

## **Cabinet**

**10 March 2026**

### **Adult Social Care Strategy 2025 - 2028**

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Teresa Murray, Deputy Leader of the Council

Report from: Jackie Brown, Assistant Director, Adult Social Care

Author: Sacha Kennard, Head of Adult Social Care Transformation and Improvement

#### **Summary**

This report presents Medway Council's refreshed Adult Social Care Strategy 2025 - 2028. Developed in response to increasing demand, rising complexity of need, and financial pressures, the Strategy sets out a clear goal and mission to help people live safely, stay independent, and be treated with dignity and respect. It is shaped by extensive consultation and aligns with statutory duties and wider system priorities. The Strategy outlines five strategic commitments and a phased delivery plan, supported by the Adult Social Care Transformation and Improvement Programme. It will guide future commissioning, investment, and service development, ensuring Adult Social Care remains responsive, inclusive, and sustainable.

The report was previously considered by the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 15 January 2026, the comments of which are set out at section 7 of the report.

#### **1. Recommendations**

- 1.1. The Cabinet is requested to note the comments of the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as set out at section 7 of the report.
- 1.2. The Cabinet is asked to approve the refreshed Adult Social Care Strategy, as set out at Appendix A to the report.

#### **2. Suggested reasons for decisions**

- 2.1. This report is an update to the previously published Adult Social Care Strategy 2021 - 2025 document. This updated strategy document considers local demographic changes, increased service demand and financial pressures within Adult Social Care, proposing aims and objectives to be delivered by the service to meet this increased demand, whilst maintaining quality of service.

### 3. Budget and policy framework

#### 3.1. The strategy supports the One Medway Council Plan:

Priority 1: Delivering Quality Social Care and Community Services, and sub-priorities:

- Provide effective, targeted support for our most vulnerable residents to enable them to fulfil their potential and improve their quality of life;
- Support people of all ages to live the most happy, healthy, independent life possible, utilising assistive technologies;
- Support all adults, including those living with disability or physical or mental illness to live independently and stay safe;
- People in Medway live independent and fulfilled lives into an active older age.

Priority 4: Improving Health and Wellbeing for All, and sub-priorities:

- Empowering people to achieve good health and wellbeing through prevention, with access to local activities and services that will enable and support them to lead independent, active and healthy lifestyles;
- Work in partnership with communities and organisations to address the issues that negatively affect health and wellbeing, making sure everyone has the opportunity to live long, healthy lives.

3.2. The refreshed strategy aligns with the Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2024 – 2028 through a shared focus on prevention, early intervention, and person-centred care. Both strategies aim to improve outcomes by supporting independence, reducing inequalities, and addressing wider determinants of health such as housing, employment, and social connection. They also emphasise mental health and community engagement, and integrated working across health, care, and the voluntary sector. The Adult Social Care Strategy's commitment to co-production, digital inclusion, and workforce development complements the Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy's goals of cohesive services and community empowerment.

3.3. The strategy supports the NHS 10 Year Plan's vision of shifting from reactive, hospital-based care to proactive, community-led and preventative models. It mirrors the Plan's three key shifts, towards community care, digital transformation, and prevention, though its emphasis on early help, strengths-based support, and inclusive digital access. Both strategies prioritise workforce transformation and integrated care, with a shared commitment to innovation, efficiency, and sustainability. Together, they promote a modern, inclusive health and care system that responds to evolving needs.

3.4. The strategy is closely aligned with the Kent and Medway Integrated Care Strategy, which focuses on improving health and wellbeing through collaboration, prevention, and tackling inequalities. Both strategies recognise the importance of addressing social, economic, and environmental factors that influence health, and promote place-based, joined-up working across

councils, the NHS, and community partners. Share priorities include supporting carers, improving access to services, and ensuring care is inclusive and equitable. This alignment strengthens Medway's role within the wider system and supports a unified approach to transforming care across the region.

## 4. Background and Local Context

- 4.1. Adult Social Care in Medway is operating in a context of increasing demand, rising complexity of need, and significant financial pressure. The adult population in Medway for 2024/25 is estimated at 223,299, comprising 174,514 adults aged 18-64, and 48,785 aged 65 and over. As of June 2025, 3038 adults are receiving long-term care and support from Medway Council, equivalent to 1 in every 74 adults. The majority of these individuals (57%) require physical support for personal care, followed by learning disability support (19%) and mental health needs (8%).
- 4.2. Demographic breakdowns reveal that over 2100 people aged 65+ are receiving support, compared to just under 1000 working age adults. Population projections indicate that the number of people aged 65 and over in Medway will continue to rise significantly over the coming years, increasing both the volume and complexity of care needs. This reflects the growing pressure from an ageing population and the need to plan for future demand, and reinforces the importance of shifting towards preventative, community-based support that enables older adults to remain independent for longer and reduces reliance on residential care and hospital admissions.
- 4.3. The financial context is equally pressing. In 2024/25, Medway Council allocated £101.57 million to Adult Social Care, but actual spend reached £108.71 million, exceeding the budget by over £7.1 million.
- 4.4. Over the past five years, the cost of delivering care has risen significantly:
  - Supported Living: +186%
  - Residential and Nursing Care: +77%
  - Mental Health Care: +178%
- 4.5. These trends underscore the urgent need for a strategic shift towards early intervention, prevention, and personalised support to reduce long-term dependence and ensure financial sustainability. The strategy aims to respond to this, alongside increasing complexity of need, the importance of supporting carers, and the need for services that are inclusive, accessible, and responsive to the diverse needs of Medway's population.

