

## **Appendix B: Consultation feedback**

As part of the Adult Social Care Strategy Refresh, we undertook a comprehensive consultation process to ensure the strategy reflects the views and experiences of those it impacts most. Between September and October 2025, we engaged with a wide range of stakeholders, including people with lived experience, partners, providers, voluntary and community sector organisations, and internal staff.

In total, we held 19 consultation events, 16 in-person and 3 virtual, with 114 participants. These sessions were open to all stakeholders and provided opportunities for meaningful dialogue and feedback.

Additionally, over 300 staff members attended the internal Divisional meeting, where they completed an exercise to review and comment on the areas of the strategy.

An online survey was also conducted from 8 September to 19 October, promoted via social media, our web page, direct emails to the Change Together Network, the provider newsletter, and Medway Matters. Nine individuals responded, each representing 11.11% of the total survey feedback.

This appendix presents a summary of the feedback received across all consultation channels, structured around the key areas of the strategy. It also includes Adult Social Care's responses to the points raised, outlining how the feedback has informed the final version of the strategy.

### **Goal:**

#### **Consultation Feedback**

Participants broadly welcomed the intent and tone of the strategy's goal. Key themes included:

- Positive reception of the focus on respect, independence, and clarity, with many agreeing the goal reflects what people want from adult social care
- Recognition that the goal is ambitious, but this was seen as appropriate given the importance of the work
- Some felt the wording was too long or complex, and suggested making it more concise and accessible
- A desire for greater emphasis on transparency, engagement, and how services are delivered
- Requests to ensure the goal reflects the range of services offered, not just care homes, including preventative support
- Suggestions to strengthen the focus on outcomes, responsiveness, and person-centred care
- Concerns that "live safely" might not fully capture the importance of safeguarding

- Requests to include support for carers and those who live with people needing care
- Suggestions to reference wellbeing, quality of life, and alignment with the NHS 10-Year Plan
- Comments on grammar and tone, including preferences for shorter sentences, avoiding language that implies current services are inadequate, and using more inclusive and confident phrasing

## **Adult Social Care Response**

The final version of the goal continues to emphasise respect, independence and clarity, while also incorporating stronger references to outcomes, responsiveness, and wellbeing. We have acknowledged the ambition of the goal and retained this tone, reflecting our commitment to continuous improvement and high standards for the people we support.

We have revised the wording to ensure it remains accessible while being robust enough to guide strategic delivery. A clear commitment to openness and transparency has been added, responding directly to feedback about how services are delivered and how we engage with people. The goal now explicitly recognises the role of carers, with a reference to the Medway Joint Carers' Strategy, and reinforces our support for person-centred care, a principle that is further embedded in the Mission and Commitments.

Concerns about safety and safeguarding have been addressed by threading safeguarding clearly throughout the strategy. We have also clarified that our responsibilities go beyond care homes, with prevention covered in a dedicated commitment. References to quality of life and alignment with the NHS 10-Year Plan have been added to reflect our joined-up approach to care and wellbeing.

Finally, we have refined the language to be positive, inclusive, and confident.

## **Mission:**

### **Consultation Feedback**

Participants broadly welcomed the clarity and intent of the strategy's mission. Key themes included:

- Positive reception of the mission's focus on service users, with many agreeing it reflects the values and priorities of adult social care
- Acknowledgement of the need for change and improvement, which was seen as realistic and necessary across local government
- Strong support for themes such as prevention, collaboration, empowerment, and timely support, which were viewed as essential to effective care
- Suggestions to make the language more uplifting and inclusive, ensuring it resonates with a wide audience

- Calls for greater emphasis on listening to individuals and incorporating their views, to reflect a co-produced and person-led approach
- Requests to reflect a whole-person approach, including wider determinants of health and links to public health
- Suggestions to include reference to the voluntary sector and family/loved ones, recognising their role in supporting individuals
- Feedback to recognise and support carers and those who live with people needing care, not just those receiving direct services
- Concerns about access to consistent care and information, particularly for families of people with SEND
- Requests for more tailored support, especially for younger adults and those with complex needs beyond traditional elderly care
- Questions about how empowerment and prevention will be delivered in practice, and how the mission connects to implementation
- Suggestions to ensure the mission reflects all people accessing care
- Concerns about vague or patronising terms, and requests to avoid negative or clinical language

Suggestions to blend professional terminology with language that feels accessible and community-focused

### **Adult Social Care Response**

The final version has been shaped to reflect the values and priorities shared during consultation, with a clear focus on supporting people and communities to live safe, independent, and fulfilling lives. We retained strong themes of prevention, partnership, empowerment, and timely support, and revised the language to be more inclusive, confident, and uplifting.

