



Adult Social Care Strategy for West Sussex

Living Well and Being Independent



Foreword

This strategy sets a clear direction for how Adults' Services will support adults and family and friend carers in West Sussex. It explains how we will work in coordination and partnership with others so that support is joined up and focused where it matters most.

It has been developed with people who draw on care and support, family and friend carers, our staff and partners across the county — including the NHS, district and borough councils, and the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector.

We are working in a challenging context. Demand is rising, needs are more complex, and our budgets are under pressure. The wider system is also changing.

This strategy focuses on what helps most: clear information, timely support, and help close to home. It is honest about choices, so we use public money wisely and protect what matters. It also builds on our progress, following Adults' Services' rating of "Good" by the Care Quality Commission.

Delivering this strategy will help ensure people get earlier, more joined-up help and support, so they can live with independence in the place they call home. We will focus on reducing inequalities, involving people with social care needs and carers in decisions, and using our resources well.



By working together and following the direction set out here, we can turn this strategy into real, lasting improvements for adults and carers across West Sussex.

Regardless of how local government arrangements or wider system structures may change in the future, the principles and commitments in this strategy will remain our shared direction, shaped with our partners and focused on what matters most for adults and carers in West Sussex.

Thank you to our staff, partners, providers, and to people we support and their family and friend carers for all that you do.



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Background

In 2021/2022 we spoke to people who access care and support to understand what was important to them. This directly shaped the 2022–2025 Life You Want to Lead: Adult Social Care Strategy for West Sussex.

Since the strategy was published, West Sussex County Council's Adults' Services, together with partners, has been on an improvement journey, recently achieving a rating of 'Good' by the Care Quality Commission (CQC). We are committed to maintaining and strengthening this position.

However, we must also be mindful of the significant challenges ahead.

Unprecedented financial pressures

Significant financial pressures are affecting every part of the care system. Households are feeling the rising cost of living, which affects people's ability to plan and pay for care and support.

Rising workforce and operating costs are putting pressure on care providers and affecting the long-term sustainability of the market.

The council faces its own significant financial challenges with a significant forecast budget gap in 2026/27, which will continue to rise over the next four years. Financial sustainability will need to be a key factor in all decisions taken by Adults' Services.

We also recognise the increasing pressures on district and borough councils' housing services, who are accommodating more people with care related needs. We will work together to plan sustainable, joined up solutions. This will be a collective issue to for us to address, given the anticipated reorganisation of local government.

More people need support

Since 2021, there has been a 7.3% increase in the number of adults supported by the council.

If the population continues to grow as expected, the council could be supporting more than 10,000 people by 2035, an increase of 12–13%. This reflects both an ageing population and rising numbers of people aged under 65 needing care and support.

Complex needs are increasing

More people are living with multiple long-term conditions, often supported by family and friends who are experiencing growing pressure themselves. Meeting this level of need will depend on coordinated action across health, care providers, the VCSE, our communities and people themselves.

The wider system is changing

Devolution and local government reorganisation will create the biggest shake-up in local government for decades.

Further national reforms, including the Casey Review, may also reshape adult social care. These reforms will have significant implications for councils, providers and partners, although details are still emerging.

Against this backdrop, we spoke again to staff, VCSE partners, care providers, district and borough councils and health partners about the challenges facing the system. We also returned to people who access support, and to family and friend carers, to check whether the things that mattered to them in the previous strategy still feel important.

This helps us ensure that the decisions we make continue to reflect what people value most.

Our vision for care and support in West Sussex

People in West Sussex will live well and as independently as possible, drawing on their strengths, support networks and community. When extra help is needed, people will be supported to understand their options and access appropriate care and support.

This vision recognises that everyone has a role to play in staying well and connected. We will work alongside people, families, communities and partners to make the best use of our shared resources.

Most people will continue to manage their wellbeing with support from family and friend carers and community groups.

When a person has care needs that meet the national eligibility criteria, the council will ensure they are assessed and supported to access the right care, whether that care is funded by the council or paid for by the person. The focus will be on providing flexible support that helps people regain wellbeing and independence and stops or slows down needs from getting worse.

As demand and costs continue to rise, we cannot do everything.

This strategy focuses on where we can make the biggest difference for people, while ensuring we meet our legal duties and use our resources responsibly.

