

People & Health Scrutiny Committee

21 January 2026

2025/26 Quarter 2 Performance Report

For Review and Consultation

Cabinet Member:

Cllr N Ireland, Leader of the Council, Climate, Performance and Safeguarding

Local Councillor(s): All

Senior Leadership Team:

S Ford, Corporate Director, Strategy, Performance and Sustainability

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Statutory Authority: N/A

Report status: Public Choose an item.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 This report provides the People & Health Scrutiny Committee with an overview of key performance trajectories, indicators and exceptions for Quarter 2 of 2025/26 (July–September 2025). It builds on the Quarter 1 2025/26 performance report (presented to the Committee on 17 November 2025).
- 1.2 The report presents red-rated performance indicators, alongside amber indicators showing a worsening trend, with narrative context and improvement actions. Based on the data the Committee's key areas of focus this quarter are:
 - Children's Service's CMS implementation project update
 - Percentage of looked after children placed outside the council area
- 1.3 For these areas, performance has been triangulated using a mix of quantitative data (trends, benchmarking, demand) and relevant resource context, providing a rounded and meaningful narrative to support scrutiny discussion.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Committee:
- notes the Quarter 2 (July–September 2025) performance overview available via the Scrutiny dashboard, with an accompanying exceptions extract provided in Annex 1 and 2.
 - considers the contextual analysis for the identified areas of performance focus, to inform actions and recommendations.

3. Reason for the recommendations

- 3.1 To support the council's commitment to robust governance, transparency and continuous improvement by adhering to the reporting mechanisms set out within Dorset Council's Strategic Performance Reporting Framework.

Specifically, this approach:

- aligns with the council's constitution, particularly provisions relating to performance monitoring, decision-making, transparency, and democratic oversight
- promotes public transparency by ensuring performance-related information is accessible, clear, and reported consistently
- supports effective tracking and oversight of the scrutiny committee's actions and decisions, reinforcing accountability and enabling timely follow-up
- supports the council's wider performance management framework by ensuring the committee's work is integrated into quarterly reporting mechanisms

4. The report

- 4.1 The scrutiny dashboard now includes Quarter 2 (July–September 2025/26) performance data, alongside historic trends where available, enabling Members to interrogate key metrics and emerging issues. The dashboard is publicly accessible via the following [link](#).
- 4.2 The areas of focus are indicated below and are considered in turn within the report:

Children's Services

- **Children's Service's Case Management System (CMS) implementation project update**
 - Dorset moved to a new workflow-based case management system in May to bring greater consistency, efficiency and oversight to the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) process. The system provides structured workflows, an

out-of-the-box reporting module for statutory returns, and alerts to support ongoing monitoring of statutory compliance. It integrates with MOSAIC and Synergy Core to improve information flow across social care and education, includes an inbuilt forms designer for flexible updates, and offers manager and team-level caseload tools that strengthen operational oversight and workload management. Future releases will also introduce portal access for professionals, schools and parents, enabling them to contribute directly to the EHCP process.

- Reporting functionality within the EHCP Case Management System has advanced significantly throughout October and November and remains a key priority for the Service. This work is being delivered in close collaboration with Business Intelligence and Performance colleagues, alongside ICT support.
- Performance information on key metrics for current EHCPs and the timeliness of the Education, Health and Care Needs Request process from initial request to final plan issuance has been reinstated and is now available.
- Performance metrics for both datasets are being backdated for the period May 2025 to November 2025 to ensure accuracy and provide a reliable baseline for monitoring.
- Data Quality (DQ) reports have been developed to identify key data anomalies to provide greater transparency and enable the service to proactively resolve errors.
- Further work on enhancing reporting and performance monitoring will remain a priority for Business Intelligence & Performance (BI&P) and ICT colleagues. This includes continued development of analytical outputs to provide full oversight of performance and compliance. Delivery will be aligned with the governance provided by the Synergy Operational Group and the Children's Services Digital Work Plan, ensuring that improvements are embedded within existing structures.
- Our EHCP performance is not yet where we want it to be, and there are a number of factors that have contributed to this:
 - Staff familiarising themselves with the new case management system
 - Vacancies in localities and induction of permanent and interim workers
 - Peak holiday season limiting staff capacity
 - Delays in reporting from the new case management system

