

REPORT TO CABINET

11 DECEMBER 2025

REPORT OF ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND HEALTH SELECT COMMITTEE

CABINET DECISION

Health and Adult Social Care – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Pauline Beall

Scrutiny Review of Reablement Service

Summary

The attached report presents the outcomes of the Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee's review of Reablement Service.

Reasons for Recommendation(s) / Decision(s)

This topic was included on the Scrutiny Work Programme for 2024-2025 which, following a pause in April 2025, continued into the 2025-2026 municipal year. The review is now complete, and the recommendations have been endorsed by the Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee for submission to Cabinet.

Recommendations

The Committee recommend that:

- 1) The NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (NENC ICB):
 - a) provides a summary on the gap analysis of the NHS England good practice guidance for ICBs (commissioners and providers) titled '*Intermediate care framework for rehabilitation, reablement and recovery following hospital discharge*' (2023), along with assurance on how it and its partners will be addressing any identified issues (e.g. a self-assessment by all relevant organisations within the health and care 'system').
 - b) more explicitly outlines the role and importance of reablement services (within the context of the overall health and care 'system') in future iterations of its overarching integrated care strategy.
- 2) North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust (NTHFT) reviews its discharge processes to ensure that eligible individuals who are ready to leave hospital are made fully aware of local reablement provision and are referred to it upon discharge from hospital.

- 3) Principal links / contacts for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC), NTHFT and the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector in relation to local reablement provision are identified / confirmed and shared in order to improve communication between key partners.
- 4) SBC and NTHFT establish required person-centred information on an individual when a referral is made into the SBC Reablement Service.
- 5) Regarding the future local reablement offer, SBC:
 - a) provides a summary of any differences in the findings of the Peopletoo review and reablement-related commentary from the Care Quality Commission (CQC) following its late-2024 inspection of SBC adult social care services.
 - b) confirms further planned changes to existing service delivery (structures, workforce) and the funding required to support this, and provides assurance on appropriate training uptake for new and existing staff.
 - c) explores whether any of its existing social care workforce outside the current SBC Reablement Service structure (e.g. Community Support Workers) can be utilised to increase staffing capacity for reablement provision.
- 6) SBC considers cost-effective options (and the communication of these) for individuals leaving the SBC Reablement Service to ensure a smooth transition from this initial support.
- 7) To increase public understanding of the Borough's reablement offer:
 - a) SBC and its partners assure themselves that they are adhering to the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) '*Supporting client and family engagement with reablement*' (2024) guidance, utilising this resource to effectively raise awareness and promote the Borough's reablement offer.
 - b) SBC undertakes a joint communications campaign (repeated on a periodic basis) with NTHFT and the VCSE sector around local reablement services, making it clear what they involve, how they are accessed (including contact details), and the principal benefits.
- 8) Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees be asked to consider facilitating a public survey in 2026 to establish the availability of information on the local reablement offer for those who had spent time in hospital and the experiences of those who had received support from the service.

Detail

1. 'Reablement' is a short period of rehabilitation which usually takes place in a person's own home.
2. National evidence suggests that supporting early and safe discharge from hospital into a reablement-type service delivers better outcomes for individuals when compared to longer periods of hospitalisation or immediate transfer into care at home. It is also cost-effective for health and adult social care services, both reducing pressure on bed-capacity in hospitals and the need for large packages of ongoing community or residential or nursing care. Research has continued to evidence that most people prefer to remain in their own homes and communities.

3. Locally, the Reablement Service provides support for people with poor physical or mental health to help them manage their illness / condition by learning or re-learning the skills necessary for daily living (so that they can remain in the community). The service seeks to ensure that people can maximise their independence when they need it – this can include both ‘step-up’ care (escalation of need for people already supported to live independently) as well as ‘step-down’ (to avoid hospital admission or ensure safe discharges). It also promotes and supports people to be more independent and reduce the need for long-term service provision for as long as possible.
4. The offer is provided free (as mandated by the Care Act 2014) for the person receiving support for up to a maximum of six weeks. A person with ongoing care and support needs following this six weeks will be financially assessed for their ongoing contribution to their care.
5. There are a number of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) *Powering Our Future* (POF) projects that link to this review; ‘Supporting People to Live Independently’ and ‘Early Intervention and Prevention’. The final report produced by the Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee will be submitted to these workstreams for their awareness.
6. The aim for this review was to identify whether the Reablement Service offered by SBC was:
 - maximising independence for people being discharged from hospital and living in the community.
 - reducing the need for ongoing, more intensive support in people’s own homes and reducing the need for admission into 24-hour care.
 - working effectively with NHS provision that supports people on a reablement pathway.
 - using technology as effectively as possible.
7. The Committee took evidence from key personnel from within the SBC Adults, Health and Wellbeing directorate, North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (NENC ICB), North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust (NTHFT), and the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector (via Catalyst). Peopletoo, commissioned by SBC to assist in assessing the impact of current ways of working and analyse the best model for continuing to support people to maximise their independence, provided feedback on its own review of local services. The Committee also issued a survey to SBC Reablement Service staff, and other approaches in relation to this scrutiny topic were considered.

Community Impact and Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment

8. As reflected in the conclusion of the Committee’s final report, continuing national coverage regarding pressures on hospitals, well-established benefits of people being at home, and the anticipated rise in the number of people aged 65 and over (the main demographic for reablement support) are all elements which emphasise the importance of services like reablement. Strengthening the local offer not only directly impacts upon the individuals and their families / carers who need to draw on such services, but has wider benefits for the whole health and care ‘system’.

An Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment (EPIA) in relation to local reablement provision has been completed by the Council (and shared with the Committee) as part of the work being undertaken on this topic through the SBC *Powering Our Future* (POF) initiative.

Corporate Parenting Implications

9. There are no direct implications in the report.

Financial Implications

10. One of the Committee's recommendations calls for the Council to consider cost-effective options (and the communication of these) for individuals leaving the SBC Reablement Service to ensure a smooth transition from this initial support – depending on the options identified, this may have a financial implication for the Council. The Committee's final report also acknowledges that the ambition to widen access (including people with a mental health need, autism or learning disability) will potentially require additional commitment in terms of funding, and indeed staffing, to make the maximum amount of difference to the wider health and care 'system'.

Legal Implications

11. There are no direct implications in the report.

Risk Assessment

12. The review is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

Wards Affected and Consultation with Ward / Councillors

13. This review is relevant to residents within all Wards across the Borough.

Background Papers

14. None.

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