Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

12 March 2026

Adult Social Care Continued CQC Improvement and Wider Transformation Update

Report from: Jackie Brown, Assistant Director Adult Social Care

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

Summary

The report provides the Committee with an update on progress made since the Care Quality Commission (CQC) outcome and improvement plan were published. It summarises delivery against the identified priorities and highlights additional improvements delivered through the wider Transformation and Improvement Programme.

1. Recommendations

1.1. The Committee is requested to note the progress against the CQC Improvement and wider Transformation Plan, which addresses the areas identified in the assessment.

2. Budget and policy framework

2.1. This report 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, health, 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.   Background

3.1   In February 2025, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) published the findings of its assessment of Medway Council's Adult Social Care services. Medway received an overall rating of "Requires Improvement" with a total score of 59%.

3.2   The CQC's assessment framework evaluates local authorities against nine quality statements, grouped under four overarching themes:

- How the local authority works with people:
    - Assessing people's needs
    - Supporting people to lead healthier lives
    - Equity in experience and outcomes
- Providing support:
    - Care provision, integration, and continuity of care
    - Partnership and communities
- How the local authority ensures safety in the system:
    - Safe pathways, systems, and transitions
    - Safeguarding
- Leadership
    - Governance, management, and sustainability
    - Learning, improvement, and innovation

3.3   Of these nine quality statements, three were assessed as "Good" and six as "Requires Improvement". An improvement plan was developed immediately following publication, and progress of this has been overseen by the Head of Adult Social Care Transformation and Improvement.

3.4   In addition to actions directly related to the CQC's recommendations, the Adult Social Care Transformation and Improvement Programme incorporates further initiatives informed by our own analysis. This ensures that our improvement work extends beyond regulatory requirements and reflects our commitment to delivering sustainable, high-quality outcomes for residents.

4.   Progress: CQC Improvement Plan

4.1   Over the past year, Adult Social Care has continued to make steady and sustained progress against the actions set out in the CQC Improvement Plan. Across the programme, momentum has remained strong, and in several areas, progress has been achieved more quickly than originally forecast.

Where delays have occurred, these are linked primarily to operational and resource pressures experienced across the wider system. In each case, the cause of the delay is well understood, and focus has been placed on addressing underlying blockers, reprioritising activity where needed, and ensuring actions move towards completion.

4.2   Developments across all themes continue to trend positively. Themes 1 to 4 show continued delivery, reflecting sustained momentum, coordination, and targeted effort across project areas. Overall, the direction of travel remains positive; action completion continues to increase, consistency of practice continues to improve, and engagement with the voluntary and community sector has strengthened significantly.

4.3   The following sections provide an update on delivery against the specific areas identified by the CQC as requiring improvement. It is important to note that this update does not capture the full breadth of transformation and improvement activity that has taken place across the CQC Improvement Plan.

4.4   <u>Assessing Needs</u>

4.4.1   Over the past year, Adult Social Care has continued to make meaningful progress in improving how we assess and understand people's needs, with a strong focus on accessibility, consistency, and timely support.

4.4.2   Access to reliable information has strengthened considerably. All Adult Social Care web content is now accessible, and work is underway to refresh individual pages, in partnership with the Content Design Team to ensure accessibility compliance is maintained throughout updates. Alongside digital improvements, work has begun to broaden the availability of information in non-digital formats. A consultation survey will shortly be circulated to understand the printed materials residents will most value, with a new Adult Social Care guide already in development based on feedback from recent engagement activity.

4.4.3   Assessment practice has also improved. The improvement of pathways and processes within the case management system is now complete and continued improvements are overseen through the new Change Board. This has reduced variation across locality teams and contributed to more consistent Care Act assessments. Capacity within financial assessments has increased following successful recruitment, resulting in assessments being completed within expected timescales. Further improvements have been supported through the updated Core Skills programme, expanded training on mental capacity, and the roll out of specialist training such as the Oliver McGowan framework and domestic abuse champion development.

4.4.4   We are ensuring the right people are involved in assessments and reviews from the start, including care providers where appropriate. Staff have been trained to plan care with people and partners, and managers are checking that this joint working is clearly shown before any assessment or review is signed off. We are also strengthening how people access independent

advocacy, with staff guidance updated, training in development, and clear information shared through practice newsletters so that staff know when and how to arrange advocacy support.

