

Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

13 October 2026

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 is responsible 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:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Financial Assessments, Adult Social Care Income and Debt• Health and Health Partnerships• Kyndi• Marmot Place• Older people• Public Health – Lead Member, including Health and Wellbeing Boards• Residential Care• Shared Lives• Voluntary Sector |
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3. Background

- 3.1 I am pleased to present my annual report on Adult Social Care and Public Health. Adult Social Care continues to operate in a challenging environment, with increasing demand, greater complexity of need, workforce shortages and significant financial pressures. Despite these challenges, I am proud of the progress made during 2025/26 and the commitment shown by our staff, providers, partners, carers and residents in driving forward improvement and transformation.
- 3.2 This year has been characterised by a strong focus on improvement, innovation and partnership working. We have continued to respond to the findings of the Care Quality Commission assessment, developed a new Adult Social Care Strategy for 2026-2030, strengthened our workforce planning arrangements and invested in services that help people remain independent and connected within their communities.
- 3.3 My role as Deputy Leader has been to provide robust political leadership, challenge and support, ensuring that Adult Social Care remains focused on delivering safe, high-quality and person-centred services while responding to increasing demand, managing significant financial pressures and preparing for future need.

4 Advice and analysis

4.1 Health and Wellbeing Board

- 4.1.1 I have successfully continued the renewal and refreshment of the Health and Wellbeing Board over the last year. Due to the success of last year's approach and in order to ensure that a strong focus is maintained on our local Health and Wellbeing Strategy, the Board now themes one element of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy each meeting. This allows a deeper discussion on issues that impact the whole Council and ensures we are focused on the priority actions we set out in 2023.
- 4.1.2 The Board continues to have strong links with the ICB and Medway Maritime Hospital. To ensure we have representation from wider system partners, the current Chief Executive of Medway Voluntary Action has taken up the deputy chair position, demonstrating our commitment to the Voluntary, Community, Social Enterprise and Faith (VCSEF) sector and the important role they play in helping with the prevention of poor health.
- 4.1.3 A particular focus of the Board currently is playing its role in the development of the Neighbourhood Health programme and plan. This is done through regular Board discussions as well as training and development sessions in between formal meetings. Health and Wellbeing Boards will be asked to sign off our local system's Neighbourhood Health plan which will reflect the work of the system programme Board and incorporate government guidance.

4.2 Providing political leadership and challenge

4.2.1 Adult Social Care Transformation, Improvement and Care Quality Commission (CQC)

- 4.2.2 Throughout 2025/26, I have maintained close oversight of Adult Social Care's improvement and transformation journey, ensuring that our work remains focused on improving outcomes for residents and carers whilst responding to increasing demand, workforce challenges and financial pressures.
- 4.2.3 Since 2023/24, requests for support have increased by 15%, while safeguarding concerns have risen by 63%. However, over the same period, the number of people receiving long-term care and support has increased by only 4%. This reflects our continued focus on supporting people to remain independent wherever safe and possible by ensuring that individuals are connected to the most appropriate support at the earliest opportunity. While there is sometimes a perception that everyone who contacts Adult Social Care will go on to receive an ongoing service, in reality only a small proportion require long-term statutory support. Our approach is centred on prevention, strengths-based practice and helping people access the information, advice, community resources and short-term interventions that can enable them to maintain their independence and wellbeing.
- 4.2.4 Following the CQC assessment, Adult Social Care has continued to build on identified strengths whilst delivering a comprehensive programme of improvement. Although the assessment highlighted areas requiring further development, it also provided a valuable opportunity to strengthen services, improve outcomes and embed a culture of continuous improvement.
- 4.2.5 As Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder, I have received regular updates through improvement and transformation governance arrangements, providing both challenge and assurance on the delivery of key priorities. A particular focus has been ensuring that improvement activity translates into meaningful changes for residents, carers and staff. I attend twice yearly meetings with the whole ASC team and use our Adult Social Care Partnership Board to test and discuss changes.
- 4.2.6 Adult Social Care continues to face significant financial pressures arising from increasing demand, greater complexity of need and wider market challenges. Throughout the year, I have received regular updates on the department's financial position and have held the service to account for delivering its financial recovery and transformation plans. The financial position remains challenging, and I have sought assurance at focussed budget meetings that appropriate action is being taken to improve sustainability, secure value for money and protect services for those residents who need them most.
- 4.2.7 During the year, Adult Social Care has continued to align its improvement, transformation and financial sustainability activity to ensure that service improvement and financial recovery are considered alongside the ambitions set out within the Adult Social Care Strategy 2026-2030.

