

Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

14 October 2025

Attendance of the Deputy Leader of the Council

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Teresa Murray, Deputy Leader

Summary

This annual report provides an account of the role of the Deputy Leader of the Council, who has responsibility for Adult Social Care and Public Health. It details their ambitions for their areas of responsibility, how they have and will undertake political challenge and leadership and what their priorities and ambitions are for the year ahead.

1. Recommendations

1.1 The Committee is asked to note the report.

2. Budget and policy framework

2.1 The areas within the terms of reference of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and covered by the Deputy Leader of the Council who has responsibility for Adult Social Care and Public Health, as set out in the Council's constitution are:

- Adults' Mental Health and Disability Services (including Learning and Physical Disabilities)
- Adults' Partnership Commissioning (25+) and Better Care Fund
- Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP)
- Carers
- Community Care
- External inspections
- Financial Assessments, Adult Social Care Income and Debt
- Health and Health Partnerships
- Kyndi
- Older People
- Public Health – Lead Member, including Health and Wellbeing Board
- Residential Care
- Shared Lives
- Voluntary Sector

3. Background

- 3.1. This has been another very busy and eventful year for the services in my Cabinet Portfolio, and we have seen a positive impact of the investment the Cabinet put into Adult Social Care. I wish to place on record my thanks to senior managers for their support and guidance, to all front line and back-office staff including those in commissioning, procurement, and finance for the support they give throughout the year and to my Cabinet colleagues for their commitment to the statutory services those in my Portfolio provide. I am grateful to our partners across Medway Health and Social Care community as we continue to work towards truly integrated services and to all Members especially those on the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HASC), who help to ensure that the services in my Portfolio are a high priority for Medway Council in the context of continuing financial challenges and rising demand. Council staff have shown genuine commitment and professional determination in their support for my ambitions for Health and Adult services and I am delighted that the early work on building a new Care facility has begun alongside other innovations, research, staff development and much strengthened oversight and control of finances by the whole Division, with the introduction of monthly budget monitoring bringing shared responsibility and greater transparency to this challenging aspect of our work.

3.2. Adult Social Care

3.2.1. Adult Social Care Restructure

The recent Adult Social Care restructure has delivered several key benefits, notably enhanced management oversight and enabling a more strategic focus across critical service areas. By aligning leadership more closely with operational delivery, the restructure has strengthened accountability and improved decision-making. It has also allowed for dedicated and focussed attention to services such as safeguarding, assessments, and provider services, ensuring these vital functions receive the strategic direction and support needed to drive quality, consistency, and improved outcomes for residents. While the restructure is still being embedded and there have been some inevitable bumps along the way, the overall direction is positive. The new structure is laying the foundations for a more responsive, resilient, and outcome-focused service that is better equipped to meet the needs of residents and adapt to future challenges.

Along with increased resource through rightsizing and the recent restructure, a new tool, Magic Notes, has been introduced in Medway Adult Social Care to support practitioners and improve efficiency. Magic Notes is an AI-powered solution that generates high-quality case notes from conversations, helping to reduce the administrative burden on frontline staff. By capturing key information quickly and accurately, the tool enables practitioners to spend more time with residents and less time on paperwork. This innovation is part of a broader effort to modernise practice, improve consistency in recording, and ensure that vital information is documented in a timely, person-centred way.

3.2.2. CQC Assessment

As Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care, I welcomed the findings of Medway Council's recent Care Quality Commission (CQC) assessment, which rated our services as "Requires Improvement" with a score of 59%, just four percentage points short of a "Good" rating. This assessment reflects both the challenges we face and the progress we've made. I was pleased to see recognition of our strengths in areas such as supporting people to lead healthier lives, Partnerships and communities, and safe pathways, systems and transitions. However, I fully acknowledge that we must continue to improve in key areas including assessing needs, safeguarding, and governance. In the financial year 2023/24, Adult Social Care received 10,933 new support requests. By 2024/25, this number had grown to 14,864, marking a 36.0% increase. Safeguarding concerns have also risen by 20.2% compared to 2023/24. This has continued the challenges in respect of long wait times, and staffing pressures remain significant issues, but I am confident that our ongoing transformation work is laying the foundations for sustainable improvement.

