

Councillors Eden (Chair), Gavin,
Khan, Vickers and R Williams

To All Members of the Access &
Disabilities Working Group

Our Ref: A&DWG 140626
Your Ref:

Direct: ☎ 0118 937 2368
e-mail: amy.bryan@reading.gov.uk

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Your contact is: Amy Bryan - Committee Services

**NOTICE OF MEETING - ACCESS AND DISABILITIES WORKING GROUP - THURSDAY
26 JUNE 2014**

A meeting of the Access and Disabilities Working Group will be held on **THURSDAY 26 JUNE 2014 at 2.00pm** in the Kennet Room, Civic Offices, Reading. The Agenda for the meeting is set out below.

AGENDA

	<u>PAGE NO</u>
1. WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	-
2. COUNCILLORS' DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS	-
Councillors to declare any personal and prejudicial interests they may have in relation to the items on the agenda.	
3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 MARCH 2014	1-6

CIVIC CENTRE EMERGENCY EVACUATION: Please familiarise yourself with the emergency evacuation procedures, which are displayed inside the Council's meeting rooms. If an alarm sounds, leave by the nearest fire exit quickly and calmly and assemble at the Hexagon sign, at the start of Queen's Walk. You will be advised when it is safe to re-enter the building.

4. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES** -
 - Disabilities Pride Day
 - Reading Station

5. **ADULT SENSORY NEEDS SERVICE CONSULTATION** -

Karla Vickers and Jo Purser, Reading Borough Council

6. **ADULT SOCIAL CARE USER PANEL** -

Emily Hodges, Reading Borough Council

7. **SUPPORTED LIVING PROVIDER LIST (SLASL) CONSULTATION** 7-30

Helen Bryant, Reading Borough Council

8. **ISSUES LIST - a look at the progress with the ongoing 'Issues List' (please see form printed at the back of the agenda papers)** 31

9. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS** -

10. **DATE AND TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS** -

Dates for the meetings in the 2014-15 Municipal Year are:
Thursday 18 September 2014 at 2pm
Thursday 4 December 2014 at 2pm
Thursday 19 March 2015 at 2pm

ACCESS & DISABILITIES WORKING GROUP MINUTES - 20 MARCH 2014

Present:

Councillors Ruhemann (Chair), Eden, Khan and Stanford-Beale.

Also in attendance:

Lisa Bamsey	Readibus & Service User
Liz Cheyney	Member of the Public
Diane Goodlock	MS Society
Keith Hester	Berkshire County Blind Society
Mark Jeffery	Department for Work & Pensions
Liz Johnson	Readibus
Malcolm Lewis	Reading Welfare Rights
Carol Marenghi	Chain Action & Stroke Association
Keith Seville	Urbanuk.net
Phil Simmons	MS Society / Member of the Public
Sue Simmons	MS Society / Member of the Public
Jenny Turner	Service User, Crossroads, Arthritis Matters & Readibus
Millicent E Turner	Readibus User Director
Helen Bryant	RBC - Access Officer
Sally Poole	RBC - Committee Services
Clare Muir	RBC - Acting Policy Manager (Items 1-3)
Debi Daniels	RBC - Promotions Manager (Items 1 & 2)
Simon Beasley	RBC - UTMC Network Manager (Items 1-4)

Apologies:

Councillors Vickers and White	
Sian Hooley	Berkshire PHAB
Joel Young	The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association
Alan Fleming	Enrych Berkshire
Alok Sharma MP	
Rob Wilson MP	

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2013 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2. MATTERS ARISING

Councillor Ruhemann reported that the two local MPs, Rob Wilson and Alok Sharma had been invited to attend this meeting, but neither had been available. It had been suggested that the next meeting be moved to Friday 27 June 2014 as Fridays were constituency days, but this would be dependant on the availability of the MPs and a room at the Civic Centre.

AGREED: That Rob Wilson MP and Alok Sharma MP be invited to a future meeting, subject to their availability and the availability of a suitable meeting room.

ACCESS & DISABILITIES WORKING GROUP MINUTES - 20 MARCH 2014

Disabilities Pride Day

Debi Daniels, Promotions Manager explained that she was very happy to assist with the development of a Disabilities Pride Day, but required further clarification as to what the Group wanted to achieve. It was agreed that the purpose of the event would be to raise awareness, celebrate achievements, showcase talent, provide current and historical information and to create a positive image of disabled people in Reading.

