

Lead Member (Adult Services and Public Health) report for Scrutiny – April 2025

A. Statutory Services

We are approaching the one year anniversary of the transfer of ASC statutory services back to B&NES Council. In order to minimise disruption, no changes were made to services at the point of transfer but managers have been working with practitioners over the past year to review and revise operational practices and to improve training and development.

Recent activities have included a “world café” at The Guild Hall to celebrate World Social Work Day On the 18th of March. This was attended by 40 social work practitioners who learnt and reflected on 6 facilitated topics, as follows:

- Making the most of community assets
- Supporting parents with a learning Disability
- Black History and current practice
- Deprivation of Liberty
- Deaf Awareness

This was followed by a meeting on Developing the ASC Practice Model on 19th March at the Civic Centre which was chaired by Ann Smith (AD Operations). The discussion focused on defining a practice model, reviewing past models, and selecting a preferred theoretical mode of practice. The group identified a preferred model for use in B&NES, the next steps are to engage with all frontline practitioners and align the model to the Care Quality Commission (CQC) framework. It will be implemented in the coming months.

B. Regulated Services

1. Adult Regulated Services

These include the two Community Resource Centres (Cleeve Court and Combe Lea care homes) and 5 Extra Care Schemes (Avondown House, St Johns Court, Hawthorns Court, Greenacres Court and The Orchard). The 5 Extra Care schemes remain rated as ‘good’ by the Care Quality Commission and the 2 Care Homes are rated overall as ‘requires improvement’ but with good in key areas such as, ‘caring’ and ‘responsive’. Extra Care was last inspected by CQC in July 2022, followed by Combe Lea in October 2022 and Cleeve Court in December 2022.

As part of our continual improvement journey, an organisation called Care for Quality has been invited to undertake another round of mock inspections of services in late April/early May and the CQC action plan continues to be reviewed with the management team on a monthly basis. The Good Governance Plan has been

introduced in both care homes since February and the effectiveness of the governance audits continues to be tested through quarterly audit review meetings.

The 2025/26 Q1 Good Governance Audit will be completed by Suzanne Westhead. An Audit Summary has also been reviewed for Extra Care services in the same period.

We have introduced a new digital care planning system (Care Control Systems – CCS) into our care homes (the lack of an electronic record had previously adversely impacted on our CQC ratings). The platform is designed to enhance the monitoring of care provided to our residents, ensuring a higher standard of oversight and efficiency. To ensure a smooth transition, both care homes were allocated additional resources and support which included dedicated personnel and training opportunities to facilitate the transfer of resident and operational data from traditional methods to the new digital platform. This transition marks a significant step forward in modernising our approach to care and operational management. Staff teams have been engaged throughout the implementation phase and we will continue to evaluate the system's effectiveness, offering further training and refining processes over the coming months. This shift toward digitalisation demonstrates our commitment to using technology for the benefit of both residents and staff.

Cleeve Court continues to focus on an intensive staff recruitment campaign which has resulted in a number of new staff joining the team, 9 vacancies remain but this represents a significant improvement in recruitment and retention since services transferred back to the council. Robust inductions enable new staff to learn our systems, support the moving in of new residents and building person centred care plans. Cleeve Court continues to work with Brokerage colleagues to take on new admissions and has taken a number of emergency placements over the last few months, there are no bed vacancies at Combe Lea.

Overall spend on external agency staff across our residential services in 2024-25 is 27% lower than 2023-24 and strong absence management has helped to reduce days lost to unplanned absence by 12%.

2. Learning Disability Provider Services

Learning Disability Provider Services transferred back to the Council on 1st April 2024 and include the 2 day services at Carrswood and Connections, a vocational service, 2 supported living schemes which also deliver community outreach and our Shared Lives Service. The Services that are inspected are rated as 'good' by the Care Quality Commission. Care 4 Quality undertook a mock inspection in December 2024 and gave the services an indicative rating of good. We have continued to develop our audit and assurance process since the services transferred back into the council.

The delivery of the Learning Disability provider services continues to present a financial challenge to Adult Social Care due to the increased costs of delivery, and

the condition of the Connections building. In May we will be talking to people who use our services, operational teams and commissioners about the future focus of these services.

