People & Health Scrutiny Committee

20 July 2026

2025/26 Quarter 4 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:
S Ford, Assistant Chief Executive, Chief Executive's Office

Report author and job title: Chris Heighway, Strategic Performance, Intelligence & Risk Lead
Email: chris.heighway@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority: N/A

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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 4 of 2025/26 (January – March 2026). It builds on the Quarter 3 2025/26 performance report (presented to the Committee on 16 April 2026).

1.2 Across Adult's Social Care & Housing, Communities and Prevention and Children's Services, Quarter 4 performance remained broadly positive. Across the 81 indicators, 40 were rated Green, reflecting current performance against target, and 59 showed stable or improving trends, reflecting direction of travel over time. As these measures assess different aspects of performance, indicators may be counted in both categories and totals are not directly cumulative.

1.3 The report and appendices presents red-rated performance indicators, alongside amber indicators showing a worsening trend, with narrative context and improvement actions. The committee's key area of focus this quarter relates to temporary accommodation and void management, emerging from discussion of red performance indicators at committee on 16 April 2026.

1.4 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 4 (January–March 2026) performance overview, available via the Scrutiny dashboard, with an accompanying exceptions extract provided in Appendices 1 and 2.

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 discussions and focus, 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 4 (January–March 2026) 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 Q4 remained broadly positive, with 40 of 81 indicators rated Green and 59 of 81 indicators showing either static or improving trends, demonstrating continued progress despite demand and financial pressures.

4.3 RAG status and trend measure different aspects of performance: indicators showing stable or improving trends include a mix of Green, Amber and Red indicators, as trend reflects direction of travel over time rather than whether current performance is meeting target.

4.4 Adult's services are showing a broadly positive operational picture, with 1,401 older people (65+) supported to remain living independently at home through preventative approaches and technology, and permanent admissions to residential and nursing care for older people now back within the monthly target.

4.5 Children's services performance is stable, with average social worker caseloads at 12.85 against a target of 16.6. Care leavers' outcomes are notably strong and consistently above the 60% target, with 69% of 19–21 year-olds and 72.15% of 22–25 year-olds in education, employment or training, meeting the Council Plan target measure to be the best corporate parent that we can for our children.

4.6 Housing, Communities and Prevention indicators show generally good outcomes, with 67% of Year 6 children at a healthy weight compared with a 62% England average and adult physical activity levels close to the national average (62.4% vs 63.7%).

4.7 Housing operational performance remains strong despite a significantly challenging operating environment. The service has seen increased demand, driven in part by a rise in Section 21 notices ahead of the implementation of the Renters' Rights Act. In response, caseworkers are working proactively to mediate and negotiate with landlords in a difficult housing market. This is reflected in the continued high number of homelessness prevention cases achieving positive outcomes, demonstrating resilience and effectiveness across the quarter.

4.8 The areas of focus for today's committee arose from previous scrutiny of the Council's temporary accommodation performance indicators. During that review, Members noted that 51 single-person households were being accommodated in bed and breakfast (B&B) accommodation, alongside one family that had remained in B&B accommodation for longer than the statutory six-week limit. In response, the Committee requested further information on the Council's approach to temporary accommodation provision and void property management. A separate report addressing these matters has been prepared by Julian Wain, Strategic Property Advisor, and is included later on the agenda for the Committee's consideration.

4.9 Quarterly performance reporting provides a comprehensive overview of progress against delivery of the Council Plan. Quarter 4 represents the first full year of reporting against Council Plan delivery, offering a year-end view of performance across all priorities. The overall position is available within the Council Plan performance dashboard.

4.10 Within the priority "Provide high quality and affordable housing", two target measures are assessed as off track at year-end (red RAG). These are:

- Bring forward new housing supply of 100 new accessible homes and 90 larger family homes at affordable rents per year
- Deliver 450 new affordable homes every year through the housing association development programme

4.11 These are set out at the top of Appendix 1, alongside detailed narrative outlining the corrective actions in place.

Quarter 4 Exceptions Extract 2025/26

4.12 The Quarter 4 (January–March 2026) performance overview is available via the Scrutiny Dashboard, with supporting exceptions extracts provided in **Appendices 1 and 2**.

