

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

CHILDREN, ADULTS, HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Monday 17th November 2025

Present:- Councillors Dine Romero (Chair), Liz Hardman (Vice-Chair), Paul Crossley, Lesley Mansell, Joanna Wright, Bharat Pankhania and Michael Auton

Co-opted Members (non-voting): Chris Batten and Kevin Burnett

Cabinet Member for Adult Services: Councillor Alison Born

Also in attendance: Suzanne Westhead (Director of Adult Social Care), Rebecca Reynolds (Director of Public Health & Prevention), Claire Thorogood (Assistant Director for Adult Regulated Services and Governance), Ceri Williams (Policy Development & Scrutiny Officer), Laura Ambler (Executive Director of Place for Bath and North East Somerset, BSW ICB), Samantha Jones (Inclusive Communities Manager), Anne Marie Stavert (Head of Service, Residential Services) and Lucy Baker (Director of Learning Disabilities, Autism and Neurodivergence, BSW ICB)

50 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

51 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

52 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor Onkar Saini and Councillor David Harding had sent their apologies to the Panel.

53 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Michael Auton declared an other interest with regard to agenda item 10 (Adult Social Care Residential Services update for Community Resource Centres and Extra Care Services) as through his work with Community Catalysts he works with many people involved in Adult Social Care.

54 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

55 ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC OR COUNCILLORS - TO RECEIVE STATEMENTS, PETITIONS OR QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OF THIS MEETING

There were none.

56 MINUTES: 13TH OCTOBER 2025

The Panel confirmed the minutes of the previous meeting as a true record and they were duly signed by the Chair.

57 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

Councillor Alison Born, Cabinet Member for Adult Services addressed the Panel and highlighted the following points from her 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.

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.

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

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.

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.

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.

Delivery of work 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.

Long COVID / Post-COVID syndrome

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.

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.

Councillor Bharat Pankhania referred to the Fair Pay Agreement and stated that Care Workers do deserve this recognition. He added though that he was concerned as to the costs that would be passed onto the Local Authority should private enterprises raise their prices.

Councillor Born replied that the Council would not expect to feed the profits of the organisations that provide such care, but said it was not unreasonable to expect some degree of price increase and that this would be a matter for discussion through this process.

The Director of Adult Social Care added that she does expect to see some increase in costs, but did not expect the Local Authority to pay much more.

Councillor Pankhania asked if the accounts / profits of the care organisations were able to be seen by the Council.

The Director of Adult Social Care replied that an Open Book Policy is in place and that they do also benchmark across other Local Authorities. She added that should an organisation request a percentage increase then this would be discussed directly with them. She said that they have worked hard in recent years to drive down costs.

Councillor Lesley Mansell said that the Council must ensure that this work aligns with its own equalities criteria. She asked what part the Trade Unions will play in this process.

The Director of Adult Social Care replied that equalities issues would be taken into account as part of the consultation process and explained that the ASC Negotiation Body would comprise representation from Trade Unions, providers, people by experience and the Local Authority commissioners.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked if the likely increase in costs had been considered as part of the current budget setting process.

The Director of Adult Social Care replied that any changes were likely to come into effect from 2028 / 2029, but they were beginning to model on what may happen in the future.

Councillor Joanna Wright asked that the Panel see the official response to the consultation from the Council.

The Director of Adult Social Care replied that she would share this with the Panel via email once it had been drafted.

Kevin Burnett asked if there was a timeline in place for the proposals relating to Newton House and residential respite.

The Director of Adult Social Care replied that one was being worked on with the providers and would possibly be ready to share in January. She added that the key elements identified by the working group remain that the provision should be residential and within B&NES.

Councillor Michael Auton referred to B&NES Dementia Strategy Update and asked if the Ageing Well Network was part of the multi-agency steering group mentioned within the update.

The Director of Adult Social Care replied that they have been very much part of this work and apologised that they were not listed within the update.

Councillor Mansell asked for it to be ensured that equitable access to dementia support would be available across the whole of the Council.

Councillor Born said that this was one of the primary concerns of the strategy, that it should be suitable across all parts of the Council. She added that the Council were working on becoming a Dementia Friendly Authority with Age UK (B&NES).

Councillor Pankhania spoke of the merits of maintaining an active lifestyle, the importance of being active from an early age and for schools to have access to sports fields.

