People & Health Scrutiny Committee
16 April 2026
2025/26 Quarter 3 Performance Report
For Review and Consultation

Cabinet Member:
Cllr N Ireland, Leader of the Council, Climate, Performance and Safeguarding

Local Councillor(s): All

Senior Leadership Team:
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Statutory Authority: N/A

Report status: Public Choose an item.

1. Executive summary

1.1 This report provides the People & Health Scrutiny Committee with an overview of key performance trajectories, indicators and exceptions for Quarter 3 of 2025/26 (October – December 2025). It builds on the Quarter 2 2025/26 performance report (presented to the Committee on 21 January 2026).

1.2 Across Adult's & Housing, Children's Services and Public Health and Prevention, Quarter 3 performance remained broadly positive, with 36 out of 81 indicators rated Green and 49 indicators showing stable or improving trends, reflecting continued progress despite ongoing demand and financial pressures.

1.3 Adults & Housing improved homelessness prevention and supply, supporting more households into settled homes and delivering new affordable housing. Children's Services sustained key strengths, including zero unallocated cases, reduced children in care and strong Education, Employment and Training (EET) outcomes for care leavers. Public Health reported improvements across breastfeeding, healthy weight, timely new-birth visits and drug and alcohol treatment outcomes, all performing above target or national comparators.

1.4 The report and annexes presents red-rated performance indicators, alongside amber indicators showing a worsening trend, with narrative context and improvement actions. Based on the data the Committee's key area of focus this quarter is:

- Percentage of looked after children placed outside the council area

1.5 For this area, performance has been contextualised using a mix of quantitative data (trends, benchmarking, demand) and relevant resource context, providing a rounded and meaningful narrative to support scrutiny discussion.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That the Committee:

- notes the Quarter 3 (October–December 2025) performance overview available via the Scrutiny dashboard, with an accompanying exceptions extract provided in Annex 1 and 2.
- considers the contextual analysis for the identified areas of performance focus, to inform actions and recommendations.

3. Reason for the recommendations

3.1 To support the council's commitment to robust governance, transparency and continuous improvement by adhering to the reporting mechanisms set out within Dorset Council's Strategic Performance Reporting Framework.

Specifically, this approach:

- aligns with the council's constitution, particularly provisions relating to performance monitoring, decision-making, transparency, and democratic oversight
- promotes public transparency by ensuring performance-related information is accessible, clear, and reported consistently
- supports effective tracking and oversight of the scrutiny committee's actions and decisions, reinforcing accountability and enabling timely follow-up
- supports the council's wider performance management framework by ensuring the committee's work is integrated into quarterly reporting mechanisms

4. The report

4.1 The scrutiny dashboard now includes Quarter 3 (October–December 2025) performance data, alongside historic trends where available, enabling Members to interrogate key metrics and emerging issues. The dashboard is publicly accessible via the following link.

4.2 Across People, Housing and Public Health, performance in Q3 remained broadly positive, with 36 of 81 indicators rated Green and 49 of 81 indicators showing either static or improving trends, demonstrating continued progress despite demand and financial pressures.

4.3 Adults & Housing have strengthened homelessness prevention and housing supply, with 192 households prevented from homelessness and 133 supported into settled homes, 82 new affordable homes have been delivered and 11 long term empty homes brought back into use. Also, continued to support more people aged 65+ to live independently in their own homes using a range of preventative approaches designed to maintain and strengthen independence with 1,379 supported individuals, the highest recorded figure since the introduction of this measure back in April 2024.

4.4 Children's directorate performance includes 0 unallocated children's cases, reduced children in care rates compared with Q2, and strong outcomes for care leavers, with Employment, Education and Training (EET) levels above target across all age groups.

4.5 Public Health & Prevention shows improving breastfeeding (61%), infant healthy weight, Percentage of all births that received a face-to-face new birth visit within 14 days by a health visitor and drug and alcohol treatment outcomes, all above target or national comparators.