- Appendix 1 provides red-rated indicators and council plan measures 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 4 Risk Update

4.13 The performance dashboard incorporates strategic risks to acknowledge their critical role in 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.

4.14 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.

4.15 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".*

4.16 This risk is scheduled for consideration at the Audit and Governance Committee on 29 June. A verbal update will be provided to this Committee, highlighting those aspects of the discussion most relevant to its scrutiny role, while maintaining a clear and appropriate distinction between the respective responsibilities of the two committees.

Quarter 1 Performance Report

4.17 The next performance report, presenting Quarter 1 data 2026/2027 (April-June 2026), will be brought to the Committee on 5 October 2026.

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 4 2025/26 (January–March 2026)

13.2 **Appendix 2**: Summary of performance exceptions (Amber and 'worsening' RAG-rated measures) – People and Health Scrutiny Committee, Quarter 4 2025/26 (January–March 2026)

14. Background papers

- Dorset Council's Strategic Performance Reporting Framework
- People and Health Scrutiny Committee, 16/04/2026 – 2025/26 Quarter 3 Performance
- People and Health Scrutiny Committee, 21/01/2026 – 2025/26 Quarter 2 Performance
- People and Health Scrutiny Committee, 17/11/2025 – 2025/26 Quarter 1 Performance
- People and Health Scrutiny Committee, 30/07/2025 – 2024/25 Quarter 4 Performance

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 Assurance and Governance (Monitoring Officer), the Director for Resources (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s).

Appendices

Appendix 1. Summary of performance exceptions and Council Plan measures (red RAG-rated measures) – People and Health Scrutiny Committee, Quarter 4 2025/26 (January–March 2026)

Service Area	Indicator	Data	Target	RAG	DOT	Narrative
Provide high quality and affordable housing	**Council Plan Target Measure:** Bring forward new housing supply of 100 new accessible homes and 90 larger family homes at affordable rents per year	0	190	Red		The Council's ability to achieve this target will be dependent on the identification of council owned assets which can go to market for housing development. A joint report is currently being produced on the feasibility of a Strategic Development Framework which would give the council complete control over site development and mix of units. The framework requires a sufficient supply of sites. Alternative options will need to be agreed with the Assets & Property Services if supply is insufficient and appropriate recommendations agreed. The recommendation to Cabinet on the Large Scale Lease model and Homes Dorset is still progressing and is expected in 2026 but recognises there is additional expertise and resource required to achieve this.
Provide high quality and affordable housing	**Council Plan Target Measure:** Deliver 450 new affordable homes every year through the housing association development programme	423	450	Red		The annual total delivered is 423. This is made up of 179 homes at affordable rent, 28 homes at social rent, 169 shared ownership homes and 9 under the first homes scheme. Completions have been affected by weather delays when key sites in Bridport, Marnhull and Crossways were significantly impacted in January and February 2026. Several sites expected to complete in Q4 are now due to complete in Q1 26/27. Despite challenges the pipeline for 26/27 is relatively strong with 596 homes in the pipeline although this is open to change and impacts including weather. Homes England Social and