4.2.8 Key areas of focus have included:

- Improving the timeliness and quality of assessments, reviews and support planning.
- Strengthening safeguarding oversight and quality assurance arrangements.
- Embedding strengths-based and person-centred practice.
- Increasing co-production and engagement with residents and carers.
- Improving performance management and accountability.
- Streamlining pathways and reducing avoidable delays.
- Expanding the use of technology and innovation to support independence.
- Improving value for money and working towards a more financially sustainable operating model.

4.2.9 The investment made in Adult Social Care over recent years has strengthened workforce capacity by bringing it back in line with the level of resource before cuts were made in 2019. Now, enhanced management oversight has provided the foundations required to deliver sustainable improvement. However, I remain clear that improvement is an ongoing journey and that we must continue to adapt to changing needs, rising demand and financial pressures.

4.2.10 Transformation must ultimately result in better experiences and outcomes for residents, stronger partnerships, a skilled and confident workforce and services that are better positioned to meet future demand. Through delivery of our Adult Social Care Strategy, Workforce Strategy and Improvement Programme, I am confident that we are creating the conditions necessary to achieve these ambitions.

4.3 **Delivering the Adult Social Care Strategy 2026-2030**

4.3.1 A major achievement during the year has been the development and launch of Medway's Adult Social Care Strategy 2026-2030.

4.3.2 The strategy was developed through extensive engagement with people who draw on care and support, carers, staff, providers and partners. It establishes a clear vision for Adult Social Care and reflects our commitment to helping people live the lives they choose, maximise independence and remain connected to their local communities.

4.3.3 The strategy is built around five key commitments:

- Being bold and open to new ideas.
- Improving how we work and think together.
- Building strong partnerships.
- Listening and working together.
- Being fair, prepared and focused on prevention.

- 4.3.4 As Deputy Leader, I will continue to hold the service to account for delivering against these commitments and ensuring that residents see tangible improvements in both services and outcomes. As part of this work, I attend the engagement events to hear residents' views directly and have been inspired by their frankness and willingness to help us improve.

4.4 Investing in Our Workforce

- 4.4.1 A key focus during the year has been the development of Medway's Adult Social Care Workforce Strategy 2025-2028 (which is also a separate item on the agenda). The strategy has been produced in collaboration with staff so that their views, ideas and experiences were considered. I am clear that our workforce is our greatest asset and that sustainable improvement depends upon attracting, developing and retaining skilled, motivated and well supported staff.
- 4.4.2 The Workforce Strategy is closely aligned with both the Adult Social Care Strategy and our wider improvement programme. It provides a framework for ensuring we have the right people, with the right skills, in the right places, both now and in the future and makes our ambitions clear to the current and future workforce about the standards we expect.
- 4.4.3 Adult Social Care continues to face workforce challenges experienced nationally, including recruitment difficulties, competition for skilled staff, succession planning risks and reliance on agency workers. During the year, I have maintained oversight of workforce performance and challenged officers to develop long-term solutions that improve workforce stability, resilience and capability. I am pleased to report that we have seen movement from locum staff to permanent posts.
- 4.4.4 **Workforce Development, Recruitment and Culture**
- 4.4.5 Building a stable, skilled and confident workforce remains a key priority. Work has continued to strengthen recruitment activity, develop clearer career pathways and improve retention through professional development, learning opportunities and wellbeing support.
- 4.4.6 I am pleased that we have seen encouraging progress in a number of service areas, with several teams now fully staffed by permanent employees. This has improved workforce stability, reduced reliance on temporary staffing arrangements and strengthened continuity for residents and carers. It also reflects the positive impact of recent investment in Adult Social Care and the work undertaken to position Medway as an attractive place to work and develop a career.
- 4.4.7 However, workforce challenges remain. Like many councils across the country, we continue to experience difficulties recruiting to some specialist and hard-to-fill posts, particularly in areas where there is strong competition for experienced social care professionals. Recruitment and retention therefore remain important areas of focus.