- Delays in timeliness and reasons for delay, are being analysed so that these can be understood and actions recommended to strengthen our position
- We are currently in formal consultation with the workforce with some proposed changes to our Dorset Children Thrive Model, and we anticipate, if these changes proceed, we will have the more capacity in the right places to strengthen our performance. The changes are proposed to be in place from April 2026.
- We have started exploring opportunities for using Artificial Intelligence to support our EHCP work and are hopeful that this will also improve our timeliness in this area. This forms part of a Council Wide initiative, and we do not yet have a timeline for implementation.
- **Percentage of looked after children placed outside the council area**
 - The percentage of children in care in homes outside Dorset at the end of quarter two was 45.22% - Dorset's target is 30%. When compared to Good + Local Authorities and Statistical Neighbours the average is 33.14% and the England average is 45%.
 - The percentage of children in care placed more than 20 miles away from home at the end of quarter two was 41.83% - Dorset's target is 35%.
 - 61% of children in care who live outside Dorset are living in neighbouring authorities.
 - Both measures have improved in October 2025 with the percentage of children in care in homes outside Dorset at the end of October 2025 being 44.71%, and the percentage of Children in homes more than 20 miles away is 41.04%.
 - Our commitment to placing children within their family networks may sometimes result in placing children outside of Dorset.
 - Where children's needs are best met in a home outside of Dorset, due diligence is completed by Brokerage Team. High cost and at distance homes are approved by the Director of Children's Services. All children are regularly visited by their social worker and there is regular contact with their independent reviewing officer between and during statutory reviews.
 - Prior to any child living in a residential home outside Dorset, careful consideration is given to matching the child's needs with the home and other children living there. A local area risk assessment is undertaken, and the relevant local authority is

notified to ensure that any risks in the area are known and understood. Annual visits are undertaken by the Brokerage quality assurance service and any downgrades to Ofsted ratings results in increased visiting and oversight.

- Dorset Virtual School provides a consistent offer for all children in care living both in Dorset and outside Dorset.
- Having children in homes outside of Dorset provides significant financial pressures, as homes are higher cost and there are additional travel costs and time pressures for social workers.
- The recruitment of local foster carers is essential to improving this position and the outcomes for our children, and despite the national challenge of recruitment of foster carers we did see an increase in initial enquiries during September 2025 and are actively assessing 19 families as mainstream foster carers and 16 families as kinship carers.
- Valuing Care is enabling us to gain a deeper understanding of children's needs and express these more clearly. At the same time, we are using the approach to assess foster carers' capacity. Together, these approaches will help us to make stronger, needs-led matches with local foster carers. Support children in transitioning from residential care to fostering in a planned and positive way.
- We launched our Christmas Fostering Campaign and are working closely with our foster carers to better understand the support they need to expand their fostering family to meet the needs of our children.
- We continue to develop and grow our in-house homes and our local externally commissioned homes. All Dorset in-house children's homes are either graded Good or Outstanding by Ofsted. We have recently successfully registered a single occupancy children's home in the East of the county, with plans to register 2 further homes in 2026. We continue to explore additional opportunities to expand.
- We have a Framework in place for locally commissioned residential homes providing a total of 17 beds for a range of children's needs. Of these we have 6 block arrangements in place meaning they can only be used by Dorset Council for our children, and we are in discussions to secure more places under these arrangements. Furthermore, we are actively engaged with other providers who are establishing homes in Dorset (proposed total beds is 8) to encourage them to join our framework.
- We are part of the Southwest Sufficiency Group, a group of 15 local authorities working together to develop sufficiency of homes for children. A recent Market Position Statement has

been produced setting out the regions position and direction of travel which includes, Regional Purchasing Arrangement and Fee Uplifts, Co-design and implement a regional framework to source residential placements for children in care, Keep children local in high-quality cost-effective provision. Workforce Development Partner with Dialogue, DfE, Ofsted, Children Homes Association, and University of Sussex academics to develop recommendations for providers and commissioners to inform recruitment, retention and growth strategies and Influence regulation and inspection protocols for Registered Managers. Transparent Baseline Costing Models, establish a transparent and data-driven baseline of costs across the region for commissioned services in children's care.

- In November 2025 the Government announced an acceleration of establishing Regional Care Cooperatives (RCC) following two regional trials. RCC's will mandate regional groups of local authorities to pool resources and budgets to accelerate the development of local homes for local children, improved data insights to support market shaping and manage excessive costs private providers charge to care for children. Our South - West regional work puts us in a good position to respond the development of RCC's.

