

Health and Wellbeing Board

24 September 2025

Better Care Fund in Dorset: Quarter 1 Template 2025/26

For Decision

Cabinet Member:

Cllr S Robinson, Adult Social Care

Local Councillor(s): All

Senior Leadership Team:

J Price, Executive Director of People - Adults

Report author and job title: Sarah Sewell, Head of Service for Commissioning for Older People and Home First

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Statutory Authority:

Report status: Public

1. Executive summary (maximum of 500 words)

1.1 This report presents Dorset's Better Care Fund (BCF) Quarter 1 2025/26 return. It reports on our performance against the 2025/26 plan and was submitted to NHS England under delegated authority on 15th August 2025. Retrospective endorsement from the Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) is now sought.

1.2 In Quarter 1, Dorset is on track to meet all three BCF metrics, with good performance in Residential Admissions continuing. Expenditure is consistent with the planned budget, with no changes reported.

1.3 Work has commenced on the next year's BCF plan, focusing on longer term plans that may enable the reinvestment of existing funds into priority partnership schemes such as Intermediate Care and Integrated Neighbourhood Teams.

2. Recommendation

To endorse the Better Care Fund (BCF) Reporting Template for 2025/26 Quarter 1; approved under delegated authority

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

- 3.1 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 mid-year, and at the end of the year.
- 3.2 There is usually a relatively short window of time between NHSE publishing the reporting templates and the submission date. NHSE allow areas to submit their plans under delegated authority, pending HWB approval. At the HWB meeting on 12 January 2022 delegated authority to approve BCF plans, if a HWB meeting could not be convened within the NHSE sign off period, was granted to the Executive Director for People – Adults, following consultation with the HWB Chair.
- 3.3 The 2025/26 Quarter 1 (Q1) template submitted for endorsement today was shared with HWB Members by email on 8th August 2025, in advance of submission to NHSE to provide advance oversight and offer opportunity to comment; no comments or amendments were returned.
- 3.4 Submission of the template was made to NHSE on 15th August 2025 on behalf of Dorset Council and Dorset NHS in line with delegated approvals. Retrospective endorsement is now sought from the Board at its meeting on 24 September 2025.

The report

4. The Quarter 1 Performance

- 4.1 The Q1 template is at Appendix A and reports performance against the original plan submitted for 2025-26. The template format is in line with previous formats but NHSE have made improvements to streamline the contents and enable a more summarised approach to the Q1 return. The template required the following updates:
- 4.1.1 Confirmation that National Conditions are being implemented
- 4.1.2 Progress against the BCF Metrics, including an assessment of whether we are on track to meet the goals
- 4.1.3 Summary of Q1 year to date expenditure against the plan with opportunity to provide narrative.
- 4.2 Our Q1 performance is positive, we remain on track to meet our goals across all three metrics.

4.3 The amended approach to the templates now means it is possible to update our metrics mid-year if necessary. This may be the case for Residential Admissions as strong performance continued during Q1. If Q2 performance continues to perform better than our original plan, we may increase our target for the remainder of the year.

4.4 Q1 expenditure is in line with our plan, and we had no changes to report.

5. Update on 24/25 Funding Agreements

5.1 At the last HWB, the BCF paper outlined an outstanding funding dispute from financial year 2024/25 between Dorset Council and NHS Dorset, that relates to funding intended to extend the services within the BCF.

5.2 At the time of writing this report, the matter is yet to be fully resolved but progress has been made.

5.3 The Section 75 agreement, which is the legal framework associated with the BCF, is in the process of being re-drafted to include risk-share arrangements across all BCF scheme lines, to provide mitigation against future disputes.

6. Preparing for 2026/27 BCF Plan

6.1 Dorset Council and NHS Dorset Commissioners have started work on the next year's plan. The intention is to identify which new and additional schemes, many of which will cover key partnership work, such as Intermediate Care and Integrated Neighbourhood Teams, we wish to include in future year's plan. There is unlikely to be new money available, so plans for how we re-invest existing monies is central to our work, because of this, it is likely longer-term plans beyond 26/27 are needed in order to bring additional lines into core BCF investments. As the work develops the HWB will be kept updated.

7. Legal considerations

7.1 Work is underway to renew the section 75 agreement that underpins the Better Care Fund plans between the Local Authority and NHS Dorset.

9. Financial implications

9.1 The Council and Dorset NHS are required to work within the financial envelope and to Plan, hence continuous monitoring is required. Joint commissioning activity and close working with System partners, including Acute Trusts, allow these funds to be invested to support collective priorities for Dorset.

10. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

- 10.1 All partner agencies are mindful in their strategic and operational planning of the commitments, which they have taken on to address the impact of climate change.

11. Well-being and health implications

- 11.1 Allocation of the BCF supports individuals with health and social care needs, as well as enabling preventative measures and promoting independence.
- 11.2 Dorset, like many other areas across the South West and nationally, is continuing to experience many challenges in providing and supporting the delivery of health and social care. For Dorset, the highest risks continue to be the increasing acuity of health, care and support needs of those being supported both in the community and in hospital. In addition the lack of therapy led care and support to promote the regaining and maintaining of longer term independence continues to challenge us.

9. Other implications

- 9.1 Dorset Council and Dorset NHS officers will continue to work closely with Dorset System Partners to plan measures to protect local NHS services, particularly around admission avoidance and hospital discharge to ensure flow is maintained to support and respond to additional demand.

10. Risk implications

- 10.1 Dorset Council and Dorset NHS officers are confident the report appendices provide appropriate assurance and confirms spending is compliant with conditions.
- 10.2 The funds provide mitigation of risks by securing continuation of essential service provision and provides preventative measures to reduce, delay and avoid demand.
- 10.3 Dorset is actively working to alter approaches that enable enhancement of provision to mitigate risks, and promote recovery, regaining and maintaining of independence.

11. Equalities

- 11.1 It is important that all partners ensure that the individual needs and rights of every person accessing health and social care services are respected, including people with protected characteristics so the requirements of the Equalities Act 2010 are met by all partners.

12. Appendices

A: Dorset's Better Care Fund 2025-2026 Quarter 1 Template

13. **Background papers**

[Better Care Fund policy framework 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK](#)

Health & Wellbeing Board, 18 June 2025, [BCF 2024-25 Q2 report.pdf](#)

Health & Wellbeing Board, 19th March 2025 [HWB - 18 June 2025 Report.pdf](#)

14 **Report sign-off**

- 14.1 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)