

Cabinet

15 February 2024

Improved Better Care Fund 2024/25

Recommendation

That Cabinet

- 1) approves the list of schemes to be funded from the Improved Better Care Fund including the pooled contribution of £15.133m by the Council for 2024/25 (as agreed between the Council and the Warwickshire Integrated Care Board) and the plan for resources as set out in paragraph 2.6 and Appendix 1, and
- 2) authorises the Executive Director for Social Care and Health, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health, to make such changes to the list of schemes as she considers necessary as a result of any amendments to the Better Care Fund Policy Framework

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Better Care Fund (BCF) is a programme spanning both local government and the NHS which seeks to join-up health and care services, so that people can manage their own health and wellbeing and live independently in their communities for as long as possible. There are two policy objectives spanning health and social care:
 1. Enable people to stay well, safe and independent at home for longer.
 2. Provide the right care in the right place at the right time.
- 1.2 The Improved Better Care Fund (iBCF) was introduced in 2017 and forms part of the Better Care Fund. It is made available to local authorities and can only be used for the purposes of:
 - Meeting adult social care needs.
 - Reducing pressures on the NHS, including seasonal winter pressures.
 - Supporting more people to be discharged from hospital when they are ready.
 - Ensuring that the social care provider market is supported.
- 1.3 Cabinet will be aware that last year a two-year Better Care Fund Plan for 2023-2025 was prepared and approved as part of the national Better Care Fund plan submission and assurance process. An update or addendum to the national Better Care Fund Policy Framework for 2023-25 is expected at some

point, relating to changes for 2024/25. Similar to previous years, the timescales for publication are unclear and so work has commenced locally on planning for next year and in particular the list of schemes to be funded from the iBCF.

Draft list of schemes to be funded from the iBCF in 2024/25

- 1.4 Similar to previous years, the draft list of schemes to be funded from the iBCF next year (2024/25) has been developed in advance (during Q3 of the preceding year) in order to give sufficient time to enable discussions between partners to take place, for contract extensions to be made to existing contracts and for staff to ensure continuity of service; or for sufficient notice to be given of services to be decommissioned.
- 1.5 The Local Government Finance Settlement in December 2023 confirmed that the national iBCF allocation for 2024/25 is £15.133m, the same as 2022/23 and 2023/24. The existing list of schemes has been reviewed by both the local authority and the Integrated Care Board (ICB) through the Joint Commissioning Board and the plan is to continue to fund existing schemes from the Improved Better Care Fund in 2024/25. The exception to this is Hospital Based Social Prescribing (Scheme 3) where funding from outside of the Better Care Fund is being considered, with contributions potentially from a number of partner organisations, whilst the ICB undertakes a wider review of community based social prescribing.
- 1.6 The draft list of schemes has the support of the Council's Corporate Board and has been reviewed and approved/endorsed by the following partnership boards:
 - Joint Commissioning Board on 10 January 2024
 - Health and Wellbeing Board on 10 January 2024
 - ICB Executive on 12 December 2023
- 1.7 Feedback from the meetings which have taken place indicates support for the draft list. The final draft is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 The grant conditions for the iBCF require that the local authority pool the grant funding into the local BCF Plan and report as required through BCF quarterly and end of year reporting.
- 2.2 iBCF funding can be allocated across any or all of the four purposes of the grant in a way that the local authority, working with the ICB, determines best meets local needs and pressures. No fixed proportion needs to be allocated across each of the purposes.

- 2.3 When preparing the list of schemes, the following considerations have been taken into account:
- Base budget pressures (to meet social care needs).
 - Committed expenditure on or changes to existing schemes (to proactively reduce/delay future demand and pressures).
- 2.4 As in previous years, any underspends against schemes will be used to fund preventative activity to reduce / delay future demand or off-set cost pressures.

Funding Sources and Expenditure Plan

- 2.5 As the iBCF allocation has now been confirmed, it is possible to confirm the following minimum funding which must be pooled into the Better Care Fund in 2024/25:

Funding Sources	2024/25
Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)	£5,124,786
Minimum NHS Contribution	£47,762,805
Discharge Fund - ICB Contribution	£4,970,667
Discharge Fund – Local Authority Contribution (WCC)	£3,536,103
iBCF (WCC)	£15,133,281
Total	£76,527,642

- 2.6 Expenditure Plans

iBCF Grant Conditions	24/25 Budget £000s	23/24 Budget £000s	Variance £000s
Reducing Pressure on the NHS	3,668	3,693	-25
Stabilising the Market	7,090	7,090	0
Meeting Social Care Needs	4,353	4,353	0
Enabling Resource	161	250	-89
Total	15,272	15,386	-114
To be funded from iBCF	15,132	15,011	
iBCF Budget	15,132	15,132	
<i>Variance</i>	0	-121	
To be funded from outside of the BCF	140	375	
Total	15,272	15,386	

A balanced Improved Better Care Fund budget is proposed for 2024/25 to mitigate any risks to either the local authority or Integrated Care Board.

- 2.8 As mentioned in paragraph 1.5, Scheme 3 - Hospital Based Social Prescribing will not continue if funding sources are not confirmed in advance of 2024/25

as if it were to continue without a secured funding source there is a risk of this cost being incurred by Warwickshire County Council, which the Council has not agreed to.

- 2.9 The iBCF is received on a temporary basis but has been recurrent since it's 2017/18 introduction. In order to counter the risk inherent in temporary funding, the grant is retained by Corporate Finance and issued to the service as base budget. Further, all new initiatives are temporary or commissioned with exit clauses. There are, however, a number of areas where the funding is being used to maintain statutory social care spending and this would require review by Warwickshire County Council if the Better Care Fund was removed without replacement. This would form part of the annual MTFs refresh. The fund is paid directly to local government and must be used to support social care activity.

3. Environmental Implications

None arising directly from this report.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1 Continuation of the iBCF enables the Local Authority to continue to fund schemes which directly reduce both social care and health current and future pressures and meet the conditions of the grant funding.
- 4.2 Engagement with the ICB is delivered primarily through the Warwickshire Joint Commissioning Board and supporting Finance Sub-Group.
- 4.3 Engagement with NHS Acute, Community Trust and Mental Health Trusts is primarily through the Joint Commissioning Board and Coventry and Warwickshire Urgent and Emergency Care Board.
- 4.4 Since February 2023, the Warwickshire Care Collaborative Consultative Forum has also been regularly engaged and updated on the Better Care Fund requirements, performance against metrics and schemes funded from the Improved Better Care Fund and wider pooled budget, as part of the move to an Integrated Care System.

5. Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

- 5.1 Following publication of the expected update/addendum to the national Better Care Fund Policy Framework for 2023-25, Cabinet will be further updated on any changes required to the approved list of iBCF schemes and the Better Care Fund Plan, metrics and plan for resources, as required.

Appendices

1. iBCF 2024 25

Background Papers

None

	Name	Contact Information
Report Authors	Rachel Briden, Technical Specialist - Integration Partnership Manager Kate Harker, Head of Older People Commissioning	rachelbriden@warwickshire.gov.uk kateharker@warwickshire.gov.uk
Director	Zoe Mayhew, Director of Health and Care Commissioning	zoemayhew@warwickshire.gov.uk
Executive Director	Becky Hale Executive Director for Social Care and Health	beckyhale@warwickshire.gov.uk
Portfolio Holder	Cllr Margaret Bell Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care & Health	margaretbell@warwickshire.gov.uk

The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local Member(s): Not applicable. This is a countywide matter.

Other members: Chair & Spokes of Adult Social Care & Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee