

# Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd

19 January 2026

## 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](mailto:samuel.poole@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk)

**Statutory Authority:** Dorset Council

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

### Executive summary

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 October 2025.

#### 1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 This report asks the Committee to note the report and progress contained within.

#### 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, extra care housing, reablement centres, system 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 consultation report has now been published, capturing rich feedback from over 350 survey responses, 850 comments, and petitions from the Blandford and Ferndown communities.
- 3.4 Key insights highlight that people want flexibility, choice, and local provision, with strong support for community-based activities alongside specialist and respite services. Engagement continues with local groups, and recent visits to Blandford and Ferndown have provided valuable insight into community priorities and ideas for improvement, which are being used to shape the new model of day opportunities. Commissioners continue to engage with Care Dorset on the proposed model, which will expand the range and availability of day opportunities across Dorset, ensuring services are responsive to local needs.
- 3.5 A report will be presented to the People & Health Overview Committee and the Health & Wellbeing Board in February, with recommendations onto Cabinet in March.

### Supported Living

- 3.6 In 2023, Dorset Council commissioned Care Dorset to deliver a supported living service in Weymouth, designed to help young adults build independence and, over time, transition to fully independent living. Following the success of this initiative, a second site in Weymouth is now underway. This new development will provide four additional beds and is on track for completion in spring 2026. We are delighted with Care Dorset's proactive approach and strong partnership working, which have been central to the success of the first site. Their commitment gives us confidence that the second development will deliver equally positive outcomes for young adults across Dorset.

### Extra Care Housing

- 3.7 Commissioners have worked closely with Care Dorset to support the delivery of care at St Martin's in Gillingham, which officially opened in November 2024. This 55-apartment extra care scheme, operated by Care Dorset in partnership with Magna Housing, was originally designated for older adults. However, following a planning determination on 11 November 2025, eligibility criteria were relaxed to encourage broader uptake. This change has enabled the service to diversify and therefore achieve approximately 90% occupancy by the end of December; with an expectation the scheme will be fully occupied in

early 2026. Throughout this period, Care Dorset has delivered high-quality, 24/7 on-site support and demonstrated flexibility in embracing the shift, facilitating improved service reach and outcomes.

### Reablement Centres

- 3.8 The redevelopment of Sidney Gale House in Bridport into a modern 56-bed reablement centre is progressing well. Care Dorset is actively involved in the final design phase, ensuring the layout and operational model will deliver a high-quality, efficient service aligned with best practice. Their input has been invaluable in shaping a design that aims to work seamlessly for staff and residents, with a strong emphasis on flow, accessibility, and person-centred care.
- 3.9 The project remains on track, subject to planning approval and Cabinet agreement to award the construction contract in May 2026. Current timelines anticipate the centre opening in early to mid-2028. Care Dorset is the preferred operator for the new service; however, the council retains the option to explore alternatives if required to secure best value and outcomes. This development represents a significant investment in short-term care capacity and will play a vital role in supporting independence and reducing pressure on hospitals and residential care services.

### System-wide transformation

- 3.10 Care Dorset is actively engaged in the FutureCare Programme and the wider health and care system transformation, supporting its aims and objectives to improve outcomes and efficiency. While system funding for 18 of Care Dorset's reablement beds, previously supported through Section 256 arrangements, has come to an end, this change has provided an opportunity to rethink how these resources are used. Care Dorset is proactively repurposing these beds, working with commissioners to explore how to better meet emerging needs and maintain service sustainability, ensuring they continue to support priority areas across the county and mitigate income loss.
- 3.11 Alongside this, commissioners and the FutureCare Programme team have worked closely with Care Dorset to strengthen reablement services at Castleman Plus in Blandford, concentrating on improving the effectiveness and performance of its 12 dedicated beds. This partnership has included regular performance reviews, joint planning sessions, and targeted support to deliver timely, outcome-focused interventions. Operational colleagues and the Care Allocation Team have played a vital role, streamlining referrals, improving flow, and aligning care pathways to maximise utilisation and impact.
- 3.12 Care Dorset has responded positively to this collaborative approach, implementing agreed changes swiftly and constructively. These improvements

have had a clear impact on performance. The average length of stay has fallen from 51 days to 37 days as of 16 December 2025. When excluding a small number of complex, long-stay cases, this reduces further to 25 days, better than the best practice benchmark of 28 days. During this improvement cycle, 13 people were discharged from Castleman Plus, with 85% successfully returning home, demonstrating the strong outcomes achieved in promoting independence and recovery.

### Finance

- 3.13 Care Dorset's financial year, previously running from October to September as a legacy of its establishment in October 2022, will now be aligned with the standard April-to-March fiscal period. This change will streamline reporting, strengthen contractual arrangements, and ensure greater consistency with council financial rhythm.
- 3.14 Commissioners and Care Dorset are exploring opportunities for additional provision and commercial ventures to strengthen Care Dorset's profitability and resilience. These discussions include new service models and innovative approaches to meet emerging care needs.
- 3.15 To build on this progress, a strategic summit is scheduled for 4 February. This session will focus on shaping future opportunities, addressing any outstanding issues, and ensuring both organisations are aligned on priorities for the year ahead.

## **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).