- 4.4.8 Supporting staff to develop their skills and confidence is essential if we are to deliver the ambitions set out within the Adult Social Care Strategy. Investment has continued in practice development, professional supervision, apprenticeships, leadership programmes, career progression pathways, digital capability and continuous professional development. Developing confident and visible leaders at all levels will remain central to sustaining improvement and creating a positive organisational culture.
- 4.4.9 Creating an environment where staff feel valued, supported and able to thrive is equally important. The Workforce Strategy places significant emphasis on workforce wellbeing, equality, diversity and inclusion, staff engagement, psychological safety, cultural competence and flexible ways of working. These are not only important for staff experience but are fundamental to delivering high-quality, person-centred services for Medway residents.
- 4.4.10 Reducing reliance on agency workers remains an important objective in ensuring continuity of care, maintaining service quality and improving value for money. While agency staffing has supported service delivery through a period of significant change and growth, our ambition remains to build a resilient permanent workforce across all service areas. Over the coming year, I will continue to hold the service to account for delivering the Workforce Strategy and ensuring that recruitment, retention, development and succession planning arrangements support the long-term sustainability of Adult Social Care.

4.5 Listening to Residents and Carers

- 4.5.1 One of the strongest themes running through both the Adult Social Care Strategy and our improvement journey is the commitment to ensuring that people with lived experience help shape the services they use. During the year, we have strengthened our approach to engagement and co-production through the continued development of Change Together Medway, creating new opportunities for residents, carers, providers and community organisations to influence decision-making and service improvement.
- 4.5.2 The Adult Social Care Engagement Team has played a central role in this work, helping to ensure that people's voices are heard, listened to and acted upon. The team has worked extensively across Medway to build relationships and trust with local communities, attending more than 500 community events, support groups and partnership meetings during the year. This has enabled Adult Social Care to reach people where they are, listen to their experiences and improve awareness of available support and services.
- 4.5.3 A particular achievement has been the establishment of Community Involvement Groups across Medway, including Chatham, Gillingham, Strood, Rainham, Rochester and the Hoo Peninsula. These groups provide residents and carers with regular opportunities to share their experiences, identify local priorities and influence the development of Adult Social Care services within their communities.

- 4.5.4 Extensive engagement also informed the development of the Adult Social Care Strategy 2026-2030. More than 100 residents, carers, partners and community organisations, alongside over 300 members of staff, contributed to the strategy, helping to ensure that it reflects the priorities and aspirations of the people who draw on care and support in Medway.
- 4.5.5 Alongside this, we have introduced new ways for people to provide feedback and remain informed about Adult Social Care. This has included community events focused on key Adult Social Care themes, regular newsletters, the publication of a Guide to Adult Social Care, and the development of an Engagement Framework that sets out how we will work with residents, carers and partners in the future. Together, these initiatives are helping to create a more open, transparent and accessible approach to engagement.
- 4.5.6 Importantly, this work has delivered practical outcomes for residents. Engagement activity has supported people to access Care Act assessments, social care reviews, benefits advice, Blue Badge applications, housing support and wider community-based services. Feedback from residents and carers demonstrates that people increasingly feel listened to, involved and able to influence services, with many highlighting the value of direct contact with Adult Social Care staff and the opportunities now available to have their voices heard.
- 4.5.7 During the year, substantial work was undertaken to strengthen co-production arrangements and develop the foundations for the establishment of the Making It Real Board. This work brought together people with lived experience, carers, staff and partners to shape the Board's purpose, membership and priorities, ensuring that it would be built on the principles of genuine partnership and shared decision-making. These developments represent an important step in our commitment to moving beyond consultation and embedding lived experience more fully within the way Adult Social Care plans and improves services.
- 4.5.8 As Deputy Leader, I am particularly encouraged by the cultural shift this represents. Listening to residents, carers and providers is no longer a separate activity undertaken at specific points in time. Through Change Together Medway and our wider co-production arrangements, we are embedding lived experience into how Adult Social Care thinks, plans, improves and makes decisions. This work will continue to be a cornerstone of our improvement journey as we work towards services that are shaped with people rather than for people. To augment our commitment and encourage older people to plan for their future in later life, a new initiative is being launched with our first Thrive from 55 event being held on Tuesday 13th October. This will showcase all of the services, activities and advice available to older people in Medway and will be organised jointly with our Public Health colleagues who do so much to enhance the lives of older residents.

