

Integrated Care Strategy Delivery Updates

Meeting: Health and Wellbeing Board

Meeting date: Monday 18 May 2026

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Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

(All Wards)

Purpose

To provide the Health and Wellbeing Board members with an update on delivery of the shared commitments, priorities and outcomes described within the Herefordshire and Worcestershire (HW) Integrated Care Strategy during 2025/26.

Recommendation

The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to note the contents of this report.

Alternative options

This is a briefing paper, no alternative options identified.

Key considerations

Introduction

1. The Herefordshire and Worcestershire (H&W) Integrated Care Strategy was developed following extensive engagement with partners and approved by the Herefordshire & Worcestershire Integrated Care Partnership Assembly (ICPA) in April 2023.
2. The Integrated Care Strategy sets out the shared priorities, underpinned by the two Joint Strategic Needs Assessments and Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategies in Herefordshire & Worcestershire. It also includes 8 commitments, that drive action towards integrated health, care and wellbeing outcomes.

3. The Herefordshire & Worcestershire ICPA was created in 2022 to oversee the development and delivery of the Integrated Care Strategy across Herefordshire and Worcestershire. As the strategy is now in its third year, the assembly's role is focused on overseeing delivery.
4. Following changing national policy, outlined the NHS 10 Year Plan, Fit for the future. It was agreed by the Chairs of the Health and Wellbeing Boards in Herefordshire & Worcestershire, the Joint Chairs of the ICPA that going forward the annual reporting function will be undertaken through the two Health and Wellbeing Boards, keeping local stakeholders and partners engaged and updated on delivery.
5. This report provides an overview of delivery of the Integrated Care Strategy for 2025/26, organised into two main sections:

Part 1: The contribution made by delivery of the Herefordshire & Worcestershire - NHS Joint Forward Plan.

Part 2: The delivery of the Herefordshire Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy. These updates provide highlights from programmes delivered by a broad range of partners working across Health, Local Authority, the broader public sector and the Voluntary and Community Sector.

Delivering integrated care through the 8 commitments

Commitment 3: Enhancing health and wellbeing by taking an integrated approach to areas such as housing, jobs, leisure and environment.

6. WorkWell is a health and employment service that provides integrated holistic early help for people with health-related barriers to work. The Department of Work and pensions has extended the programme for a further three years. During 2025/26 the service has supported over 918 participants; delivered via GP practices, PCNs, employers, and self-referral, underpinned by a jointly developed Work and Health Strategy.
7. A project was delivered in Herefordshire tackling issues around mould and damp in homes where children were presenting in emergency care with asthma exacerbations. A Herefordshire and Worcestershire approach was taken to the development of a pathway to ensure best support to families including early assessment of housing and additional social care needs. The pathway was launched at an event aimed at healthcare providers and other services who regularly visit homes, supporting early intervention and prevention.
8. A school asthma guidance document was coproduced and shared across schools in Herefordshire and Worcestershire. The guidance document was complemented by training developed by asthma specialists and has led to development of asthma policies and asthma champions in schools.

Commitment 5: Co-producing solutions with individuals, carers our communities and Voluntary Sector organisations as equal partners with collective responsibility.

9. The Melo service (delivered by ONSIDE) was introduced in April 2025 as the early intervention and preventative mental health service to meet mental health outcomes early on by providing a needs-led, flexible service for children and young people aged 0-25. Inclusive Access: It provides a "welcoming front door" with no clinical threshold. Referrals can be made via WhatsApp, phone, or community drop-ins, supporting those who might struggle with formal systems. Reducing Geographic Barriers: By offering support in community hubs and via digital platforms, Melo ensures that young people in rural parts of Herefordshire and Worcestershire are not disadvantaged by their location.

10. The Core20PLUS Community Connector Programme successfully engaged Gypsy, Roma & Traveller (GRT) communities and South Asian women through trusted, culturally sensitive approaches; established Community Health Champions; ran targeted events and one-to-one support; improved awareness and uptake of cancer screening and preventative services; strengthened NHS and VCSE partnerships. Addressing health inequalities by understanding barriers to care and enabling prevention and early intervention.

Commitment 8: Using digital to make services more accessible and effective but never forgetting the risks of digital exclusion.