We will work in a way that is ambitious for people and realistic about the resources available, making choices that ensure support remains sustainable for the future.

Together with partners, we want people to:

- Stay well and independent for as long as possible
- Use their strengths, relationships and communities first
- Access clear information, advice and guidance to make informed decision
- Get the right help, at the right time, in the place they call home

This strategy sets out a shared direction for how we will move towards this vision over time.



Our strategy brings together the:

Principles that define how we work.

Priorities that focus our efforts on what matters most.

Enablers that turn our direction into action.

For the council's Adults' Services, this strategy will guide how we support people, and will help shape how services develop over time, in line with available resources and in collaboration with people accessing care and our partners.

Our shared aim is to support people to live the life they want to lead, while ensuring that support is sustainable and focused on what matters most to individuals.



Overview

Five key principles that guide how we work:

**Financial
sustainability**

Feeling safe

**Independence &
involvement**

Collaboration

**Reducing
inequalities**

Four priorities, focusing on our efforts on what matters most:

Home

**Right help
Right time**

Empowerment

**Building
relationships
& connections**

Four enablers:

Workforce

**Commissioning &
market shaping**

Technology

Data & insights

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Principles

How we work



Our guiding principles

The following guiding principles will be used when we are making decisions about how we improve care and support.

Financial sustainability - Best use of available resources

As demand and costs increase, we must make sure public money is used where it can make the greatest difference.

This means focusing on preventing and delaying needs wherever possible, offering early information, advice and guidance, and ensuring funded support is prioritised for people with eligible care needs.

We will work with partners and communities to help people stay well for longer and, where needs do arise, provide short-term, focused support that helps people regain independence and avoid needing ongoing care.

We will make thoughtful, proportionate decisions about how support is delivered and commissioned, and use our collective resources wisely.

By strengthening prevention and supporting people to recover wherever possible, we can protect essential services now and for future generations.

Safeguarding and safety

Creating the conditions for people to feel safe, supported and free from abuse and neglect.

Everyone has the right to feel safe. Safeguarding is central to everything we do. We will work proactively to prevent abuse and neglect, and work with people to understand and manage risks in a balanced way, respecting their right to make their own choices where they have capacity.

We will promote open conversations about safety, support positive risk-taking, and strengthen coordination between organisations.

Staff and partners will be supported to develop confident and consistent safeguarding practice and management of risk.

Independence and involvement

Supporting people to have as much control as possible over their lives, and to be actively involved in decisions about their care and support.

We will listen carefully to what matters most to people, recognise their strengths, and support them to shape their care and support wherever possible.

We will aim to provide flexible, proportionate options and work with partners and providers to make these options realistic and sustainable.

Collaboration

We will work with organisations across West Sussex — including the NHS, district and borough councils, the VCSE, providers and communities — to align our efforts, reflect local priorities and improve people's experiences.

We will also take account of neighbourhood plans to make it easier for people to get the support they need.

We will make explicit links with NHS Integrated Care Teams (ICTs) and Local Community Networks (LCNs), and work alongside district and borough councils and the VCSE to strengthen neighbourhood level prevention and support.

This means sharing information appropriately, learning together, listening to feedback from people and carers, and strengthening the relationships that help keep people well and independent.

Reducing inequalities

Everyone has a fair chance to live well and get the support they need.

We want everyone to be able to access care and support when they need it, whatever their background, identity, or circumstance including care experienced adults and members of our Armed Forces community.

This means reducing inequalities in access and outcomes for all people with social care needs regardless of their background, condition or disability, and ensuring services are culturally competent and responsive.

People's experiences of care are often shaped by who they are as well as the circumstances they live in, including the quality of their housing.

We will work with partners to address how poor housing can increase people's reliance on care and contribute to avoidable inequalities.



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Priorities

Focusing our efforts on
what matters most



Empowerment

Everyone should have the opportunity to shape their own life and be involved in decisions that impact them.

Empowerment means supporting people to take responsibility for their wellbeing, to use their strengths and support networks, and to make informed choices about the help they need. It also recognises that, for many people, having opportunities for work — including supported employment — is an important part of independence.