The following suggestions were made for consideration:

- An event in Forbury Gardens such as a picnic with disabled entertainers;
- Participating in an existing event, such as Forbury Concerts, the Water Festival or the Holocaust Memorial day. This would need less organisation, but might not generate as much publicity or awareness;
- It might be possible to obtain a small grant from the Council;
- Help could be obtained from Reading Voluntary Action Group;
- Regular contributions by disabled people to local media, such as Reading Post, would build awareness;
- It was hoped to emulate existing annual events, such as Arts Week or Black History Month, but it was accepted that the group might have to start with a single event this year and gradually build this up;
- It was agreed to set up a working group to organise the event. Initial volunteers for this group were Helen Bryant, Malcolm Lewis, Lisa Bamsey, Keith Seville and Diane Goodlock.

AGREED: That position be noted.

Reading Station

Simon Beasley, UTMC Network Manager, reported that the access to the ramp by Station Hill had been upgraded. It was noted by the Group that the current ramp for the underpass was still too steep for wheelchair users and the alternative route through the station required the purchase of a ticket. It was also considered unacceptable that there was only a lift on one side of the station.

AGREED: That S Beasley investigate further and report to a future meeting.

Home Care Consultation with Users

Councillor Eden reported that the contract for home support and domiciliary care would be put out for tender in Autumn 2014 and that this would be an excellent opportunity to ensure that all aspects of the Unison Ethical Care Charter were included.

ACCESS & DISABILITIES WORKING GROUP MINUTES - 20 MARCH 2014

AGREED: That position be noted.

3. TACKLING POVERTY IN READING

Clare Muir, Acting Policy Manager, submitted a report detailing the 'Tackling Poverty in Reading' event that had taken place on 19 November 2013. The aim of the event had been to initiate the development of a strategy to tackle poverty in Reading in a context where welfare reforms, a reduction on public sector expenditure and the slow economic recovery had created hardship for many residents, including some of the most vulnerable.

She explained that there had been a significant increase in calls to Reading Citizens Advice Bureau and a 200% increase in food parcel referrals over the last year. Many of those affected were people in work but with incomes that did not meet the rising costs of living.

The event had been attended by around 200 people representing public service providers, local businesses, voluntary and community organisations, trade unions, faith organisations and residents. The priorities and pledges agreed at the event contributed to the development of a new strategy to tackle poverty in Reading which was overseen by the Tackling Poverty Delivery Partnership.

The Council were focussing on the following priorities:

- Advice on tax credits and benefits, including a benefit take up campaign;
- Promoting sources of affordable credit, such as credit unions and the ban on advertising by 'pay day' loan companies;
- Supporting people into work - a key strand of the City Deal project;
- Reducing child poverty and ensuring that all children got the best start in life;
- Reducing in work poverty, including leading a campaign to encourage local employers to pay the living wage as there were more poor people in work than out of work.

The Group discussed the difficulties caused by national policy decisions such as the requirement for more people to register for benefits via the internet, when some families and many older people did not have access to a computer and it was not always possible to complete such forms on computers in public libraries.

AGREED:

- (1) That the position be noted;
- (2) That the manager of the Reading Job Centre be invited to a future meeting.

4. PLAZA WEST UPDATE

Helen Bryant, Access Officer, reported that some members of the Group had visited the new civic offices at Plaza West and had felt that it would be more accessible than the existing civic centre, particularly because Readibus would be able to deliver people to the front door. However, there was still some work to be done to ensure access out of office hours.

Simon Beasley reported that work would be taking place in summer 2014 to improve the junction of Gun Street and Bridge Street to enable the paths to be widened and the traffic systems updated. They were also looking at the ease of crossing the road from the Oracle to Plaza West and encouraging Reading Buses to update some bus routes so that they stopped closer to Plaza West.

He also explained that the Local Sustainable Transport Fund provided the opportunity to refresh traffic systems throughout the Borough and so members of the Group were encouraged to inform him of any that were unsuitable.

AGREED: That position be noted.

5. LETTER TO FIRST GREAT WESTERN FROM THE CHAIR

Councillor Ruhemann submitted a copy of a letter that he had written to Mr Hopwood, Managing Director, First Great Western, with regard to the disabled toilets at railway stations, and reported that he had not yet received a reply.

AGREED: That the position be noted.

6. ROYAL BERKSHIRE HOSPITAL PARKING

Councillor Ruhemann reported on the on-going issue of insufficient parking at the hospital. The Council were attempting to influence the hospital's parking strategy through the Planning Applications Committee.

Members of the Group were encouraged to attend a NHS Call to Action event that was taking place in April 2014.

AGREED: That the position be noted.

7. DISABLED PEOPLE AND THE HOLOCAUST

Helen Bryant, Access Officer, reported on a campaign for a series of public sculptures as a memorial for the disabled people who had been killed in the Holocaust. She also informed the Group of a Government consultation to establish how best to commemorate the Holocaust - <http://engage.number10.gov.uk/contact-the-holocaust-commission> and a competition for young people to have a place on a youth forum set up by the Prime Minister's Holocaust Commission.