4.4.5   In addition, Adult Social Care has strengthened its approach to workforce planning. The rightsizing exercise has been completed, with the new structure implemented and ongoing recruitment helping stabilise capacity across social work, occupational therapy, and financial assessment teams. We have completed the analysis needed to create a model where named practitioners would be linked to specific care homes to improve continuity and communication, and this analysis is informing our next steps on caseload planning and how best to introduce this approach safely and effectively.

4.4.6   Progress for unpaid carers is covered in detail within the Early Help and Carers report elsewhere on this agenda. In summary, significant developments have taken place over the past year, including the redesign of carers web pages, improved assessment pathways, the introduction of the Medway Carers Panel, and expanded engagement through Community Involvement Groups and the Carers Marketplace event.

4.4.7   Engagement and communication across the wider community have also strengthened. Promotion of events, support options, and forums for lived-experience input has increased, with sustained outreach through social media, community events, and work with voluntary and community sector partners. This has contributed to improved awareness of assessment options and support for both residents and unpaid carers.

4.4.8   A more structured approach to learning from complaints, and engagement and feedback has been established. Analysis of complaints shows very few concerns relating specifically to eligibility decisions, with trends instead linked to communication and financial assessment issues. This insight is being used to inform ongoing improvements in practice and information provision.

Annual Reviews

4.4.9   A previous Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee report in May 2025 outlined that there were 1,292 outstanding annual reviews. This figure has since reduced to 1,100, and work continues to bring the backlog down. Alongside planned annual reviews, the service also responds to people whose needs change unexpectedly due to health or personal circumstances. This part of the waiting list is highly dynamic, as new requests arise on a regular basis. When the position was reported in May 2025, 165 people were waiting for a change in need review. The current figure is 50 people. It is important to note that these 50 individuals are not the same people who were previously waiting; they represent a different set of clients whose needs have recently changed.

4.4.10 All cases are managed through a RAG-rating approach, with Senior Social Workers and Team Managers regularly assessing risk to ensure that people with the highest level of need are prioritised and that urgent situations are

managed immediately. To increase capacity, recruitment is underway for six locum social workers on a three-month basis. They will focus specifically on reducing the annual review backlog, with a minimum reduction of 400 cases expected. Each worker in the service will also take on additional review activity to support further improvement of the position. Staffing will also be redirected to the targeted review team, which will support reviews within learning disability and mental health, further accelerating progress.

Carers Reviews

4.4.11 In May 2025, there were 386 outstanding carers' reviews. This has now reduced to 280. Reviews are prioritised using the same RAG-rating system to ensure that carers with the most urgent needs receive timely support. To assist in reducing the backlog further, the service is exploring a pilot with Carers First to provide additional capacity.

Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS)

4.4.12 There are currently 248 DoLS cases awaiting allocation. Several improvements have been introduced to strengthen oversight and manage demand more effectively. The DoLS process was successfully transferred onto the case management system in early January, enabling better tracking and planning of assessments. The service has also expanded its pool of Best Interest Assessors, including the recruitment of five permanent full time assessors and the provision of two further in-house training opportunities to increase capacity.

4.4.13 From the first week of March, a detailed review of the DoLS service will be underway to identify opportunities for streamlining processes and maximising assessment capacity. This work will inform the ongoing improvement plan.

Court of Protection Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (CoP DoLS)

4.4.14 At present, 138 Court of Protection (CoP) DoLS are awaiting allocation. Although the Long Term Care and Support service previously secured funding through the Transformation Programme to commission resource to complete additional assessments, this work could not be completed within the financial year due to the complexity and time required for each case.

4.4.15 Across services, there remain concerns about Legal Services' capacity to support the number and complexity of CoP DoLS applications. This continues to be a limiting factor, and further work is underway to understand how demand can be managed sustainably.

Early Help and Prevention

4.4.16 Within Early Help and Prevention, waiting lists have increased in recent months. This is linked to an overall rise in demand, alongside work to reduce waiting times for initial contact, which has resulted in more people progressing to the assessment stage.

4.4.17 Following a service review, a new operating model has been introduced to ensure that assessments can be completed within 28 days. The allocation process has also been revised to reduce delays and improve the flow of Care Act assessments. These changes aim to increase efficiency and ensure timely access to support.

4.5   Equity in Experience and Outcomes

4.5.1   Adult Social Care has made steady progress in strengthening how we identify and address inequalities, ensuring that people from all communities have fair access to support.