We will focus on:

- Providing clear, practical information and guidance early.
- Supporting people working in care and support to work alongside people in ways that recognise their strengths, respect individuality, and enable involvement in decisions.
- Enabling people who want to arrange and manage their own care to do so, including through direct payments where appropriate.
- Supporting staff to use their skills and judgement.
- Ensuring young people and their parent carers feel prepared for adulthood and understand what support may be available, so they can plan confidently for the future.
- Supporting delivery of the county's all age Autism Strategy, including clearer information and preparation for adulthood.

So that:

- People have clear information and the tools they need to take responsibility, make confident choices, plan ahead and stay independent.
- People feel respected, listened to and more able to influence decisions about their care and support.
- Staff can respond flexibly to changing needs while managing risk safely.

Building relationships and connections

Relationships and connections are central to people's lives and make a significant difference to their wellbeing.

Family and friend carers play a vital role in supporting people day to day, and they also need support to look after their own wellbeing. Being part of a wider community helps people feel connected, reduces loneliness and supports independence.

We will focus on:

- Working with partners to deliver the joint carer strategy to improve how carers are identified, involved and supported, with clear information, advice and access to breaks.
- Working with VCSE partners to help grow local groups and networks and supporting neighbourhood-level initiatives that strengthen connections.
- Developing partnership approaches to help reduce loneliness and isolation.
- Encouraging co-production, enabling people with lived experience to shape services and decisions in ways that are meaningful and proportionate.

So that:

- Carers feel recognised, respected and supported.
- More people can stay well and independent with support from strong supportive communities and informal networks.
- We make the most of the expertise of people with lived experience to improve services.

Right help at the right time

Getting the right help early is an important factor in helping people and carers stay well and independent. Clear information and support in their community can help people manage issues before they become more serious. Strengthening prevention means more people can take action sooner, avoid crises, return to health after a set back and stay in control of their lives.

We will focus on:

- Working with partners to strengthen prevention, front-line teams and early support, including joint work with District and Borough wellbeing teams on proven activities such as falls prevention and healthy lifestyle support
- Using a proportionate approach to assessments and reviews, focusing first where needs have changed most.
- Continuing to improve hospital discharge pathways through joint working so that support is timely, coordinated and helps people regain independence.
- Strengthening cross-sector working to provide earlier and more coordinated support for people with mental health, multiple or complex needs.
- Working with partners to improve planning and support for end-of-life care, including earlier conversations and coordination.

So that:

- People and carers can act earlier to stay well and avoid crisis.
- People recovering from illness or a setback can regain independence.
- People with the greatest or changing needs are prioritised appropriately.
- People with mental health, complex or multiple needs experience earlier and more joined-up support across organisations.
- People experience coordinated and compassionate support at the end of life.

Home

A safe, comfortable home is central to wellbeing. Many people told us they want to live in their own home for as long as possible, close to the people and places that matter to them. Our aim is to help people stay independent at home wherever this is safe and appropriate, with the right support, adaptations and technology to make daily life easier. When people do need more support, there should be quality options, from extra care housing through to nursing homes, that feel welcoming and person-centred.

We will focus on:

- Helping people remain independent at home, through home care, adaptations, reablement, equipment and technology-enabled care.
- Working with partners to develop a range of sustainable and proportionate housing and support options, including Shared Lives and extra care, where possible.
- Working with providers as partners to support safe, high-quality and person-centred care in residential and nursing homes.
- Reviewing the role of our own care homes to ensure they remain appropriate for future needs.

So that:

- More people can live safely and independently at home for longer, where possible.
- Housing and support can develop in ways that work for people and are financially suitable.
- Residential and nursing homes provide high-quality, compassionate care when it's needed.

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Enablers

That turn our ambition
into reality



Enablers: That turn our ambition into reality

Workforce

Nationally, the social care workforce is under significant strain. This can be seen in West Sussex, with an ageing workforce and the need to attract more younger people into the profession.

Our focus is therefore on creating the conditions where people want to join, stay and develop in social care.

Working with providers and partners, we will support staff through good training, supervision and workplace culture so they feel valued, confident and motivated in their roles.

Commissioning and market shaping

We play a key role in supporting a care market that is as strong, diverse and sustainable as possible.

This means working in genuine partnership with home care, supported housing, extra care, residential and nursing providers and Shared Lives so that people can access safe, quality and person-centred support, and providers have the stability they need to operate well.