I have been proud to support the Adult Social Care team throughout this journey, including the investment to increase staffing and restructure services. I believe the CQC report validates the direction we are taking and confirms that we are on the right path. We are already seeing the impact of our efforts, and I am committed to ensuring we maintain momentum. With continued focus, partnership working, and investment, I am confident that Medway can achieve a "Good" rating in future assessments - delivering better outcomes for our residents and creating a service we can all be proud of.

3.2.3. Mental Health

People living with mental ill health are increasingly reliant on Adult Social Care services, and in Medway, this growing demand has required a substantial increase in funding. Since 2019/20, overall investment in mental health services has risen by 178%, not as a strategic choice, but as a necessary response to the scale and complexity of need. One of the most significant areas of growth has been in Supported Living, where expenditure has increased from £985,000 in 2019/20 to £6.5 million in 2024/25. This sharp rise reflects the reality that more people need intensive, community-based support to live safely and independently, and Adult Social Care must continue to adapt to meet these challenges.

3.2.4. Continuing Health Care

The Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) Spring Survey 2025 highlights growing concerns among local authorities regarding NHS Continuing Healthcare (CHC) funding. Nationally, 73% of Directors of Adult Social Care reported increased council overspends due to tighter CHC eligibility, while 75% noted a rise in new adult social care requests from individuals who were previously eligible for CHC. 100% of Directors agreed that NHS pressures will intensify strain on Adult Social Care in 2025/26.

For Medway Adult Social Care, these national trends are translating into increased financial pressure, as more residents fall outside CHC eligibility and require support from council-funded services. Strategic planning, robust partnership working with the ICB, and clear escalation routes for CHC disputes are essential to mitigate these impacts locally.

As the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care, I am committed to supporting Medway Council through the challenges posed by reduced NHS Continuing Healthcare (CHC) funding. I will continue to advocate for the needs of our adult social care services both within the council and with external partners, including the Integrated Care Board (ICB), to ensure fairer funding.

3.2.5. Care for Medway

I continue to lead the Care for Medway strategic initiative to address the increasing demand and limited capacity in the local care home market, particularly for residential and nursing dementia care. We are exploring the feasibility of designing, commissioning, and operating our own care home provision, consisting of 40 residential dementia beds, and up to 40 additional assessment beds and reablement services to improve flow at Medway NHS Foundation Trust and reduce waiting times. With a rapidly ageing population and rising levels of complex need, my proposal aims to ensure high-quality, sustainable care options for Medway residents.

A report will be submitted to Full Council in October 2025 to recommend agreeing funding for the next phase. A detailed business case will then be developed and presented to Cabinet in April 2026 to determine whether the Council will proceed with the proposal.

Care for Medway has the potential to deliver significant benefits for residents, including improved access to care, shorter waiting times, and more personalised support in a modern, purpose-built environment. It would also enable better integration with health services, provide a more stable and responsive local care market, and create new employment opportunities for residents— supporting the wider community and local economy.

3.2.6. Adult Social Care Budget

Like many local authorities, Adult Social Care are experiencing increasing complexity of need, which has contributed to a substantial overspend. We are taking decisive action to address this, including a full review of our Best Practice Panel, which will now include a dedicated session focused on Supported Living to ensure more consistent decision-making and better value for money. Alongside this, we are driving savings through our transformation programme and closely monitoring progress via the Financial Improvement and Transformation (FIT) Plan tracker. These tools are helping us identify opportunities to reduce costs while maintaining quality and safety. The challenges are real, but they are also helping to sharpen our focus, strengthen our governance, and ensure that every pound spent delivers the best possible outcomes for our residents.