AGREED: That the position be noted.

8. DISABLED PEOPLE LEADING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

Helen Bryant, Access Officer, reported that Disability Rights UK were compiling examples of work carried out by Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) to make their local communities more inclusive for everyone living with disability or long-term health conditions. These examples of good practice would then be compiled into a central resource that could be accessed by other DPOs and used to advise local commissioners on their role in working with disabled people.

AGREED: That the position be noted.

9. ISSUES LIST

The following issues were reported at the meeting:

- The push button on the traffic signals at Cemetery Junction was inaccessible from a wheelchair due to a dip in the pavement;
- The lip in the pavement was hard for wheelchairs to navigate in Sidmouth Street;
- Some of the shops in Tilehurst Triangle and the audio books in Tilehurst Library were inaccessible for disabled people;
- There were some missing bricks in the pavement in Broad Street;
- Assistance for disabled people was not available in the North side of Reading Station;
- The lighting outside the Hexagon was inadequate at night and the path to Car Park B was uneven and narrow.

AGREED: That the issues reported be noted.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Disability Sanctuary

On-line peer support was available via www.disabilitysanctuary.com

Reading Services Guide

This guide, which listed all local facilities for adults and families, was currently being updated and so feedback from the Group was welcomed. The guide was accessible via the following link: www.reading.gov.uk/servicesguide

11. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Access & Disabilities Working Group would meet on the following dates in 2014/15:

ACCESS & DISABILITIES WORKING GROUP MINUTES - 20 MARCH 2014

- Thursday 26 or Friday 27 June 2014 at 2pm (date to be confirmed)
- Thursday 18 September 2014 at 2pm
- Thursday 4 December 2014 at 2pm
- Thursday 19 March 2015 at 2pm

(The meeting opened at 2.00pm and closed at 4.15pm)

May 2014

Report on the Supported Living Provider List (SLASL) consultation

Easy-read summary

Thank you

In January we told people about our ideas to have a new list of Supported Living providers.

We asked people what they thought about our plans.

112 people wrote to us.



There were 6 meetings for people to tell us what they thought.

Nearly half of the people who replied use Supported Living services themselves.

Hearing from so many people really helped us decide what to do next.



We've changed some parts of our plan.

We're re-writing other parts of the plan to make it clearer.

What is Supported Living?

Supported Living is for people who want to live in their own home the way they want.

With Supported Living people can get help to do things.

- Help with cooking, shopping and cleaning the home.





- Help with paying bills and looking after money.

- Help with getting washed and dressed.



- Help with getting out and meeting people.

Why does the Council think a Supported Living provider list (SLASL) would be a good idea

It would make it easier for people to choose the right provider for them.



Only the best 12 providers would go on the list.

Everybody on the list will be checked regularly by the Council.

Most people could get the right support from a SLASL provider.

We would help people who need a specialist service to choose a provider in other ways.

What people liked



Supported Living is an important service.

People want it to be the best it can.

People thought the new list would help users get a better service.

What people didn't like

Some people are very happy with the Supported Living provider they have now.

They were worried that the SLASL might mean they'd have to change provider.

Some people don't want to change.



Some people need a specialist Supported Living service.

Some providers only work with people who have certain types of health conditions.

People were worried what would happen to these services.

What needs to be explained better

People can always choose their Supported Living provider.

The Council's job is to help people find the best service for them.





Everyone is different.

A SLASL provider will be best for some people.

A specialist provider will be best for some people.

Some providers will be happy to support anyone.

It's OK for some providers only to work with people who have certain types of need.



The Council will work with specialist providers and with SLASL providers to improve standards for everyone.

Can you help us?

We need to help people who use Supported Living understand how the new list will work.

We would like people to check our information to make sure it's easy to understand.



If you would like to help, please contact us.



Nina.Crispin@reading.gov.uk



0118 937 2383

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Supported Living Provider List (SLASL)

Consultation Report - May 2014



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Executive Summary

Reading Borough Council (RBC) ran a public consultation from 29th January to 14th March 2014 on the proposed introduction of a Supported Living Accreditation Select List (SLASL). This generated 112 written responses in the form of hard copy or online survey returns and separate correspondence on the consultation issues. In addition, verbal feedback was taken following presentation of the consultation questions at a range of meetings. The summary of verbal feedback on the consultation from these meetings is based on a total of 91 face-to-face engagements.

Feedback was generally in favour of the plan to introduce the SLASL. It was seen as offering a way to drive up standards and to offer people clearer guidance on choosing a Supported Living provider. The benefits were more obvious to service users or families who had experienced problems with their provider, however. People who were happy with their current provider were most interested in reassurance that they would not be forced to change by the introduction of the SLASL. There was also some confusion and concern about the impact on specialist Supported Living provision.

