

27 July 2023		ITEM: 5
Health and Well-Being Board		
Better Care Fund Plan 2023 to 2025		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Not Applicable	
Report of: Cllr George Coxshall, Cabinet member for Health, Adult Social Care, Community and Public Protection		
Accountable Assistant Director: Les Billingham, Assistant Director of Adult Social Care and Community Development		
Accountable Director: Ian Wake, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

Thurrock's initial Better Care Fund Plan, and Better Care Fund Section 75 Agreement between the Council and NHS, was approved in 2015. The arrangement has allowed the creation of a pooled fund, to be operated in line with the terms of the Plan and the Agreement, to promote the integration of health and care services. The focus of the Better Care Fund to date has been on adults aged 65 and over who are most at risk of admission to hospital or to a residential care home.

The planning requirements for the Better Care Fund Plan for 2022/23 were published by NHS England on 4 April 2023, with a deadline for submission of the Plan of 26 June 2023. The Plan has been submitted, and scrutiny by NHS England is underway, with approval letters expected in the week of 8 September 2023. The Total BCF Pooled Budget 2023/24 is £49,139,875

The Better Care Fund Plan 2023 to 2025 has been developed to reflect the new strategy for adult services – Better Care Together Thurrock – The Case for Further Change 2022-26. The Plan also includes the Discharge Fund, first introduced in mid 2022. A programme of reviews has commenced which will ensure that all services commissioned fully reflect the new strategy, as well as meeting the National Conditions, and demonstrating best value for money.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 For the Board to approve the Better Care Fund Plan for 2023 to 2025.

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 Thurrock's initial Better Care Fund Plan, and Section 75 Agreement between the Council and the then NHS Thurrock Clinical Commissioning Group, was approved in 2015. The Agreement allowed the creation of a pooled fund, to be operated by the Council as Host Partner in line with the terms of the Agreement, to promote the integration of health and care services.
- 2.2 The Host Partner is the Partner responsible for:
 - holding all monies contributed to the Pooled Fund on behalf of itself and the other Partner; and
 - providing the financial administrative systems for the Pooled Fund.
- 2.3 The pooled fund is overseen by the Thurrock Integrated Care Alliance made up of officers from the Council and NHS Mid and South Essex Integrated Care Board (NHS MSE ICB). The Alliance receives regular reports on expenditure, quality and activity. The Alliance reports, as required, on the performance of the Better Care Fund to the Health and Wellbeing Board, as well as Cabinet and the Board of NHS MSE ICB. The focus of the Better Care Fund to date has been on adults aged 65 and over who are most at risk of admission to hospital or to a residential care home. The Better Care Fund Plan for 2022/23 was approved by the Board on 28 October 2022 and, following a national assurance process, by NHS England on 10 January 2023.
- 2.4 On 18 November 2022, the Minister for Social Care announced the £500 million Adult Social Care Discharge Fund to support timely and safe discharge from hospital into the community by reducing the number of people delayed in hospital awaiting social care. The guidance published by the Department of Health and Social Care stipulated that 'the local authorities and ICB funding allocation should be pooled into local Better Care Fund section 75 agreements with plans for spend agreed by LA and ICB chief executives and signed off by the Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) under national condition 1 of the BCF.' Condition 1 is a jointly agreed plan between local health and social care commissioners and signed off by the HWB. The Board received a report on the Adult Social Care Discharge Fund on 9 December 2022, and welcoming the additional funding, signed off the spending plan for the Fund for 2022-23.
- 2.5 The Better Care Fund Scorecard for Adult Social Care in 2022/23 shows:
 - There were 162 new permanent admissions to residential/nursing care for people 65+ in the year, which equates to 676.3 per 100,000 population. This is 16 under target.
 - In Quarter 4 2022/23, 38 out of 43 discharges from hospital for people 65+ into re-ablement/rehabilitation were at home 91 days later, which equates to 88.4%. This is 1.3% above target and is an improvement on the previous quarter. Of the 5 discharges where the individual was not at home 91 days later, 3 had deceased and 2 were in hospital. If the deceased were not counted in the cohort, the performance would have been 95%.

