part of our overall picture of how we work to ensure that the right care and support is available to people across the county. Representatives of the company will no doubt be part of the discussions that CQC will wish to have with the Council's partners in order to form their evaluation.

3. Wider Council and Integrated Care System developments

Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan

- 3.1 The Council has agreed its budget for 2025/26, which includes further investment to meet identified pressures in adult services, offset with a substantial programme of savings. The savings include identified opportunities to ensure that people's independence is maximised, both in working age and older people. There will be a number of opportunities for Care Dorset to support this work, including (as outlined above) the developing proposals for delivering reablement at our "front door". Day opportunities form part of this, as does work on new supported living and similar support models.

- 3.2 The budget available, despite significant additional investment in adult social care, does not allow the Council to meet the cost of the increase in National Insurance contributions or the National Living Wage. The funds provided by Government were not sufficient to meet the costs to the Council's own workforce, and the additional investment in adult social care (nationally £600m) was well short of the amounts required to meet the increased financial burden on the social care market. Our uplift offer to the market for 2025/26 is made on this clear premise. This year will follow two years in which the provision of Market Sustainability Grant funding allowed the Council to make offers to targeted parts of the market in the 9-16% range, and in that context we will continue to work with providers to look for all opportunities to help them reduce their own costs and to sustain their businesses.

Future Care

- 3.3 This is the banner under which the changes to urgent and emergency care pathways are being delivered. The workstream leads and sponsors are now all in place and the programme workstreams are being shaped. This will deliver an improved flow and inter-connectedness for the various elements of the out-of-hospital journey for people in Dorset. It will provide a number of opportunities for Care Dorset to deliver on their ambition to improve existing reablement services and develop new offers. Of course, as already observed, it also provides the context for the development of the new bedded reablement services, such as at Sidney Gale House.

Our Future Council

- 3.4 Alongside the budget, the Council agreed the next stage business plan for Our Future Council. This will transform the Council's approaches to customer support, commissioning and procurement, strategic and enabling services, and business support. In due course there will be opportunity to explore what this will mean for the Council's companies, including Care Dorset, and their relationship to the Council both as shareholder and as commissioner of services.

4. Finance

- 4.1 There continues to be some final matters to resolve in the contract price for Care Dorset's services to the Council in the coming year, aligned to the agreement of the final revised contract.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 No specific decisions are requested from this report; as such, there are no specific financial implications raised by this report. Note should be taken of the Cabinet papers on the medium-term financial plan for the Council, and the context that it sets for Care Dorset's work.

6. Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology Implications

- 6.1 There are no specific implications raised by this report. The work underway on day services, as well as the change to Sidney Gale House, present opportunities to improve the environmental efficiency of Care Dorset's estate and operations..

7. Well-being and Health Implications

- 7.1 The services described, and their journey of improvement, are significant contributors to the maintenance and improvement in the health and wellbeing of people who draw on support.

8. Other Implications

- 8.1 No other implications identified.

9. Risk Assessment

- 9.1 No decision is required; no risk assessment therefore needed.

10. Equalities Impact Assessment

- 10.1 No decision is required. Equalities impacts are assessed in connection with decision made on specific service developments.

11. Appendices

- 11.1 None.

12. Background Papers

- 12.1 Cabinet meeting, 28 January 2025
<https://moderngov.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=152&MIId=5904&Ver=4>
- Report on Our Future Council Business Case and Transformation Plan – item 107.
 - Report on the Budget strategy and medium-term financial plan (MTFP) – item 109.
 - Report on Care Dorset's annual performance report – item 113.

13. Report Sign-Off

- 13.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)