The Director of Public Health & Prevention replied that her team work alongside the Green Infrastructure team to protect and, where possible, expand these areas. She added that a Sports Field Strategy Survey was ongoing and the results of that would feed into the Local Plan.

Kevin Burnett referred to the Community Support Contract Awards and asked if this had led to the savings being achieved as hoped.

The Director of Adult Social Care replied that they have worked closely with the 3rd sector on these contracts to take into account the local needs and requirements. She stated that they have achieved the planned savings (£802k) and that no services have been cut.

Councillor Mansell asked for assurance that the contracts would be culturally competent.

The Director of Adult Social Care replied that they have worked with 3SG with regard to enabling the contracts to be culturally sufficient. She added that regular feedback on the contracts will be sought and said a Quality Assurance process was in place.

Councillor Hardman referred to the Vocational Hub and asked how people could access the services of the Hub, what the level of demand was and any challenges that it faces.

The Director of Adult Social Care replied that they offer a range of employment services and would like to put together a fuller offer, if possible, in the future. She said that many local businesses are willing to take part and that people are referred following a Care Act Assessment or via the voluntary sector. She proposed to bring an update to the Panel in September 2026.

Councillor Mansell asked if training and support is offered to the employers that take part in the provision of this service.

The Director of Adult Social Care replied that the businesses involved do receive support from the Council.

Councillor Mansell asked if the Virtual School, Youth Connect and Bath College were involved with this work.

The Director of Adult Social Care replied that yes, they do work alongside all three organisations as part of this service.

Councillor Mansell asked how the B&NES Suicide Prevention Strategy is evaluated.

The Director of Public Health & Prevention replied that the strategy had recently been updated and that a multi-agency action plan was currently being finalised and offered to bring this to the Panel in the early part of 2026. She stated that the strategy is monitored on a quarterly basis.

Councillor Pankhania commented that the update did not give enough detail of the measures in place locally. He said that he was concerned with the escalation that can take place between self-harm and suicide. He added that in settings such as the Accident & Emergency department at hospitals an intervention should take place if self-harm has been identified, and that in his view mental health services should be contacted immediately.

Lucy Baker, Director of Learning Disabilities, Autism and Neurodivergence, BSW ICB replied that Mental Health Liaison Officers are based within the emergency department at the Royal United Hospital and also a representative from Bath Mind.

She added that the Community Mental Health Framework in B&NES promotes a strengths-based, preventative approach to working with individuals and communities.

Councillor Pankhania asked if this provision was in place at the hospital 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Lucy Baker replied that the provision was in place until 8pm each day when an on-call service would then commence. She added that if patients were deemed to be of significant risk they would remain in hospital at least overnight.

Councillor Pankhania asked if an audit of people who have presented and been referred to these services could be undertaken.

Lucy Baker replied that this should be possible and would then seek to share it with the Panel.

The Chair proposed that a report on the Suicide Prevention Strategy and the requested audit be pencilled in for their January meeting.

Councillor Wright asked if the audit could detail whether patients were care experienced.

Councillor Hardman referred to Oral Health and asked what training was being given to staff working with children and older people.

The Director of Public Health & Prevention replied that staff working in nurseries and care homes have received training on how to clean teeth well.

Kevin Burnett asked if any feedback had been gathered from schools on a similar project recently undertaken by them.

The Director of Public Health & Prevention replied that she was unsure and would seek further information.

Councillor Pankhania stated that it was his view that good dental care for children is vital and suggested the ICB should look to provide mobile dental clinics.

Laura Ambler replied that she would ask colleague Victoria Stanley to provide an update to a future meeting.

Councillor Pankhania referred to the national pandemic preparedness exercise - Exercise Pegasus. He asked how evidence would be analysed and any actions implemented.

The Director of Public Health & Prevention replied that debriefing sessions were due to take place and that she expected national scrutiny of the exercise.

Councillor Hardman asked that the findings be shared with the Panel.

Councillor Pankhania referred to Long COVID and said that it was real issue for those affected by it. He explained that there was a need to prepare for further cases and to also minimise future infections.

Lucy Baker replied that a Long COVID Service continues to be commissioned, with funding available until March 2026. She added that there is a reduced prevalence and that when funding ceases patients will continue to be supported by community teams according to their needs.