4.5.2   Foundations for stronger equality, diversity and inclusion data are now in place. Key updates to our case management system mean that protected characteristics are consistently reported, enabling clearer insight into who is accessing services and where gaps may exist. While full reporting will take time to mature, these improvements will allow us to better identify unmet needs and monitor trends over the next year.

4.5.3   Targeted accessibility work (see 4.4.2) is complemented by on-demand British Sign Language interpreting and outreach to seldom-heard groups. Outreach to communities who may face additional barriers has strengthened, with staff attending language cafés, community hubs, cultural events, and specialist forums. Engagement work is ongoing with partners including Medway Diversity Forum, community organisations supporting Roma and Traveller groups, and NHS-commissioned projects such as Growing Better Services, which gathers feedback from adults with learning disabilities and/or autism.

4.5.4   Increasing workforce capability remains central to improving equity. Cultural competence training is now part of the Core Skills programme, alongside training in accessible communication, trauma-informed approaches, and unconscious bias. The Oliver McGowan learning programme is progressing, with Tier 2 sessions scheduled into 2026.

4.5.5   Co-production activity has expanded, with a draft reimbursement policy designed to remove financial barriers to participation and broaden representation. Community Involvement Groups launched in January, providing regular, structured opportunities for residents, particularly those from seldom-heard groups, to help shape services and test improvements. Engagement with voluntary and community sector partners has grown, with links now in place with more than fifty organisations across Medway.

4.5.6   Collaborative work with partners continues to support better outcomes for people who may experience discrimination or disadvantage. Medway has exceeded targets for annual health checks for people with learning disabilities and/or autism, supported by improved multi-agency working and improved processes within the case management system. Multi-disciplinary approaches to domestic abuse, substance misuse and homelessness have also

strengthened, with domestic abuse champions trained across teams and enhanced joint working with Forward Trust and NHS partners.

4.6   Care Provision, Integration and Continuity

4.6.1   Adult Social Care has continued to strengthen its approach to commissioning, provider oversight, and market sustainability. This work aims to ensure that residents can access the right care, in the right place, at the right time, and that services remain stable and responsive to changing needs.

4.6.2   Commissioning decisions are consistently informed by a combination of provider feedback, market intelligence, and data from the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. This is embedded as part of routine commissioning practice and is supported by a dedicated data analyst, helping to ensure that future services reflect local need and emerging trends.

4.6.3   Work is ongoing to address gaps in provisions, particularly for people with mild learning disabilities or autism who require tailored supported living options. Recommissioning of supported living and day services is underway. For older people, market development is progressing through the recommissioning of residential and nursing care. This will support a more diverse mix of provision.

4.6.4   Longer term planning continues through the Care for Medway project, aiming to support future sustainability of local residential care. Work to understand demand for extra care housing is ongoing, recognising that current levels appear sufficient but may change over time.

4.6.4   Provider oversight has strengthened through the expansion of the Quality Assurance team, which offers earlier intervention and more direct support for services rated "Requires Improvement" or "Inadequate". The team develops tailored work plans with providers and, alongside Partnership Commissioning, is preparing to introduce a "Well Led" improvement programme, modelled on successful approaches in other areas.

4.6.5   Workforce pressures remain a key challenge across the sector, and Adult Social Care continues to work closely with providers on recruitment, retention, and access to training. Engagement with training institutions is ongoing, including renewed work with the Medway College of Social Care to expand accessible and affordable training options for care workers and personal assistants.

4.6.6   Relationships with providers remain strong, supported through provider forums, newsletters, provider visits, and regular communication. Feedback from these groups increasingly shapes commissioning approaches and helps identify operational challenges early.

4.6.7   While contracting arrangements are governed by national procurement rules, processes have been streamlined over the past year. Where providers face

barriers, for example support needs for bid-writing, Adult Social Care is linking them with partners for practical assistance.

4.7   Safeguarding

4.7.1   Safeguarding continues to be a key area of focus, with significant progress made over the past year to strengthen timeliness, consistency, and confidence in safeguarding practice. The new single Safeguarding Hub, launched in March 2025, has streamlined oversight and reduced delays by bringing decision making and triage into one place.

4.7.2   The introduction of clearer screening processes and strengthened managerial oversight has improved the timeliness of review and prioritisation. All safeguarding concerns are now read on the day they are received, with urgent risks identified immediately and referrals allocated to officers within 48 hours. Backlogs have reduced, supported by a dedicated short-term team put in place to accelerate progress. Oversight clinics are held weekly to monitor waiting times, ensure risks are managed, and prioritise those adults most in need of support.