C. Commissioning

1. Carers

The B&NEs co-produced carers strategy was launched in September 2024. This highlighted key themes of particular importance to carers, and a set of principles for working together to effect change. Following the launch, the local authority has worked with 12 carers to develop an action plan for developing the carers offer in B&NES through a series of in person events that included carers and social care professionals. These events focused on the key themes outlined in the strategy, pinpointing areas of activity and actions that would improve the lives of carers. The findings were written up into an action plan which was taken to senior social care managers. It is now being embedded within service and improvement plans for 2025-26. During the coming months carers will be updated on progress towards completing these actions and invited to take part in further co-production work.

2. Community Partners

Community support related to adult social care

Responsibility for commissioning these services transfers from HCRG to B&NES council on April 1st 2025. The council has worked with community partners to complete due diligence processes and negotiate bridging contracts and grant funding agreements for 2025/26. Most of these contracts and agreements have been issued for signature and several have been signed by providers. A small number of contracts are in the final stage of negotiations, aiming to finalise as soon as agreements have been reached.

The commissioning and procurement team have developed a procurement strategy for community support services being recommissioned in 2025. These include provision of information and advice for older people, support to return home after a hospital stay, prevention and enablement support for adults living at home, and day opportunities for older people, amongst other services. This procurement strategy will be presented to the market at the next market engagement event planned in April.

Housing and homelessness related contracts

The commissioning team have issued letters of intent to providers, most of which have signed and returned. Bridging contracts for 2026/26 are being worked on and will be issued in early April.

D. Finance

ASC is projecting delivery of its savings targets for 2024/5 and a break-even position at year end. This is particularly noteworthy given the increased activity and complexity the service has faced, especially in Mental Health (MH), Older Persons (OP), and Learning Disabilities (LD). Congratulations to all involved as this will ensure that the service starts the new financial year from a position of strength.

E. Newton House

See separate report

F. CQC Inspection

See separate report

G. Public Health

1. New public health contracts

The new public health contracts for Drug and Alcohol Services (Turning Point), Wellness services (Everyone Health) and Public Health Nursing Services (HCRG Care Group) start from 1st April 2025.

2. Health protection issue in K&A Canal, Widcombe

The health protection team have recently responded to concerns from members of the public about an apparent mass poisoning of fish in Widcombe Section of the Kennet and Avon Canal. The team worked with the Canal and River Trust and the Environment Agency to identify the cause as an algal bloom with the recent lack of rainfall being identified as a significant contributory factor. Concerns also remain about the impact of alleged unlawful discharges from boats and a recommendation has been made to the Canal River Trust to investigate this. From the information provided by the CRT and Environment Agency Public health has confirmed that there is no immediate threat to human health.

3. Leisure services

Summer opening hours have started at Royal Victoria Park Golf with the course now open 7 days per week for Foot Golf (12 holes) and pitch and putt golf (currently 9 holes but due to increase to 18 once Green treatments are completed). Progress is also being made on the Adventure Golf Course at Dragonfly Leisure centre in Midsomer Norton with the course due to open later this month. Leisure services are currently working with Planning on a new application to further develop the Sports facilities at Odd Down. This includes more gym and studio space, a walking and running trail and padel tennis courts.

4. Children and young people's health and wellbeing

The Department for Education announced a one-year extension to the Holiday Activity Food (HAF) programme in February and an update regarding future funding beyond Easter 2026 is expected in the Autumn.

Five Outreach Family Health and Wellbeing Clinics with early years settings have been held in Twerton and Whiteway in the last few months involving different partner organisations. The clinics have taken a Making Every Contact Count (MECC) approach by taking other offers and including the promotion of childhood oral health by HCRG staff. Approximately 25% of the children attending received a flu vaccine, 50 MECC conversations took place, and 250 oral health packs were distributed

5. Smoke free grant to local authorities

The government has announced a further year's additional ring-fenced funding for local stop smoking services and support for 2025/26 for use on local stop smoking services. The B&NES allocation for 2025/26 is £216,795.

6. Cabinet visit to Somer Valley Links project

Several Cabinet members recently visited the Somer Valley Links Project/Active Way, which is a WECA funded collaboration between B&NES Sustainable Transport and Leisure Services/public Health. The scheme works closely with local GP practices and social prescribers and offers a range of activities that encourage exercise and accessible active travel to improve both physical and mental health. The offer includes opportunities for people with complex disabilities to ride a range of adapted e bikes in an off road environment. It works with many people in the Somer Valley area.

Councillor Alison Born – Cabinet Lead Adult Services and Public Health