3.3. Public Health

3.3.1. HDRC and the visit from the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR)

The NIHR-funded Health Determinants Research Collaboration (HDRC) aims to increase research capacity and capability in Medway Council to improve health and reduce health inequalities in Medway. To achieve this, a lot of work has taken place in the background to build the team, develop an approach to training and explore initial research questions. Early in 2025, Medway's HDRC team was visited by the Public Health Consultant Advisor to the Public Health Research Programme for NIHR and the Deputy Director of Research Programmes in the Science, Research and Evidence directorate at the Department of Health and Social Care. This high-level delegation was extremely impressed by what has been achieved so far and the approaches that the team are taking and have developed. Most importantly, they left feeling confident that Medway's HDRC is robust and is on track to deliver its objectives.

3.3.2. Marmot

Medway is one of the first places in the Southeast to commit to starting the journey to collaboratively address health inequalities, setting out a plan to ensure measures are long-lasting and have a desired impact. Becoming a Marmot Place is a commitment to lifelong improvements in health equity and social justice. A Marmot Place recognises that health and health inequalities are mostly shaped by the social determinants of health: the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age, and takes action to improve health and reduce health inequalities.

Medway held a Marmot Place launch event on Tuesday 22nd April, bringing together more than 100 representatives from organisations specialising in health, education, housing and the voluntary community, as well as clinicians from across the sector. The guest speaker was University College London's Professor Sir Michael Marmot himself, who listened to Medway's vision of ultimately improving health outcomes for all its residents living across Medway, and helping them live longer, healthier lives.

Since the launch event, the Medway Marmot Advisory Group has met to agree the priorities for 2025. The group have agreed the following ten-year ambition:

"In ten years' time, Medway will halve the gap in life expectancy between Medway and England; halve the gap in life expectancy between the best and worst-off areas in Medway; and halve the gap in healthy life expectancy between Medway and England."

Over the next few months, we will start to see the progress on our ambitious community asset mapping exercise, engaging with residents to understand their health inequality priorities and progressing the priority of supporting young people into education, employment and training.

3.3.3. Beside You

Beside You is a local campaign which supports women and their families to breastfeed. The Beside You website was refreshed and relaunched, just in time for World Breastfeeding Week (1-7 August).

The site has been updated in collaboration with Medway Maternity and Medway Community Healthcare and now offers even more comprehensive support for local families. The website covers everything from pregnancy and birth, right through to breastfeeding support. Breastfeeding is one of the first steps towards good nutrition and gives babies the best start in life.

The refreshed website includes:

- Clear accessible guidance for expectant families on what to expect during their antenatal appointments in Medway;
- The addition of a 'Looking after you' section, which includes nutrition, safe sleep and information about support for perinatal mental health;
- A new 'Supporting dads and partners' section, which includes support for dads and partners during their antenatal journeys, and details of local support organisations for Dad and LGBTQ+ families;
- More detailed information about breastfeeding, plus an updated interactive website showing all the antenatal / postnatal support available locally;
- Links to local services, support groups and breastfeeding friendly venues;
- Stories and experiences from local Medway families.

Beside You Medway is a trusted resource for families, recommended to all expectant and new families by midwives throughout Medway. It is particularly useful for anyone working in maternity, health visiting, early years and community settings <https://besideyoumedway.co.uk>

3.3.4. Dental/Oral Health

Improving oral health continues to be a priority for the Public Health team, particularly reducing and preventing tooth decay in children and adults. Through the Oral Health Strategy group, we continue to support and empower partners to take action in their settings, doing this through training professionals, campaigns and providing support materials.

This year Medway secured investment to launch a supervised tooth brushing scheme for children. A staff member has been recruited and external investment received for materials, such as toothbrushes. Implementing this programme to show children how to effectively clean teeth and provide the resources to do so at home, aims to reduce hospital admissions for tooth

decay, which continues to be the most common reason for children to be admitted to hospital.

3.3.5. Falls Prevention

The Medway Falls Management Exercise and Wellbeing Service (FaME) is a brand new 20-week strength and conditioning primary falls prevention service. After securing funding from the Better Care Fund a specialist team have been recruited to support frail adults to prevent falls related hospital admission. Falling has a major impact on elderly people's health and wellbeing and is a major cost burden to the NHS and adult social care. The average cost of a fall that leads to a hospital admission is in excess of £14,000.

After a successful pilot the service was launched in a range of community venues, with over 200 frail adults either being referred or self-referred in the first quarter of the year.

3.3.6. Health & Wellbeing Board

The Health and Wellbeing Board brings system partners together to deliver the outcomes described in the Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy. I would like to highlight a few key areas covered by the Board.

3.3.7. Local plan

For far too long, Medway had been without a Local Plan, leading to poorer, ad hoc development in Medway. I am pleased that Medway now has a Local Plan that has been produced in a way that integrates health and wellbeing as a fundamental part of future development in Medway, with the Health and Wellbeing Board having the opportunity to comment on the plan in its development stages.

3.3.8. Medway Food Partnership

The Medway Food Strategy is a comprehensive plan to foster a healthier, more sustainable, and resilient food system within Medway, aiming to promote access to affordable, healthy food and improve community food skills, tackling food poverty and diet-related illnesses through initiatives aligned with Sustainable Food Places principles.

The Medway Food Partnership forms a subgroup of the public health's healthy weight network. It does this through the actions of the 5 key operational subgroups that make up the food partnership.

1. Poverty, food security and emergency food support
2. Healthy food for all and education and skills
3. Climate change and the environment
4. Business and procurement
5. Oral health

In this, our 5th year, we have secured investment to open a community supermarket to help people experiencing food poverty move from dependency to resilience and reduce food waste, with commissioning a provider due to commence in the autumn. I was pleased to attend our Annual Food Partnership meeting on 20th September when we heard from enthusiastic local growers, producers, educators and businesses as well as voluntary sector partners all committed to ensuring more of our residents can enjoy better, sustainable food at a time of continuing stretched resources, challenge and change.

3.3.9. Better Care Fund

The Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) formally approves the Better Care Fund (BCF) plan annually, ensuring it meets all national conditions and reflects a locally integrated approach to health, social care, and housing.

The BCF plan is jointly developed by NHS and local authority partners, with input from key stakeholders. It supports the Integrated Care Strategy and aligns with the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA).

The plan must comply with all national conditions, including:

- Funding for discharge services
- Use of pooled budgets under Section 75
- Plans for integrated care and prevention
- Metrics for reducing avoidable admissions and improving outcomes

As Chair, I am accountable for the final sign-off of the BCF plan on behalf of the Board. I ensure the plan reflects system-wide collaboration and strategic alignment with both national and local priorities. The Health and Wellbeing Board has robust oversight mechanisms in place to monitor delivery and impact.

We dedicated one meeting to a review of women's health, including the development of women's health hubs and most recently serious violent crime and road safety. This new approach worked well and led us to plan to hold meetings from April 2025 based on the themes of the Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy – this will be discussed in more detail in next year's report.

3.3.10. Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA)

The pharmaceutical needs assessment (PNA) is a statutory document that Health and Wellbeing Boards are required to produce every three years. The document is used by NHS commissioners to inform decisions regarding approving new pharmacy applications, relocating or consolidating existing services and commissioning enhanced or advanced services. This year we have updated the PNA, which is now published. I was pleased to be the

chair of the PNA Steering Group and to have been involved in the careful deliberation of the data for each area of Medway described in the PNA.

A PNA has to follow a particular format and be developed in a particular way, with specialist support. A key issue for the PNA is to determine whether there is a gap in service provision. The definition of a gap in the terms of the PNA may differ from the public perception of the availability and access to pharmacies and in the current economic climate, viability of pharmacies is a significant concern. If the situation changes in the next three years before the next PNA is due, the Health and Wellbeing Board will issue what is known as “supplementary statements” that update the conclusions of the PNA based on those changes.

3.3.11. Therapeutic Alliance for Young People

Both locally and nationally there have been increasing concerns about the mental health of young people since the pandemic. The children’s partnership commissioning team have been working to increase the support available for children and young people across the iThrive framework bolstering the low to moderate support available in order to reduce the escalation of needs and pressure on specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

In 2025/26, we successfully secured the funding from NHS Kent and Medway ICB to pool with Medway Council investment and procure a single Therapeutic Alliance (TA) for mild to moderate mental health support for children and young people in Medway, bringing all contracts across the space into one single service. This will create a single front door to access support making it easier for professionals, parents/carers and young people to navigate mental health services. Key priority pathways will be established for care experienced children, children with special educational needs and youth justice pathways. In addition to face-to-face group and one-to-one services there will be a digital offer which will increase access for young people in evenings and weekends. The TA will provide a range of therapeutic interventions including Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (DBT) and Play Therapy according to need. The aim will be to ensure young people can access the right support in a timely way. The aim is for the new service to go live in April 2026.