After considering the consultation feedback, RBC has decided that it would be appropriate to make some changes to how the framework should operate. The consultation has also highlighted some areas where the framework needs to be presented differently to clarify what is intended. Making these changes could mean some providers will take a different view about whether to apply to join the SLASL. To be fair to everyone, the Council therefore plans to re-draft the SLASL documentation and advertise the tender opportunity again.

The key changes are as follows.

- The original presentation of the SLASL understated the expected use of specialist services in future, i.e. services for individuals with higher level needs. This needs to be addressed, including offering more information about the circumstances when the Council expects alternatives to SLASL to be considered. The Council's expectation is that there will continue to be a significant minority of people in Reading who will need a specialist Supported Living service.
- Consultation feedback showed that most people thought it was appropriate to expect all SLASL providers to work towards supporting people with a range of disabilities or health conditions. This was generally seen as fair, and a positive move towards ensuring consistent standards of service. However, some people disagreed with this and felt there should be more opportunities for providers who wanted to focus on supporting people with particular conditions. The Council will therefore clarify that whilst across the SLASL it would expect the full range of disability or health needs to be met, individual providers would not need to commit to supporting people with needs arising across the complete range of disabilities or health conditions.
- The Council will re-draft the SLASL documentation to reflect more clearly its intention to support individuals to choose whether or not to change providers,

if someone is currently supported by a provider who isn't appointed to the SLASL. There was never an intention to insist that people in this situation change providers, but that was not clearly understood before.

- The Council also acknowledges that it should be clearer about the opportunities for providers outside of SLASL and should explore the option of developing a separate list of providers of services for individuals with higher levels of need. These services might be best commissioned on a collaborative basis with neighbouring authorities. The Council intends to engage in a dialogue with specialist providers and other authorities to identify how to ensure that these services continue to be available and are contracted in an effective way when needed.

The Council has considered all consultation responses carefully, recognising its duties of care to social care users, its responsibilities as a public sector body under the Equality Act 2010, its general responsibilities to shape the care market to meet local need, and its specific responsibilities towards people with learning disabilities or autism who also have mental health conditions or behaviours viewed as challenging - i.e. that group of service users who were the focus of the Department of Health report *Transforming care: a national response to Winterbourne View Hospital*.

Within the consultation responses, there was a consistent message from across stakeholder groups that service users must be supported to understand the SLASL process, and given time to adjust to changes, if these changes are in the service user's best interests. This would include preparing accessible guides, and raising awareness of the rights to involve family members or other advocates and supporters in making choices about services. RBC is committed to working with service users and carers on developing a future communication plan accordingly.

What is Supported Living?

Some adults need support to live independently in their own home and be able to make choices about their daily routine. Supported Living is a type of service which can help people to manage:

- household tasks
- maintaining a tenancy
- money management
- personal care
- taking medication
- social and leisure activities
- making healthy lifestyle choices
- building links with friends, family and the community

How do people choose a Supported Living provider?

The Council's Adult Social Care service is there to help people who need support because of a disability or long term health condition. Care managers help individuals and their families to find the right services for them. This starts with a Care Needs Assessment, which gives everyone the chance to talk through what the service user has achieved and wants to achieve next, as well as what they find difficult. As things change over time, service users also have a regular Care Needs Review to check they're still getting the services that best meet their needs.

If everyone agrees that a Supported Living service would be the best option, care managers can then advise whether an individual needs a specialist service where all staff concentrate on supporting people with particular needs, e.g. challenging behaviour. This need for a specialist service normally applies to 10-20% of Supported Living service users being supported by Reading Borough Council. Most people don't need a specialist service, however, and they would be advised they may get more from a service which supports a wide range of people. Within these broader based services, there are often some members of staff who focus on particular health conditions, e.g. autism, to develop their expertise.

All Adult Social Care users in Reading now have a Personal Budget. This means they are told how much money is required to buy the support they need. Put another way, their support needs are described in monetary terms. Service users can then choose to have the Council buy the services they ask for, or take their Personal Budget as a Direct Payment, so they can buy their own services. Care managers can tell people about organisations which offer a Supported Living service in Reading, whether the service user wants the Council to buy that service for them or use a Direct Payment to make the arrangements themselves.

The Supported Living Accreditation Select List (SLASL) proposal

Some Supported Living providers offer better services than others, and some are more expensive than the rest. The most expensive don't always give the best service. This makes it very hard for people to find the best service for them.

At the start of the consultation, the Council was working with 33 Supported Living providers, with some of those providers supporting only one or two Reading Borough Council service users. The Council was concerned that officers did not have enough time to monitor so many providers in the way that they'd like to - to make sure that they are offering value for money, delivering high quality services, and ensuring that problems are picked up quickly and resolved.