This also includes strengthening contingency planning with providers to help manage market pressures and reduce the impact of potential failures.



Technology

People needing care and support in the future will expect a strong and easy-to-use online offer.

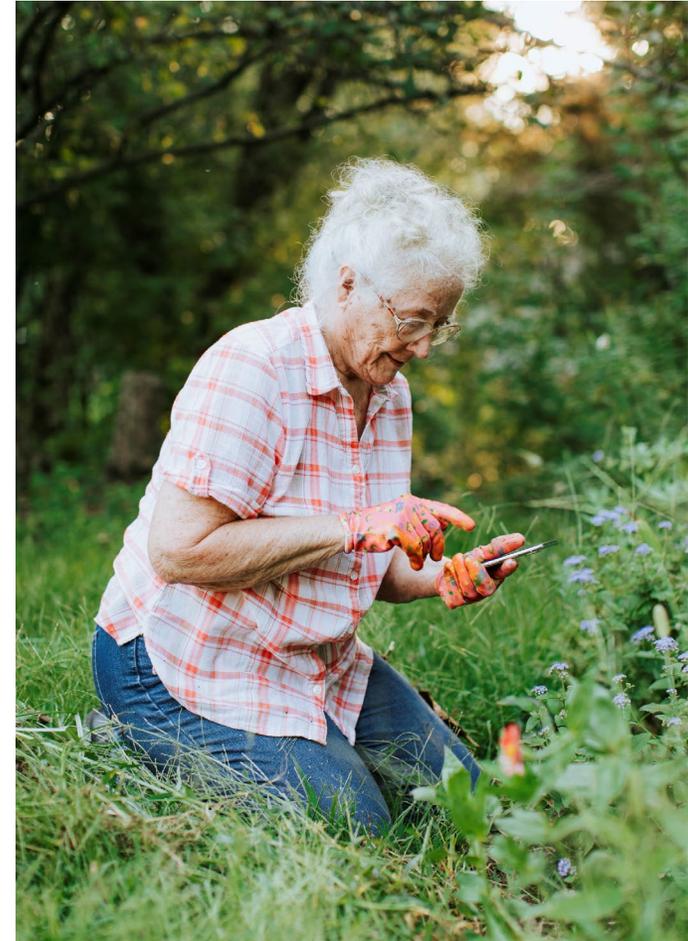
Digital tools can help people find information, get early support and use self-service options, reducing the need for formal contact and helping us focus resources where it can have greatest impact.

We know, however, that not everyone has the confidence or ability to use digital tools, so our approach, while digital first, will never be digital-only. We will make sure support remains inclusive.

Data and Insights

Good decisions depend on good data and insights. Bringing together data, evidence and lived experience helps us better understand local need, use resources wisely, and learn from what works.

Securely sharing this insight with partners will help us to identify and respond to need earlier. Strong data also helps us plan and understand the difference our support makes to people and their carers over time.



Monitoring progress

We will monitor delivery of the strategy through our established governance arrangements, focusing on progress against the four priorities.

This will include working collaboratively with our involvement groups, partners and wider stakeholders to ensure shared oversight of delivery, reflecting our commitment to working together across the system.

Progress will continue to be reviewed and prioritised in line with our financial and workforce capacity. We will provide regular updates through our internal governance processes and report to elected members via the Cabinet Member for Adults' Services, Cabinet, and the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee.



Acknowledgments

Thank you to our partners and stakeholders who have supported the development of this strategy and will be instrumental in ensuring its successful delivery.

4Sight	Diverse Communities Insight and Inclusion Group	Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
Adults' Services Customer and Carer Group	Guildcare	Time to Talk Befriending
Adur District Council	Healthwatch West Sussex	University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust
Age UK West Sussex Brighton & Hove	Horsham District Council	West Sussex Parent Carer Forum
Aldingbourne Trust	Impact Initiatives	West Sussex Partners in Care
Alliance for Better Care	Independent Lives	West Sussex Safeguarding Adults Board
Arun District Council	Learning Disability Partnership Board	Worthing Borough Council
Autism Partnership Board	Mid Sussex District Council	
Carers Strategic Partnership Group	My Sister's House	
Carers Support West Sussex	NHS Sussex	
Chichester District Council	Stonepillow	
Community Works	Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust	
Crawley Borough Council		