4.6 The areas of focus are indicated below and are considered in turn within the report:

4.7 **Children's Services: Percentage of looked after children placed outside the council area**

Children in care who are living outside of Dorset reduced from 213 at the end of Q2, to 208 at the end of Q3, which is 45.22% down to 44.92%. Dorset's target is 30%. When compared to Good + Local Authorities and Statistical Neighbours the average is 33.14% and the England average is 44%.

This change from Q2 to Q3 equates to 7 fewer children recorded as living out of area. Between the two quarters, 5 additional children moved out of area, while 12 children are no longer recorded as living out of area.

99 children, which equates to 47.60% of children in care, who live outside Dorset, are living in neighbouring authorities: Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, East Devon District, New Forest District, Somerset and Wiltshire.

Of those who are in neighbouring authorities, 12.12% are living with family or friends, or are placed for adoption, 21.21% are in regulated supported accommodation (i.e. children's homes or residential schools). 66.66% are in other foster carers; half of these are in long term matched foster homes.

Of the 109 that are not placed in neighbouring Authorities, 39 are best placed out of Dorset because they are unaccompanied children who are living in culturally matched areas more suited to their needs.

Of the remaining 70, 17 are placed with family or friends, 26 in children's homes or Supported Accommodation, 6 are placed with parents, and 26 are living with foster carers, of which 12 are long term carers.

In late 2025 the government announced its intensions to roll out Regional Care Cooperatives (RCC's). RCC's is a national model being introduced by the Department for Education (DfE) to transform how local authorities commission, plan, and provide placements for children in care, following two pilots in England. RCC's are designed to address longstanding challenges in the children's social care placement market, including insufficient local provision, rising costs, and variable quality. As a member of the SW Sufficiency Group, we are actively considering how this will impact our region, while also preparing plans for RCC requirements and developing funding bid applications to establish an RCC.

In February 2026 the Government announced plans to reverse the decline in foster carers, create 10,000 more fostering places by 2029, and rebuild the fostering system so more children can live in family homes. Nationally there has been a 12% decline in foster carers since 2019 and a national action plan has been developed to expand fostering. This is designed under 7 pillars which include enhanced regional collaboration, £12.4m to support innovation programmes, identify stronger support for foster carers & review the current fostering standards and regulations. The drive and commitment to reform fostering by 2028 is progressing at pace. The reforms will aim to simplify the assessment and approval processes, expand the role and function of fostering hubs and ultimately create more homes through fostering for children and young people in care.

Quarter 3 Exceptions Extract 2025/26

4.8 The Quarter 3 (October–December 2025) performance overview is available via the Scrutiny Dashboard, with supporting exceptions extracts provided in **Appendices 1 and 2**.

- Appendix 1 provides red-rated indicators accompanied by narrative context and improvement actions.
- Appendix 2 presents amber-rated indicators, with a worsening direction of travel, also supported by narrative and improvement actions.

Quarter 3 Risk Update

4.9 The performance dashboard incorporates strategic risks to acknowledge their critical role in shaping and influencing overall performance. Strategic risks are those that, if realised, could have the most significant impact on delivering the Council Plan or other key organisational priorities. Strategic risks may be considered by the Scrutiny Committee within the context of performance.

4.10 It is important to note that the responsibility for assessing the adequacy of risk controls and management rests with the Audit and Governance Committee, which holds the authority to make recommendations on the effectiveness of the council's risk management arrangements.

4.11 Whilst this is the case, it is acknowledged that the committee has an overarching interest in Risk ID 200, rated Very High:

"As a result of health service reform, Dorset Council may incur additional unprovisioned responsibilities, leading to increased resourcing & budgetary pressures, unmet health needs and potential harm to individuals".

4.12 This risk position is expected to improve following the forthcoming joint partnership summit, which will focus on resolving outstanding issues and cases. Establishing a clear escalation route and a consistent resolution approach between partners will enable this risk to be re-scored.

Quarter 4 Performance Report

4.13 The next performance report, presenting Quarter 4 data, will be brought to the Committee 22 June 2026. Within this report committee has requested to receive a report focusing on Housing performance.