11. NHS Herefordshire & Worcestershire has promoted the rollout of the national Reasonable Adjustment Digital Flag across all partners. Materials to support this, and widespread understanding of reasonable adjustments, have been developed by people with a lived experience of learning disability. Continuing its Expert by Experience-led programme of reviewing NHS establishments so they provide sensory-friendly and reasonably adjusted spaces for patients; 2/3rds of GP practices have been reviewed and a further 13 NHS secondary care units, including areas within Acute Hospitals.
12. The Health Information video library has grown with new videos being produced for topics including vaccinations, falls prevention, anticipatory medicines and endometriosis. It contains thousands of bite-sized videos across a wide range of health conditions, designed to support people to prepare for appointments and surgery, self-management of their conditions and much more. It is a resource that is helping us address health inequalities through ensuring people have access to health information that is easy to understand and utilise to make decisions about health.

Part 1: NHS Joint Forward Plan – Progress in 2025/26

13. The H&W NHS Joint Forward Plan (JFP) was developed in Spring 2023 alongside the Integrated Care Strategy, and was published in July 2023, and has been updated annually. The JFP outlines how NHS Partners will contribute to the delivery of the Integrated Care Strategy and the Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategies. The JFP also outlines how NHS Partners plan to meet mandatory national requirements in the NHS Long Term Plan and any other operational priorities determined which are determined annually by NHS England.

Providing the best start in life

14. The Change Partnership Programme, which Herefordshire and Worcestershire both participated in, has piloted innovative approaches to inclusion in mainstream schools. Health service involvement in PINS (Partnership for Neurodiversity in Schools), ELSEC (Early Language Support for Every Child) and other pilots are demonstrating positive outcomes, and these approaches will become part of the SEND reform plans locally, supporting children, young people and families.
15. A psychology service was delivered for children and young people with epilepsy. This was a shared service between Worcestershire Acute and Wye Valley Trust. The service supported a need identified in the system to support the mental health needs of children and young people with epilepsy through effective screening and provision of signposting and targeted interventions. The team also developed 'easy read' screening tools to improve access for children and young people with learning disabilities.
16. Neighbourhood Health Models - In line with the 10-year plan, there has been a Children and Young People's Neighbourhood Model Partnership established to drive forward implementation of neighbourhood models across the system. System partners are actively engaged, demonstrating a strong willingness to work in new and more collaborative ways. Further work will be undertaken during 26/27 to design, develop and implement models moving care closer to home.

Living, ageing and dying well

17. The timeliness of urgent and emergency care improved during the second half 2025/26, as more people attending an Emergency Department were seen within 4 hours, ambulance handovers delays reduced. The coordinated work across the system contributed to ensuring that people were seen and treated in the most appropriate place, with seven days working in place. This included early intervention and the prevention of ill-health, as evident by the level of flu and covid vaccinations that remained high for a further year and the increase in identification and planning for people living with frailty, led by the Neighbourhood Teams.
18. As part of the new Palliative and End of Life Care strategy (launched December 2025) extensive engagement took place with patients, carers and staff. Focusing on increased and timely identification of those people likely to be in the last year of life, within enhanced communication and integration, timely personalised care, equitable access, a 24/7 single point of access offering timely support to patients, families, carers and health and care professionals.

Reducing ill health and premature deaths from avoidable causes

19. Increased access to cancer screening and early diagnosis and targeted interventions included easy-read bowel screening pathways for people with learning disabilities, breast screening health equity audit, low-uptake PCN cervical screening initiatives, and a primary care cervical screening toolkit. Community awareness improved via the Cancer Hub, Cancer Collaborative Group, Cancer Champion training.
20. Tobacco Dependency Treatment has expanded from inpatient model to pre-surgery, children and young people, community mental health, and emergency department cohorts; Level 1 accreditation achieved for Worcestershire NHS Acute Hospitals Trust and Wye Valley NHS Trust; mandated recording of inpatient smoking status; automated referral pathways initiated. 1,078 community pharmacy smoking cessation consultations delivered year to date via secondary care referral pathway (2nd highest nationally). Stopping smoking reduces the longer-term risks of cancer, lung disease, heart disease and stroke will be significantly reduced.

Part 2: The delivery of the Herefordshire Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy

21. Three years have now passed since the publication of the Herefordshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy (HWS) for 2023 to 2033. This sets out two strategic priorities:
 - Best start in life for children; and
 - Good mental wellbeing throughout life

Action plans have been co-produced for both priorities with partners, communities and those with lived experience. There are excellent examples of delivery against the action plans and outcomes are monitored through a HWS dashboard.