Quarter 2 Exceptions Extract 2025/26

4.3 The Quarter 2 (July–September 2025) performance overview is available via the Scrutiny Dashboard, with supporting exceptions extracts provided in **Appendix 1 and 2**.

- Appendix 1 provides red-rated indicators accompanied by narrative context and improvement actions.
- Appendix 2 presents amber-rated indicators, with a worsening direction of travel, also supported by narrative and improvement actions.

Quarter 2 Risk Update

4.4 The performance dashboard incorporates strategic risks to acknowledge their critical role in shaping and influencing overall performance. Strategic risks are those that, if realised, could have the most significant impact on delivering the Council Plan or other key organisational priorities. Strategic risks may be considered by the Scrutiny Committee within the context of performance.

4.5 It is important to note that the responsibility for assessing the adequacy of risk controls and management rests with the Audit and Governance Committee, which holds the authority to make recommendations on the effectiveness of the council's risk management arrangements.

4.6 Whilst this is the case, it is acknowledged that the committee has an overarching interest in Risk ID 200, rated Very High:

“As a result of health service reform, Dorset Council may incur additional unprovisioned responsibilities, leading to increased resourcing & budgetary pressures, unmet health needs and potential harm to individuals”.

4.7 A meeting with risk owners is scheduled for 19 January 2026 to review the current position and understand how the risk is evolving within the context of performance. A verbal update will be provided to the Committee at its meeting on the 21 January 2026

Quarter 3 Performance Report

4.8 The next performance report, presenting Quarter 3 data, will be brought to the Committee 1 April 2026. Within this report committee has requested to receive a report focusing on Housing performance.

5. Alternative options considered

5.1 Not applicable. The report presents information on past performance and does not recommend any change to council policy or new action.

6. Legal considerations

6.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from this report; however some indicators are based on statutory returns, which the council must make to the Government.

7. Financial implications

7.1 There are no financial legal implications arising directly from this report.

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

8.1 The report does not have direct climate change implications.

9. Well-being and health implications

9.1 The People and Health Committee scrutinise performance within its area of expertise and any commissioned actions resulting from this process may improve the well-being and health outcomes of our communities.

10. Other implications

10.1 None.

11. Risk implications

11.1 Not applicable. The report presents information on past performance and does not seek a decision.

12. Equalities

12.1 There are no direct equality, diversity or inclusion implications resulting from this report. Equality impact assessments are carried out, when necessary, across the council to ensure service delivery meets the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010.

13. Appendices

- 13.1 **Appendix 1:** Summary of performance exceptions (red RAG-rated measures) – People and Health Scrutiny Committee, Quarter 2 2025/26 (July–September 2025)
- 13.2 **Appendix 2:** Summary of performance exceptions (Amber and ‘worsening’ RAG-rated measures) – People and Health Scrutiny Committee, Quarter 2 2025/26 (July–September 2025)

14. Background papers

- [Agenda Document for People and Health Scrutiny Committee, 17/11/2025](#)
- [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for People and Health Scrutiny Committee, 30/07/2025](#)

15. Report sign-off

15.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Corporate Director for Finance and Commercial (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)

Appendices

Appendix 1. Summary of performance exceptions (red RAG-rated measures) – People and Health Scrutiny Committee, Quarter 2 2025/26 (July–September 2025)

Service Area	Indicator	Data	RAG	DOT	Narrative
Adults & Housing	Adults Safeguarding Activity - number of safeguarding concerns received during the month	636	RED	Same	The service continues to see a rise in demand and a significant increase in the number of concerns received in comparison to last year. As reported last month 50% of concerns continue to be received from the provider sector with missed medication being the most frequently reported incident type reported by providers. The number of concerns reported in relation to self-neglect is also significant and a rising area of demand and focus for the team.
Adults & Housing	Number of pregnant women / families in B&B exceeding 6 week stay	1	RED	Worsening	One household has been in B&B for longer than 6 weeks. Close monitoring and joint planning will be continued to ensure the accommodation needs of all families who require temporary accommodation are understood as early as possible following their approach to housing so that alternative options can be identified quickly and B&B placements are avoided if other more suitable options exist.
Children's Services	Number of Independent Special School places taken up by children and young people	542	RED	Same	As the number of children with agreed EHCPs continues to rise, we anticipate this may influence the number placed in independent or non-maintained specialist provision. Our strategic aim remains to place children in mainstream or maintained special schools wherever possible, ensuring provision is both appropriate and sustainable.