4.7.3   A new proportional triage approach is now embedded, ensuring only concerns that genuinely meet the threshold progress to a Section 42 enquiry. This has reduced unnecessary escalation and improved clarity for partners, with feedback provided where referrals do not meet safeguarding criteria.

4.7.4   Learning from Safeguarding Adult Reviews and audits is more systematically embedded into day-to-day practice. Staff receive regular updates through the Kent and Medway Safeguarding Adults Board newsletter, team meetings, and mandatory training. Audit themes are reviewed at monthly performance board meetings, with findings shared through practice briefings and incorporated into the Core Skills programme.

4.7.5   Targeted safeguarding training has also been strengthened, including refreshed Section 42 training and enhanced domestic abuse learning delivered with specialist support from an Independent Domestic Abuse Advocate. These developments are helping improve confidence and consistency in applying safeguarding thresholds across the workforce.

4.7.6   In line with broader provider engagement (see 4.6.6), safeguarding inputs at provider networks now cover thresholds, expectations, and learning from enquiries. Safeguarding is now a standing item at provider network events. This has helped address previous inconsistencies in understanding when and how to raise concerns and has fostered stronger joint working. Work is also underway with frequent referrers to improve understanding of processes and reduce inappropriate or premature referrals.

4.7.7   Improving the experience of people involved in safeguarding remains a priority. Safeguarding information is now available in fifteen languages following activity during Safeguarding Adults Week, and further work is

planned to update web pages and increase the availability of accessible materials, including video content and easy-read formats.

4.7.8   Acknowledgement letters are now sent to all referrers, and updates are provided at the end of each safeguarding enquiry. While feedback forms are in place, return rates are low, and work is ongoing with the Engagement Team to improve how feedback is collected and used to shape the Making Safeguarding Personal approach.

4.7.9   The Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) team is now fully staffed, and workforce pressures have eased across the Safeguarding service, with reliance on locum staff significantly reduced.

4.7.10 Collaboration with the Kent and Medway Safeguarding Adults Board remains strong, including use of a joint data dashboard, shared learning from Safeguarding Adult Reviews, and coordinated public awareness campaigns. Community engagement has expanded, with safeguarding sessions delivered in community centres, cultural organisations, and local shopping centres to raise awareness, improve confidence in reporting concerns, and reach residents who may be less familiar with safeguarding services.

4.8   <u>Governance, Management and Sustainability</u>

4.8.1   Adult Social Care has strengthened its governance arrangements, leadership visibility, and approaches to performance oversight. These improvements are helping ensure clearer accountability, earlier identification of issues, and a more open and engaged culture across Adult Social Care.

4.8.2   Leadership accessibility has continued to improve through a wider range of engagement opportunities including whole-service forums, team-specific meetings, and divisional away days. Heads of Service now hold regular drop-ins or targeted sessions within their service areas, helping staff feel more connected to senior leaders and better informed about divisional activity.

4.8.3   Stay interviews and new starter sessions have been re-established to better understand staff experience and inform workforce planning. These insights are shaping workforce priorities and complement ongoing work to strengthen a culture where staff feel safe and encouraged to raise concerns. The Adult Social Care Workforce Strategy is moving through internal engagement and external review with improvement partners. A first draft has been produced and tested with staff groups, with further refinement underway to reflect operational feedback and sector conditions. Critically, new starter feedback and stay interview themes have directly informed the strategy's priorities and delivery plan.

4.8.4   Work is progressing to create a clearer and more consistent approach to learning from complaints, Ombudsman decisions, and internal and external feedback. A new improvement pipeline has been implemented that ensures a clear and structured approach for identifying, assessing, and delivering improvements, ensuring that every recommendation, no matter its origin, is

considered fairly, assessed consistently, and progressed through a transparent governance process.

4.8.5   Building on process improvements set out in paragraph 4.4.3, dashboards and performance reporting are being strengthened to provide clearer oversight of caseloads, waiting times and performance trends across services. Weekly reporting on caseloads and waiting times remains embedded, supporting early identification of pressure points and enabling timely management action.

4.8.6   Community involvement in governance has expanded. Community Involvement Groups are now operating and already providing valuable insight and challenge to service design and improvement. Work to establish a Co-Production Board is underway, creating a more formal and consistent structure through which lived experience is an equal partner in decision making. The Adult Social Care Engagement Plan is being refreshed for 2026/27 to align with emerging co-production proposals. The revised plan will continue to support monitoring of engagement activity, ensuring feedback is acted on and embedded within ongoing service improvement.