In response to feedback about listening and co-production, we added a specific focus on engaging with individuals, families, carers, and communities. The mission now reflects a whole-person approach, while recognising that wider determinants of health are more appropriately addressed through linked strategies with health and public health partners. We also included reference to tailored support, acknowledging the diverse needs of people who access adult social care, including younger adults and those with SEND.

While some feedback was too specific for the mission itself, these areas will be addressed through our improvement programme, that supports delivery of the strategy. Similarly, questions about how we will deliver empowerment and prevention are addressed through the key activities under each Commitment, and through planned actions across adult social care, health, and public health.

We clarified that the mission applies to all people and communities, including those who may not be directly known to Medway, such as self-funders. Finally, we refined the grammar and tone to remove vague or clinical language, replacing terms like

“problems” with “solutions” and avoiding professional jargon to ensure the mission is clear, meaningful, and accessible to all.

## **Commitment 1:**

### **Consultation Feedback**

Participants broadly supported the intent behind this commitment, particularly its focus on innovation, improvement and early help. Key themes included:

- Strong support for the concept of innovation and improvement, with many welcoming the emphasis on trying new approaches and learning from experience
- High levels of agreement with the proposed activities, including hiring permanent staff, using data, and planning ahead
- Requests for more detail on how certain activities will be implemented, such as creating a strong plan to support staff
- Concerns about digital exclusion, with feedback highlighting that not everyone has access to or feels comfortable using digital tools
- Support for permanent staffing, alongside concerns about current inconsistency and retention challenges
- Emphasis on high-quality, relevant training and incentives to help staff grown and adapt
- Calls for more collaborative language and clearer accountability for outcomes, to reflect shared responsibility and transparency
- Suggestions to incorporate learning from other organisations, including best practice and shared insights
- Concerns that technology and paperwork may reduce time spent with service users, and a desire to see technology used to enhance, not replace, human interaction
- Consistency of care highlighted as a priority, with feedback suggesting innovation should not come at the expense of reliability

Suggestions to include the community and voluntary sector in planning and delivery, recognising their role in shaping and supporting services

### **Adult Social Care Response**

The revised version continues to emphasise innovation, improvement, and early help, while placing greater focus on consistency, collaboration, and inclusivity. We have updated the title from “Being Strong and Trying New Ideas” to “Being Bold and Open to New Ideas” to better reflect the ambition and energy behind this commitment, and to avoid language that felt vague or patronising.

In response to concerns about digital exclusion, we have added a clear statement that non-technological ways of accessing support will be retained and improved, alongside support for those who wish to use digital tools. Technology will be used to

reduce administrative burden and enable staff to spend more meaningful time with the people they support, not to replace human interaction. This will be further addressed through the Improvement Programme.

We have strengthened the language around staffing, focusing on attracting and retaining dedicated professionals and making Medway a great place to work. The commitment now includes a clearer focus on high-quality, relevant training and learning from others, including the voluntary and community sector. While some activities may lack detail in the strategy itself, they will be supported through the wider improvement programme, the outline of which is included in the Delivery Plan.

We have also added a stronger emphasis on consistency of care, recognising that innovation must be balanced with reliability and continuity. The grammar and tone have been revised to be more energising and person-centred, avoiding technical jargon and ensuring the language reflects our commitment to delivering outstanding outcomes for local people.

## **Commitment 2:**

### **Consultation Feedback**

Participants strongly supported this commitment, with 100% agreeing or strongly agreeing that it should be included. Key themes included:

- Positive reception of the emphasis on kindness, personalisation, and putting people at the centre of care, which was seen as essential to good practice
- Recognition of the importance of shared values, adaptive care, and inclusive language, particularly in reference to Medway's diverse and changing population
- Requests to reflect Medway's evolving demographic, and ensure services are responsive to different backgrounds, needs, and expectations
- Suggestions to broaden references to community engagement beyond charities to include local communities, partner agencies, and grassroots organisations
- Concerns about language around planning for complex needs, with feedback suggesting it should avoid implying exclusion or marginalisation
- Calls to clarify what "strong leadership" means and how it contributes to care quality and staff support
- Acknowledgement that many care workers are already committed to learning, with a request to focus more on monitoring, accountability, and valuing staff
- Suggestions to emphasise making staff feel valued, not just confident, to support retention and morale
- Concerns about overpromising universal outcomes, such as "everyone will get good support," which may not reflect the complexity of service delivery
- The original title "Changing How We Work and Think" was seen as vague and potentially patronising, and did not clearly reflect the commitment's intent

- Terms like “strong leadership” and “personal care” were felt to need clearer definitions, to avoid ambiguity

Requests to avoid broad or unrealistic terms, such as “everyone” or “problems” and to use more specific, grounded language

### **Adult Social Care Response**

The revised title, from “Changing How We Work and Think” to “Improving How We Work and Think Together” better reflects the collaborative and forward-thinking nature of the commitment, while avoiding vague or patronising language.