Service Area	Indicator	Data	RAG	DOT	Narrative
Children's Services	Number of special educational needs (SEND) tribunals against the authority	15	RED	Improving	<p>SEND tribunal activity increased in September, with 15 new appeals lodged across Dorset. Chesil recorded the highest number, with 7 new cases (3 refusals to assess, 1 refusal to issue, 2 Section I disputes, and 1 covering Sections B, F & I). No cases were concluded in Chesil during this period.</p> <p>Dorchester & West received 2 new appeals (both refusals to assess) and concluded 3 cases: one refusal to assess which was overturned by Dorset before the hearing, one refusal to issue decided in favour of parents at hearing, and one Sections B, F & I appeal struck out by the tribunal.</p> <p>North locality saw 1 new appeal (refusal to issue an EHCP) and 2 concluded cases: one Sections B, F & I appeal decided in favour of the parent at hearing, and one refusal to issue resolved via paper hearing, also in favour of the parent.</p> <p>East recorded 4 new appeals (2 refusals to assess and 2 covering Sections B, F & I) and concluded 2 cases: one Sections B, F & I appeal decided in favour of the parent at hearing, and one Section I case conceded by the LA prior to hearing.</p> <p>Purbeck had 1 new appeal (Sections B, F & I) and concluded 1 case (Section I, hearing outcome in favour of the parent).</p>

Service Area	Indicator	Data	RAG	DOT	Narrative
Children's Services	Percentage of children with a new child protection plan who have been on a child protection plan within the last two years (rolling 12 months)	16.22	RED	Worsening	The service has seen a rise in the proportion of children subject to repeat child protection plans, which is currently above target. In response, an audit has been completed to review the sustainability of plans and the decision-making processes involved. The findings from this audit will help inform next steps and support improvements in practice.
Children's Services	Percentage of Education, Health & Care Plans (EHCPs) issued within 20 weeks	22.86	RED	Worsening	We are currently unable to report on EHCP metrics due to the recent migration to the new Case Management System. Once the new reporting solution is fully implemented and embedded, we will backfill the missing data to ensure continuity and accuracy in performance monitoring.
Children's Services	Percentage of looked after children placed outside the council area	45.22	RED	Worsening	We have seen an increase at the end of this quarter in the % of children in care living outside Dorset to 45.22 from an improved figure in July of 41.61. This means that our performance is worse than National Average and Good + stat Neighbours.

Service Area	Indicator	Data	RAG	DOT	Narrative
Children's Services	Rate of permanent exclusions from schools (all schools) (%)	0.84	RED	Worsening	<p>There have been 9 permanent exclusions recorded this quarter: 4 in July and 5 in September. These exclusions predominantly affected pupils in Years 8 and 10, with each year group accounting for 33% of the total (3 children and young people (CYP) in each year group).</p> <p>One exclusion was rescinded in the East locality. A significant proportion of the excluded pupils had existing vulnerabilities, 40% were Children in Need (CIN), 20% were receiving Targeted Early Help, 40% had previous involvement with Children's Social Care (CSC) within the past six years. Only 2 pupils had an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).</p> <p>Locality-level data shows that Chesil, Dorchester, and North each recorded the highest number of exclusions, with 2 exclusions per locality.</p>
Public Health and Prevention	Percentage of deaths registered within 5 calendar days	80	RED	Improving	<p>Since 9 September 2024 the national target has been to register deaths within five days of the receipt by Registration Services of the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death. The national target of 95% is extremely challenging for rural areas such as Dorset where most of the registration offices are part-time due to local demand and a lack of capacity to be able to increase the opening hours. Whilst customers are likely to be able to book an appointment at any office in the area within the five-day timeframe, they frequently wish to attend the office that is most convenient to them rather than travelling to a different town in order to register more quickly and will choose to wait a little longer for this reason.</p>