4.6 Social Care Providers

- 4.6.1 I remain committed to ensuring Medway has a sustainable, diverse and high-quality care market capable of meeting the needs of our residents now and in the future. Adult Social Care continues to operate within a challenging environment, with increasing demand, greater complexity of need and continuing financial and workforce pressures. Despite these challenges, providers across Medway have continued to demonstrate dedication, professionalism and a strong commitment to delivering safe, person-centred care.
- 4.6.2 Throughout the year, I have been encouraged by the constructive relationships that exist between the Council and our care providers. We meet our providers every month offering a combination of debates, information, training and advice as well as holding an annual care conference. As a local authority, we have a responsibility to ensure public funds are used effectively and that services deliver value for money for Medway residents. Equally, we recognise that a sustainable and resilient provider market is essential to maintaining high-quality care and achieving positive outcomes. Through regular engagement, provider forums and partnership discussions, we have sought to balance these priorities by working collaboratively with providers to understand the costs and challenges of delivering care, whilst ensuring services remain affordable, effective and responsive to the needs of local people. This approach has helped strengthen mutual understanding and support informed decision-making across commissioning, market shaping and service development activities.
- 4.6.3 Providers have continued to respond positively to an evolving policy and operational landscape. Alongside managing recruitment and retention challenges, rising operating costs and increasing complexity of care needs, the sector has adapted to changing expectations around quality, personalised care, technology-enabled support and integration with health services. Their commitment to innovation and continuous improvement has been key to maintaining high standards of care and support for local people.
- 4.6.4 Market sustainability remains one of the Council's key priorities. We have continued to focus on our market shaping responsibilities, working closely with providers to understand current and future demand and ensure sufficient capacity is available across residential care, nursing care, home care, supported living and community-based services. Particular attention has been given to supporting provision for people living with dementia, learning disabilities, autism and individuals with complex care needs.
- 4.6.5 The contribution of social care providers to the wider health and care system cannot be overstated. Providers continue to play a vital role in supporting hospital discharge, preventing avoidable admissions and enabling people to recover and regain independence within their own homes and communities wherever possible. Their partnership with the Council and NHS colleagues is fundamental to maintaining system resilience and improving outcomes for residents.