To make choosing easier, and quality standards easier to improve, the Council proposed setting up a list of providers - called the Supported Living Accreditation Select List (SLASL). Council officers talked to service users and to providers to develop a process intended to test providers' quality based on what service users had identified as the most important issues for them.

The Council's proposal was to use this process to find the 12 providers which can offer the best service in Reading, and work with those providers to keep improving quality. One of the Council's specific aims in setting out to concentrate its business on a smaller pool of providers was to support those providers to give fair terms and conditions for their workforce, including paying a living wage and providing appropriate training.

The intention was that the 12 highest rated providers in terms of service quality and value for money would go onto the SLASL. All SLASL providers would agree to offer services to people with a range of health needs or disabilities. Supported Living providers who want to specialise in supporting people with particular conditions only would not be able to go onto the SLASL, but would still be able to support people assessed as needing a specialist service. Specialist placements would continue to be chosen outside of the SLASL process, as they are now.

Putting the SLASL in place would affect new service users opting for a Supported Living Service, and users already having Supported Living. Existing users would continue to have regular reviews of whether their services best meet their needs, as now, and in addition would have the option of switching to a SLASL provider from a non SLASL provider, if applicable. People would have the option of staying with a non SLASL provider, provided they understood and accepted that the Council's Quality Monitoring Team would spend less time with non SLASL providers than with SLASL providers in future.

A SLASL tender was launched towards the end of 2013 on this basis of the proposal as described. However, some stakeholders expressed concern as to whether the Council had given everyone affected sufficient opportunity to comment on the details of how the SLASL would operate. The tender was therefore paused in order to allow time for consultation on these issues.

How the consultation was carried out

The consultation was open to the general public, but targeted at current Reading social care users who use Supported Living services, plus their families or informal carers, together with providers of Supported Living services in Reading across all sectors (statutory, private and third sectors).

All Reading Adult Social Care users with a Supported Living service in place at the start of the consultation period were sent a personally addressed invitation to take part in the consultation, and to involve their family members or other chosen advocate. Both full-length and easy-read versions of the consultation were sent out to all service users. Copies of these letters were sent to each service user's recorded next of kin.

All providers who had submitted a Pre Qualification Questionnaire or registered an Expression of Interest through the SE Business Portal in the SLASL tender received a direct notice of the consultation and instructions on how to take part (by email including a link to the consultation page on the RBC website).

Notices about the consultation were also issued to members of relevant consultative forums, i.e.

- the Supported Living Providers Forum
- the Learning Disability Partnership
- the Learning Disability Carers Forum
- the Mental Health Partnership
- the Physical Disability and Sensory Needs Network
- the Carers Steering Group
- the Older People's Working Group
- the Access and Disabilities Working Group

Consultation material was available from the RBC website throughout the consultation period, and hard copies were available on request. The consultation material was also available in alternative languages and formats on request.

Within the consultation pack, people were directed to 4 public meetings as opportunities to give verbal feedback on the consultation issues. These were the Carers Steering Group, the Learning Disability Carers Forum, Talkback's Matters session (for people with a learning disability), and a mental health service user and carer meeting at Reading Your Way. The SLASL consultation was also taken as a substantive item at two broad-based but closed meetings during the consultation period - the Mental Health Partnership Board and the Learning Disability Partnership Board.

Healthwatch Reading offered independent support to people to complete consultation questionnaires as necessary.

Who responded to the consultation

There were a total of 112 written responses to the consultation, including online and paper copy survey returns plus separate correspondence on the consultation issues.

44% of written responses to the consultation came from people using Supported Living services. Over three quarters of the service users who sent in a written response indicated they had help to complete this. 51% of service users said they needed support mainly because of a mental health condition, and 40% of service users said the main reason they needed support was because of a learning disability. Where service users identified more specific health conditions, the most frequent reference was to schizophrenia, followed by Asperger's Syndrome then autism.

21% of written responses came from providers of Supported Living services, and 14% came from family members of service users.

Slightly more written responses were received from women than from men. Most written responses came from people aged 35-65 (35% from people in the 35-49 age bracket, and 27% from people aged 50-65).

Of those written responses which included an answer to the ethnic background question, two thirds were from people who identified themselves as White British. 8% of people identified themselves as Black or Black British, and 2% as White Irish, with other ethnic backgrounds being represented equally in very small numbers.

Discussion of the consultation issues at 6 meetings (4 public forums, and 2 closed sessions) generated feedback on the basis of 91 face-to-face engagements. Taken together, representation at those meetings was approximately one third service users, one third family/informal carers, and one third service providers and other professionals.

Some of the people who gave verbal feedback at meetings also submitted a written response.

