BRIEFING		
	TO:	Health and Wellbeing Board
	DATE:	2nd September 2026
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	TITLE:	Better Care Fund (BCF) Call-Off Partnership / Work Order 2026/27

Background

1.1	The purpose of this report is to confirm that Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC) and NHS South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (SYICB) have jointly developed the Better Care Fund (BCF) Call-Off Partnership Agreement and Work Order for 2026/27. The agreement reflects the requirements of the national Better Care Fund Framework, supports local health and care priorities, and sets out the governance, financial and commissioning arrangements required to deliver integrated health and social care services in Rotherham.
1.2	The Department of Health and Social Care and NHS England jointly published the Better Care Fund Framework 2026/27, setting out the national requirements, funding conditions and planning requirements for local areas. It requires Integrated Care Boards (ICBs), local authorities and Health and Wellbeing Boards to work collaboratively to plan and deliver services that help people remain independent, prevent avoidable hospital admissions and support timely discharge from hospital. Where a Call-Off Partnership Work Order sits beneath the overarching Section 75 Agreement, there is a requirement for it to be reviewed annually.
1.3	The Health and Wellbeing Board is required to provide strategic oversight of the Better Care Fund and approve the local arrangements. Approval of the 2026/27 Call-Off Partnership Agreement and Work Order will ensure that statutory BCF requirements are met and that partners are able to deliver the agreed programme of investment in line with both national expectations and local priorities.

Key Issues

2.1	The Better Care Fund (BCF) continues to provide the principal mechanism for bringing together health, social care, housing and community services through pooled budget arrangements. The Better Care Fund Framework 2026/27 places a stronger emphasis on integrated and preventative care, the development of neighbourhood health services and supporting people to remain independent for longer.
2.2	In line with national requirements, all BCF funding must be transferred into one or more pooled funds established under Section 75 of the NHS Act 2006 and agreed through the Health and Wellbeing Board. The BCF Call-Off Partnership Agreement / Work Order provides the legal, financial and governance framework through which RMBC and SYICB will deliver these requirements. The Agreement formally establishes the pooled budget arrangements, sets out partner contributions, governance and decision-making arrangements, risk-sharing mechanisms and commissioning responsibilities required to deliver the approved Better Care Fund Plan.
2.3	The BCF Plan for Rotherham has been developed jointly by RMBC and SYICB to support national Better Care Fund objectives and local priorities. The plan focuses on promoting

	independence, improving outcomes through rehabilitation and reablement, supporting timely hospital discharge, reducing avoidable non-elective admissions and preventing unnecessary admissions to long-term residential and nursing care. In line with the Better Care Fund Framework 2026/27, the plan also supports the development of Neighbourhood Health Services and Integrated Neighbourhood Teams through investment in a range of integrated health, social care and community-based services designed to help people remain independent and receive the right care in the right place at the right time.
2.4	The BCF Call-Off Partnership Agreement / Work Order 2026/27 establishes two pooled budgets. Pool 1 is hosted by RMBC and is valued at £35.073 million. Pool 2 is hosted by SYICB and is valued at £20.968 million. Together these pooled arrangements deliver a total Better Care Fund investment programme of £56.042 million.
2.5	This includes funding streams comprising the NHS Minimum Contribution (£29.226 million), Local Authority Better Care Grant (£17.864 million), Disabled Facilities Grant (£3,938 million), an additional LA contribution (£2,352 million) and an underspend of £2,661 million carried forward from 2025/6.
2.6	Investment within the Better Care Fund is focused on six strategic themes: Mental Health Services, Rehabilitation and Reablement, Supporting Social Care, Care Management and Integrated Care Planning, Supporting Carers and Infrastructure. These themes support delivery of national Better Care Fund requirements and local priorities relating to independence, prevention, integration and hospital discharge.
2.7	The Better Care Fund Framework 2026/27 requires local partners to agree and monitor local goals relating to: • Non-elective admissions for people aged 65 and over • Average length of discharge delay for acute adult patients. • Long-term admissions to residential and nursing care homes for people aged 65 and over per 100,000 population • The proportion of people aged 65 and over who were discharged from hospital into reablement and who remained in the community in the 12 weeks following discharge. This goal is not mandatory in 2026/27 but will be measured to create a baseline.
2.8	The established governance arrangements with the BCF Executive Group providing strategic oversight, supported by the BCF Operational Group, which oversees delivery, performance, risk management and assurance activity, reporting to the Health and Wellbeing Board provides a comprehensive performance management framework. The framework enables the monitoring of delivery of the BCF Plan, achievement against national and local metrics, value for money and continuous improvement, supported by quarterly financial and performance reports. Quoracy and membership of the Executive and Operational groups have been updated for 2026/27 to reflect organisational change.
2.9	The partners have agreed a formal risk-sharing arrangement and the establishment of a £541,000 Better Care Fund Risk Pool. The risk pool will be used to manage financial pressures, support delivery of agreed outcomes, mitigate overspends where appropriate and provide flexibility to address emerging system priorities during 2026/27. The Agreement includes formal risk-sharing arrangements between RMBC and SYICB to manage financial risks associated with the pooled funds, including overspends, underspends and delivery risks, ensuring that both partners are appropriately protected whilst supporting delivery of agreed outcomes.
Key Actions and Relevant Timelines	

3.1	The following key actions and milestones apply: • BCF Executive – Approval and recommendation of the BCF Call-Off Partnership Agreement / Work Order for submission to the Health and Wellbeing Board. • Health and Wellbeing Board (2nd September 2026) – Approval of the Better Care Fund Call-Off Partnership Agreement / Work Order 2026/27. • Formal signing by RMBC and SYICB authorised signatories – Completion of legal agreement and establishment of pooled budget arrangements under Section 75. • Submission of final BCF assurance return.
Implications for Health Inequalities	
4.1 **4.2** **4.3**	Addressing health inequalities is a core objective of the Better Care Fund (BCF) and is reflected in the allocation of resources across the 2026/27 programme. BCF investment supports preventative, community-based and integrated services that help people remain independent, improve wellbeing and access support earlier. Schemes that contribute to reducing health inequalities include social prescribing, proactive care, reablement, intermediate care, carers' support, disabled facilities adaptations and community-based rehabilitation services. These services support vulnerable residents, help prevent avoidable hospital admissions and promote independence within local communities. The BCF also supports the development of neighbourhood health services and partnership working, helping to improve outcomes for people with frailty, long-term conditions and complex health and care needs, while reducing variation in access and outcomes across Rotherham.
Recommendations	
5.1	That the Health and Wellbeing Board approves the: (i) Better Care Fund (BCF) Call-Off Partnership / Work Order for 2026/27