5. Alternative options considered

5.1 Not applicable. The report presents information on past performance and does not recommend any change to council policy or new action.

6. Legal considerations

6.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from this report; however some indicators are based on statutory returns, which the council must make to the Government.

7. Financial implications

7.1 There are no financial legal implications arising directly from this report.

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

8.1 The report does not have direct climate change implications.

9. Well-being and health implications

9.1 The People and Health Committee scrutinise performance within its area of expertise and any improvement actions resulting from this process may improve the well-being and health outcomes of our communities.

10. Other implications

10.1 None.

11. Risk implications

11.1 Not applicable. The report presents information on past performance and does not seek a decision.

12. Equalities

12.1 There are no direct equality, diversity or inclusion implications resulting from this report. Equality impact assessments are carried out, when necessary, across the council to ensure service delivery meets the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010.

13. Appendices

13.1 **Appendix 1:** Summary of performance exceptions (red RAG-rated measures) – People and Health Scrutiny Committee, Quarter 3 2025/26 (October–December 2025)

13.2 **Appendix 2**: Summary of performance exceptions (Amber and 'worsening' RAG-rated measures) – People and Health Scrutiny Committee, Quarter 3 2025/26 (October–December 2025)

14. Background papers

- Dorset Council’s Strategic Performance Reporting Framework
- People and Health Scrutiny Committee, 21/01/2026
- People and Health Scrutiny Committee, 17/11/2025
- People and Health Scrutiny Committee, 30/07/2025

15. Report sign-off

15.1 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).

Appendices

Appendix 1. Summary of performance exceptions (red RAG-rated measures) – People and Health Scrutiny Committee, Quarter 3 2025/26 (October - December 2025)

Service Area	Indicator	Data	RAG	DOT	Narrative
Adults & Housing	Net number of single households in B&B at the end of the month (taking in to account households newly placed in B&B and those moving out into alternative accommodation)	51	RED	RED	The recent increase has primarily been driven by the activation of the severe weather emergency protocols (SWEP) due to falling temperatures. This has placed upward pressure on numbers at the same time as 30 units of accommodation have been handed back, reducing our available stock. We are working with an external provider to onboard additional units, however, these will not come until later in the year.
Adults & Housing	Number of pregnant women / families in B&B exceeding 6 week stay	1	RED	RED	Move on plans are in place with accommodation identified and arranged, however, the properties are not yet ready. We are awaiting the completion of void works in Temporary Accommodation before these moves can progress. Intensive work is ongoing with Assets to address the high number of voids across our stock, and we expect to see a significant improvement in void turnaround times over the coming weeks. Close monitoring and joint planning will continue to ensure the accommodation needs of all families approaching for assistance are identified as early as possible, enabling alternative options to be explored quickly and avoiding the use of B&B placements where more suitable options exist.

Service Area	Indicator	Data	RAG	DOT	Narrative
Children's Services	Number of Independent Special School places taken up by children and young people	550	RED	RED	Currently there are 550 children with an EHCP in an independent non-maintained setting. Whilst the number of children continues to increase, approximately a quarter of these children are attending Coombe House, which is an independent special school for which the Council is the only shareholder. This means our placement prices are 25% below the wider independent market fee - equating to a £2.7m saving. We must ensure that children are in the right setting equipped to support their individual needs. We are taking action to further understand our children's needs and are taking a 'deep dive' into our data. To support inclusion in mainstream we have a planned programme of work to create an additional 14 mainstream Specialist Resourced Provisions (SRP) in our existing schools to bring the number of settings across Dorset with SRPs to 32. When completed by January 2029 the projected Communication and Interaction (C&I) and Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) SRP capacity will be 406 places, with 234 designated for C&I needs and 172 provided for SEMH needs. The number of Physical Disability (PD) SRP places is likely to remain at or around 21. This programme will reduce the need to place children in independent special schools and will ensure more children and young people with SEND - including those with Social, Emotional and Mental Heath needs - can be educated locally.