What is important to people about Supported Living

Service users talked about the freedom which their Supported Living service gives them, especially having flexibility around both getting out and having visitors. Lots of people mentioned help to manage money and budgets as being an important part of being able to live independently. Several people also talked about help to maintain their flats and to manage medication. Service users valued getting support tailored to what they need - which may change from time to time. They made frequent references to the good relationships they felt they had with their Supported Living carers, the trust they had in them, and how much they enjoyed the company of the staff who supported them.

Several family carers talked about the reassurance Supported Living gave them, as they could see something in place to give their family member help when they were no longer able to do this. Many felt Supported Living was helping their relative to develop broader social networks, and several talked about the importance of Supported Living in helping to maintain someone's skills to stay independent for as long as possible.

Providers talked about the range of ways in which a Supported Living service can empower people to achieve their full potential. Providers saw choice and dignity as priority issues. Several talked about the need for stability so they could attract and invest in the right workforce.

What people liked about the SLASL proposal

Service users generally liked the idea of the Council trying to improve the quality of services. Some said it was quite hard to choose a provider at the moment - "to know who's good". Those service users who felt their current service could be improved expressed support for having a clear process to help them choose the best provider for them. Service users who were happy with their current service, however, were less sure about whether the SLASL would benefit them. Because they didn't want anything to change, they weren't sure how the SLASL could help them.

Family carers were on the whole more positive about the SLASL proposal. They liked the idea of clear standards which providers could be monitored against. Quite a few thought that it would be a good idea for the Council to try to concentrate on a smaller number of providers, although there was some discussion about how 12 had been chosen as the optimum number of providers for the SLASL.

Supported Living providers liked the idea of a more streamlined process for securing packages of work. All were supportive of a clear quality assurance process, and offering service users and families a process they could trust. Some commented that relationships between providers and the Council's Commissioning Team would be strengthened with a smaller pool of Supported Living providers on the SLASL. Several providers looked forward to greater stability for their business provided, of course, they were successful in their application to go on the SLASL. In any event, those providers welcomed the Council setting clear intentions which would help the providers to plan. Some providers felt the introduction of the SLASL could encourage co-operation between providers. Providers not currently operating in Reading felt the SLASL would offer newcomers a transparent route into the local market.

What people didn't like about the SLASL proposal

People who had experienced problems with their service tended to see the SLASL as a positive thing which would make changing providers easier if that was necessary, and they had few concerns. However, many people using Supported Living services were

very happy with their current provider, and some of them were concerned that introducing the SLASL might mean they had to leave a provider they liked, or even move home. This is not the impact the SLASL was ever meant to have, but feedback highlights the need to communicate the effect of any change on current service users clearly and sensitively.

Some family members were worried whether people would have enough choice with only 12 providers going onto the SLASL, and there were queries about how the Council had chosen this number. RBC is aiming to focus its Supported Living commissioning, and has based the proposed size of the SLASL on the range of providers chosen currently. Some local authorities have as few as four providers on their approved Supported Living provider lists. However, RBC felt this would be too dramatic a reduction. At the start of the consultation, the majority of RBC placements for Supported Living services were with 10 providers, so 12 was proposed as a number which would suit the local market.

There were concerns about the balance of quality and price in assessing applications to join the SLASL, and whether quality would take priority. Several family members pointed out that their relative had a need for specialist support and were worried if this type of support would be lost when the SLASL was introduced.

Family members had several questions about their relatives possibly being invited to transfer from a non SLASL provider to a provider on the SLASL after the list was introduced. Many felt it was good to give service users the options of moving to a provider being monitored more closely by the Council. Even so, moving provider was seen as a big decision which service users would need support to make. Some family members felt that they would need to be satisfied a SLASL provider would offer a significantly better service before they'd believe the disruption of a move was worthwhile. For some service users and family members, the recent closure of the Council's in-house Supported Living service impacted on their view of the SLASL proposal. That closure had forced some people to move to new providers, and left them particularly anxious about any prospect of further disruption.

Some providers felt the proposed limit on the number of places on the SLASL could restrict choice. Some suggested that the Care Quality Commission's registration requirements should be sufficient to ensure minimum quality standards without the Council needing to set further standards.

Some smaller providers worried that they would find it hard to compete against larger organisations for places on the SLASL, particularly smaller providers with quite a 'niche' business. Some suggested the SLASL would actually 'prevent' providers from developing specialisms. The local authority has considered this carefully, but takes the view that the SLASL would not have such a dramatic impact. The Council's expectation has always been that a proportion of service users would be matched with a Supported Living provider outside of the SLASL process. This would include both service users assessed as needing specialist support (whereas the SLASL would only cover generic services) and service users who choose to take their Personal Budget as a Direct Payment.