- 4.6.6 This year has also seen the continued development of community-based support and prevention services. I am particularly pleased to highlight the introduction of the Adult Day Support Service (ADSS) dementia day provision and had the pleasure of attending their opening of the new service at Capstone, which offers structured activities, social engagement and specialist support for people living with dementia. The service is already demonstrating its value in helping people maintain independence, wellbeing and community connections whilst reducing social isolation.
- 4.6.7 Importantly, the ADSS dementia service is also providing much-needed support to family members and unpaid carers. By offering regular opportunities for meaningful engagement and trusted support, the service enables carers to access respite, maintain their own wellbeing and sustain their caring responsibilities for longer. This reflects our wider commitment to supporting both people with dementia and those who care for them.
- 4.6.8 I would like to place on record my thanks to all care providers across Medway. Their resilience, flexibility and commitment to supporting some of our most vulnerable residents continues to make a significant difference. As we look ahead, I am confident that through continued partnership working, innovation and a shared focus on quality, we can build a strong and sustainable care market that supports independence, choice and positive outcomes for the people of Medway.
- 4.6.9. **Care for Medway**
- 4.6.10 As Portfolio Holder, I welcome the considerable work undertaken during 2025/26 to develop and rigorously test the Council's ambition to establish a Medway-owned and operated care home. Throughout the year, I have sought assurance that the proposal is evidence-led, financially robust and capable of delivering meaningful benefits for Medway residents.
- 4.6.11 The work undertaken has highlighted the significant challenges facing the adult social care market locally, including increasing demand for residential and nursing care, a projected growth in dementia prevalence, rising placement costs and continuing pressures on local capacity. These challenges require the Council to consider innovative and sustainable solutions to meet its responsibilities under the Care Act while ensuring residents can access high-quality care closer to home.
- 4.6.12 I have consistently challenged officers to ensure that any proposal for a Council-operated care home demonstrates a clear strategic need, and complements, rather than undermines, the existing care market. The Council must continue to fulfil its market-shaping responsibilities whilst responding to areas where the market alone is not currently providing sufficient affordable capacity.
- 4.6.13 Particular assurance has been sought regarding the proposed model of 80 beds, incorporating specialist dementia care, assessment, reablement and respite provision. This approach has the potential to address several strategic priorities simultaneously, including reducing delays in hospital discharge,

increasing local capacity and supporting residents to remain closer to their families and support networks.

- 4.6.14 Given the scale of the potential investment, I have also emphasised the importance of robust governance and staged decision-making. The gateway approach adopted through the RIBA process provides the necessary oversight, ensuring that Cabinet has opportunities to review progress, risks, costs and affordability before further commitments are made.
- 4.6.15 Whilst the project is not expected to deliver immediate financial savings, the work undertaken during the year has reinforced the long-term risks of inaction, including increasing reliance on costly spot purchases, greater use of out-of-area placements and continued pressure on Adult Social Care budgets as demand grows.
- 4.6.16 I will continue to hold the programme to account to ensure that future decisions remain focused on delivering high-quality care, improving outcomes for residents.

4.7 Public Health Achievements

- 4.7.1 Public Health continued to deliver a wide range of important services to residents to improve health and wellbeing and to reduce health inequalities. In the last full financial year, the team supported over 105,000 Medway residents through a public health service.
- 4.7.2 This number includes lifesaving services such as the 6,000+ NHS health checks that are delivered in our High Street location and across a range of community venues. This service is for 40–74-year-olds and a key programme that detects existing and future health conditions. This figure doesn't include the additional 1,000 blood pressure checks delivered in Measure Your Pressure month.
- 4.7.3 Last year, over 22,000 children attended Medway Go, providing a healthy meal and enrichment activity for children who before the programme was launched, may have spent the half term feeling hungry and missing out on the excellent movement and creative activities delivered by the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) providers. The funding guarantee for three years provided by the government has been very welcome helping us to plan ahead.
- 4.7.4 It is often the front-line services that get the headlines, but core elements of the team's success is the Public Health Advice Centre that processes over 7,500 referrals from health care professionals and self-referring residents. The team have an incredible response and turnaround time which is a KPI they pride themselves on. This is our front door to our menu of healthy lifestyle interventions, and the team provide a friendly, accessible first-class service.
- 4.7.5 Another element of the department which is critical to the success is the Public Health Intelligence Team. They have an excellent reputation within the wider council and local health and care system for providing the highest quality analytics, and they support on a wide range of intelligence tasks. One

crucial element is refreshing and publishing Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) chapters, with the most recent being the social isolation and loneliness chapter. Our analysts also play a critical role in helping us to measure the impact of our interventions and predict future demand on vital services.