Kevin Burnett commented that it was his view that schools feel that COVID has gone away and that messaging should be put in place that preventative measures should still be taken where possible.

Lucy Baker replied that she would assess what advice is in place currently for schools and said that the NHS no longer require testing to be carried out for COVID.

Councillor Hardman asked if community support would be adequate.

Lucy Baker agreed to provide further data and service details in a future report.

Councillor Mansell said she would welcome a further report as she had personally worked with people who have / have had Long COVID.

The Director of Public Health & Prevention said that the importance of ventilation during the winter months is recognised and would discuss with colleagues regarding an awareness message to schools.

The Chair, on behalf of the Panel, thanked Councillor Born for her update.

58 B&NES, SWINDON & WILTSHIRE INTEGRATED CARE BOARD (BSW ICB) UPDATE

Laura Ambler, Executive Director of Place for Bath and North East Somerset, BSW ICB and Lucy Baker, Director of Learning Disabilities, Autism and Neurodivergence, BSW ICB addressed the Panel and highlighted the following areas from within the update.

Feedback sought on local weight management services

Across Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire, a number of different services are available to support people living with obesity.

These services were designed at a time when rates of obesity were lower and before the introduction of new weight loss treatments, which have since grown in popularity.

In recent years, increasing numbers of patients have been referred to the specialist weight management services, which are provided by the region's hospitals, including the Royal United Hospital in Bath.

In light of the growing waiting lists, a review is needed to ensure services continue to meet the needs of patients and reflect developments in treatments.

Feedback from this survey will be used to develop a proposal on what services should look like in the future, and will be submitted as part of a wider application for funding to support local obesity initiatives.

Update on winter vaccinations

The ICB has agreed ambitions with NHS England for each of the key winter vaccinations and specific cohorts within that for flu, Covid-19 and respiratory syncytial virus.

These ambitions are set taking into account World Health Organisation guidance on herd-level immunity requirements, as well as national requirements for each individual programme.

These targets, and our local progress towards these, alongside any operational details are shared with the local authority health protection leads regularly on a weekly basis for operational purposes.

The ICB continues to encourage those people who are eligible for one or more winter vaccinations to come forward without delay.

As it stands, the three localities which make up the Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire are all performing better than the national average in terms of uptake for the three main winter vaccinations.

Commissioning an all-age neuro-developmental pathway

The ICB has commissioned an all-age neuro-developmental pathway to provide a needs-based approach to support children, young people and adults with autistic and/or ADHD traits.

This new pathway forms part of the integrated community-based care procurement, with the implementation of the new pathway at the end of March 2026.

This needs-based model was co-created with people with lived and living experience from across BSW, as part of workshop events who co-developed a number of pillar principles.

As a pre-cursor to this model HCRG Care Group has been working with the ICB and partners as part of a longer-term test and learn programme to transform the children and young people neuro-developmental pathway to move from a diagnostic approach to a needs-based model to improve outcomes and access.

Within the pathway, adult patients awaiting an autism assessment were transferred from AWP to HCRG as part of the ICBC mobilisation. All patients on a medication pathway have now been transferred to HCRG to ensure no gap in medication provision along with around 50 military patients, who are unable to access the NHS Right to Choose pathway.

The ICB also identified around 10 patients who needed an assessment expedited due to risk, and these individuals have also been transferred to HCRG.

The remaining patients awaiting an ADHD assessment have all been contacted and offered the NHS Right to Choose pathway in the interim, as well as support to wait well while transformation work continues to complete the previously mentioned all age pathway by the end of March 2026.

Councillor Bharat Pankhania said that more cases of seasonal flu should be expected and called for the need to strengthen the message for having an annual vaccination. He asked about the uptake of the flu vaccine among healthcare workers.

Laura Ambler acknowledged there was a relatively low uptake and said that targeted campaigns had been put in place.

Kevin Burnett referred to the neuro-developmental pathway and asked about schools involvement and whether there were implications for EHCPs.

Lucy Baker made the Panel aware of the Partnerships for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) programme and that funding for the schools involved was due to continue into 2026. She added that an aspiration remains for further schools to become involved in the programme.

She said that work regarding EHCPs continues with parents and carers on establishing a 'new normal'.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked for more information on autism assessments.