Service Area	Indicator	Data	Target	RAG	DOT	Narrative
						Affordable Homes Programme is expected to increase registered provider delivery capacity in the medium to longer term and all main registered providers working in Dorset express continued commitment to Dorset. There has been an increase in all affordable schemes.
Education & Learning	Rate of permanent exclusions from schools (all schools)	0.84%	0.00%	Red	Worsening	In Quarter 4, permanent exclusions primarily related to a small number of schools and individual cases, with exclusions recorded across both primary and secondary age groups. The January figure (1.06%) reflects the highest monthly rate within the quarter. Action continues through the inclusion and early-intervention agenda, with a focus on supporting schools to manage behaviour earlier, reducing escalation to permanent exclusion, and maintaining oversight of exclusion patterns through regular multi-agency review. Ongoing work includes strengthening the use of inclusion pathways and ensuring consistent data oversight to support timely intervention where exclusion risk is identified.
Education & Learning	Number of independent special school places taken up by children and young people	562	355	Red	Improving	During Quarter 4, the number of children and young people with an EHCP attending independent or non-maintained specialist schools remained broadly stable. There were 565 children in January, 567 in February, and 562 in March, meaning the quarter ended with a similar number to where it began. Looking across the year, the Quarter 4 figure of 562 is slightly higher than earlier quarters but remains in line with recent patterns and is lower than the position at the same time last year (567). Despite continued growth in the overall number of children and young people with EHCPs, the proportion placed in independent and non-maintained settings has stayed fairly consistent, with around 11–12% of the EHCP cohort educated in these settings. This reflects ongoing work to ensure that independent

Service Area	Indicator	Data	Target	RAG	DOT	Narrative
						placements are used appropriately and proportionately, based on children's individual needs, while maximising opportunities for children to be supported in local maintained and mainstream provision where this meets their needs. The council continues to focus on strengthening local provision, including developing inclusion hubs and increasing capacity in maintained and mainstream schools. This work reflects the direction of travel outlined in the white paper, 'Every child achieving and thriving' and is aimed at helping more children and young people have their needs met closer to home, while ensuring that specialist independent placements remain available for those who need them most.
Commissioning & Partnerships	Percentage of 16 and 17 year olds not in education, employment or training	4.20%	3.00%	Red	Improving	Quarter 4 remain broadly stable. While levels were steady in January and February, March saw fewer young people identified as NEET, reflecting successful re-engagement into education, training and work. Dorset continues to perform well compared with other areas. When considering both young people who are NEET and those whose circumstances are not yet known, Dorset's combined position remains better than national levels, the South West average and statistical neighbour authorities. Overall, Quarter 4 provides reassurance that Dorset knows its young people well and is supporting many back into positive destinations. Work continues with colleges, employers and partners to strengthen transitions and help more young people stay engaged at key points of change.

Service Area	Indicator	Data	Target	RAG	DOT	Narrative
Commissioning & Partnerships	Rate of early help open cases at month end	171.86	200.00	Red	Improving	Across Quarter 4, the rate of children open to Targeted Early Help (TEH) showed a modest but positive upward trend, increasing from 166.20 in January to 170.96 in February and 171.86 by the end of the quarter. While performance remains below the local target of 200, the direction of travel has improved. This suggests improving access to Early Help support and early signs of rebalancing within the system. The annual picture indicates that Early Help demand has remained strong, as detailed we are starting to see a slight increase, the trajectory going back up. CIN numbers are slowly reducing which is positive and Targeted Early Help rising alongside which is the picture we want to see. The Family Support and Advice Line monitor the decisions made by them in relation to Early Support required by families, this number is good and continues to grow, indicating we are offering early support to many families and supporting them at the earliest opportunity.
Regulatory Services	Percentage of deaths registered within 5 calendar days	86%	95%	Red	Improving	Councils with large geographies often suffer with this indicator as registration offices are more difficult to access. Performance improved slightly during March, despite the higher seasonal death rate, due to an increased emphasis being placed on making customers aware of the target when booking appointments and dynamic diary management to prioritise death registration appointment capacity. Looking ahead, the national civil registration transformation project will see a move away from the current in-person requirements for registration with a move to telephone and on-line services. This will resolve this issue.

