

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

Adult Social Care Update

Fair Pay Agreement

The Fair pay agreement process in adult social care consultation was launched on 30th September and will close on the 16th of January 2026. The fair pay agreement is part of the government plan to Make Work Pay policy and is part of the intention is to build a national care service. [DHSC consultation on the Adult Social Care Negotiating Body | Local Government Association](#)

The Employment Rights Bill which is awaiting royal assent will enable Adult Social Care (ASC) to set out the process for reaching fair pay agreement in secondary legislation. The ASC negotiating Body will be established as a public body using powers provided by the Employment Rights Bill. It will bring together trade unions and people representing employers to negotiate on pay, terms and conditions and related matters

In the consultation there is a recognition that achieving fair pay in ASC will come with a cost and £500m will be made available to manage the pressure for the sector. The fair pay agreement is expected to lead to increased labour costs for care providers. These increased costs are likely to be passed on through higher fee rates for councils, to people who pay for their own care and the NHS where it supports ASC services such as through funding nursing (FNC) and Continuing Health Care (CHC). Efficiencies from better recruitment and retention could enable providers to cover some of the increased labour costs

Exactly what the fair pay agreement will cover will be determined by the ASC Negotiation Body which will be made up of unions, providers, people by experience and the local authority commissioners

The consultation covers

- Who and what should be in scope of negotiations
- How the negotiation process could work
- How disputes are resolved
- How the agreement could be implemented and complied with

Anyone may participate in this consultation. The council plans to submit an official response. Commissioners are consulting with providers to include their perspectives, though many providers will also reply independently.

Newton House update

B&NES families who draw on care and support at Newton House continue to collaborate with council officers as part of the working group looking at options for future building-based respite services. The working group forms an important part of the all-age respite programme, and all families have been invited to take part. The

group is going to meet regularly over the next three months to start adding detail to the shape of future services. Confirmed dates are 14 November, 5 December, and 13 January.

Commissioning and procurement teams have started to develop a procurement approach to recommissioning these services. Possible routes to the market are being considered under the Procurement Act 2023 and look to explore flexibilities available in the legislation. Recommissioning of building based services, including residential respite, remains a priority for the council and timelines will be communicated at a future meeting.

B&NES Dementia Strategy Update for Scrutiny October 2025

Development of a new Dementia Strategy for B&NES has started, with the intention of improving outcomes for people living with dementia, their families, and carers. The strategy will be structured around the five domains of the NHS Dementia Well Pathway: preventing well, diagnosing well, supporting well, living well, and dying well and will also incorporate recommendations from the Alzheimer's Society Dementia Strategy Toolkit. To date, a first draft strategy scope, steering group terms of reference, and project plan have been produced, with the aim of developing the strategy within the next 9–12 months. The purpose of the strategy is to make B&NES a good place for people with dementia to live, ensuring access to the right information and support at the right time, and enabling people to live well with dementia.

A multi-agency steering group has been established to lead the development of the strategy. This group includes representatives from B&NES Council (commissioners and public health), the Integrated Care Board (ICB), Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership (AWP), ReMind, Alzheimer's Society, a carer with lived experience, The Carers Centre, Care Home and Home Care providers, Community Mental Health Team (CMHT), Peggy Dodd Centre, and Forget Me Not Familiar Friends. The first meeting of the steering group is scheduled for 27th November and will focus on agreeing the terms of reference, discussing the scope, and mapping current provision. This collaborative approach is intended to ensure joined-up support for people with dementia and their families across the area, and to give a strategic voice to people with dementia and carers in the design and delivery of the strategy.

Stakeholder engagement is central to the strategy's development. Meetings have already taken place with the Older Peoples Voice Network and Village Agents, with further engagement planned with BEMSCA to discuss co-production. A carer with lived experience will sit on the steering group. The strategy will be co-produced through a combination of focus groups and surveys (both online and one-to-one), ensuring that the voices of people with lived experience and carers shape the final scope, vision, and priorities for each of the five pathway areas. 'I statements' will be used to inform these priorities, and a clear, achievable action plan will be developed alongside the strategy.

