Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd

23 November 2026

Commissioners' Update

For Review and Consultation

Cabinet Member:
Cllr S Robinson, Adult Social Care & Health

Local Councillor(s):
All

Senior Leadership Team:
J Ingram - Director, Adult Social Care

Report author and job title:
Karen Stephens – Head of Service for Commissioning for Working Age Adults
Sarah Sewell – Head of Service for Commissioning for Older People

Email: karen.stephens@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk / sarah.sewell@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority: Dorset Council

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

1. **Executive summary (maximum of 500 words)**

1.1 This report provides an update on developments led by the Council that are relevant to Care Dorset, summarising key progress made since the last Shareholder Committee meeting in September 2026.

2. **Recommendation(s)**

2.1 The Committee is asked to note the contents of this report and the progress outlined.

3. **Reason for the recommendation(s)**

3.1 Care Dorset plays a key role in delivering the Council's 'Commissioning for a Better Life' strategies and in improving the quality and long-term sustainability of care and support for adults in Dorset.

4. The report

4.1 This report provides an update on key areas of work affecting Care Dorset. It reflects progress since September across day services, supported living,

reablement, care homes, and system transformation, alongside key financial and delivery considerations.

4.2 This work is aligned with Dorset Council's priorities, particularly supporting "Communities for All" by promoting independence, strengthening community-based provision, and ensuring people can access the right care and support at the right time. Care Dorset continues to play a key role within the Council's wider transformation of community health and care services, supporting more integrated and sustainable models of delivery.

4.3 During the reporting period, work has continued on the planned refresh of the core contract governing services delivered by Care Dorset under the Local Authority Trading Company arrangement. Commissioners and Care Dorset have maintained positive engagement to progress revisions across Day Services, Supported Living, Care Homes and Reablement. The refreshed contract is intended to strengthen governance arrangements and provide a more flexible framework that supports both current service delivery and future service development.

Day Services

4.4 Following Cabinet approval in March 2026 of the Council's new model for day opportunities, work has progressed into the implementation phase. The agreed approach establishes a more flexible and sustainable model of delivery, with a stronger emphasis on promoting independence, maximising the use of community assets, and ensuring long-term financial viability. In doing so, it supports the Council's ambition to build stronger, more inclusive communities developing local resources.

4.5 Work is underway to rebase the Care Dorset Day Services contract across the 13 centres, reflecting the transition to deliver the agreed future model for day opportunities. This may include some changes to staff structures; the Council is working closely with Care Dorset to understand the impact and any potential cost of change and how that will be funded.

4.6 Progress to date includes the development of a new service specification and detailed analysis of the cost base for each centre to ensure alignment with the revised model and overall affordability. Further work is progressing to determine the appropriate balance between block and spot purchasing arrangements.

4.7 Early modelling of current costs, projected future demand will develop a savings profile across all 13 centres, once established and agreed this will be reported back to Shareholder Committee.

4.8 A review of lease and occupancy arrangements across the estate is ongoing to ensure assets are used effectively and support the delivery model. There is also a continued focus on linking day services more strongly with community-

based provision and prevention initiatives and ensuring we consolidate the use of our assets.

4.9 In addition to the above Property and Assets are mid process in completing condition surveys of all day centres, we expect reporting December 2026.

Supported Living

4.10 A second transitions property in Weymouth has now opened. This will provide a shared three-bedroom supported living property, with a focus on skill development and move on. As our numbers of young people reaching adulthood continues to increase officers are actively working with our strategic housing partner to identify further transition properties in Dorset.

Reablement Centre

4.11 Detailed design work is complete, and the preferred construction partner has submitted their cost plan and construction activity schedule, in accordance with the two-stage tender process, which has been independently validated and evaluated. Construction costs have increased, driven by global events leading to high fuel and building materials prices. There are also infrastructure dependencies associated with the development which require further work before the Council can confirm the delivery programme. Further analysis of the options available to the Council is underway.

4.12 Further analysis of the options available to the Council is underway, but this additional work will inevitably delay a Cabinet decision.

4.13 In parallel, work is continuing with Care Dorset to develop the operational model for the future service, including ongoing discussions regarding the proposed operating arrangements, lease structure and occupancy model. This will ensure that the future service is both operationally effective and financially sustainable once delivered.

Community Reablement

4.14 Reablement performance remains in line with expectations, with several indicators exceeding target. Contact time has reached its highest recorded level, supporting improved outcomes, while the introduction of the Care Coordinator role is contributing to enhanced effectiveness and oversight. Performance will continue to be monitored to ensure these improvements are sustained.

4.15 Commissioners and Care Dorset have established a clear understanding of workforce capacity across the reablement service and continue to work collaboratively to address remaining staffing challenges. Staffing levels have improved during the reporting period, although some variability remains. Care

Dorset's focused recruitment and workforce planning activity is continuing to support progress towards full delivery of contractual capacity by 31 March 2027.

Care Homes

4.16 Work continues in partnership to explore opportunities for service development. This includes consideration of how care home provision could expand to support individuals with higher acuity needs, including those with complex mental health and dementia diagnoses who are ready for discharge from acute settings, informed by demand data being provided by commissioners.

4.17 During October, Care Dorset supported an initial cohort of individuals with more complex needs to enable timely hospital discharge. This demonstrates the potential to further develop existing services in response to local need and highlights Care Dorset's contribution to wider health and social care priorities. Outcomes will be monitored to inform future service development within the Short-Term Intermediate Care pathway.

5. Legal considerations

5.1 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.

6. Financial implications

6.1 This report does not seek any formal decisions at this stage and does not introduce new financial commitments. However, the Council continues to face sustained pressures within the adult social care budget. In this context, Care Dorset has an important role in supporting the Council to manage these financial challenges by delivering efficient, high-quality services and contributing to value for money. Robust commissioning decisions in relation to Care Dorset will therefore be essential to ensure financial sustainability.

7. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

7.1 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

8. Well-being and health implications

8.1 The services described, and their journey of continuous improvement, are key contributors to maintaining and improving the health and wellbeing of people who draw on support, supporting independence, reducing risk, and contributing to better long-term outcomes.

9. Other Implications

9.1 No other implications identified.

9.2 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.

12. Appendices

12.1 None

13. Background Papers

13.1 None