- 4.7.6 Other key statistics that show the scale of our front line Public Health services last year include 1,457 people setting a quit date with our stop smoking team, more than 1,800 children and adults attending one of our healthy weight services, 350 people attending a cookery workshop, more than 40,000 residents attending a physical activity intervention such as health walks, 8,000 attending at a talking table to tackle social isolation and 706 children supported through our new supervised tooth brushing programme.
- 4.7.8 A key project which brings together both parts of my portfolio areas is the Falls Management Exercise and Wellbeing Service (FaME), which was launched last year. The relatively new programme continues to grow with over 700 frail largely older adults who were at risk of falling supported through a 20-week strength and conditioning programme. The adherence and outcomes we are seeing from this are excellent and it is preventing vulnerable people falling, meaning they are not admitted to hospital with major fractures, saving lives and avoiding costs to Adult Social Care. I recently visited the class in Rainham and receive extremely positive feedback from participants not only about the exercise but about the welcome social interaction at the class.
- 4.7.9 At the other end of the age spectrum the child health team continue their fantastic work in schools and other young people settings. This includes 2,184 receiving our peer ambassador support and 2,237 children attending schools that have progressed through our A Better Medway (ABM) Schools Awards.
- 4.7.10 We support a range of settings such as workplaces, education providers and care settings, so that in turn they can support their workforce, students or service users. Through our various settings programme like Workplace Health and the Healthy Early Years (HEY) awards, we reached over 35,000 people with lifestyle messages and support.
- 4.7.11 Another core element of our Public Health offer is training and development. Through long standing programmes such as A Better Medway (ABM) training (which continues to have new and fresh training content added every year) we trained 2,778 professionals and volunteers last year. This free training continues to be available, and people can register via the ABM training portal.
- 4.7.12 The Public Health team can regularly be seen at large corporate events or running their own events. Last year this led to more than 4,500 engagements with residents allowing them to promote healthy lifestyles, give direct advice and drive sign-ups for services.
- 4.7.13 The department's digital reach also continues to grow. Key websites such as A Better Medway, Every Day Active and Beside You, continue to get strong public engagement along with our Family Hub app, TikTok content for child

health and other social media platforms. Our analytics shows over 420,000 Facebook posts were viewed last year alone.

- 4.7.14 Another core element of Public Health is working with and through our various partners to improve health and wellbeing. Building and developing networks is a particular skill. I have had great pleasure in opening and speaking at numerous network sessions such as our Food Partnership, Physical Activity Alliance, Marmot Partnership and Positive Behaviour Support (PBS Community of Practice. These various networks include over a thousand different partners and organisations and are helping to achieve our ambition to reduce health inequalities in Medway.
- 4.7.15 Another statutory requirement and critical public health service we are responsible for commissioning is the 0-19 service. This includes a wide range of targeted and universal services. Within the Health Visiting element alone, 3,000 families and children were supported with a range of physical and emotional health support last year.
- 4.7.16 Other programmes which show our commitment to supporting children and families is our Best Start in Life offer. This programme supports core early years agendas such as school readiness, peri-natal mental health and infant feeding. Through our partnership working and targeted interventions (which includes services such as parenting support), the team continue to develop this offer and reach families in communities with some of the poorest health outcomes.
- 4.7.17 A core pillar of Public Health which we have developed considerably over the last year has been our Health Protection function. Priorities for this team over the last year have been improving vaccine uptake and reducing hesitancy, along with improving screening rates for major health conditions.
- 4.7.18 Our Children's Partnership Commissioning Team continue to work with our NHS partners on core agendas such as children and young people mental health. Through a range of commissioned providers and strategic delivery our approach to partnership commissioning has been commended by others within the wider Kent and Medway footprint and something they want to see grow as the system matures.
- 4.7.19 There has been some excellent targeted communications and campaigns were delivered by the team, which I have been proud to be a part of. One key campaign that was a large partnership success was the Baton of Hope. This suicide prevention campaign included a range of community activities in order to inspire hope in people struggling with their mental health. It culminated in a powerful event that saw baton bearers who have been affected by suicide, walking from MidKent college to Rochester Cathedral, via a Kent Fire and Rescue boat going up the River Medway. We will now hold our own Baton of Hope event each year.
- 4.7.20 Over the last year, the Financial Welfare and Public Health teams have also been working hard to launch a community food supermarket in the centre of Chatham. Funded by the Crisis and Resilience Fund, this venue will offer