Vocational Hub

The Vocational Hub transferred from HCRG Care Group to B&NES on 1 April 2024 and is part of the Learning Disability (LD) day service offer. Functions operate from Carrswood Day Centre in Bath

The service is made up of three elements:

- Voluntary work – through many hands which supports people in voluntary placements such as working in the reuse shop at Keynsham recycling centre(funded for people with LD)
- Vocational day services – rake up and grow which is a gardening service delivered in by people with Learning Disabilities working in the community on a voluntary basis (funded for people with LD)
- Employment Inclusion Service - Job Coaching (Employment Inclusion) funded from the day services budget and access to work funding, this service is supporting individuals who do not meet the criteria for day services

The service is currently supporting 55 individuals to maintain them in paid employment. Of the 55 individuals 48 receive access to work funding The funding can cover the cost of a Job Coach or support worker, specialist equipment, workplace or equipment adaptations, communication support, and additional travel costs to work this funding is used to offset some on the services staffing costs.

Community Support Contract Awards

The six Community Support Service tenders were delivered under the new Procurement Act 2023 using the Light Touch Regime for above-threshold social care contracts. Run concurrently through the Proactis e-tendering portal, they attracted strong market interest and concluded successfully.

Contracts have been awarded to the following organisations:

Service Name	Provider
Independent Living Service	Curo Choice Ltd
Older Peoples Information and Advice Service	Age UK B&NES
Step Up Step Down Accommodation	Curo Choice Ltd
Sensory Impairment Support Service	Sight Support West of England
Carers and Family Support Service	Bath and North East Somerset Carers Centre
Support at Home	Age UK B&NES

Contracts will commence in January 2026, with mobilisation and implementation activity now underway to ensure a smooth transition and continuity of support for residents across Bath and North East Somerset.

Better Care Fund Update

The Better Care Fund (BCF) is a national programme designed to integrate health, social care, and housing services, ensuring person-centred care and better outcomes for people and carers. It pools resources from the NHS and local authorities under Section 75 agreements, promoting collaboration to reduce hospital admissions, improve discharge processes, and support independence at home. Nationally, the BCF focuses on prevention, reducing health inequalities, and shifting care from hospital to home through joined-up services and digital innovation.

In B&NES, the BCF plays a vital role in supporting our local health and care priorities and underpins local strategies to improve health and wellbeing outcomes. The 2025/26 plan prioritises:

- **Prevention and early intervention** to ease pressure on urgent and emergency care.
- **Reducing inequalities** by strengthening community partnerships, supporting unpaid carers and access to services.
- **Effective discharge and interim care**, enabling residents to “wait well” and return home safely.

Schemes include reablement support, VCSE infrastructure in the form of Community Wellbeing Hub digital solutions and projects, and technology-enabled care, all aimed at helping people live independently for longer and reducing reliance on long-term residential care. Delivery is overseen by the Health and Wellbeing Board, working with the Integrated Care Alliance and partners across health, social care, and the voluntary sector and we are in the middle of a 1-year plan. A new framework for 2026 has been published earlier this month and will inform planning for the coming year.

Opening of New OT Assessment Centre

B&NES first OT Assessment Centre had its official opening last week. The centre is based on the Combe Lea site in Midsomer Norton and provides a specialist venue for B&NES residents to receive OT assessments and for family members to receive support. The centre offers residents the opportunity to trial pieces of equipment that will enhance their independence and quality of life. OT assessments are still provided in people's homes where the assessment centre is not the best option but this new service is helping to improve access to Occupational Therapy and reduce waiting times for the service.

Public Health Update

1. Suicide Prevention Update

Suicide rates in B&NES remain below the national average, with around 17 deaths annually (approx. 10 per 100,000 people). Rates among young people (10–24) are lower than England, though the South West region rates is above the national average. Real-time surveillance continues to monitor trends and identify emerging risks.

The refreshed B&NES Suicide Prevention Strategy (2024–2029) aims to reduce suicide and self-harm, ensuring no resident feels suicide is their only option. The strategy prioritises tackling stigma, building community resilience, and improving support for those affected. The multiagency action plan is currently being finalised, with input from partners and services. Next steps include further engagement and implementation of targeted actions.