3.3.12. James Williams Healthy Living Centre

Good progress is being made on the development of the James Williams Healthy Living Centre which is due to open in the new financial year. The centre will offer a comprehensive space for 2 GP practices and a range of other health, community and voluntary based services.

The ambition is for this to form the first neighbourhood health (NH) model for Medway. Neighbourhood health will benefit patients by providing end-to-end care and tailored support, looking beyond the condition at wider causes of health issues, helping to avoid unnecessary trips to hospital, prevent complications and avoid the frustration of being passed around the system.

The Council supported a bid for Medway to be in the pilot implementation programme. Whilst this was unsuccessful the learning from this helped secure a place on the Southeast Health Accelerator pathway. This will help shape the model, identify the cohort needs and develop the systems leadership to ensure that we are NH model ready when the James Williams Healthy Living Centre opens.

3.3.13. Voluntary Community Sector (VCS)

I have continued my program of visits to VCS organisations in Medway and this year went to see the work of the Alzheimer's and Dementia support service in Frindsbury, Bluebell Warriors who work to ensure those with Dementia have their voices heard in service development, KMPT's new recovery and respite facility for mental health patients, Open Road addiction support, Second Chance and Home Start as well as various community cafes and Public Health classes.

Adult Partnership Commissioning commission and manage a number of voluntary sector services that support the aims of the Better Care Fund and the wider aims of Adult Social Care and Health. These are:

Carers Support Service – Carers First

Services provides a range of advice and support for unpaid carers in Medway. Carers First engaged with 837 service users in 2024.

Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired – Kent Association for the Blind

Visually impaired register includes 1074 adults and 81 children and young people

Healthwatch Medway – EK360

Represents the service user voice in health and social care services.

Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure – Medway Voluntary Action

Supports the sector to remain resilient and sustainable, supporting income generation, advice and support to the whole VCS in Medway.

In 2024, the service supported 116 organisations with income generation, and of those supported 68% were from micro and small organisations.

100% of VCS organisations using the service felt that they have achieved their outcomes as a result of using the service.

40% of organisations supported are in areas of health inequalities, such as the Medway Central, Medway South, Gillingham South and the Peninsula.

Wellbeing Navigation

Supports Medway residents to navigate the health and social care system and help those with conditions that could be preventable, those with long term conditions and the ageing population to get care as quickly as possible, from the best resources.

In 2024, the service supported over 400 referrals each month.

3.3.14. Kent and Medway Integrated Care Strategy and delivery plan

The Kent and Medway Integrated Care Strategy was developed by Medway Council, Kent County Council and the NHS Kent and Medway ICB, with input from partners including the voluntary and faith sector to create a shared approach to addressing health and social care needs. This strategy was developed in parallel with our own Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy and we ensured that there was read across between the strategies. Over the last year, I have kept abreast of progress in the shared delivery of the strategy through the Health and Wellbeing Board and the meetings of the Integrated Care Partnership, a valuable forum that currently includes the senior leadership of the three statutory partners: Medway Council, Kent County Council, the ICB; and representatives of Kent districts and the voluntary sector. I believe that it will only be possible to address some of our most complex problems by working collaboratively across the system and the Integrated Care Partnership and Integrated Care Strategy provide the vehicles to do that. The joint local health and wellbeing strategy enables us to put a Medway-specific lens on these and other issues.

3.3.15. Carers

Although it is difficult to measure the current overall level of unpaid care provided by Medway's residents, the most recent Census data provides us with our best indication. In 2021, the number stood at approximately 24,828, this represents 9.2% of Medway's population aged 5 and over. Approximately 22,000 of these are aged 18 and over.