Best Start in Life

Good Level of Development at the end of reception

22. The government has a national drive to improve educational outcomes for children at the end of Reception and to increase the number of children achieving an overall good level of development (GLD) at age 5.
23. In the academic year 2024/25, 72% of Herefordshire's 5-year-olds achieved a good level of development at the end of Reception. Herefordshire has a statutory target to increase this to 80% by 2028. In addition, 51.7% of children eligible for free school meals achieved a good level of development by the end of Reception, against a new government target of 57.2% by 2028.

24. Work is underway with multi-agency partners through the Best Start in Life Development Plan and the Family Hubs Initiative to improve outcomes for children in Herefordshire.

Healthy Tots

25. The Healthy Tots programme (part of the wider Healthy Schools initiative) supports schools and early years settings to promote healthy eating, oral health, positive lifestyle choices, and physical activity for children under 5. Six early years settings in Herefordshire have achieved the full Healthy Tots award, and 53 settings are currently signed up and working towards it. A Healthy Tots accreditation formally recognises early years providers or schools that meet standards supporting children's physical, mental, and social wellbeing.

Best Start Family Hubs

26. Best Start Family Hubs were launched in Herefordshire on 31 March 2026, with Widemarsh Family Hub in Hereford opening as the first site. A further five to six hubs are planned to be rolled out over the next six months, alongside a wider network of affiliated and branded sites, including libraries. From May 2026, libraries will offer stay and play sessions, together with a "first library card" offer for two- and three-year-olds starting nursery.
27. The hubs, which were previously children's centres, are located in or near areas where some children experience poorer outcomes compared with their peers. Analysis undertaken in 2025 confirmed these priority areas, based on four key indicators: children in need; early help; eligibility for free school meals; and children with special educational needs and disabilities.
28. Additional capacity within the 0–19 Public Health Service is supporting the delivery of stay and play sessions within the hubs. Early identification and support are being provided through a new universal outreach portage post for children who do not currently meet the threshold for portage. An online booking system for parents has been established, and a range of partners have confirmed future sessions to be delivered from the hubs. A strong focus on parenting and the home learning environment will be taken forward during 2026/27, particularly for three- and four-year-olds, to support good level of development outcome targets.
29. Leadership and governance arrangements have been set up and although the funding is for three years, a strategic goal is to ensure legacy and sustainability are built-in to developments.

Living, ageing and dying well

Neighbourhood Health

30. Neighbourhood Health in Herefordshire has progressed rapidly since the county was selected as one of 43 national pilot sites for the Government's new Neighbourhood Health Service. Over the past seven months, the system has established agreed neighbourhood footprints, identified priority cohorts using risk stratification tools, and begun developing the data-sharing and analytics infrastructure needed to support integrated working. Multi-agency Integrated Neighbourhood Teams are being formed to provide holistic, preventative support, while a 24/7 Single Point of Access model is in development to coordinate care for those with escalating needs. The creation of a Community Anchors alliance and neighbourhood-level health profiles has strengthened the role of the Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector and improved understanding of local needs. Governance has also matured, with 18 workstreams reporting into a system-wide Delivery Board, and early adopter testing underway in the city to refine the model before wider rollout.

Good Mental Wellbeing Throughout Life

31. Building on the first two years of delivery of our Health and Wellbeing Board priorities, we have updated our local action plans. Working with our partners, we have developed a concise “plan on a page” focused on five Good Mental Wellbeing outcomes:
 - Improvements in individual mental health and resilience
 - A reduction in rates of suicide
 - A reduction in self-harm admission rates across the county
 - Improved access to appropriate mental health support
 - Increased mental health and wellbeing support within communities, supported by stronger partnership working
32. The Good Mental Wellbeing plan on a page also incorporates our suicide prevention activity across the county.
33. Key achievements to date include the publication of our local Suicide Prevention Strategy, the ongoing development and delivery of the associated action plan and becoming a signatory to the Prevention Concordat as a partnership through the Adult Better Mental Health Partnership Board.