Supporting people with a range of health conditions

The majority of people felt it was a good idea to expect providers on the SLASL to offer services to people with a wide range of health conditions. Service users tended to see this as a way of encouraging fairness and consistency. Some pointed out that they wanted their Supported Living provider to focus on their needs and interests first rather than their underlying health condition. However, a small minority felt that having a range of specialist providers would be better.

Family members were generally supportive of the SLASL providers being required to support people with a range of health conditions, but pointed out that there would need to be a process - perhaps alongside the SLASL - to match people who needed specialist support with appropriate providers.

Most of the negative responses to this aspect of the SLASL proposal came from providers. Even so, most said they were willing to be flexible as their size would permit, and many drew attention to their emphasis on personalised support which lends itself well to meeting the needs of people with different health conditions. Some saw their future as specialist providers, however, and would prefer they could apply to join the SLASL on this basis. The ability of these providers to offer support to people assessed as needing a specialist service would not, of course, be affected by the introduction of the SLASL. However, some providers suggested that reducing the opportunities for specialist providers could then lead to the Council having to move people out of area to get access to those specialisms.

One specialist provider suggested the SLASL could be divided into sub categories so as to offer specialist provision from within an overall pool of providers which was kept at a manageable level for the Council's quality assurance processes. Others gave more general responses to the effect that the Council needed to adopt processes which ensure specialist provision as well as general support could still be offered and sourced locally.

How the Council could address concerns about the SLASL

The majority of service users wanted reassurance they would not be forced to change service if they preferred to stay with their current Supported Living provider. Some wanted to know that they would be given time to think things through properly if offered the choice of changing. Several service users wanted to know that they could include family members or other supporters in their next Care Needs Review.

Many family members wanted to know what the Council would do to make sure service users had real choices about their Supported Living service, such as accessible and reliable information alongside time and support to make big decisions. Several family carers talked about how useful it is to see feedback from other service users and families, but wanted this to be available as well as an objective quality framework - "You don't want to feel you're just relying on hearsay."

Some providers suggested the Council should increase the number of places available on the SLASL to offer more choice. Some felt the requirement to work towards offering support to people with a range of health conditions should be relaxed. Others embraced the need to diversify but asked that the Council do more to publicise the training it offers for providers to help them develop their skill base.

There was a consistent message coming from all stakeholders about the need for ongoing dialogue with service users, family and providers about the SLASL process and working with people on implementation plans. Many of the details are not known at this stage, so this will be an ongoing piece of work.

How the Council could help people adjust to changes

Across all stakeholder groups, the responses to this question were mostly on the theme of communication. Service users wanted simple guides / explanations, time to ask questions, and the opportunity to involve others if they felt they needed that help. Service users wanted clear advice about what would change for them and what would not. Some people weren't clear, for example, about the link between their Supported Living carer and other professionals they saw regularly. Many of the service users who chose to come to a meeting to give their feedback on the consultation said they'd like another face to face opportunity to learn the result of the consultation and find out what happens next.

Family members emphasised the need to give service users time to adjust to changes, and to let things "sink in" properly. Several had questions about what support is available to people who choose to take their Personal Budget as a Direct Payment.

Providers highlighted the need for handover periods. Some also drew attention to the need for clear guidance around things which the Council isn't planning to change, such as the Care Needs Review process. Adult Social Care staff might assume processes which are very familiar to them are well understood by others, but individual service users and families go through these processes quite infrequently and they forget what's involved.

Equality issues

Through the consultation, the Council sought views on whether some groups might be more affected than others by the proposed introduction of the SLASL.

Most people felt that anyone eligible for a Supported Living service was likely to need support to adjust to any changes in their service, although that support would need to be different for different individuals. Some people suggested that those with sensory impairments or whose first language was not English could take longer to establish good communication with a new provider. Others also pointed out that people with autism find change especially difficult.

Some people suggested that service users who were quite isolated would be the most reliant on their relationship with their support worker, so they could find changes especially difficult.

Annexe 1: Schedule of consultation meetings

Date	Meeting	No. of attendees
07.02.2014	Mental health drop-in	20
25.02.2014	Mental Health Partnership Board	12
26.02.2014	Carers Steering Group	10
04.03.2014	Learning Disability Carers Forum	18
04.03.2014	Talkback 'Matters' session for people with learning disabilities	11
11.03.2014	Learning Disability Partnership Board	20

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

SUPPORTED LIVING ACCREDITATION SELECT LIST (SLASL)

Reading Borough Council (RBC) ran a public consultation from 29th January to 14th March 2014 on the proposed introduction of a Supported Living Accreditation Select List (SLASL).

After considering the consultation feedback, RBC has decided that it would be appropriate to make some changes to how the framework should operate. The consultation has also highlighted some areas where the framework needs to be presented differently to clarify what is intended. Making these changes could mean some providers will take a different view about whether to apply to join the SLASL. To be fair to everyone, the Council therefore plans to re-draft the SLASL documentation and advertise the tender opportunity again.

