

**REPORT TO:** Health & Wellbeing Board

**DATE:** 9<sup>th</sup> July 2025

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Executive Director of Adult Services,

**PORTFOLIO:** Adult Social Care

**SUBJECT:** Better Care Fund (BCF) Plan 2025-26

**WARD(S):** Borough-wide

## 1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To update the Health and Wellbeing Board on the BCF Plan 2025-26, for information, following its submission on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025.

## 2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Board: -

- 1) Note the contents of the report and associated appendices.

## 3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The Government published the BCF Policy framework for 2025-26 at the end of January 2025, along with the associated planning requirements.

The framework and planning requirements set out the vision, funding, oversight and support arrangements, focused on 2 overarching objectives for the BCF in 2025-26, as follows:-

- Reform to support the shift from sickness to prevention; and
- Reform to support people living independently and the shift from hospital to home

3.2 The BCF Plan for 2025-26 consists of 3 documents, as follows: -

- Narrative Plan;
- Planning Template; and
- Capacity & Demand Template 2025-26

3.3 In terms of the planning template and the BCF schemes listed in it (**Appendix 2**), much of the 2025-26 plan remains a continuation of the successful approach undertaken in 2024-25, with some changes made in respect to how the schemes are funded based on national changes to the funding streams that are available.

3.4 Unlike last year, a full narrative plan was required to be submitted, in addition to a local capacity and demand plan; these are attached at **Appendix 1 & 3** respectively.

3.5 Following submission of the plan, all BCF Plans are scrutinised by regional assurers. At the time of writing this report, Halton's plan is currently going through this scrutiny

process. National guidance issued suggests that the process will run to the end of May, however at the time of writing this report we are still awaiting the outcome of the process. Once formal approval letters are issued, this will then allow for the release of the NHS minimum contribution amount, as per our plan.

- 3.6 In line with the governance arrangements outlined in the Joint Working Agreement between Halton Borough Council and NHS Cheshire & Merseyside (Halton Place), prior to its submission, the BCF Plan, including the expenditure plan, was presented and discussed at both the Better Care Commissioning Advisory Group and the Joint Senior Leadership Group.

The Board should note that to support the BCF Plan 2025-26, the Joint Working Agreement was reviewed and updated as necessary to reflect changes in governance and processes. The new Joint Working Agreement runs for two years up to the end of March 2027 and has been approved by both partners.

#### 4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 None identified.

#### 5.0 **OTHER/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The Better Care Fund sits within the wider pooled budget arrangement and the financial context of the local health and social care environment. The pooling of resources and integrating processes and approach to the management of people with health and social care needs will support effective resource utilisation.

#### 6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

##### 6.1 **Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence**

Developing integration further between Halton Borough Council and the NHS Cheshire and Merseyside (Halton Place) will have a direct impact on improving the health of people living in Halton. The plan that is developed is linked to the priorities identified for the borough by the Health and Wellbeing Board.

##### 6.2 **Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy**

None identified.

##### 6.3 **Supporting Children, Young People and Families**

None identified.

##### 6.4 **Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need**

Linked to the Council priority relating to improving health, promoting wellbeing and supporting greater independence, the plan will also aim to help those who are most in need within our community.

##### 6.5 **Working Towards a Greener Future**

None identified.

## 6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

None identified.

## 7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 Management of risks associated with service redesign and project implementation are through the governance structures outlined within the Joint Working Agreement.

## 8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 None associated with this report.

## 9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no environmental or climate implications as a direct result of this report.

## 10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

10.1	Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
	Joint Working Agreement – HBC & NHS Cheshire & Merseyside 1.4.25 - 31.3.27	Copy available on request	<a href="mailto:Susan.Wallace-Bonner@halton.gov.uk">Susan.Wallace-Bonner@halton.gov.uk</a> Tel: 0151 511 8825