- 2.6 An end of year report on the ASC Discharge Fund 2022/23 was submitted as required to NHS England on 2 May 2023. The Board may wish to note that the Discharge Fund received by the Council was fully committed by year end, and the schemes were successful in alleviating winter pressures.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 The Better Care Fund Policy framework for this year and next, published on the 4th of April 2023, sets out the Government's priorities for 2023-25, including improving discharge, reducing the pressure on Urgent and Emergency Care and social care, supporting intermediate care, unpaid carers and housing adaptations. The vision for the BCF over 2023-25 is to support people to live healthy, independent and dignified lives, through joining up health, social care and housing services seamlessly around the person. This vision is underpinned by the two core BCF objectives, which are 2 of the 3 National Conditions for the BCF:
- Enable people to stay well, safe and independent at home for longer
 - Provide the right care in the right place at the right time
- 3.2 The Discharge Fund in 2023/24 (and 2024/25)
- The planning requirements state 'In 2023-24, the Government is providing £600 million (£300 million for ICBs, £300 million for local councils) to enable local areas to build additional adult social care (ASC) and community-based reablement capacity to reduce delayed discharges and improve outcomes for patients. As in 2022-23 the ICB will agree with relevant local HWBs how the ICB element of funding will be allocated rather than being set as part of overall BCF allocations, and this should be based on allocations proportionate to local area need. Local areas should use the discharge funding as part of BCF plans, particularly in relation to National Condition 3, and in conjunction with wider funding to build additional social care and community-based reablement capacity, maximise the number of hospital beds freed up and deliver sustainable improvements for patients.'
- 3.3 The Better Care Fund for 2023/24 comprises:
- Disabled Facilities Grant – £1,318,254
 - Local Authority Discharge Funding - £780,830
 - ICB Discharge Funding £988,577
 - Improved BCF Contribution £5,569,460
 - Local Authority Additional Contribution £27,005,157
 - NHS minimum contribution £13,477,327
- The Total BCF Pooled Budget 2023/24 is £49,139,875
Details of the contributions to the Pooled Fund are shown on Tab 6 (Income) of the Planning template. This includes indicative values for 2024/25.
- 3.4 The Better Care Fund planning submission for Thurrock 2023 to 2025 (including intermediate care and short term care capacity and demand plan;

and discharge spending plan) was made on 28 June 2023 which was set as the national deadline.

The review of the Better Care Fund

- 3.5 The attached BCF Planning and Narrative templates address the core objectives of the Better Care Fund 2023/25, and the Plan for has been developed with a view to implementing the new Strategy for Adults: Better Care Together Thurrock – the case for further change 2022-26. In the light of current performance, no significant changes are planned for BCF services commissioned at this point in the year (July) as a local review of the whole plan is commencing in July and August 2023, with the aid of the Better Care Fund Support Programme which is delivered through the LGA.

- 3.6 The review encompasses:

- Self-assessment of what is working well in Discharge to Assess (D2A), guided by the Hospital Discharge Policy, through an online survey of system leaders and workforce
- Review and exploration of options to develop an affordable model for discharge, one which supports joint budget management, shared decision-making and shared risk sharing
- Findings activity presented to leaders in peer-led facilitated conversations to agree priorities and next steps

The Alliance is committed to ensuring any potential improvements which are identified during the course of the BCF Review, and in particular the review of the High Impact Change Model, will be implemented without delay. The Health and Well-Being Board will be advised of the outcome of the review, and the implications its the Better Care Fund Plans.

Section 75 Agreement

- 3.7 Thurrock has had a Better Care Fund Plan and associated Section 75 Agreement in place since 2015-16. The NHS England Planning requirements for 2023/25 stipulate that the section 75 agreement for 2023/24 is to be signed and in place (following approval of the Plan by NHS England) by 31 October 2023.