affordable, healthy and nutritious food when it opens on 5th October 2026. The team have been through a competitive tender process, with Social Enterprise Kent winning the contract to provide the service. This facility will offer a sustainable solution to rising food insecurity by combining low-cost food shopping with wraparound support designed to address the root causes of financial hardship. This new initiative complements our ambition to support residents with the cost-of-living crisis and the ambitions we set out in our Medway Food Strategy.

4.8 Adults Partnership Commissioning

- 4.8.1 During 2025/26, the Voluntary, Community, Social Enterprise and Faith (VCSEF) sector continued to play a critical role in supporting the Council's prevention and early intervention agenda, helping residents to remain independent, connected to their communities and able to access support at the earliest opportunity.
- 4.8.2 VCSEF organisations worked alongside statutory services to provide a broad range of support, including community navigation, social prescribing, wellbeing services, carer support, practical assistance and activities aimed at reducing loneliness and social isolation. Through this work, residents were able to access timely support within their local communities, often preventing needs from escalating and reducing demand on more intensive health and social care services.
- 4.8.3 The sector made a significant contribution to supporting people following discharge from hospital, helping residents to regain confidence, re-establish independence and avoid unnecessary readmissions. VCSEF partners also continued to provide tailored support for vulnerable adults, including people living with dementia, those experiencing frailty, and residents with long-term health conditions.
- 4.8.4 The VCSEF sector has been instrumental in strengthening community resilience across Medway, creating opportunities for residents to participate in local activities, maintain social connections and access support closer to home. This work aligns closely with the Council's Care for Medway ambitions and the wider neighbourhood health approach, recognising the important role that communities play in improving health and wellbeing outcomes.
- 4.8.5 The continued collaboration between the Council, health partners and the VCSEF sector has helped deliver a more preventative, person-centred approach to care, supporting better outcomes for residents while ensuring that finite public resources are targeted towards those with the greatest need.

4.9 Assistive Technology

- 4.9.1 During 2025/26, Kyndi Ltd continued to make a significant contribution to supporting residents to live independently, safely and confidently within their own homes. Customer satisfaction remained exceptionally high at 98%, while customer retention was maintained at 85%, significantly above the reported market average, demonstrating the quality and value of the services provided.

- 4.9.2 Kyndi expanded its use of innovative assistive technology and telecare solutions, including the rollout of Circadacare Smart Lightbulbs, helping people living with dementia and other vulnerable residents remain safe and independent at home. This work has also delivered cost avoidance benefits for Adult Social Care and has been extended through partnership working with Medway Community Healthcare's falls services.

5. Ambitions for 2026/2027

- 5.1 During 2026/27, my focus will be on ensuring the successful delivery of the Adult Social Care Strategy 2026-2030 and embedding the improvements already underway across the service. This will include maintaining oversight of the Adult Social Care Improvement Programme and ensuring that the learning from the CQC assessment continues to drive sustainable improvements in practice, performance and outcomes.
- 5.2 Improving the experience of residents and carers will remain a key ambition. We will continue to focus on reducing waiting times for assessments and reviews, improving the timeliness of support planning and ensuring that people receive the right support at the right time. Alongside this, we will strengthen our approach to prevention and early intervention so that more people can remain independent and connected to their communities for longer.
- 5.3 Supporting unpaid carers will continue to be a priority. Carers make a vital contribution to the wellbeing of residents across Medway, and we will continue to work with Carers First to improve access to information, advice, assessments and practical support to help them maintain their caring roles and their own wellbeing.
- 5.4 The delivery of the Adult Social Care Workforce Strategy will be central to achieving our wider ambitions. We will continue working to recruit and retain talented staff, reduce reliance on agency workers, strengthen leadership capacity and provide opportunities for learning, development and career progression. Building a stable, skilled and supported workforce remains fundamental to delivering high-quality services.
- 5.5 We will continue to embrace innovation and expand the use of technology-enabled care where it can support independence, improve outcomes and enhance people's quality of life. At the same time, we will ensure that technology complements, rather than replaces, the personal relationships that are so important within Adult Social Care.
- 5.6 Partnership working will remain essential. We will continue to strengthen our work with health partners, housing providers, care providers, the voluntary and community sector and people with lived experience to ensure services are joined-up, responsive and centred around the needs of residents.
- 5.7 A particular ambition for the coming year is to embed the newly established Making It Real Board as a central part of Adult Social Care governance and

