

Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee



Reading
Borough Council

Working better with you

02 July 2025

Title	Supported Living Framework Tender
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report	Melissa Wise, Executive Director of Communities and Adult Social Care
Report author	Natalie Powell, Commissioning Officer
Lead Councillor	Councillor Paul Gittings, Lead Councillor for Adult Social Care
Council priority	Safeguard & support the health & wellbeing of Reading's adults & children
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. That ACE Committee grant delegated authority to the Executive Director of Communities and Adult Social Care in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Adult Social Care, the Director of Finance and the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic to:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Procure and enter into a contract with the successful tenderer(s) for the support/care services to be provided. The contract will be for up to 10 years (5 initial years and then up to 5 further years).• Negotiate with the successful tenderer(s) to mobilise the contract, vary the contract, extend the contract at the appropriate time and otherwise contract manage the contract throughout its lifecycle.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The Council defines 'supported living' as a service which enables individuals with care needs to live in their own homes as independently as possible with personalised support to facilitate this. Supported living encompasses various models, each adapted to meet an individual's specific needs and aspirations. Some models provide comprehensive, 24/7 wraparound support, while others offer flexible, floating assistance for those with lower support requirements. Accommodation options vary and may include shared housing, group homes, single dwellings, or living arrangements with family, depending on the individual's circumstances.
- 1.2. The current Supported Living Framework contract commenced on 1st April 2020 and is due to expire on 31st March 2026 with no opportunity for further extensions after running for 5 years. The Procurement of a new Supported Living Framework is proposed to commence in September 2025, which allows sufficient time for the procurement exercise to be completed, mobilisation to happen and the new contract to be effective from 1st April 2026.
- 1.3. The current spend on supported living is £13m per year, with £10m being spent with the current framework providers and the remaining £3m being used for off framework spot purchases. 367 individuals are accessing Supported Living Services, with 306 utilising support from current framework providers. We plan to implement Lots throughout the

contract, enabling tailored specifications that will help minimise off framework spot purchases.

- 1.4. It is proposed that the value of the new Supported Living Framework would be £13m per annum, with a total value over the lifetime of the contract of £150m (up to 10 years) including an annual inflationary uplift of 2%. A 5 year initial term, with the option to extend up to 5 years provides flexibility while ensuring long term price stability. It also enables performance evaluation of the new Lots before committing to extend, reduces procurement costs, and encourages supplier investment in Reading.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1. The Care Act 2014 places a legal duty on local authorities to ensure individuals receive high-quality care and support services that meet their eligible care needs. A fundamental principle of the Act is promoting independence and preventing the escalation of care needs, enabling people to remain in their homes with appropriate support funded through a personal budget.
- 2.2. The Adult Social Care teams in Reading work alongside Public Health and Housing as part of the Directorate for Communities and Adult Social Care. The Directorate is responsible for meeting the Council's duties under the Care Act 2014, which include:
 - Improving independence and wellbeing by ensuring that people can receive services that prevent their needs from becoming more serious. This means working with the local community to understand the resources available, providing or arranging support that can keep people well and identifying people and carers in the local area who might have care and support needs that are not being met.
 - Ensuring that people can get the information and advice they need to understand how local services work and make good decisions about their care and support.
 - Engaging with local providers to develop a responsive market that can provide sustainable high-quality care and support for the local community – promoting wellbeing and offering people more choice and control over their care.
- 2.3. In line with In Control's 'Social Care Future' vision (in-control.org.uk), our overriding ambition is to support people to realise their potential, be independent and live in their own homes for as long as possible, whilst ensuring that intensive support is available for those that need it most.
- 2.4. The Service's 'Supporting the life that matters to you' ethos will be central to this contract, ensuring people can live in their own homes with security of tenure when needed. It also supports individuals in transitioning to independent accommodation, where they can receive assistance as required rather than being tied to a fixed support setting.
- 2.5. We are committed to ensuring that the voices of individuals with lived experience play a central role in shaping the specification of the contract and influencing the development of Reading's supported living offer. Their insights and perspectives are invaluable in creating services that truly reflect the needs of the community. Furthermore, we actively encourage individuals to participate in the procurement process wherever possible. To facilitate this, we will provide support to help them contribute meaningfully, including assisting in the design of an evaluation question that reflects their lived experience and priorities.

3. Current position

Framework Use

- 3.1. As of 31st March 2025, a snapshot of commissioned supported living packages shows a total of 367 currently in place. 83% (306 packages, 77% of annual spend) of these are under the current framework contract which consists of 18 providers, 17 of which are active. The remaining 17% (61 packages, 23% of annual spend) are spot purchased

between 28 off framework providers and have been required for various reasons, for example due to the current framework providers often not being able to meet complex needs.