Lucy Baker replied that the waiting list was under 2,000 and all had transferred to HCRG and been contacted by them.

Councillor Lesley Mansell asked about promotion of the pathway, its entry point and monitoring.

Lucy Baker replied that promotion is ongoing through a range of agencies and that a communications plan is in place. She explained that it was possible to self-refer onto the pathway and that a monitoring process will be built into it.

Councillor Joanna Wright asked about the prioritisation for assessments regarding the neuro-developmental pathway.

Lucy Baker replied that prioritisation is based on need, with a focus on early intervention. She added that this was a huge piece of work and one that was important to get right.

Councillor Bharat Pankhania asked about causes and prevention of neurodiversity.

Lucy Baker replied that causes are not well understood and that the focus is on early identification and support.

Councillor Pankhania asked about flu vaccine uptake among healthcare workers.

Laura Ambler acknowledged that there was a low uptake and agreed to provide further data.

Councillor Mansell referred to local weight management services and asked if this would incorporate new procedures / medication.

Laura Ambler replied that these services would now include the use of new medication to help with weight loss.

Councillor Pankhania asked about monitoring over-the-counter sales in pharmacies.

Laura Ambler agreed to seek assurance / information from pharmacy teams.

The Chair thanked Laura Ambler and Lucy Baker for their update on behalf of the Panel.

59 ADULT SOCIAL CARE RESIDENTIAL SERVICES UPDATE FOR COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTRES AND EXTRA CARE SERVICES

The Assistant Director for Adult Regulated Services and Governance summarised the update on in-house residential and extra care services, highlighting occupancy, staffing, and quality assurance.

- Cleeve Court is a two floor 45 bed residential care home located in Twerton, Bath for older people with dementia and Combe Lea is a two floor 30 bed residential care home located in Midsomer Norton for older people with a range of physical disabilities and dementia support.
- Extra Care is provided across 5 service locations (Avondown House, St Johns Court, Hawthorns Court, Greenacres Court and The Orchard). Extra Care services offer housing designed for individuals who value both independence and access to support services.
- The Stepdown service is delivered in partnership with Curo as a social housing landlord. There are six stepdown flats at two Extra Care sites (Hawthorn Court and St John's Court). The Stepdown service provides short term (up to 12 weeks) accommodation with care to people who are at risk of hospital admission or who are medically fit to leave hospital but are not ready to return to independent living.
- The Adult Regulated Services management team are highly knowledgeable and skilled with many years of experience working in older people's residential services. They demonstrate commitment, compassion and focus on the delivery of good outcomes for residents. The management of Extra Care and Combe Lea care home has been stable for some time.
- Residential Services has a permanent staffing establishment of 240 staff which equates to 43% of the total ASC workforce at B&NES. In addition to this, there are a total of 213 bank staff, including both dedicated bank staff (60) and permanent staff who also hold a bank contract (153). The bank

function provides staff with the opportunity to take on additional shifts which support care continuity and reduces reliance on agency staff.

- There are currently 23 vacancies across the residential services. Staffing vacancies are monitored and actioned with HR recruitment colleagues as well as reported to the Provider Services Quality and Performance meetings. This is managed through use of bank and agency staffing and where agency staff are required the service seeks continuity of agency staff.
- Staff retention has improved across Residential Services with 16 leavers recorded from April-September 2025 compared to 23 staff leavers for the same period in 2024.
- Staff are required to complete a suite of mandatory training requirements as part of their induction and ongoing professional training to enable safe, efficient, and effective services to be delivered to residents.
- Current CQC ratings - The five Extra Care schemes remain rated as 'good' and the two Community Resource Centres are rated overall as 'requires improvement' but with good in key areas such as 'caring' and 'responsive'.
- An independent provider has been commissioned to undertake unannounced mock inspection visits to both CRC's and each Extra Care service over the last year. A summary of the mock inspection feedback has been received by each service and included in the service's continual CQC action plan.
- B&NES Commissioners were invited by the Director Adult Social Care to undertake a Quality Assurance Visit to each Community Resource Centre in July 2025. Combe Lea had a strong assurance visit scoring 85% for good level of compliance and standards. For Cleeve Court the assurance visit resulted in a robust service improvement plan to address criteria scored as requires improvement or non-compliant.
- CQC conducted an unannounced onsite inspection of Cleeve Court CRC in July 2025 with assessment activity running from 17 July 2025 to conclusion in early October 2025. The inspection concentrated on the domains of 'safe' and 'well led' as these were rated as requires improvement at the December 2022 inspection. The draft inspection report has been received by the Director Adult Social Care and this is in the process of being checked for factual accuracy by 14th November 2025 CQC deadline. Following this process the CQC report will then be finalised and published but we cannot anticipate CQC timescales for publication.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked if there was enough space within the existing centres and whether funding was in place to support staffing costs and recruitment.