This document is a summary of the changes that will be made to the operation of the framework and the amendments to the procurement documents that will be issued. This is being sent to all those providers who expressed an interest in the original procurement exercise.

The Council also intends to make some other material changes to the procurement process arising from some issues that became apparent in the early stages of the previous procurement that can be helpfully addressed in this fresh procurement. These are outlined in the tables below.

The documents will also be amended to provide greater clarity without making a material change to the meaning or process. Changes of this type have not been identified in this summary.

1. CHANGES ARISING FROM THE CONSULTATION

RBC Consultation Report Response	Change to SLASL Procurement Process
The original presentation of the SLASL understated the expected use of specialist services in future, i.e. services for individuals with higher level needs. This needs to be addressed, including offering more information about the circumstances when the Council expects alternatives to SLASL to be considered. The Council's expectation is that there will continue to be a significant minority of people in Reading who will need a specialist Supported Living service.	The documents will make clearer the full process that the Council will follow including when and how alternative services to those offered through SLASL will be considered by the individual when choosing the most appropriate services for their care needs.

RBC Consultation Report Response	Change to SLASL Procurement Process
<p>Consultation feedback showed that most people thought it was appropriate to expect all SLASL providers to work towards supporting people with a range of health conditions. This was seen as fair, and a positive move towards ensuring consistent standards of service. However, some people disagreed with this and felt there should be more opportunities for providers who wanted to focus on supporting people with particular conditions. The Council will therefore clarify that whilst across the SLASL it would expect the full range of health needs to be met, individual providers would not need to commit to supporting people with needs arising across the complete range of disabilities or health conditions.</p>	<p>Providers wishing to join SLASL will no longer be required to commit to provide services to meet all care needs within SLASL. The new commitment will require each provider to commit to providing services to the majority of needs.</p> <p>One consequence of this change is to require changes to the original tiering structure to maintain the same level of choice for individuals as had been originally intended. Providers on SLASL will no longer be allocated to tiers, but will simply be ranked in order of their combined quality and pricing scores (their value for money ranking). Individuals will be initially offered to choose from the four highest ranking providers who have submitted a response to the invitation to provide their package rather than those providers from the top tier.</p> <p>The SLASL protocol will also be amended to make clear that all providers will be expected to work constructively with the Council to develop services where necessary to provide for new and emerging needs or where there are regular capacity shortages.</p>
<p>The Council will re-draft the SLASL documentation to reflect more clearly its intention to support individuals to choose whether or not to change providers, rather than insist on that a change if someone is supported by a provider who isn't appointed to the SLASL.</p>	<p>Amendments to the protocol will be made to reflect this intention clearly</p>

RBC Consultation Report Response	Change to SLASL Procurement Process
<p>The Council also acknowledges that it should be clearer about the opportunities for providers outside of SLASL and should explore the option of developing a separate list of providers of services for individuals with higher levels of need. These services might be best commissioned on a collaborative basis with neighbouring authorities. The Council intends to engage in a dialogue with specialist providers and other authorities to identify how to ensure that these services continue to be available and are contracted in an effective way when needed.</p>	<p>This recommendation does not impact directly on the SLASL Procurement</p>

2. OTHER CHANGES

Reason For Change	Change to SLASL Procurement Process
<p>There is an emerging need for supported living services for 16 and 17 year olds.</p>	<p>The Council will include the option to potentially use the SLASL to develop services for this group.</p>
<p>The original reference requirements in the procurement did not operate as intended. Some organisation were unable to meet the minimum requirements owing to the reluctance of some commissioning organisations to provide references, and the difficulty some commissioning organisations faced in providing all of the information required. The resulting partial references were unacceptable in a larger proportion of cases than had been anticipated.</p>	<p>The referencing requirements will be relaxed to allow organisations who obtain one supported living reference and one other related reference (domiciliary or residential care) to meet the minimum requirement. The scoring scheme is also being simplified. The reference form is being amended to make clear to the referees the minimum requirements that a reference must meet to be acceptable</p>
<p>Some responses to the safeguarding questions were not possible to score as the circumstances had not been foreseen in the design of the evaluation scheme.</p>	<p>The scoring scheme will be redesigned to ensure that all responses can be allocated a suitable score</p>

PLEASE USE THIS FORM TO RECORD ANY ACCESS OR
DISABILITIES ISSUES THAT YOU WISH THE COUNCIL
TO INVESTIGATE

FILL IN AND HAND IN AT THE ACCESS AND
DISABILITIES WORKING GROUP MEETING

Name:

Contact Details (if you wish the Council to let you know the
progress with your enquiry - a telephone number or email address
would be useful):

Issues: