Better Care Fund 2026-27 Plan

Report being considered by:	Health and Wellbeing Board
On:	24th September 2026
Report Sponsor:	Paul Coe, Executive Director
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1. Purpose and Executive Summary

1.1 This report seeks endorsement from the Health and Wellbeing Board for West Berkshire's Better Care Fund (BCF) Plan for 2026-27, comprising the narrative plan and numerical template submitted to NHS England.

1.2 The 2026-27 BCF framework continues to support integrated, preventative health and social care, with a focus on enabling people with complex needs to remain independent for longer, improving discharge from hospital, strengthening reablement outcomes, and reducing avoidable admissions and long-term residential and nursing care placements.

1.3 The Plan has been developed jointly with Thames Valley Integrated Care Board and local partners and has been considered through the Locality Integration Board as a sub-group of the Health and Wellbeing Board. It reflects the national requirements for a jointly agreed plan, compliance with grant and funding conditions, pooled funding through a Section 75 agreement under the NHS Act 2006, and appropriate governance and reporting arrangements.

1.4 The Plan received Section 151 Officer sign-off prior to submission to NHS England on 19th May 2026. NHS England approval is expected following the joint NHS and local government assurance process, with outcome letters anticipated in July or August 2026. Section 75 agreements are required to be in place by 30th September 2026.

1.5 Endorsement of the Plan will confirm the Board's support for the proposed use of BCF funding in 2026-27 and the continued partnership approach to delivering more coordinated, accessible and preventative care for residents, particularly older people, people with complex needs, and communities experiencing health inequalities.

2. Recommendation

2.1 To endorse the Better Care Fund Plan for 2026-27.

Implications

Financial

The 2026-27 plan received sign-off from S151 officer prior to its submission to NHS England on 19th May 2026.
Human resources
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.
Council Strategy
Other Implications
Policy - The Better Care Fund Policy Framework supports integrated health and social are, helping people live independently at home for longer. The 2026-27 framework focuses on prevention, faster hospital discharge and more personalised, community-based care through joint planning and funding
Equalities Impacts: Choose an item.
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.
Data Impacts: Choose an item.
n/a
Environmental Impacts: Choose an item.
n/a
Health Impacts: Choose an item.

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

Consultation and Engagement:	This was a jointly agreed plan between the HWB and Thames Valley ICB. The Plan was agreed with partners through the Locality Integration Board, sub-group of HWB.

3. Background

3.1 Better Care Fund Policy Framework for 2026-27 provides continuity from the previous rounds of the programme and is a one-year plan.

3.2 Improving flow to support Hospital Discharge remains a key priority. Delivery will be driven by a focused programme to enhance pathway 3 performance.

3.3 The Policy Framework was published on 18th February 2026

3.4 The Policy Framework sets out three national conditions:

1. ICB's and Local Authorities must develop a joint plan, agreed by HWB outlining how ICB's and local authorities intend to use BCF funding to deliver more integrated and preventative care, linked to relevant areas of neighbourhood health and social care services,

2. ICB's and Local Authorities must comply with all national grant and funding conditions and deliver in accordance with their approved return. ICB's must maintain the NHS minimum contribution to adult social care and pool NHS BCF contributions into a section 75 (of the NHS Act 2006) pooled fund.

3. ICB's and Local Authorities must comply and engage with BCF planning, governance and reporting requirements including adherence to any assurance and oversight processes.

3.5 The Policy Framework also sets out three national metrics:

1. Non-elective admissions to hospital for people aged 65 and over per 100,000 population

2. Discharge Delays – average length of discharge delay for all acute adult patients (this calculates the % of patients discharged after their DRD multiplied by the average number of days)

3. Admissions to residential and nursing homes – long term admissions to residential and nursing care homes for people aged 65 and over per 100,000 population.

3.6 The BCF planning requirements for 2026-27 required a narrative plan and a numerical template to be submitted to NHS England on 19th May 2026.

3.7 The numerical template details income, expenditure by scheme type and metrics.

3.8 BCF Plans will be approved by NHS England following a joint NHS and Local Government assurance process at regional level and outcome letters will be sent to ICB's, Local Authorities and HWB's in July/August 2026.

3.9 West Berkshire's plan has been approved with conditions.

3.10 S75 Agreements must be in place by 30th September 2026.

4. Appendices

Appendix A – BCF 2026-27 narrative plan

Appendix B – BCF 2026-27 numerical template

Background Information

BCF 2026-27 Framework

Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy Priorities Supported

The proposals will support the following 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 helping 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

Governance Pathway

Committee/Body	**Date**
Corporate Board	1**2/8/26**
Executive Briefing	3**/9/26**
Health and Wellbeing Board	2**4/9/26**
Choose an item.	

Choose an item.	
Other: (please state)	