## 5. Development of the Strategy

- 5.1. The refreshed Adult Social Care Strategy reflects a shift from reactive care to proactive, strengths-based approaches, and is designed to meet statutory duties while aligning with wider system ambitions.

5.2. The strategy is built around a clear goal: to help people live safely, stay independent, and be treated with dignity and respect. Its mission is to support and engage with people and communities to live safe, independent, and fulfilling lives. This is underpinned by a commitment to inclusion, responsiveness, and evidence-based decision making.

### 5.3. The Five Strategic Commitments

5.3.1. To deliver on this mission, the strategy sets out five key commitments:

#### 5.3.2. *Being Bold and Open to New Ideas*

Rising costs and increasing complexity of need require innovation. Embracing technology, workforce development, and new models of care will help Medway to deliver more efficient, person-centred services.

#### 5.3.3. *Improving How We Work and Think Together*

With a diverse and growing population, the system must adapt to meet evolving needs. This includes improving internal processes, professional development, and cross-sector collaboration.

#### 5.3.4. *Building Strong Partnerships*

The scale of demand cannot be met by the council alone. Stronger partnerships with the NHS, voluntary sector, and care providers are essential to deliver joined-up, community-based care.

#### 5.3.5. *Listening, Sharing and Working Together*

Engagement with people who use services, carers, and communities ensures that services are responsive and inclusive. This is vital for building trust and improving outcomes.

#### 5.3.6. *Being Fair, Prepared and Focused on Prevention*

With 1 in 74 adults already receiving long-term support, and with the over-65 population set to grow, early help and prevention are critical to managing future demand and ensuring sustainability.

## 6. Delivery of the Strategy

6.1. Delivery will be driven through the Adult Social Care Transformation and Improvement Programme, including the CQC Improvement Plan. Oversight will be provided by the Adult Social Care Improvement Programme Board, ensuring strategic alignment, accountability, and progress monitoring across all workstreams.

6.2. Implementation will follow a phased approach, structured around short, medium, and long-term priorities. This allows for targeted action in the immediate term, while building capacity and embedding sustainable change over the life of the strategy.

- 6.3. Co-production will be central to delivery. The Adult Social Care Engagement Team are developing Community Involvement Groups and a Co-Production Board, which will provide ongoing opportunities for people with lived experience to shape services and evaluate outcomes. These structures will strengthen our ability to measure impact meaningfully and ensure that delivery remains grounded in what matters most to residents, carers, and communities.
- 6.4. The Strategy will be monitored through a combination of key performance indicators, feedback loops, and lived experience measures drawn from the “What success will look like” section of the Strategy. This includes direct quotes from consultation participants, which reflect what good adult social care looks and feels like from the perspective of those who use it. These statements will guide how we evaluate progress and ensure the Strategy remains focused on real-world outcomes.
- 6.5. Delivery will also be informed by ongoing data analysis, including trends in demand, complexity of need, and service performance. This will support targeted investment, identify areas for transformation, and ensure that services are equitable and responsive to changing needs.
- 6.6. The Strategy will run until 2028, aligning with the timescales for Local Government Reorganisation.

## 7. Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 7.1. The report considered by the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 15 January 2026, the draft minutes of which are as follows:
  - 7.2. The Assistant Director, Adult Social Care introduced the report which presented the Council’s refreshed Adult Social Care Strategy. Developed in response to increasing demand, rising complexity of need, and financial pressures, the strategy set out a clear goal and mission to help people live safely, stay independent, and be treated with dignity and respect. She explained that the timeframe indicated on the strategy at Appendix A was an error that confirmed the strategy was to cover the period 2026-28.
  - 7.3. Members then raised a number of questions and comments, which included:
    - 7.3.1. **Feedback** – in response to a question it was confirmed that wording in the strategy had been amended to reflect the feedback received from consultation.
    - 7.3.2. **Overspend impact** – in response to a question about how the overspend on the Adult Social Care Budget would impact in the delivery of the strategy, it was confirmed that the overspend was a significant challenge as the Service was only providing statutory functions, therefore the only direct way to manage the overspend was to reduce staffing but this would have a significant negative impact on service delivery, therefore the Council was

working closely with partners and providers to work more efficiently and smartly to manage spend.