The final wording continues to emphasise kindness, confidence, and listening, and now includes a clearer focus on inclusivity and responsiveness to Medway’s evolving population. We have broadened references to community engagement to include local people, charities, and community groups, recognising the vital role of grassroots organisations and partner agencies in shaping care.

In response to concerns about language around complex needs, we have reframed the wording to reflect adaptation and responsiveness, rather than exclusion. We have also clarified what we mean by maintaining high-quality care, through oversight, learning, and professionalism, and acknowledged the existing commitment of many care workers to learning and improvement. While we respect this, we also recognise that continued support and accountability are essential to maintaining standards across the sector.

We have strengthened the language around staff development to reflect the importance of making staff feel valued, not just confident, and removed overpromising language such as “everyone will get good support” to ensure the commitment remains realistic and grounded. The grammar and tone have been revised to be more specific, inclusive, and person-centred, with clearer definitions and a focus on what matters most to the people we support.

### **Commitment 3:**

#### **Consultation Feedback**

Participants strongly supported this commitment, with 100% agreeing that it should be included in the strategy. Key themes included:

- Broad support for partnership building, supporting care providers, and using data and feedback to shape services
- Recognition of the importance of sustainable services, inclusive collaboration, and responsive care, especially as Medway’s population grows and changes
- Concerns about the term “care market,” which was seen as unclear or uncomfortable. Suggested alternatives included “care community,” “local services,” and “care partnerships”

- Suggestions to broaden references beyond charities and community groups, to include partner agencies, the voluntary sector, local communities, and grassroots organisations
- Requests to expand the scope of services beyond care homes to reflect the full range of adult social care including respite, day services, and community support
- Feedback that language around “choices and control” should reflect realistic options and avoid overpromising
- Calls to emphasise bespoke, case-by-case approaches that feel safe, responsive, and person-centred
- Suggestions to ensure voluntary sector involvement is backed by consultation and sustainable funding, though it was acknowledged this may sit outside the strategy’s direct control
- Support for using external data and forecasts to plan for future needs, with a desire for evidenced-based planning
- Emphasis on listening to those directly affected by decisions and including reference to self-directed support to empower individuals
- Some phrases were seen as too professional or vague and could be made more accessible
- Terms like “care market” and “health, housing and social care” needed clearer or broader definitions, to reflect the full scope of partnership working

Requests to avoid terms that imply inadequacy or overpromise outcomes, and to use more positive, grounded language.

### **Adult Social Care Response**

The revised title, from “Working Together and Building a Strong Care Market” to “Working Together to Build Strong Partnerships” replaces the term “care market,” which was widely seen as unclear or uncomfortable. The new wording reflects a more inclusive and collaborative approach, encompassing care providers, local services, charities, community groups, and grassroots organisations.

We have broadened the scope of the commitment to reflect the full range of adult social care services, removing specific references to care homes and instead planning for future needs across all types of support. The language around choice and control has been refined to reflect realistic options and ensure people have a say in their care, without overpromising outcomes.

In response to feedback about responsiveness and personalisation, we have emphasised flexibility, person-centred care, and planning based on individual and local needs. While some suggestions, such as sustainable funding for the voluntary sector and the use of external data, are too specific for the strategy itself, they will be addressed through the improvement programme and planning processes that support the strategy’s delivery.

We have also strengthened the commitment to listening to people and using their ideas to shape future services. The grammar and tone have been revised to be more accessible and positive, avoiding vague or overly technical language and ensuring the commitment reflects our ambition to build strong, responsive, and inclusive partnerships across Medway.