The Assistant Director for Adult Regulated Services and Governance replied that the expansion of Extra Care at Avondown House is being explored and said that bank staff are used to minimise agency costs.

Councillor Lesley Mansell asked about the impact of the work on staff well-being.

The Assistant Director for Adult Regulated Services and Governance replied that well-being support is provided from both within and outside of the Council and that a dedicated Human Resources business partner is in place.

Councillor Bharat Pankhania asked for further information about the unannounced inspections.

The Assistant Director for Adult Regulated Services and Governance replied that inspectors would arrive during the day and arrange to return within one week for a site visit. She explained that the Registered Manager and Head of Service would be present during the visit and that staff and residents would be spoken to as part of the process. She added that the service worked with the Lead Inspector to develop an action plan, and this was updated and reviewed with them in early August.

The Head of Service, Residential Services described the inspection process as positive and said regular feedback had been given by the inspectors.

Kevin Bernett asked about succession planning from a staffing point of view.

The Assistant Director for Adult Regulated Services and Governance replied that the Workforce Strategy includes areas such as apprenticeships and student placements in collaboration with Bath College.

The Panel **RESOLVED** to;

i) Note the update on Residential Services for Community Resource Centres (care homes) and Extra Care Services.

ii) Agree that a further update report will be presented to Panel following the publication of the CQC report for Cleeve Court and any other relevant CQC inspection reports as they arise.

60 MODERN SLAVERY

The Inclusive Communities Manager addressed the Panel and said she was happy to receive questions relating to the presentation submitted within the agenda pack.

Councillor Liz Hardman asked about what sectors of work were regularly involved and what actions can be taken.

The Inclusive Communities Manager replied that care work, beauty / nail bars, hospitality, car washes, drug movement and sex work were the prominent areas identified. She described the Disrupt Panel process and the way in which it has the ability to bring a multi-party group together to discuss concerns.

She added that she would recommend the Panel reading a report from the Local Government Association (LGA) on this issue.

Councillor Hardman asked about the number of incidents locally.

The Inclusive Communities Manager replied that 42 cases were reported to Avon & Somerset Police in 2024 and that this equated to 96 potential victims.

Councillor Paul Crossley asked about prevalence of cases, annual reporting to the Panel, and support for victims.

The Inclusive Communities Manager outlined the multi-agency work that takes place, especially the support from the Salvation Army who are the national organisation assigned to rehabilitate and support individuals that have been enslaved.

She added that officers also work with areas within the local nighttime economy and with Public Protection.

Councillor Lesley Mansell asked about awareness training and potential to integrate that with safeguarding procedures.

The Inclusive Communities Manager confirmed training is available for members and staff.

Councillor Joanna Wright suggested a briefing should be held for all councillors.

Councillor Hardman, current Chair of Council, agreed to raise the issue at full Council.

Councillor Bharat Pankhania asked about the exploitation of sponsored workers.

The Inclusive Communities Manager confirmed such cases are textbook examples of modern slavery and said there were many barriers to disclosure of their situation.

Councillor Crossley asked about organ harvesting.

The Inclusive Communities Manager stated this typically occurs abroad, with victims enticed by false promises, e.g. payment, bond deleted.

The Chair said that she would encourage a further briefing to be given to all Councillors and asked for the mentioned LGA report to be circulated.

On behalf of the Panel, the Chair thanked the Inclusive Communities Manager for the presentation.

61 PANEL WORKPLAN

The Panel reviewed the workplan, noting items to be brought forward, including:

- CQC Report - Unannounced onsite inspection of Cleeve Court
- Long COVID
- Neuro-developmental pathway
- Modern Slavery

The Panel **RESOLVED** to note their current workplan and these proposals for future updates / reports.

The meeting ended at 12.42 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services