Carers provide essential support to relatives, friends, and neighbours who could not manage without help. This hidden workforce plays a vital role in sustaining the health and social care system, with their contribution saving taxpayers billions nationally.

Adult Social Care is, therefore, currently undertaking a comprehensive review of the carers' offer in Medway, in recognition of the essential contribution carers make. We are working in partnership with Trussell who are campaigning to improve conditions and support for unpaid Carers.

4. Ambitions for the Year Ahead

- 4.1. I will continue my work to further strengthen partnerships, enhancing collaboration with key stakeholders, including health services, voluntary sectors, and community organisations, to deliver comprehensive and

effective care; focusing on achieving consistently high-quality outcomes for all residents in receipt of care and support.

- 4.2. A new Adult Social Care Strategy for Medway will be developed and we are currently consulting stakeholders and partners. I have attended our whole Division training and development sessions to see for myself how staff respond and to work along side them to make improvements. We will set out a clear vision for how we will support people to live well, independently, and with dignity. For residents and service users, it will mean more personalised, proactive, and joined-up care that focuses on outcomes and what matters most to them. Carers will benefit from greater recognition, improved access to support, and a stronger voice in shaping services. For our workforce, the strategy will provide a shared direction, clearer priorities, and a commitment to investing in skills, wellbeing, and modern ways of working. Ultimately, the strategy will help us build a more sustainable, inclusive, and responsive adult social care system that meets the needs of Medway's communities now and into the future.
- 4.3. I will continue to lead on the development and delivery of our Prevention Strategy, which is central to our ambition of supporting people to live well, independently, and for longer. Prevention is not just about reducing demand on services, it's about improving quality of life, delaying or avoiding the need for formal care, and empowering individuals and communities to take control of their wellbeing. The strategy will focus on early intervention, better access to information and advice, stronger community connections, and targeted support for those most at risk. By working closely with partners across health, housing, and the voluntary sector, we can build a more proactive and sustainable system that benefits residents, carers, and staff alike. Prevention is a long-term commitment, and I am proud to champion this work as we continue to transform adult social care in Medway.
- 4.4. In January this year, NHS England published guidelines for NHS organisations on the development of a Neighbourhood Health Service, where the NHS, local government, including social care, and their partners work together to bring care closer to home. This was followed by the 10-year plan in June, which emphasises the importance of neighbourhood health and the primary role of Health and Wellbeing Boards in developing neighbourhood health plans. In the year ahead, I will be working with colleagues in the ICB to determine how we can make neighbourhood health a success in Kent and Medway, recognising that there is a careful balance to be found between what makes the most sense to be done once, in the same way, across the whole of Kent and Medway, and what needs to be determined locally, based on local needs and circumstances.
- 4.5. From April this year, I have changed the approach that the Health and Wellbeing Board takes setting its agenda by focusing each meeting on one of the four themes of the Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy. This helps to ensure that all partners represented on the Board maintain a focus on the aims of the strategy and the actions that all we need to take to deliver the outcomes set out in strategy.

5. Climate change implications

- 5.1. [The Council declared a climate change emergency in April 2019](#) - item 1038D refers and has set a target for Medway to become carbon neutral by 2050.
- 5.2. Adult Social Care and Public Health proactively work with partners and within their own divisions to support the target for Medway to become carbon neutral by 2050. Public Health has an action plan with a number of activities that are either new specific pieces of work, such as replacing the van with an electric vehicle and conducting an energy efficiency check of buildings used for Public Health services; or ways of working that have become part of business as usual, such as continuing to promote and only issue re-usable e-cigarettes in our vape programmes and encouraging all staff to attend carbon literacy training.
- 5.3. Commissioning activity undertaken by Adults Partnership Commissioning has a strong emphasis on the Council's climate change aims. for example, the Integrated Community Equipment Service contract ensures the provider is committed to using electric vehicles for deliveries and collections and has an apprenticeship programme.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

7 Legal implications

- 7.1 There are no legal implication arising directly from this report.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Medway Adult Social Care Local Account 2024-25

Background papers

None