Appendix 2. Summary of performance exceptions (Amber and 'worsening' RAG-rated measures) – People and Health Scrutiny Committee, Quarter 4 2025/26 (January–March 2026)

Service Area	Indicator	Data	Target	RAG	DOT	Narrative
Adult Social Care	Adults - Number of overdue 12 month reviews (Care Act)	1370		Amber	Worsening	Activity remains high with 4,872 reviews completed; however, demand continues to increase and is increasingly driven by deterioration in individuals living in the community. This has required resources to be realigned to manage immediate risk and unplanned activity. As a result, although a significant number of reviews are being completed, these are not always the most overdue, contributing to a worsening position within the wider overdue review cohort. This pressure is compounded by lower-than-expected volumes of provider-led reviews, which is limiting overall system capacity. Engagement with providers will be strengthened to address this and improve performance. Plans include maintaining a risk-led approach to allocating reviews, ensuring resources continue to prioritise individuals experiencing deterioration or safeguarding concerns. Strengthening oversight and engagement with providers to improve the timeliness and volume of provider-led reviews and relieve pressure on council-led capacity remains a priority.
Adult Social Care	Adults - Number of outstanding assessments (Care Act)	879		Amber	Worsening	The overall position on overdue assessments continues to deteriorate as sustained growth in demand and increasing case complexity within locality services outstrip available capacity. While system improvements are evident, with Adult Access Team resolving 67% of cases and PEI reducing the volume progressing to localities by 31% since October, these have not been sufficient to offset rising pressure. Despite strong productivity, with 3,263 assessments completed last

Service Area	Indicator	Data	Target	RAG	DOT	Narrative
						year, increasing demand from known adults with escalating needs has required resources to be diverted to unplanned reviews and risk management. Localised staffing challenges have further constrained capacity, contributing to continued growth in the wider cohort of overdue assessments.
Adult Social Care	Adult Safeguarding Feedback - individuals that felt listened to during the safeguarding intervention (%)	98%	100%	Amber	Worsening	This figure has remained consistently high throughout the year which is positive but we continue to strive to be 100% in this area.
Housing	Number of rough sleepers on a single night this month	16		Amber	Worsening	Although there has been a significant increase in the single night figure, the monthly figure (number of people met sleeping rough over the course of a month) is only 1 higher, at 24. A higher single night figure compared to the monthly figure often reflects the timing of contacts rather than underlying trends.
Care & Protection	Rates of children in care per 10,000 (as at the end of the month)	70.74	68.00	Amber	Worsening	The number of children in care in Dorset remained largely stable, with 472 children in January and February, increasing slightly to 475 in March. The rate of children in care at month-end was 70.74 slightly above the local target of 68, reflecting continued pressure on the system. Compared with Q4 last year (65.89), the rate has increased, indicating higher demand over time. We continue to review each child's circumstances through regular children in care reviews and permanency planning meetings to consider whether it is safe and appropriate for them to return home. Where a return home may be possible, we identify the support needed to make this sustainable, ensuring that children are cared for outside their family only when necessary and for no longer than needed. We are also using

Service Area	Indicator	Data	Target	RAG	DOT	Narrative
						valuing care to identify further opportunities for children to exit care under special guardianship orders.
Care & Protection	Percentage of children in care in foster placement	70.53%	71.00%	Amber	Worsening	Across Quarter 4, the percentage of children in care living in foster homes has remained broadly stable, sitting at 70.53% by the end of the quarter. While the Q4 position is just below the local target of 71%, it remains comfortably above both the national average (55.71%) and Good and Outstanding statistical neighbours (67%), providing reassurance about Dorset's relative performance.
Care & Protection	Rate of children with a child protection plan per 10,000 (open at the end of the month)	43.78	41.40	Amber	Worsening	We have seen a gradual increase in the rate of children subject to Child Protection Plans this quarter, rising from 40.21 in January to 43.04 in February and 43.78 by the end of the quarter. While this places us above our local target, the rate remains within the agreed tolerance and reflects appropriate safeguarding responses rather than a concern about practice. We continue to maintain strong oversight of all children subject to Child Protection Plans. Each case is monitored through the Quality Assurance service, with themes and trends regularly reported to and discussed at the multi-agency child protection operational board. Overall, while CPP rates have increased during Quarter 4, this reflects appropriate and proportionate safeguarding activity.