4.9   <u>Learning, Innovation and Improvement</u>

4.9.1   Adult Social Care has continued to strengthen its approach to learning, workforce development, and innovation. The focus has been on building a stable and skilled workforce, using feedback more effectively, and exploring new technologies and approaches that support high-quality care.

4.9.2   As outlined in 4.4.5 and 4.8.3, the rightsizing project has completed, and the Workforce Strategy is being refined using stay interview and new starter insights. Targeted recruitment continues to address hard-to-fill roles; locum-to-permanent events have taken place, with further events being planned based on learning from the first round. Adult Social Care are working with the Recruitment and Communications teams to develop more tailored advertising, learning from successful campaigns within Medway and other local authorities.

4.9.3   Safeguarding learning and training updates are set out in section 4.7. The broader safeguarding strategic plan and accompanying operational guidance are in development to further embed these improvements.

4.9.4   As noted in 4.4.2 and 4.5.3, engagement and information improvements continue. As noted in 4.5.5 and 4.8.6, community voice is now embedded through Community Involve Groups and a developing Co-Production Board, with qualitative insights feeding the improvement pipeline. The Engagement Team is embedding a "You Said, We Did Approach" to clearly demonstrate how feedback influences decision making.

4.9.5   Work to strengthen awareness and use of assistive technology continues, supported by improved internal communications and collaboration with partners. New technologies are being explored and piloted, with early

evidence showing benefits for independence and wellbeing as well as potential efficiency savings. Digital platforms are being considered to enhance staff awareness of available assistive technologies, and a demonstration site is due to open shortly to support staff learning and public engagement.

5. Progress: Wider Improvement Programme

5.1 As set out in Section 4, the CQC Improvement Plan has progressed well. This section provides a brief selection of highlights from the wider Transformation and Improvement Programme delivered over the past year.

5.2 Recruitment and Retention

5.2.1 As of December 2025, 9% of social work and occupational therapy posts remain filled by locums, and 15% remain vacant. Recruitment continues against the rightsized structure (see 4.8.3), with targeted initiatives underway (see 4.9.2). Themes from staff feedback have directly informed the developing Adult Social Care Workforce Strategy, which focuses on improving induction, supervision, career pathways, and staff wellbeing.

5.2.2 However, challenges remain. Recruitment pressures persist in several specialist areas, and competition for experienced social workers continues to affect the pace at which vacancies can be filled. Locum reliance, while reduced, remains higher than desired. Overall, whilst the direction of travel is positive, sustained focus is required to build a stable, resilient workforce.

5.3 Magic Notes

5.3.1 Magic Notes has been introduced across Adult Social Care as part of our wider commitment to reducing administrative burden and increasing the time practitioners can spend directly supporting residents. The tool transcribes conversations and assessments and turns them into structured notes, helping staff produce timely and accurate records while improving the quality of written information.

5.3.2 Over the past year, the focus has been on embedding Magic Notes into everyday practice and understanding its impact. Staff feedback and dedicated surveys show significant benefits: assessment write-up time has reduced by 63%, weekly administrative tasks have reduced by 32%, and the average time to complete and submit assessments into the case management system has reduced from 12 days to 2 days. Staff report improved engagement and more time for reflective practice, multi-agency working and relationship building. Service users have responded positively, with the majority consenting to its use and noting improved participation in conversations.

5.3.3 Magic Notes has also supported accessibility for some staff, including those with hearing impairments or physical conditions that make typing difficult, helping create a more inclusive working environment.

5.3.4 Adult Social Care has shared learning with SEND and Children's Services as they run their own pilots, supporting a consistent approach and benefits reflected across the Council.

5.4 Flight Project

5.4.1 Flight services were expanded in June 2025 to increase in-house capacity to support adults with a learning disability and/or autism. The service provides personalised, enabling support that focuses on developing independence, improving wellbeing, and strengthening community connections.

5.4.2 The expanded service is currently supporting three individuals who have moved from external placements. Each person is being supported to develop daily living skills, build confidence and engage more actively with their community. Early outcomes show clear improvements in quality of life, with individuals reporting greater independence, improved access to family and local amenities, and increased involvement in decision making about their day-to-day lives. For some, unmet health needs have also been identified and addressed, leading to better overall wellbeing.

5.4.3 Transitioning individuals from external placements into the service has resulted in both improved outcomes and savings and cost avoidance, with placement costs notably lower than previous external arrangements. As a result, the service offers greater value for money and reduces long-term reliance on out of area provision.