Service Area	Indicator	Data	RAG	DOT	Narrative
					<p>In Dorset we place significant emphasis on providing our customers with the best experience for registering deaths at what is often a sensitive time for them, listening to their preferences as to where they attend to do this, over seeking to maximise performance against the target. For instance, a customer living in Gillingham is unlikely to wish to travel to Weymouth in order to register a death as quickly as possible and will choose to wait a few days longer so that they can attend the Gillingham office.</p> <p>A flexible approach is taken to diary management with as many offices open as possible on any given day, but this is limited by registrar capacity and accommodation availability. Whilst death appointments are prioritised due to their time-critical nature, availability must also be balanced with appointments for birth registrations and taking notices of intention to marry or form civil partnerships.</p> <p>Performance improved slightly during September due to the reduced death rate (in line with seasonal expectations), engaging more casual cover for offices to offset capacity issues arising from vacancies and lessening in demand for notice of marriage appointments (in line with seasonal expectations).</p> <p>Looking ahead, the national civil registration transformation agenda is likely to see a move away from the current in-person requirements for registration appointments that tie these to physical offices. The temporary move to conducting death registration appointments by telephone enabled during the</p>

Service Area	Indicator	Data	RAG	DOT	Narrative
			Red	Green	pandemic proved that these could be undertaken much more quickly when the location and travel issue was removed in areas like Dorset. The ability to register deaths remotely will make a significant difference to performance in this respect. However the timeframe will be driven nationally, and we are unable to implement such changes locally.

Appendix 2. Summary of performance exceptions (Amber and ‘worsening’ RAG-rated measures) – People and Health Scrutiny Committee, Quarter 2 2025/26 (July–September 2025)

Service Area	Indicator	Data	RAG	DOT	Narrative
Adults & Housing	Adults - Number of outstanding assessments (Care Act)	863	Amber	Worsening	There has been pressure on the teams due to high volumes of referrals in and ongoing waiting list of work. There were 865 referrals into teams in September, of which 345 were for assessments; there were 383 assessments completed across the service within the month.
Adults & Housing	Adults - Number of overdue 12 month reviews (Care Act)	1221	Amber	Worsening	Overdue Reviews continue to be a challenge. There is a considerable volume of review work that is completed across the service, with 2476 reviews having been completed since 1st April 2025 for 1758 individuals. This continues to be an area of focus with the majority of the reviews being for people who have been waiting longest or there has been a change in need.
Adults & Housing	Net number of households in Temporary accommodation (including B&B) at the end of the month (taking in to account households newly placed in TA and those moving out into	211	Amber	Worsening	The increase of households in temporary accommodation reflects the expected seasonal increase.

Service Area	Indicator	Data	RAG	DOT	Narrative
	alternative accommodation)				
Children's Services	Percentage of 3 and 4 yr olds benefitting from funding EY education in Met/Good/Outstanding setting	96.78	Amber	Worsening	<p>The proportion of 3 and 4 year-olds accessing funded early years education in settings rated Met/Good/Outstanding remained consistently high throughout Quarter 2, with a slight upward trend observed mid-quarter. A peak in July and August reflects a period of stability and quality across most settings. However, a slight dip in September is attributed to a small number of settings receiving inspection outcomes below 'Good'.</p> <p>These outcomes were primarily due to challenges in recruitment and the absence of robust processes to ensure consistent quality. Currently, three settings are rated below Good: two Inadequate and one Requires Improvement. All are receiving targeted support to reflect on their inspection outcomes and implement improvement plans. These settings are expected to be re-inspected within 12 months, and ongoing support is in place to ensure rapid progress and improved outcomes for children.</p>

Service Area	Indicator	Data	RAG	DOT	Narrative
Children's Services	Percentage of Section 47 investigations completed within 10 days	82.76	Amber	Worsening	The timeliness of s.47 investigations has varied in Q.2 and has been below target. The previous delays in one locality have started to improve but have required further focus. Timeliness of s.47 investigations continues to be driven through weekly locality management meetings
Children's Services	Percentage of Section 47s leading to an Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC)	42.53	Amber	Worsening	Quarterly performance shows an average of 34.50 this year compared to 41.68 last year, performance remains slightly above the national average (32.18) and close to the benchmark for Good+ authorities (35.50), reflecting an overall improvement.
Adults & Housing	The total number of contacts into adult social care each month	1704	Amber	Worsening	The demand at the front door of Adult Access Team is difficult to manage as it is direct access from members of the public. The volume over the last year has risen since the same period last year . This is reflected in demand across the service in other areas and is reflected in the complexity we are seeing in the population of Dorset who have Care Act eligible needs.