



**12 March 2025**

<b>Subject:</b>	Sandwell Better Care Fund Plan 2025/ 26
<b>Presenting Officer and Organisation</b>	BCF Programme Manager, Paul Moseley Black Country ICB and Sandwell MBC <a href="mailto:paul_moseley@sandwell.gov.uk">paul_moseley@sandwell.gov.uk</a>
<b>Purpose of Report</b>	Decision

## **1. Recommendations**

- 1.1 To approve the Sandwell Better Care Fund (BCF) plan for 2025/ 26.
- 1.2 To authorise the Director of Adult Social Care to sign off such BCF-related reports and submissions, as may be required, throughout 2025/ 26.
- 1.3 To authorise the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board to sign the plan.

## **2. Links to Workstreams Set out in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy**

<b>Healthy Communities</b>	The Sandwell Better Care Fund (BCF) Plan for 2025-26 contributes to the Healthy Communities workstream of the Sandwell Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-25 by promoting integrated, community-based care that reduces reliance on hospital services. It aligns with the strategy's focus on prevention, early intervention, and addressing the wider determinants of health, such as housing and social isolation. By expanding home-based rehabilitation, and leveraging digital innovation, the plan strengthens community resilience and promotes independence, ensuring residents receive the right support at the right time in the most appropriate setting
<b>Primary Care</b>	The BCF Plan contributes to the Primary Care workstream by enhancing integration between primary care and

	<p>community-based services. It aligns with the strategy's emphasis on demand management, workforce planning, and pathway development. By strengthening multi-disciplinary teams and expanding anticipatory care planning, the BCF programme ensures more proactive support to people, reducing the need for hospital admissions. Additionally, its focus on digital innovation and care navigation helps streamline access to primary care, supporting the broader goal of providing timely, person-centred services closer to home.</p>
<b>Integrated Town Teams</b>	<p>The BCF Plan aligns with the Town Teams workstream by promoting integrated, community-based care. It strengthens collaboration across health, social care, and voluntary sectors, ensuring that care is delivered closer to home, reducing reliance on hospital services. By embedding the Home First approach and enhancing intermediate care pathways, the BCF supports the Town Teams' aim of providing coordinated, place-based care. This also aligns with the new Neighbourhood Health Guidelines by prioritising prevention, early intervention, and personalised support to improve overall health outcomes in Sandwell's communities.</p>
<b>Intermediate Care</b>	<p>The BCF Plan aligns with the Intermediate Care workstream by delivering community-based reablement services and integrating multidisciplinary teams. It prioritises a shift from bed-based care to home-based models, ensuring that individuals receive rehabilitation in a familiar environment, improving recovery outcomes. The plan for 2025/26 will also explore opportunities to strengthen links with mental health services and Learning Disabilities &amp; Autism pathways, promoting holistic, person-centred support. This approach supports the Neighbourhood Health Guidelines by embedding care within local communities, fostering prevention, and reducing hospital admissions through targeted early interventions</p>
<b>Care Navigation</b>	<p>The BCF Plan aligns with the Care Navigation workstream by improving community-based support and improving access to integrated health and social care. The plan prioritises proactive admission avoidance and timely hospital discharge, ensuring individuals receive appropriate care within their neighbourhoods. It also strengthens pathways between primary care, social care, and voluntary sector services, reducing fragmentation. This approach aligns with the Neighbourhood Health</p>

	Guidelines, supporting a coordinated system that empowers residents to navigate services efficiently and promotes person-centred, preventative care closer to home
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### **3. Context and Key Issues**

- 3.1 The Sandwell Better Care Fund (BCF) Plan for 2025/26 has been developed in line with national planning requirements set out by NHS England. The Better Care Fund is a longstanding programme aimed at integrating health and social care services to improve outcomes for residents, particularly those who are older, frail, or have complex needs. The 2025/26 plan will continue to build on existing partnerships across Sandwell, ensuring collaboration between the local authority, the NHS, and community and third sector partners.
- 3.2 A key focus of the plan is to support people to live independently for as long as possible, reducing unnecessary hospital admissions and enabling timely and effective hospital discharges. The plan is shaped by local population needs, addressing health inequalities and ensuring services are accessible to diverse communities within Sandwell.
- 3.3 Financial planning and sound governance is central to the development of the BCF Plan, ensuring that pooled budgets between health and social care partners are used effectively. Whilst the headline performance measures required by the BCF programme for 2025/26 focus on emergency hospital admissions for over 65s, discharge delays, and permanent admissions to care homes, the planning requirements emphasise that attention should be given to other measurable outcomes, including improving reablement services, and enhancing the overall quality of care. Performance monitoring and reporting mechanisms will be strengthened to track progress against national and local priorities.
- 3.4 The Sandwell BCF Plan for 2025/26 provides a framework for delivering person-centred, joined-up care that maximises independence and quality of life. It reflects both national expectations and local priorities, ensuring that funding and resources are directed where they can have the greatest impact on our residents' health and social care outcomes.

### **4. Engagement**

- 4.1 The development and local assurance of the BCF plan has been a collaborative process, involving key stakeholders from Sandwell Council (SMBC), the Black Country Integrated Care Board (ICB), Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust (SWBHT), Black Country

Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (BCHC), Primary Care, and local voluntary and community sector (VCS) partners.

- 4.2 The plan has been informed by wider engagement work with service users, carers, and frontline professionals, ensuring that it reflects the needs and aspirations of the local population. Governance structures have been designed to support effective oversight, with the Sandwell Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) providing strategic leadership and the JPB ensuring that operational decisions align with BCF priorities.
- 4.3 Through this collaborative approach, the Sandwell BCF Plan for 2025/26 reflects a shared commitment to integrated working, ensuring that services are designed around the needs of residents and that resources are used effectively to improve health and social care outcomes.

## 5. Implications

<b>Resources:</b>	The total BCF Pooled Budget settlement for 2025/26 is £72,021,785 - an increase of £1,861,954 compared to the 2024/25 total of £70,159.831.
<b>Legal and Governance:</b>	The Better Care Fund is one of the government's key national vehicles for driving health and social care integration. It requires integrated care boards (ICBs) and local government to agree a joint plan for using pooled budgets to support integration, which is governed by an agreement established under section 75 of the NHS Act (2006).
<b>Risk:</b>	It is a requirement for a S75 Agreement to be in place to enable access to the BCF funding. There is a current S75 Agreement in place for Sandwell. The S75 Agreement for 2025/26 will be drafted following the conclusion of the national BCF plan assurance process.
<b>Equality:</b>	No implications. Services commissioned from Sandwell BCF funding are required to undertake Equality Impact Assessments.
<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b>	The Sandwell BCF programme contributes to improvements in the Health and Wellbeing outcomes for the people of Sandwell.
<b>Social Value:</b>	Schemes funded by the Sandwell BCF programme provide social value through local employment opportunities for health and care professionals and income for local businesses.
<b>Climate Change:</b>	No climate change implications arising directly as a result of this report.

<b>Corporate Parenting:</b>	No corporate parenting implications arising directly as a result of this report.
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## **6. Appendices**

6.1 Appendix 1 – Better Care Fund 2025/ 26 Narrative Plan

## **7. Background Papers**

7.1 BCF Policy Framework 2025-26