- 3.8 Cabinet agreed in July 2021 (Decision: 110575) to give delegated authority to the Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Adults and Communities, to agree annual Section 75 Agreements and Better Care Fund plans and proposals for applicable periods as required, effective from 2021/22. The Agreement is subject to the Council's annual budget setting arrangements, and any changes to the Section 75 can be made with agreement of both parties – Thurrock Council and NHS MSE ICB. The terms of the Section 75 agreement are subject to review as part of the work of the LGA Better Care Fund Support Programme as noted above.

Overspends and Underspends in the Better Care Fund

- 3.9 The Section 75 Agreement sets out arrangements for overspends and underspends to the Fund. The arrangements to date have been that any

expenditure over and above the value of the Fund will be the responsibility of either the Council or NHS MSE ICB depending on whether the expenditure is incurred on social care functions or health functions. Arrangements for monitoring expenditure and managing any overspend in an individual scheme are set out in detail within the Section 75 Agreement. Underspends have stayed within the Pooled Fund unless otherwise agreed by both parties. The arrangements for overspends and underspends will be considered as part of the review of the terms of the Section 75 agreement noted above. Any changes to the current agreement will be agreed by both parties.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 Section 75 of the NHS Act 2006 allows partners (NHS bodies and councils) to contribute to a common fund which can be used to commission health or social care related services. This power allows a local authority to commission health services and NHS commissioners to commission social care. It enables joint commissioning and commissioning of integrated services.
- 4.2 The NHS England Planning requirements for 2023/24 stipulate, that as a National Condition, BCF Plans must be agreed by the ICB(s) (in accordance with ICB governance rules) and the local council chief executive, prior to being signed off by the HWB. Once the plan is agreed and approved, the funding must be placed into one or more pooled funds under section 75 of the NHS Act 2006.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 5.1 A specific consultation on the establishment of the pooled fund to drive through the integration of health and social care services, as required under the terms of the Health and Social Care Act 2012, was held in September and October 2014.
- 5.2 There has also been extensive consultation on the new strategy for adults - Better Care Together Thurrock – The Case for Further Change - which forms the foundation of the plan.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 6.1 A key aim of the Better Care Fund, and the Discharge Fund, is to reduce emergency admissions, which brings within it the potential to invest in services closer to home to prevent, reduce or delay the need for health and social care services or from the deterioration of health conditions requiring intensive health and care services. This will contribute to the priority of

'Improve Health and Wellbeing' and the vision set out within the refreshed Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

- 6.2 Achieving closer integration and improved outcomes for patients, services users and carers is also seen to be a significant way of managing demand for health and social care services, and so manage financial pressures on both the NHS MSE ICB and the Council.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Jo Freeman**
Finance Manager

The Better Care Fund comprises contributions from the Council and NHS MSE ICB as shown in paragraph 3.3 of this report.

The total value of the pooled fund in 2023/24 is £49,139,875. The nature of the expenditure is an agreed ring-fenced fund. Financial risk is therefore minimised and governed by the terms set out in the Agreement. Paragraph 3.9 refers. The Fund will be accounted for in accordance with the relevant legislation and regulations, and the agreement between the Local Authority and NHS MSE ICB.

Financial monitoring arrangements are in place, ensuring that auditing requirements are met, as well as disclosure in the financial statements.

The value of the pool can change by mutual agreement between the two parties.

7.2 Legal

Implications not received at the time of publication.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
**Community Engagement and Project
Monitoring Officer**

The vision of the Better Care Fund is improved outcomes for patients, service users and carers through the provision of better co-ordinated health and

social care services. The commissioning plans developed to realise this vision will be developed with due regard to the equality and diversity considerations.

7.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health Inequalities, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder, and Impact on Looked After Children

None

8. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- 2023 to 2025 Better Care Fund policy framework 2023-25, Published 4 April 2023 Available via the following link:
[2023 to 2025 Better Care Fund policy framework - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/better-care-fund)
- Better Care Fund planning requirements 2023-25, Published 4 April 2023 Available via the following link:
[PRN00315-better-care-fund-planning-requirements-2023-25.pdf](#)

9. **Appendices to the report**

- The Thurrock Better Care Fund Plan (comprising Planning template, and Narrative template) for 2023-25.

Report Author:

Christopher Smith
Programme Manager
Adults, Housing and Health