Service Area	Indicator	Data	Target	RAG	DOT	Narrative
Care & Protection	Percentage of children with a new child protection plan who have been on a child protection plan within the last two years (rolling 12 months)	11.86%	10.00%	Amber	Worsening	The percentage of children becoming subject to a repeat Child Protection Plan within two years has remained stable, at 11.86. While this remains slightly above the local target of 10%, it represents an improvement compared with earlier in the year and is lower than at the same point last year (13.43%), which is reassuring. Looking across the year, repeat CPP rates have shown fluctuation rather than a clear upward trend, with levels peaking in Q2 (16.22%) before reducing in Q3 (11.93%) and stabilising in Q4. This pattern suggests that actions taken earlier in the year are beginning to have an impact, and that repeat planning is not increasing unchecked. All repeat Child Protection Plans continue to be actively reviewed and monitored by the Quality Assurance service, with cases escalated to Service Managers where additional scrutiny or challenge is required. A follow-up assurance audit is planned within the next 6 months to test whether learning has been consistently implemented.
Care & Protection	Percentage of children in care for 12 months or more with Annual Health Assessment completed on time	83.74%	90.00%	Amber	Worsening	Timeliness of health assessments declined gradually month-on-month, from 87.54% in January to 83.74% in March. Most delays were linked to out-of-area placements, appointment availability, or changes in placement. We continue to work closely with health partners, actively follow up delayed appointments, prioritise under-5s, and ensure that missed or rescheduled assessments are rebooked promptly with management oversight.

Service Area	Indicator	Data	Target	RAG	DOT	Narrative
Care & Protection	Percentage of Section 47 investigations completed within 10 days	83.95%	90.00%	Amber	Worsening	Across the quarter, completion of Section 47 enquiries remained consistently high, reflecting continued timely child protection action. February demonstrated particularly strong performance at 97% completed within 10 days. End of Q4 performance was 83.95%, which although lower than 90% target represents the strongest performance achieved this year and continues a consistent upward trajectory across all quarters, improving from Q1 (82.47) through to Q4. This sustained quarter-on-quarter improvement reflects effective stabilisation and gradual strengthening of performance, with Q4 showing the most notable uplift.
Commissioning & Partnerships	Percentage of 3 and 4 yr olds benefitting from funding EY education in Met/Good/Outstanding setting	95.90%	100.00%	Amber	Worsening	The Early Years 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 and settings are RAG rated. Less than good settings receive tailored in-person support. 16% are waiting for an inspection.
Education & Learning	Number of special educational needs (SEND) tribunals against the authority	10	5	Amber	Worsening	SEND tribunal appeals against the local authority varied month to month. There were 14 appeals in January, reducing to 9 in February, before increasing to 10 appeals in March. A proportion of SEND tribunal appeals are resolved without progressing to a final hearing, either through further consideration by the local authority or where appeals are withdrawn by families.

Service Area	Indicator	Data	Target	RAG	DOT	Narrative
						Learning from tribunal cases continues to inform practice, with ongoing work to strengthen decision-making, improve communication with families and resolve concerns at an earlier stage. Supporting early resolution and reducing escalation to formal tribunal routes remain key priorities moving forward.
Education & Learning	Average (%) school attendance (attendance feed)	92.30%	95.00%	Amber	Worsening	Average school attendance remained stable, with rates of 92.6% in January, 92.8% in February, and 92.3% in March. Attendance levels were broadly consistent across the quarter and remained above the red threshold, though below the target of 95%. Looking across the year, the Quarter 4 position of 92.3% is broadly in line with Q3 (92.9%) and above Q1 (92.5%), indicating that attendance has been maintained over time without deterioration. Attendance in Quarter 4 is also consistent with Quarter 4 last year (92.8%), demonstrating stability despite wider pressures affecting attendance nationally. Work continues with schools to support consistent attendance and to build on this stable position through early engagement and targeted support where attendance concerns are identified.