Service Area	Indicator	Data	RAG	DOT	Narrative
Children's Services	Percentage of 16 and 17 year olds not in education, employment or training	4.1%	RED	RED	The NEET rate for December represents 325 young people, with an increase from November of 38. Chesil retains the highest NEET rate (4.7%) with the North (4.4%) now exceeding Purbeck (4.3%). 65 young people were newly identified as NEET, with the majority coming from FE colleges. This trend is a focus for the Next Steps working group which is now undertaking data analysis around vulnerable groups, localities and schools. In December? 27 young people have become EET with the majority starting employment. We are currently awaiting data on EET and NEET nationally, regionally and by our statistical neighbours, to provide a benchmark for our performance, though we know NEET rates are an issue nationally. The figures are very similar to this time last year, and whilst there is no improvement, it is positive there is no deterioration. We are working to encourage collaboration between DC teams, schools, and FE Providers targeted at those identified as most at risk – based on learning from the approaches of high performing statistical neighbours.

Service Area	Indicator	Data	RAG	DOT	Narrative
Children's Services	Percentage of Education, Health & Care Plans (EHCPs) issued within 20 weeks	35.82%	RED	GREEN	The number of EHCPs issued within 20 weeks continues to improve. In September 22.86% of plans were issued within 20 weeks and by December this had increased to 35.82%. Indicative data for January 2026 continues to suggest improvement. Next steps include completing the current consultation on a new model for some of our SEND work and to introduce AI solutions which will hopefully have a significant impact on performance, once embedded.
Children's Services	Rate of Early Help open cases at month end	178.11	RED	RED	The rate of Early Help is sitting at its lowest point in 6 months, and now sits below the target of 200, it has been marked as worsening. We acknowledge that some reduction was due to the B2SA data cleaning in September however the rate continues to fall and examination of step-ups and step-downs compared to practice two years ago shows: We are stepping up more children to Children In Need and stepping down fewer children from CIN to EH than we were two years ago. We recognise that there continues to be some challenges in step up/step downs between early help and CIN, although on a practical level for families they are still receiving family help.
Children's Services	Rate of permanent exclusions from schools (all schools) (%)	1.27%	RED	GREEN	There were 6 permanent exclusions recorded in December; 1 in Chesil, 1 in West, 2 Dorchester, 2 North. No Children In Need or Child Protection, 1 with EHCP, 1 SEN support and only 1 with CSC in last six years. 50% of these were from primary schools.

Service Area	Indicator	Data	RAG	DOT	Narrative
Public Health & Prevention	Percentage of deaths registered within 5 calendar days	79%	RED	AMBER	Since 9 September 2024 the national target has been to register deaths within five days of the receipt by Registration Services of the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death. The national target of 95% is extremely challenging for rural areas such as Dorset where most of the registration offices are part-time due to local demand and a lack of capacity to be able to increase the opening hours. Whilst customers are likely to be able to book an appointment at any office in the area within the five-day timeframe, they frequently wish to attend the office that is most convenient to them rather than travelling to a different town in order to register more quickly and will choose to wait a little longer for this reason. In Dorset we place significant emphasis on providing our customers with the best experience for registering deaths at what is often a sensitive time for them, listening to their preferences as to where they attend to do this, over seeking to maximise performance against the target. For instance, a customer living in Gillingham is unlikely to wish to travel to Weymouth in order to register a death as quickly as possible and will choose to wait a few days longer so that they can attend the Gillingham office. Performance decreased during December due to an increase in the death rate and a loss of appointment capacity arising from the Bank Holiday closures. Looking ahead, the national civil registration transformation agenda is likely to see a move away from the current in-person

Service Area	Indicator	Data	RAG	DOT	Narrative
					requirements for registration appointments that tie these to physical offices. The temporary move to conducting death registration appointments by telephone enabled during the pandemic proved that these could be undertaken much more quickly when the location and travel issue was removed in areas like Dorset. The ability to register deaths remotely will make a significant difference to performance in this respect. However the timeframe will be driven nationally, and we are unable to implement such changes locally.

