

Better Care Fund Plan 2025-2026

Report being considered by: Health and Wellbeing Board

On: 24 September 2025

Report Author: Maria Shepherd, BCF Lead

Report Sponsor: Cllr Heather Codling

Item for: Decision



1. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to gain formal sign-off for West Berkshire's Better Care Fund Plan 2025-2026. The plan consists of a narrative plan and planning template.

2. Recommendation(s)

To endorse the Better Care Fund Plan for 2025-2026

3. Implications

| Implication | Commentary |
|-------------------------|---|
| Financial: | The 2025-26 plan received sign-off from S151 Officer. |
| Human Resource: | n/a |
| Legal: | Better Care Fund (BCF) funding is pooled through a Section 75 agreement under the NHS Act 2006, which allows local authorities and NHS bodies to combine resources and deliver integrated services. This legal framework ensures joint accountability, shared decision-making, and coordinated use of health and social care budgets. |
| Risk Management: | NHS England's Better Care Fund planning requirements explicitly reference the need for robust risk-sharing and governance arrangements; these are articulated in the S75 agreement under the NHS Act 2006. |
| Property: | n/a |
| Policy: | The Better Care Fund Policy Framework supports integrated health and social care, helping people live independently at home for longer. The 2025-26 framework focuses on prevention, faster hospital discharge and more personalised, community-based care through joint planning and funding. |

| | Positive | Neutral | Negative | Commentary |
|--|----------|---------|----------|--|
| Equalities Impact: | | | | |
| A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality? | X | | | The Better Care Fund helps reduce health inequalities by providing more consistent, coordinated, and accessible care—especially for older people, those with complex needs, and underserved communities. The focus on early intervention, personalised support, and care close to home helps address the social determinants of health and reduce the disproportionate burden of illness among disadvantaged groups. |
| B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users? | | X | | n/a |
| Environmental Impact: | | X | | n/a |
| Health Impact: | X | | | Addressing these is a key part of the Policy intent. Equality and health inequality duties are built into how BCF plans must be developed and implemented. |
| ICT Impact: | | X | | n/a |
| Digital Services Impact: | | X | | n/a |
| Council Strategy Priorities: | | X | | Business as usual |
| Core Business: | | X | | Business as usual |
| Data Impact: | | X | | n/a |

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| <p>Consultation and Engagement:</p> | <p>Heather Codling, Health and Wellbeing Board Chair, Nick Broughton, ICB Chief Executive, Joseph Holmes, LA Chief Executive, Paul Coe, LA Director of Adult Social Care, Shannon Coleman-Slaughter, LA Section 151 Officer, Clare Lawrence, DFG Lead, Helen Clark, ICB Place Director, Berkshire West Urgent Emergency Care Board, Primary Care Networks, Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust, Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust, South Central Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust, Representatives from Voluntary Sector, West Berkshire Healthwatch, Community Pharmacy and Locality Integration Board.</p> |
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4. Executive Summary

- 4.1 The Better Care Fund Policy Framework for 2025-2026 provides continuity from the previous rounds of the programme and is a one-year plan.
 - 4.2 The Policy Framework was published on 30th January 2025.
 - 4.3 The Policy Framework sets out four national conditions:
 1. A jointly agreed plan between local health and social care commissioners and signed off by the Health and Wellbeing Board.
 2. Maintaining the NHS's contribution to ASC and investment in NHS commissioned out of hospital services
 3. Implementing the **two** BCF objectives of: Providing the right care, at the right place, at the right time and Enabling people to stay well, safe and independent at home for longer
 - 4.4 The Policy Framework also sets out four national metrics:
 1. Avoidable admissions - indirectly standardised rate of admissions per 100,000 population
 2. Falls – Emergency hospital admissions due to falls in people aged 65 and over directly age standardised rate per 100,000. (This metric is new for 2023-25)
 3. Discharge to usual place of residence – percentage of people, resident in HWB, who are discharged from acute hospital to their normal place of resident.
 4. Residential Admissions – long-term support needs of older people (age 65 and over) met by admission to residential and nursing care homes, per 100,000 population.
 - 4.5 The BCF planning requirements for 2025-26 required a narrative plan and a planning template to be submitted to NHS England. The planning template details the schemes funded by the BCF, targets for the four metrics, expected monthly demand and capacity for hospital discharge by pathway and expected monthly demand and capacity for intermediate care services from community resources.
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- 4.6 West Berkshire's BCF Plan was submitted from the Health and Wellbeing Board on 20th March 2025 and delegated Authority was granted by the Chair for this to happen prior to formal sign-off from the Board.
- 4.7 NHS England confirmed their approval of the Plan on 30th May.

5. Supporting Information

The formal governance for the Better Care Fund plan sits within the Locality Integration Board, a sub-group of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

6. Options Considered

None.

7. Proposal(s)

n/a

8. Conclusion(s)

One of the conditions set out within the Policy Framework is to have a jointly agreed plan between local health and social care commissioners that is signed off by the Health and Wellbeing Board.

9. Appendices

Appendix A – BCF Narrative Plan

Appendix B – BCF Planning Template

Background Papers:

None

Health and Wellbeing Priorities Supported:

The proposals will support the following Health and Wellbeing Strategy priorities:

- ☐ Reduce the differences in health between different groups of people
- ☒ Support individuals at high risk of bad health outcomes to live healthy lives
- ☐ Help families and young children in early years
- ☐ Promote good mental health and wellbeing for all children and young people
- ☒ Promote good mental health and wellbeing for all adults

The proposals contained in this report will support the above Health and Wellbeing Strategy priorities by driving health and social care integration, using pooled budgets.