improvement. Bringing together people with lived experience, the Board will provide a formal mechanism for co-production and help ensure that the voices of people who draw on care and support are reflected in policy development, service design and improvement activity. Through this work, we will continue our journey from consultation towards genuine co-production, with lived experience increasingly shaping how decisions are made across Adult Social Care.

- 5.8 Finally, underpinning all of these ambitions is the need to ensure Adult Social Care remains sustainable in the face of increasing demand, growing complexity of need and ongoing financial pressures. While the people who draw on care and support will always remain at the centre of our decision-making, we must also recognise that the long-term sustainability of services is essential if we are to continue delivering positive outcomes in the future. My ambition is therefore to support a programme of transformation, prevention and service improvement that enables Adult Social Care to live within its means over time whilst continuing to provide high-quality, person-centred support for Medway residents.
- 5.9 I will continue to tackle health and social inequalities ensuring that residents' health is not adversely affected by where they live. Our Marmot Partnership ambition is to halve health inequalities across Medway, and I am fully committed to Medway Council doing its part and encouraging all other Medway stakeholders to join this ambition and the wider aspirations of the public health programme.
- 5.10 I will continue to support the VCSEF, who play a crucial role in delivering essential services and fostering community resilience. The VCSEF provides a critical element of a thriving health and care system, and we recognise the role the sector plays and the strength of the Medway sector in particular. Through our Better Together Consortium, by supporting the Leadership Network and working directly with individual community groups through various programmes, we want to grow our third sector. We are committed to helping them become more sustainable and give them the opportunity to show the value they add to Medway residents' lives.
- 5.11 I will continue to ensure that the resources of the Health Determinants Research Collaboration (HDRC) are deployed to conduct and use research findings to improve the way that council services are delivered to increase efficiency and to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for all in Medway, and especially those in greatest need so that health inequalities are reduced.
- 5.12 Ensuring the long-term sustainability of Adult Social Care remains a key priority. In recognition of the significant financial pressures facing Medway, I wrote to Government to highlight the growing gap between increasing demand, rising complexity of need and the resources available to local authorities to meet those pressures. The letter set out Medway's position as a Council that continues to invest in Adult Social Care, drive improvement and deliver ambitious transformation, whilst facing financial challenges that are being experienced across the sector.

- 5.13 In making Medway's case, I highlighted that Adult Social Care expenditure has increased significantly in recent years, with budgets increasing by approximately 70% since 2018/19. However, this remains lower than growth seen across comparable authorities, where Adult Social Care budget increases have ranged between 85% and 96%. At the same time, demand and costs continue to rise, with long-term care expenditure increasing by 17.6% for adults aged under 65 and 18.0% for adults aged 65 and over. I will continue to advocate strongly for Medway, ensuring the Council's voice is heard in national discussions on Adult Social Care reform and funding, while continuing to hold the service to account for delivering transformation, strengthening financial sustainability and ensuring that every available resource is focused on achieving the best possible outcomes for Medway residents.

6. Climate change implications

- 6.1 [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.
- 6.2 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.

7 Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) implications

- 7.1 Following the announcement of the pause on 7 September 2026, officers will monitor the ongoing situation and will consider any relevant impacts as they arise.

8 Financial implications

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

9 Legal implications

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

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Medway Adult Social Care Local Account 2025-26

Background papers

None