## **Commitment 4:**

### **Consultation Feedback**

Participants strongly supported this commitment, with 100% agreeing it should be included in the strategy. Key themes included:

- Strong support for co-production and involving service users in shaping services, with many valuing the emphasis on collaboration and shared decision-making
- Recognition of the importance of transparency and trust-building, particularly through open, respectful communication
- Support for improving accessibility, including for people with different communication needs, languages, and digital confidence
- Desire to see feedback lead to visible changes, with calls for clearer feedback loops and accountability
- Suggestions to highlight ongoing opportunities for engagement and collaboration, rather than one-off consultations
- Calls to raise awareness and reduce stigma around adult social care, especially around asking for help
- Emphasis on communication that is clear, fair, and tailored to different audiences, including Easy Read formats and translated materials
- Requests to extend outreach to people from varied backgrounds and experiences to ensure inclusivity
- Suggestions for practical improvements, such as simplifying website navigation, providing printed materials, and clarifying financial assessments
- Need to rebuild trust and ensure feedback mechanisms are meaningful and followed through, with transparency about how input is used
- Suggestions to highlight that services may be accessible beyond Medway, where appropriate
- The title was well received and considered clear and engaging
- Some terms like “design services” were seen as needing more collaborative phrasing to better reflect shared ownership
- Requests to avoid vague promises and to specify how and when engagement will happen
- Concerns about lack of specificity around forum meetings and engagement mechanisms, with suggestions to provide clearer routes for involvement

- Feedback that timelines and responsibilities should be clearer, to avoid ambiguity

## **Adult Social Care Response**

The revised wording continues to emphasise co-production, transparency, and inclusive communication, and now includes a clearer reference to reducing stigma around asking for help and to ongoing community engagement.

We have strengthened our commitment to making information accessible to different audiences, including those with varied communication needs, languages, and digital confidence. While some suggestions, such as simplifying website navigation and clarifying financial assessments, are too specific for the strategy itself, they are already planned as part of our improvement programme.

Although the strategy wording does not explicitly outline engagement mechanisms, we want to reassure the community that these are detailed in our engagement plan, which is being refreshed for 2026. More information about how to take part in Change Together Medway, our engagement programme, is now included in the strategy document, and is also available on our [Change Together Medway](#) web page, where people can sign up to our mailing list to receive regular updates on opportunities to get involved.

We have revised the grammar and tone to ensure the commitment is collaborative and inclusive, softening terms like “design services” to better reflect shared ownership. While not all engagement timelines and responsibilities are detailed in the strategy, they are supported through the Delivery Plan, engagement plan, and improvement programme, which outline how we will continue to listen, share, and work together with the people of Medway.

## **Commitment 5:**

### **Consultation Feedback**

Participants expressed strong support for this commitment, with 89% agreeing it should be included in the strategy. Key themes included:

- Broad support for activities promoting fairness, inclusion, and diversity, with recognition of the importance of equitable access to support
- Strong endorsement of early help and prevention, especially as a way to maintain independence and reduce crisis interventions
- Support for improving services for people with complex or less visible needs and ensuring these groups are not overlooked
- Encouragement to use data and feedback to drive service improvement, and to identify and address inequalities
- Requests to design services that respond to local changes and reflect different communities, ensuring relevance and responsiveness

- Suggestions to emphasise helping individuals find their own solutions and supporting informed decision-making
- Feedback to avoid implying that all issues can be prevented, and instead focus on early support and planning for future challenges
- Calls to highlight the role of individuals, families, and carers in shaping care decisions and to recognise informal support networks
- Suggestions to foster hope and confidence in future support through positive messaging and outcomes
- Requests to ensure language reflects all age groups, not just older adults
- Support for sharing positive outcomes to build trust and optimism in adult social care
- Mixed views on the title, with some finding it clear and others questioning the meaning of “fair” and “ready”
- Concerns about negative phrasing in the opening sentence, particularly the use of “problems”
- Suggestions to replace vague or unrealistic terms with more accurate and inclusive language

### **Adult Social Care Response**

The title has been revised from “Fair, Ready, and Focused on Prevention” to “Being Fair, Prepared and Focused on Prevention” to better reflect the intent and tone of the commitment, while addressing concerns about vagueness. The opening sentence has been rewritten to use more positive language, removing references to “problems” and instead focusing on helping people earlier so they can stay well and live their lives the way they choose.

The final wording now includes a clearer emphasis on supporting people to find their own solutions where they wish to, and to make informed decisions about their care. It also highlights the role of families, carers, and support networks, recognising their importance in promoting wellbeing and independence and shaping care decisions.

We have retained and strengthened the focus on fairness, inclusion, and diversity, and added reference to safeguarding within early help and prevention. The commitment now reflects support for people with complex or less visible needs and includes a clearer intention to use feedback and evidence not only to address inequality, but also to share positive outcomes that build trust and optimism in adult social care.

