

Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd

6 October 2025

Commissioners' Update

For Review and Consultation

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: Sam Poole, Corporate Director of Commissioning & Improvement

Email: samuel.poole@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority: Dorset Council

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

Executive summary (maximum of 500 words)

This report provides an update on developments led by the Council that are relevant to Care Dorset, summarising key progress made over the past 2–3 months since the last Shareholder Committee meeting in June 2025.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 This report asks the Committee to:

- i) Note the continued progress made in development of the relationship between Commissioners and Care Dorset.
- ii) Note the priority areas being addressed and plans in place to further develop Care Dorset priorities in line with Dorset Council's 'A Better Life' Commissioning Strategies.

2. Reason for the recommendation(s)

2.1 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.

3. The report

- 3.1 This report provides an update on key areas of work that affect Care Dorset. It covers progress on day services, supported living, system-wide transformation, and a financial update.

Day Services

- 3.2 Dorset Council continues to develop a new model for day opportunities, which has direct implications for Care Dorset as a key provider of day services across the county.
- 3.3 The formal consultation has now closed, and we are grateful for the warm welcome and support received from Care Dorset centre managers and their teams, which enabled meaningful engagement with people who draw on support. The consultation generated hundreds of responses, including petitions regarding the future of Blandford and Ferndown centres, and highlighted the diverse and evolving role these services play in their communities.
- 3.4 We are now working through the feedback and developing revised proposals for Cabinet consideration in December 2025. No decisions have been made at this stage. We continue to engage with stakeholders and explore the detail of future delivery.

Supported Living

- 3.5 In 2023, Dorset Council commissioned Care Dorset to operate a supported living service in Weymouth, designed to support young adults in building independence and, over time, transitioning to fully independent living. Early outcomes from the service are encouraging, with several young people already successfully moving on. Building on this progress, Dorset Council is working with Care Dorset to develop a second move-on service in Weymouth.
- 3.6 Care Dorset also delivers two other supported living settings, which support an ageing population with learning disabilities and individuals with more complex needs. The Council and Care Dorset are working collaboratively to explore how these services can evolve to meet future needs, ensuring they remain responsive, sustainable, and person-centred.

System-wide transformation

- 3.7 Reablement remains a key area of focus across Dorset's health and care system, with coordinated work progressing through the FutureCare Programme. The Home-Based Intermediate Care (HBIC) workstream, in which Care Dorset are supporting, continues to deliver strong outcomes, with increasing numbers of people receiving timely support after hospital discharge

and regaining independence at home, reducing long-term care needs and associated costs. In parallel, the Bed-Based Intermediate Care (BBIC) workstream is developing future specifications for reablement beds, working closely with Care Dorset, Tricuro, and BCP Council to ensure a joined-up and system-wide approach.

- 3.8 A strategic review of intermediate care bed distribution is underway, with Dorset Council and NHS Dorset committed to a medium-term ambition for a neighbourhood-based model that includes specialist bedded reablement. In
- 3.9 As part of Future Care, the Care Dorset Community Reablement Team will begin using a Reablement App to support the setting and tracking of SMART focused goals with all individuals they supported. This approach will improve focus on a goals-based approach to reablement activities and improve individuals longer-term independence. In addition, this will enable clearer and more effective oversight of the Reablement Caseload, reducing length of stay and improving the effectiveness of reablement interventions. Training for all Reablement Teams took place during September, with go-live planned for end September.
- 3.10 Care Dorset has played a central role in the Right Care at Home pilot, which aimed to “right-size” new home care packages before long-term support was commissioned. The pilot delivered strong results, with 32% of individuals not requiring ongoing care and a 45% reduction in care hours compared to initial referrals, resulting in notable cost avoidance. However, the pilot began to consume more of Care Dorset’s reablement capacity, impacting its ability to support other priority areas such as P1 for short-term, step-down care. In response, referrals were limited to two per week to protect core capacity while maintaining a small level of cost avoidance.
- 3.11 This learning has directly informed the development of the Reablement at the Front Door model, launching in October 2025. This new approach focuses on prevention and early intervention, ensuring people receive the right support as soon as they approach adult social care. Care Dorset’s operational insight and capacity remain critical to the success of this model, particularly in areas where alternative providers have limited coverage. The model is co-dependent on sufficient reablement capacity, and work is ongoing to address geographical gaps and improve provider utilisation to support delivery.

Finance

- 3.12 For the current financial year, a targeted saving of £500,000 is expected from improved operational efficiency within day services. While this is separate from the broader transformation programme, it reflects the need to address disproportionately high benchmark costs in this area. Commissioners will

continue to work closely with Care Dorset to identify and realise additional efficiencies to support the council.

- 3.13 Care Dorset is now operating from a more stable and strategically aligned position, supported by the agreement of a five-year business plan and the approval of a working capital loan from Dorset Council. This financial arrangement will help the company manage investment and cash flow across longer timeframes. Looking ahead, commissioners intend to continue working with Care Dorset on an open-book basis to ensure transparency and a shared understanding of where efficiencies can be identified and reinvested into the contract, both in the current year and in future commissioning cycles.
- 3.14 We continue to work closely with Care Dorset to strengthen our shared approach to data and performance. While there have been some ongoing challenges around the timing and consistency of data sharing, these are being addressed through open dialogue and joint problem-solving. We recognise that further work is needed to enhance the contract management arrangements, and we are actively progressing improvements to ensure greater clarity, accountability, and responsiveness. To further strengthen collaboration and strategic alignment, Dorset Council and Care Dorset are planning to hold a joint summit later this year.

4. Legal considerations

- 4.1 There are no immediate legal implications arising directly from this report. However, any future decisions relating to service transformation, contractual changes, or commissioning arrangements will need to comply with relevant statutory duties, including those under the Care Act 2014, public procurement regulations, and employment law.

5. Financial implications

- 5.1 This report does not seek any formal decisions at this stage, and therefore does not introduce new financial commitments. However, the ongoing pressures facing the Council's adult social care budget remain and therefore solid commissioning decisions related to Care Dorset will need to be made.

6. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

- 6.1 While this report does not raise any direct environmental implications, ongoing work on the transformation of day services and the redevelopment of Sidney Gale House presents opportunities to improve the environmental performance of Care Dorset's estate. These projects offer potential to enhance energy efficiency, reduce carbon emissions, and make better use of existing buildings in line with the Council's wider sustainability goals

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 implications

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

10. Equalities

- 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 None

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).