6. Benefits and Outcomes

6.1 Across Adult Social Care, the programme has delivered clear benefits for residents and people using our services, including faster and more consistent assessments, clearer information, better safeguarding oversight, and more personalised support, such as the improved independence and wellbeing outcomes achieved through the expanded Flight service. Key stakeholders are benefiting from clearer pathways, redesigned information, stronger engagement, and a growing "you said, we did" approach that makes it easier to understand how their feedback shapes change. Improvements at the front door and more inclusive communication have also strengthened the experience for people entering services for the first time.

6.2 For providers, partners and the voluntary and community sector, better communication, joint training, strengthened market oversight and expanded involvement in planning and decision making have supported more consistent practice and closer collaboration. Digital developments are improving efficiency and supporting more collaborative working, while recommissioning activity and quality assurance work are helping to build a more stable and responsive market.

6.3 For the organisation, the programme has strengthened governance, workforce planning, and performance management, with rightsizing, recruitment work and learning from our staff helping to build stability and

reduce reliance on locums. Enhanced audit processes, improved data use, and clearer quality assurance arrangements support earlier identification of risks and more consistent follow-through to action. Taken together, these improvements point to a more resilient, person-centred, and partnership-focused approach delivering better outcomes for Medway residents.

7.   Risk management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Workforce vacancies and continued reliance on locums	Despite progress, vacancy levels and locum reliance remain higher than desired in several specialist teams, which could affect continuity, capacity, and staff wellbeing	Continued targeted recruitment; Workforce Strategy delivery; locum-to-permanent conversion events; strengthened induction and supervision; stay interview learning built into retention plans	BII
Capacity pressures affecting assessment timeliness and consistency	Improvements have been made, but rising demand may impact the ability to maintain timeliness, quality, and consistency in assessments and reviews	Ongoing recruitment into rightsized structure; strengthened performance oversight; continued improvement of pathways; further process improvements including digital options	BIII
Sustaining improvements across safeguarding processes	Backlogs have reduced, but sustained pressure and increase in demand could lead to delays in progress	Maintain strengthened daily/weekly oversight; ongoing training; improved thresholds guidance; audit feedback loops; strategic safeguarding plan	BII
Market fragility and provider workforce pressures	Care capacity remains stretched in some areas, and provider recruitment/retention challenges may lead to instability, hand-backs, or increased difficulty sourcing specialist placements	Continued provider engagement; recommissioning processes; strengthened QA support; improvement models	BII
Digital and innovation benefits not fully realised or sustained	The impact of Magic Notes, intelligent automation and assistive technology relies on continued staff engagement, training, funding, and cross-council support	Ongoing training and support; structured analysis of outcomes; cross-council engagement; wider rollout plans for assistive technology	CIII

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Engagement fatigue and low return rates for feedback mechanisms	Engagement has expanded significantly but some areas of feedback show low response rates, limiting insight into lived experience	Ongoing analysis and development of feedback mechanisms; embed "you said, we did" to build trust; continue to increase VCS and community-based engagement; embed engagement plan for 2026/27	CIV
Financial pressures affecting sustainability of improvements	Ongoing budget pressures may affect the ability to sustain improvements, expand in-house provision, or address capacity issues in the external market	Continued delivery of the One Medway Financial Improvement and Transformation Plan to drive savings and cost avoidance; strengthening prevention and early-help approaches to reduce long-term demand; maximise in-house and wider sector efficiencies	BII

8.   Climate change implications

8.1   [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.

8.2   Adult Social Care continues to work proactively with partners and within its own services to support Medway's target of becoming carbon neutral by 2050. Many of the delivered improvements indirectly contribute to lower carbon emissions and more sustainable ways of working. These approaches will continue to be embedded wherever appropriate as part of routine service development.

9.   Financial implications

9.1   Delivering the Transformation and Improvement Programme continues to have financial implications, including one-off and recurrent costs and a programme of savings and cost avoidance. These implications are considered as part of the Medium Term Financial Outlook, the Draft Budget and the Capital and Revenue Budget approved by Full Council. Performance against the approved budget is reported to Cabinet though the budget monitoring reports three times a year.

10.   Legal implications

10.1   This work continues to support Medway Council in meeting its statutory responsibilities under Part 1 of the Care Act 2014.

Lead officer contact

Jackie Brown, Assistant Director Adult Social Care

Appendices

None

Background papers

None