- 7.3.3. **Co-Production Board** – when asked who would be appointed to the Board it was confirmed this was very much still in the planning stage but that a mix of representation would be explored, including residents and community groups.
- 7.3.4. **Local Government Reform** – it was explained that amendments to the strategy would be made to reflect the forthcoming local government reform. The Council had reached out to Kent County Council when developing the strategy but it had been difficult to build relationships and work with the senior staff in Adult Social Care due to recent changes in personnel.
- 7.3.5. **Support for carers** – it was welcomed that the strategy included recognition of carers and the contribution they make. It was confirmed that supporting carers as well as those they care for was a statutory duty and ways to improve the offer to carers was being explored. One option was for Care First to potentially undertake carer assessments and the pros and cons of this were being explored. The Assistant Director advised that she would also look into the option of a Carers Charter.
- 7.3.6. **Sharing of information** – reference was made to the importance of people not having to repeatedly tell their story and for partners to effectively share information to reduce the need for this. The Assistant Director confirmed that this was a focus for the neighbourhood health model and would be a key requirement in its success, however there were some difficulties in the differences of the statutory returns required from local authorities which were very different to those of health partners and was a barrier that needed to be overcome.

7.4. **Decision:**

The Committee noted the report and recommended the Adult Social Care Strategy, as set out at Appendix A to the report, to the Cabinet for approval.

## 8. Risk management

8.1. The following risks have been identified:

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>	<b>Rating</b>
Strategy may not keep pace with change	Rapid developments in adult social care policy and the scale and rate of change may outpace the strategy, leading to it becoming outdated.	Regular reviews of the strategy, making adjustments as necessary  Timely delivery will be driven through the Transformation Programme, with support from the dedicated ASC Transformation Team.	CII
Financial pressures	Continued growth in demand may exceed available resources.	Forecasting, transformation planning, and prioritisation of early help.	BI
Regulatory change	CQC assurance framework may introduce unforeseen requirements.	Ongoing monitoring of national guidance and readiness planning.	DIII
Workforce capacity and retention	Difficulty recruiting and retaining skilled staff may impact quality and consistency of delivery.	Workforce development planning, improved training and support, and recruitment campaigns.	BII
Digital exclusion	Increased reliance on digital tools and communication may exclude individuals with limited digital access or confidence.	Maintain non-digital access routes, promote digital inclusion initiatives, and ensure communications meet accessibility standards.	CII
Market sustainability	Risk that local care providers may struggle to meet demand or	Market shaping activities, provider support programmes, and	BII

	maintain quality due to financial or workforce pressures.	regular engagement with care sector partners.	
Public confidence and engagement	Lack of trust or awareness among residents may reduce engagement with services or co-production efforts.	Transparent communication, ongoing engagement, and visible responsiveness to feedback.	CIII

Likelihood	Impact:
A Very likely	I Catastrophic
B Likely	II Major
C Unlikely	III Moderate
D Rare	IV Minor

8.2. A Diversity Impact Assessment has been produced at Appendix C to the report.

## 9. Consultation

9.1. The strategy has been shaped by extensive consultation, incorporating feedback from people with lived experience, carers, providers, partners, and staff. This included:

- 19 consultation events (16 in-person, 3 virtual) with 114 participants;
- An internal divisional meeting with over 300 staff;
- An online survey promoted via multiple channels.

Full details of the consultation feedback, along with responses from Adult Social Care are provided in Appendix B to the report.

9.2. Additional required amendments identified through internal governance reviews will be incorporated into the final strategy once the full governance process has been completed. The proposed changes are outlined in Appendix B to the report.

## 10. Climate change implications

10.1. While the strategy itself does not carry direct climate change implications, Adult Social Care remains committed to reducing its carbon footprint through innovation, smarter working, and digital transformation.

## 11. Financial implications

11.1. While the strategy does not carry direct financial commitments, its delivery will involve activities that may require investment. These financial implications will

be scrutinised and governed through the Adult Social Care Improvement Programme Board, with individual business cases developed and scrutinised as needed.

- 11.2. The strategy will inform the Medium Term Financial Strategy, support future commissioning decisions, and guide investment planning to ensure resources are targeted effectively and sustainably.

## 12. Legal implications

- 12.1. The strategy supports delivery of statutory duties under the Care Act 2014, the Mental Health Act 1983, the Mental Capacity Act 2005, and Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. These duties include promoting wellbeing, safeguarding adults at risk, supporting carers, and ensuring equitable access to care and support.
- 12.2. It also aligns with national policy and regulatory frameworks, including the Care Quality Commission's statutory assurance model for local authorities, which came into effect in April 2023. This model assesses how councils discharge their adult social care duties, and the strategy supports Medway's readiness and ongoing compliance with this framework.

## Lead officer contact

Jackie Brown, Assistant Director, Adult Social Care  
[Jackie.Brown@medway.gov.uk](mailto:Jackie.Brown@medway.gov.uk)

## Appendices

Appendix A: Adult Social Care Strategy 2025 - 2028

Appendix B: Consultation Responses

Appendix C: Diversity Impact Assessment

## Background Papers

None