Smoking Cessation

34. Herefordshire’s smoking prevalence stands at 10.7%, which is below the England average; however, rates remain elevated in key priority groups, including routine and manual workers, adults living in social housing, adults experiencing long-term mental health conditions, and pregnant women. The Public Health Team continues to prioritise support for higher-risk groups through targeted engagement and staff training. Our maternity stop smoking service has been expanded to include the Pregnancy and Significant Other Incentive Scheme, recognising improved outcomes when partners and family members are supported together.
35. Herefordshire Council’s Stop Smoking Service provides structured behavioural support from trained advisors alongside evidence-based stop smoking aids. This comprehensive offer is reflected in strong outcomes, with 59% of clients remaining smoke-free at four weeks. The service has recently expanded to include six months’ free access to the Smoke Free App, along with a free reusable vape. Work is underway to further enhance the service by introducing smoking cessation medications, in line with NICE recommendations.
36. Partnership work with Wye Valley Trust continues to widen access to smoking cessation support, including the implementation of an inpatient referral pathway to the service and the recruitment of a Healthy Lifestyles Service Navigator to facilitate and manage individuals on that pathway. Plans are also in place to expand this offer to pre-operative assessments. Prevention activity is expanding through Very Brief Advice training for frontline professionals and the rollout of a four-year, evidence-based smoking and vaping prevention programme in selected secondary schools in Herefordshire.

Enablers

Talk community

37. Talk Community has continued to evolve, with a stronger focus on prevention, early help and partnership working. Key developments include the introduction of Community Connectors, supporting residents to access the right support earlier and reduce escalation into Adult Social Care, and the launch of Early Homelessness Prevention Officers, providing targeted, wraparound support to those at risk of homelessness.

38. Alongside this, the programme has strengthened partnership working across the system, particularly in supporting residents experiencing financial hardship. Through delivery of the Household Support Fund, Talk Community has worked closely with VCFSE partners and advice services to provide timely crisis support while connecting residents to longer-term financial resilience support, including income maximisation, debt advice and wider wellbeing services. This is being built on through the development of the Crisis and Resilience Fund, strengthening the focus on prevention and longer-term financial resilience.

Herefordshire Health and Wellbeing Board

39. The Herefordshire Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) is strengthening its effectiveness, clarity of purpose, and strategic impact. One-to-one discussions with senior system leaders and a Board workshop facilitated by the Local Government Association (LGA) in February 2026 enabled members to reflect on the HWB's role in an evolving health and care system and how it can add greater value as a system-wide partnership. The focus was on democratic leadership, aligning priorities with community need, and driving action on the wider determinants of health, including housing, employment, and prevention.
40. The engagement confirmed a shared ambition for the HWB to operate as a strategic, action-focused partnership, with clear ownership of priorities and accountability for delivery. Development themes included:
- Clarify the HWB's distinct role within the partnership landscape. For Neighbourhood Health, the HWB owns the Neighbourhood Health Strategy, and the Neighbourhood Health Delivery Board (NHDB) adopts and delivers it. The NHDB will co-produce and shape the strategy while maintaining the HWB's democratic community role.
 - Improve ways of working to enable more strategic discussion.
 - Concentrate efforts on a small number of high-impact priorities.

This provides a clear basis for the next steps to ensure the HWB remains an influential forum for improving population health and wellbeing in Herefordshire.

Next steps

41. From 2026/27 onwards NHS organisations across the commissioner and provider landscape continue to work collaboratively to develop and deliver medium term plans within each sector that will continue to drive improvements in access and outcomes, delivering the commitments set out in the NHS 10 year plan: Fit for the future which was received at the September 2025 board meeting, including Neighbourhood Health as outlined above.

Community impact

42. There will be widespread community impact from delivery of the Integrated Care Strategy, but these factors will need to be considered and reported on through a case-by-case basis.

Environmental impact

43. It is inevitable that there will be environmental impact from delivery of the Integrated Care Strategy, but again these factors will need to be considered and reported on through a case-by-case basis.

Equality duty

44. Delivery of Integrated Care Strategy initiatives will be governed by the NHS Equality Duties, and these will be factored into delivery plans and the various Impact Assessments that will be undertaken relating to any decisions that would be made under the remit of the plan.

Resource implications

45. There are no specific financial implications associated with the endorsement of this plan for the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Legal implications

46. There are no legal implications.

Risk management

47. There are no specific risks to highlight in relation to this briefing paper.

Consultees

48. Not applicable to this briefing paper.

Appendices

No appendices

Background papers

There are no background papers, as per the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, but a link is provided below to a published work.

A full copy of the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Strategy can be found here: [Good health and wellbeing for everyone - 2023 - 2033](#)