

Report to: East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board

Date: 15 July 2025

By: Director of Adult Social Care and Health

Title: Better Care Fund Plans 2025-26

Purpose of Report: To provide a summary of the Better Care Fund (BCF) requirements for 2025 – 2026, and to seek approval of the East Sussex BCF plans.

Recommendations:

East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to:

- 1. note the Better Care Fund requirements for 2025-26; and**
 - 2. approve the East Sussex BCF Plans for 2025-26 recognizing the discussion underway to review the metrics targets for the year ahead.**
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1 Background

- 1.1 Since 2014 the Better Care Fund (BCF) has provided a mechanism for joint health, housing and social care planning and commissioning, focusing on personalised integrated approaches to health and care that support people to remain independent at home or to return to independence after an episode in hospital. It brings together ring-fenced budgets from NHS Integrated Care Board (ICB) allocations, and funding paid directly to local government, including the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) and Local Authority Better Care Grant (iBCF).
- 1.2 The continuation of national conditions and requirements of the BCF in recent years has provided opportunities for health and care partners to build on their plans to embed joint working and integrated care further. This includes working collaboratively to bring together funding streams and maximise the impact on outcomes for communities whilst sustaining vital community provision.
- 1.3 Following approval by the Health and Wellbeing Board in July 2024, East Sussex's BCF plans for 2024/25 were nationally assured and approved on 23 August 2024. In line with the requirements, quarterly reports were submitted in October and January with the year-end report being submitted in June 2025, informed by the plans for 2025/26
- 1.4 The Additional Discharge Funding to enhance community and social care capacity is now fully included within the BCF pooled budget arrangements, without being ring-fenced as in previous years.
- 1.5 For 2025 to 2026, the objectives of the BCF reflect the Government's commitment to reform via a shift from sickness to prevention and from hospital to home. Local areas should produce BCF plans that support systematic adoption of best practice in

preventing avoidable hospital admissions and care home admissions, linked to the early priorities for the neighbourhood health service.

2 National BCF Planning Guidance and Requirements for 2025-26

2.1 The BCF 25- 26 Policy Framework and Planning Requirements for 2025-26 were published on 30 January 2025. This provided a revised planning template to confirm BCF income, expenditure, new metric targets, capacity, and demand planning for 2025-25 alongside the local BCF narrative plan outlining how the East Sussex plans will support the delivery of the BCF objectives in the year ahead.

2.2 National Conditions: Each national condition required a response to an assurance statement on the planning template:

- National Condition One: Plans to be jointly agreed
- National Condition Two: Implementing the objectives of the BCF
- National Condition Three: Complying with grant and funding conditions, including maintaining the NHS minimum contribution to adult social care (ASC)
- National Condition Four: Complying with oversight and support processes

2.3 For 2025 to 2026, the objectives of the BCF reflect the Government's commitment to reform via a shift from sickness to prevention and from hospital to home.

Objective 1: reform to support the shift from sickness to prevention. Local plans must illustrate how they will help people remain independent for longer and prevent escalation of health and care needs, including:

- timely, proactive and joined-up support for people with more complex health and care needs
- use of home adaptations and technology
- support for unpaid carers

Objective 2: reform to support people living independently and the shift from hospital to home. Local plans should ensure appropriate services are in place to:

- help prevent avoidable hospital admissions
- achieve more timely and effective discharge from acute, community and mental health hospital settings, supporting people to recover in their own homes (or other usual place of residence)
- reduce the proportion of people who need long-term residential or nursing home care

2.4 In line with these objectives, the metrics targets for 25-26 have been revised to the following measures. Targets were required to be set for 3 headline metrics with each of these having 2 supporting metrics for which targets are not required:

	Headline metric	Supporting metrics
1.	Emergency admissions to hospital for people aged 65+ per 100,000 population. (monthly)	Unplanned hospital admissions for chronic ambulatory care sensitive conditions. Emergency hospital admissions due to falls in people aged 65+.
2	Average number of days from Discharge Ready Date to discharge (all adult acute patients). (monthly)	Patients not discharged on their DRD, and discharged within 1 day, 2-3 days, 4-6 days, 7-13 days, 14-20 days and 21 days or more. Local data on average length of delay by discharge pathway.
3	Admissions to long term residential and nursing care for people aged 65+ per 100,000 population. (quarterly)	Hospital discharges to usual place of residence. Proportion of people receiving short-term reablement following hospital discharge and outcomes following short term reablement

2.5 Further information relating to the 2025-26 BCF Policy Framework and Planning Requirements and can be found on the external web links below:

[Better Care Fund policy framework 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK](#)

[NHS England » Better Care Fund planning requirements 2025-26](#)

3 East Sussex Better Care Plans 2025-26

3.1 The contributions to the BCF Pooled budget for 2025-26 are outlined below.

Funding Source	Lead Org	2025/26 Contributions
Disabled Facilities Grant	ESCC	£10,080,084
NHS Minimum Contribution	NHS Sussex ICB	£58,475,129
Local Authority Better Care Grant	ESCC	£26,865,023
Additional LA Contribution	ESCC	£10,694,000
Total BCF Resources		£106,114,236

- 3.2 The Local Authority Better Care Grant comprises of the former iBCF and LA discharge grants with no uplift to either element and the discharge ring-fence having been removed.
- 3.3 The NHS Minimum Contribution comprises of the 2024/25 figure uplifted by 1.7% plus a proportion of the 2024/25 ICB additional discharge funding with the ring-fence removed.
- 3.4 The Adult Social Care minimum spend requirement increased by 3.9% from the 24/25 requirement as shown below.

	Minimum spend required	Actual/Planned Spend
2024/25	£26,092,688	£26,092,691
2025/26	£27,116,853	£27,370,178

- 3.5 Many of the schemes and services previously funded through the Better Care Fund have continued into this year.
- 3.6 Modelling of the Capacity and Demand on community services to support avoidance of admission to and reduction in length of stay in bedded care has been reviewed for 2025-26.

4 Assurance of Plans.

- 4.1 Following submission of our plans on 31st March, a regional assurance process has been undertaken, and the East Sussex BCF plans have been recommended for national approval with one condition. This condition requires further review of the East Sussex metric ambitions and discussions are underway to support this review. It is of note that other HWB submissions have also been approved with the same condition as East Sussex.
- 4.2 The section 75 agreement supporting the 2025/26 plans is under review and will be updated for this year prior to the required date of 30 September 2025.

5 Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

- 5.1 This paper summarises the Better Care Fund requirements for this year setting out the East Sussex plans for 2025-26 confirming their alignment with the national conditions and provides a summary of the 2024/25 year-end position.
- 5.2 The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to:
- Note the Better Care Fund requirements for 2025-26.
 - Approve the East Sussex BCF Plans for 2025-26 recognising the discussion underway to review the metrics targets for the year ahead.

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Appendix 1: East Sussex HWB Better Care Fund Narrative Plan 2025-26

Appendix 2: East Sussex HWB Better Care Fund Planning Template 2025-2026

Appendix 3: East Sussex HWB Better Care Fund Capacity and Demand Planning Template
2025-2026