On 16th October, B&NES hosted the 6th Annual Suicide Prevention Stakeholder Event in the Guildhall. The event was attended by approximately 100 people. The event brought together statutory, voluntary, and community partners to share best practice, raise awareness, and strengthen collaborative efforts. Feedback indicated the event was a success, with high engagement and positive contributions from attendees.

Key areas of focus:

- **Real-Time Surveillance System (RTSS):** Rapid notification and review of suspected suicides, enabling timely identification of clusters and risk factors, and informing preventative action. Data is shared with partners and discussed at strategic groups.
- **Training and Awareness:** Ongoing training on suicide awareness and emotional resilience for frontline staff and community partners has been commissioned and is available.
- **Role of Partners:** Suicide prevention is a collective effort, involving statutory, voluntary, and community organisations. Partners contribute expertise and resources, and community responsibility is emphasised in all work.
- **Bereavement Support:** Timely referrals are made to suicide bereavement support services for families and friends affected by suicide. Peer-led support groups and counselling are available, and postvention protocols are in place for schools and workplaces.

2. Oral Health

A dental service called At Home Dental has recently been commissioned (ICB funding) to deliver oral health training to workforces across B&NES, Swindon and Wiltshire. The online and face to face training is for workforces across children and adult providers. In B&NES the training has already been taken up by a number of early years settings, childminders, Children's Centre, elective home education team, and nurses from the Learning Disability team. At Home Dental are early into their contract and are continuing to recruit services/teams/organisations onto the training.

3. Odd Down Sports Ground

A planning submission was made in September to extend and refurbish facilities at Odd Down Sports Ground to support people to participate in sports and physical activity, so improving physical and mental health wellbeing. The submission includes proposals for an extension to the building to house a new gym, an outside training area, provision of an accessible nature trail on site, play equipment, pitch lighting, a mini cycle track, reorganisation of the car park and provision of a cycle paddock. A decision on the application is expected towards the end of November.

4. National pandemic planning exercise

B&NES Council has participated in a national pandemic preparedness exercise - Exercise Pegasus – between September and November. The core objectives of the national exercise include testing strategic coordination across national government and local systems, and our multi-agency response capabilities, in the event of a pandemic caused by a novel virus. Teams across B&NES Council participated in the exercise and key learning will be shared and will inform our local preparedness arrangements.

5. Long COVID / Post-COVID syndrome

Long COVID, sometimes called post-COVID syndrome, can affect people of all ages. Many people will experience COVID symptoms lasting up to 12 weeks, these usually resolve within this time, and it is common to experience an episodic or relapse/remission pattern.

The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) gives the following clinical definitions:

- ongoing symptomatic COVID-19: signs and symptoms of COVID-19 from four to 12 weeks
- post COVID-19 syndrome: signs and symptoms that develop during or after COVID-19 and continue for more than 12 weeks and are not explained by an alternative diagnosis

The most common symptoms of Long COVID include extreme tiredness (fatigue), shortness of breath, difficulties with concentration and memory, joint pain and aching muscles.

There's currently no cure for long COVID and the condition is still being researched. Multidisciplinary COVID services can offer treatments and resources that may help ease and support self-management of symptoms.

HCRG are commissioned during 2025-26 to provide a Long COVID Community Assessment and Rehabilitation Service for patients registered with GP surgeries in B&NES, Swindon or Wiltshire. This specialist service provides assessment, signposting and short-term rehabilitation for adult patients who are experiencing new and long-lasting symptoms of COVID infection, suspected COVID infection or following a virus, which are significantly impacting how they are able to function in day-to-day life. (Under 18s are referred to a paediatrician). Referral into the service is via the GP or a secondary care clinician or via self referral. Individual treatment plans developed with patients are based on a comprehensive assessment of needs, and may include occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, physiotherapy, multi-disciplinary team discussion, signposting to self-help resources, and onward referral where required. Dedicated national funding for the service ends in March 2026 but patients with long covid will continue to be supported by community teams according to their needs.

Alison Born – Cabinet Lead Adult Services and Public Health