Appendix 2. Summary of performance exceptions (Amber and 'worsening' RAG-rated measures) – People and Health Scrutiny Committee, Quarter 3 2025/26 (October - December 2025)

Service Area	Indicator	Data	RAG	DOT	Narrative
Children's Services	Percentage of 3 and 4 yr olds benefitting from funding EY education in Met/Good/Outstanding setting	95.35%	AMBER	RED	The EY Lead holds a monthly meeting to discuss settings performance including those we are required to statutorily support. There is a coaching circle held monthly to explore the elements and complexities of each case of 'less than good' settings or those where quality is a concern. Ofsted outcomes are monitored through the EY dashboards and settings are RAG rated. Only 1 of the Requires Improvement outcomes is for a Private setting. The others are all School-based Nurseries. There are 2 Inadequate settings identified. The day care setting outcome related to staffing recruitment processes and safeguarding children. Less than good settings receive tailored in-person support. 16% are waiting for an inspection.
Children's Services	Percentage of children in care for 12 months or more with Annual Health Assessment completed on time	85.11%	AMBER	RED	There has been a drop in performance during Q.3, bringing us below the target of 90%, below national average (90%) and below Good+ statistical neighbours. However, December's figure represents a dip compared to the stronger performance seen earlier in the quarter, with October at 90.85% and November at 87.42%. Seasonal pressures over the Christmas period are likely to have

Service Area	Indicator	Data	RAG	DOT	Narrative
					influenced December's performance, with an expectation that performance will improve as these pressures ease.
Children's Services	Percentage of children in care placed outside the council area	44.92%	AMBER	RED	Having seen this area improve slightly in the earlier part of this quarter, we have seen a slight worsening of this indicator to 44.92% at the end of Q3, which is slightly above national average of 44% and above Good + statistical neighbours 29.1%. This is slight improvement from Q2 where 201 children were living out of county in Sept 25 compared to 208 in December 25. This is an area of continued focus. We recognise that we are working in a highly challenging national context of reduced numbers of foster carers. We remain ambitious and continue to develop creative recruitment campaigns to stimulate interest in fostering. We continue to work with our foster carers to better understand the support they need to expand their fostering family to meet the needs of our children locally.
Children's Services	Percentage of Section 47 investigations completed within 10 days	82.88%	AMBER	RED	Performance at the end of Q3 stands at 82.88%, broadly unchanged from 82.76% at the end of Q2. Across the quarter, performance was strong in October and November (both 95%) before dipping in December due to workforce absence and school holiday impacts. Although December is below the 90% target, Q3 overall remained above target on average, and performance continues to stabilise following earlier locality-specific issues.

Service Area	Indicator	Data	RAG	DOT	Narrative
					This remains an area of focus for managers and is discussed weekly in the management meetings. It is expected that given the previous 2 months of 95% this will again improve in January 26.
Children's Services	Rates of children in need per 10,000 (including CP, CIC and 18+)	330.31	AMBER	RED	The rate of children in need is now equal to the national average but above good+ statistical neighbours and slightly higher than this time last year. The rate has fluctuated during the Quarter, with the lowest rate at 323.91 in October. We recognise that there continues to be some challenges in step up/ step downs between early help and CIN, although on a practical level for families they are still receiving family help. QA to support a thematic dip sample and observation of Family Help line of sight to support practice development on stepping up and stepping down between early help and child in need
Adults & Housing	The total number of contacts into adult social care each month	1653	AMBER	RED	The demand at the front door of Adult Access Team is difficult to manage as it is direct access from members of the public. The volume over the last year has risen since the same period last year . This is reflected in demand across the service in other areas and is reflected in the complexity we are seeing in the population of Dorset who have Care Act eligible needs. A key indicator is the impact this has in terms of how many people they are able to help at the point of contact.

