

Health and Wellbeing Board

18 March 2026

Better Care Fund in Dorset: Quarter 3 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

Email: sarah.sewell@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority:

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

1. Executive summary (maximum of 500 words)

- 1.1 This report seeks approval from the Health and Wellbeing Board for endorsement of the Better Care Fund Quarterly Reporting Template.

2. Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 To endorse the Better Care Fund (BCF) Reporting Template for 2025/26 Quarter 2; 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 3 (Q3) template submitted for endorsement today was shared with HWB Members by email on 22nd January 2026, 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 29th January 2026 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 18 March 2026.

4. The Report

The Quarter 3 Performance

- 4.1 The Q3 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. The template required the following updates:
- Confirmation that National Conditions are being implemented
 - Progress against the BCF Metrics, including an assessment of whether we are on track to meet the goals
 - Summary of Q3 year to date expenditure against the plan with opportunity to provide narrative.
- 4.2 Our performance has continued to be challenged during Q3. We remain on track to meet two out of three goals, with the Discharge Delays metric 'not on track' at the end of Q3.
- 4.3 Active work continues via the Future Care Programme which is focussed in reducing the length of stay for people ready to leave hospital. There is a specific workstream, Transfers of Care, focussed on discharge planning.
- 4.4 In relation to Q3 expenditure, we remain in line with our plan, and we had no changes to report.

5. Planning for 2026/27 BCF Plan

- 5.1 BCF guidance for the new financial year was published on 18 February 2026. While more significant changes had originally been anticipated, the updated guidance primarily aligns the programme with the 10-Year Health Plan. It encourages stronger links between BCF plans and neighbourhood-level integrated health and care services, including areas such as intermediate care.

- 5.2 While full integration is not expected for 2026–27, partners are asked to pragmatically link BCF spending to local priorities without disrupting key BCF-funded services, ensuring continued investment in adult social care and collaborative plan sign-off.
- 5.3 Local Authority and NHS Dorset officers are working jointly to develop the 2026/27 Plan, which is expected to remain closely aligned to the current year's plan. The submission deadline is 19 May 2026. To meet this timeframe, delegated authority to the Executive Director for People – Adults, following consultation with the HWB Chair, will be used. Draft documents will be circulated to HWB Members by email for comment prior to submission, with formal endorsement sought at the 17 June 2026 HWB meeting.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 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.

7. Natural Environment, Climate and Ecology Implications.

- 7.1 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.

8. Well-being and Health Implications

- 8.1 Allocation of the BCF supports individuals with health and social care needs, as well as enabling preventative measures and promoting independence.
- 8.2 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 Assessment

- 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. Impact Assessment

- 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

- 11.1 Appendix A: Dorset's Better Care Fund 2025-2026 Quarter 3 Template

13. 12. Background Papers

- [Better Care Fund policy framework 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK](#)
- Health & Wellbeing Board, 17th November 2025 [Better Care Fund Q2 Template Report](#)
- Health & Wellbeing Board, 24th September 2025 [Better Care Fund Q1 Template report.pdf](#)

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)