The language has been revised to be more inclusive and representative of all age groups, not just older adults, and to avoid vague or unrealistic promises. The strategy wording now reflects the need for services to adapt to local changes and community needs.

## **Whole Strategy:**

### **Consultation Feedback**

Participants shared a range of comments about the overall strategy. Key themes included:

- Requests to include reference to homelessness and safeguarding, recognising both as key issues
- Calls for stronger emphasis on personalisation and bespoke services tailored to individual needs
- Importance of fairness, equity, and managing public expectations, especially around access to care
- Suggestions to include information on budgets, funding sources, and means-tested services, with a breakdown of income and expenditure
- Feedback that the strategy should explicitly address the role of carers and families, not just individuals receiving care
- Comments on language, with suggestions to balance accessibility with clarity for professionals and service users
- Requests to avoid negative or ambiguous terms and ensure consistency in phrasing
- Need for regular updates on assessment progress, and other processes, to improve transparency and communication
- Emphasis on collective responsibility and collaboration across health, voluntary sector, and communities
- Suggestions to reduce stigma and improve public understanding of adult social care
- Calls for improved communication, especially around how to access support
- Feedback that the strategy should be written in a sympathetic and inspiring way, helping people to understand their role and how to contribute
- Encouragement to focus on outcomes rather than inputs, and to monitor and adapt plans as needed
- Suggestions for more creativity and flexibility in support, while recognising the need for oversight
- Requests to celebrate success and share positive stories
- Comments on specific service areas such as care homes, learning disability services, and reablement
- Suggestions for workforce development, including staff skill alignment and valuing carers
- Requests for greater involvement of people with lived experience, and more opportunities to contribute

## **Adult Social Care Response**

We are grateful for the wide-ranging and constructive feedback received on the strategy as a whole. These comments have helped shape both the final wording and the supporting content, ensuring the strategy is more inclusive, transparent, and reflective of the priorities shared by those who participated in the consultation.

Safeguarding is now clearly embedded throughout the strategy, with references included in the goal, mission, and all five commitments. While homelessness is not directly addressed in this strategy, it is covered under Medway's housing strategies, including the Housing Strategy, and Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy. Adult Social Care will continue to work in partnership with Housing colleagues to support people affected by homelessness, recognising the importance of joined-up working across services.

Personalisation and bespoke support are reflected throughout the strategy, including references to accessibility, flexibility, and services centred around people's needs. The importance of fairness, equity, and managing public expectations is also embedded across the commitments, particularly in how we describe access to support, responsiveness, and transparency.

Budget and funding information is included in the Local Context section of the strategy, which also signposts to our charging policy. This ensures people can understand how services are funded, what financial support is available, and how decisions are made about eligibility and contributions.

The role of carers and families is explicitly recognised throughout the strategy, particularly in the Mission, and Commitments 2 and 5. We have also revised the language to balance accessibility with clarity, aiming to be understandable to a wide audience, including professionals, service users, and the wider public, while avoiding negative or ambiguous terms.

While some suggestions, such as reinstating the named worker model, or providing real-time updates on assessments, are too specific for the strategy itself, they are already planned to be addressed through our improvement programme. Similarly, service-specific feedback will be considered as part of ongoing service development and commissioning plans.

The strategy reflects a collective approach, with references to partnership working across health, the voluntary sector, and communities. Reducing stigma and improving public understanding of adult social care are key themes, particularly in Commitment 4, which also addresses communication and access to support. We have included a section in the strategy about how to get involved through Change Together Medway, our engagement programme. This reflects our commitment to ongoing engagement and co-production and ensures that people with lived experience have meaningful opportunities to shape services.

The strategy is focused on outcomes, not just inputs, and will be supported by a robust benefits management plan and key performance indicators. Flexibility and creativity in support are encouraged, while recognising the need for appropriate oversight and governance. We have also committed to celebrating success and sharing positive outcomes to build trust and optimism in adult social care.

Importantly, we will also measure our success by the feedback people gave us during consultation about what good adult social care looks and feels like. These powerful statements are captured in the “What success will look like” section of the strategy and reflect the lived experience of those who matter most. These voices will continue to guide us as we deliver, evaluate, and improve adult social care in Medway. We recognise that even the best strategies must be monitored, reviewed, and adapted. The strategy sets out a clear direction, but its success will depend on respectful, professional collaboration across the system, and on continuing to listen to the people we support.