Service Area	Indicator	Data	RAG	DOT	Narrative
					At the moment the Adult Access Teams resolves 75% of all requests for support which helps to manage the demand that comes to the complex care teams. The New Prevention and Early Intervention Team has also been supporting people in the 'front door' of Adults Service, which has further reduced the demand into the ongoing teams and increased our preventative offer for adults.
Adults & Housing	Adults - Number of outstanding assessments (Care Act)	651	AMBER	RED	We have prioritised the allocation and completion of our most overdue assessments to reduce backlogs and improve timeliness, with the impact of the Prevention and Early Intervention Team starting to show our throughput and number of completed assessments. However, we are experiencing a sustained increase in demand at the front door, which continues to drive up the volume of work to be completed. Our focus remains on our longest outstanding cases or those which present as higher priority due to risk and adjusting capacity where possible to prevent further delays.
Adults & Housing	Adults Safeguarding Activity - number of safeguarding concerns received during the month	601	AMBER	RED	During December we have seen an increase of 59 referrals into the team when compared to last month. This is also a higher referral rate when comparing to last year and is consistent with the continued demand into the service. However due to the realignment of our safeguarding model we continue to manage the waiting list positively with the average waiting list (post completion of initial risk screen) averaging between 0-10 cases.

Service Area	Indicator	Data	RAG	DOT	Narrative
					We continue to hold High Risk Transitional Safeguarding meetings on a monthly basis and in the past 14 months since they were launched have considered 32 cases. This has ensured more timely intervention and risk management approaches to those young people requiring our support as they step into adulthood. Primary referral routes into the service, do however remain unchanged with over 50% of concerns being received from the provider sector. This continues to be an area of focus for the team to ensure providers feel supported and equipped to appropriately identify and refer safeguarding concerns to the service. The team continue to work closely with partners across Dorset to support timely response and robust risk management approaches. Making Safeguarding Personal which is an approach to safeguarding adults that emphasises a person-centred and outcome focussed methodology is a consistent focus for the team and they continue to strive to ensure that all individuals are asked what their desired outcomes and to receive feedback following the person safeguarding journey to embed any learning and change required within the service.

Service Area	Indicator	Data	RAG	DOT	Narrative
Adults & Housing	Number of cases where the Council has a duty to secure permanent accommodation (applicant is eligible, in priority need, unintentionally homeless and has a local connection) and has issued a decision to accept a main housing duty.	38	AMBER	RED	In December, there were 38 accepted cases out of 52 decisions made - still showing a 73% acceptance rate which is broadly in line with the English average. Complexity of cases mean it is often taking longer for decisions to be made due to officers having to go back and investigate areas that they had not previously considered. The acceptance rate of 73% is in line with other councils of a similar size and nature. All decisions are monitored closely by senior staff.
Public Health & Prevention	Number of health checks delivered	1098	AMBER	RED	The local target for NHS Health Checks is to invite 10% of the eligible population annually, with a goal of achieving a 50% uptake. For the Dorset Council area, this equates to delivering 5,799 checks per year, or approximately 1,450 per quarter. In Quarter 3 of 2025/26, 1,098 checks were completed, falling short of the quarterly target and lower than the 1,465 delivered in the same period of the previous year. The 1098 checks were delivered as follows: Universal health checks, offered to all eligible individuals, are primarily delivered through contracts with primary care providers. The annual target for universal checks is 4,899, or 1,225 per quarter. In Quarter 3, 977 checks were delivered, 20% below target. Although primary care are

Service Area	Indicator	Data	RAG	DOT	Narrative
					exceeding the 10% invitation target, there were fewer invitations sent in Q3 than in previous quarters of this year. A smaller number of targeted health checks are delivered by LiveWell Dorset, aimed at reaching individuals at higher risk. In Quarter 2, 121 targeted checks were completed against a target of 225. Although representing a shortfall, performance has been sustained from Q1 despite recruitment and retention challenges. Additionally, LiveWell Dorset was impacted by reduced social media advertising to promote the service due to the disaggregation of Public Health Dorset which has impacted its website. Seasonality also affects uptake of the LiveWell service.