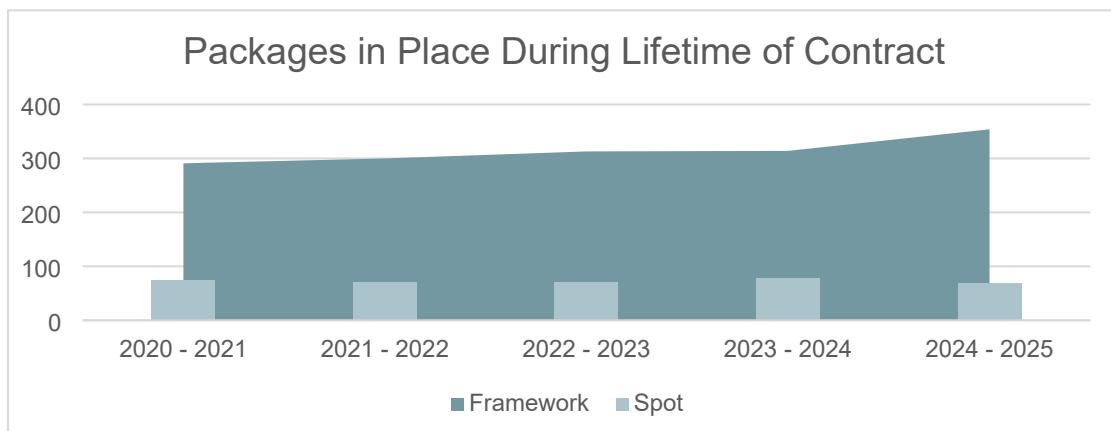
Throughout the year, 61 packages have ceased. A review of the reasons reveals recurring themes, including individuals choosing to discontinue support, informal assistance from family or community networks, and a shift to direct payments which provide increased choice, control and flexibility.

When comparing data over the lifetime of the current contract, needs analysis demonstrates recurring themes for requiring an off-framework spot provider such as, inability for framework providers to meet the needs, individuals requiring staff with bespoke skills and training to manage complex and specialist needs. Whilst the Council acknowledges in some cases there will always be a need to proceed off framework (e.g. out of area placements), it is intended that the new framework will attract providers who are able to meet the range and complexity of need thus reducing the frequency of off-framework spot placements. This will provide consistent oversight of services, streamline contract management, and ensures that providers under the framework contract share its vision, values, and enablement expectations. Providers will adopt a collaborative approach to service development, supporting long-term objectives throughout the duration of the agreement.

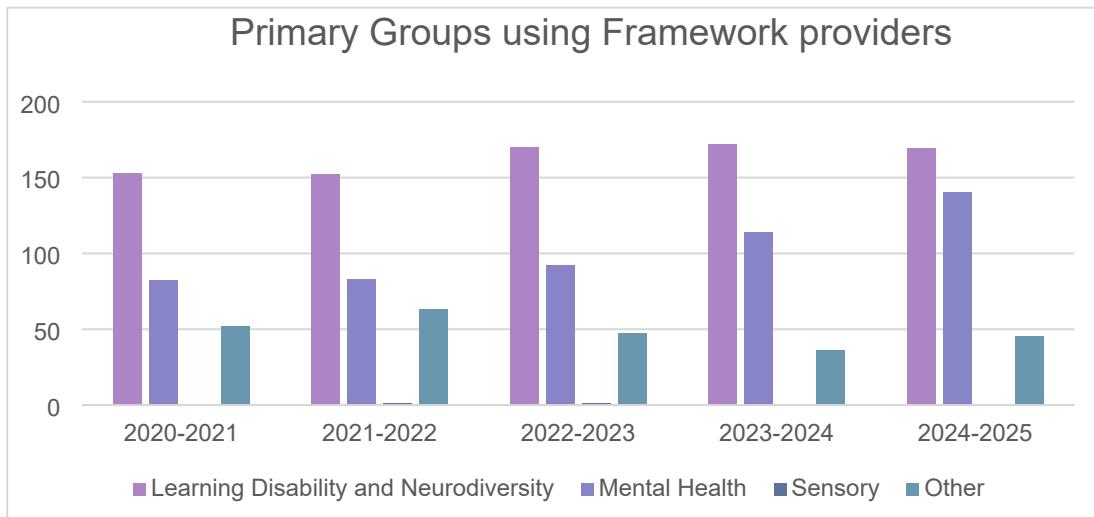
Summary of Needs Analysis

3.2. Throughout the period from 1st April 2020 – 31st March 2025 the Council has seen a 16% increase in the number of commissioned supported living packages. However, it is important to note that the initial year of the contract coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to a decline in the number of people moving into services. Over the lifetime of the contract the demand for supported living services has increased on average 4% each year.

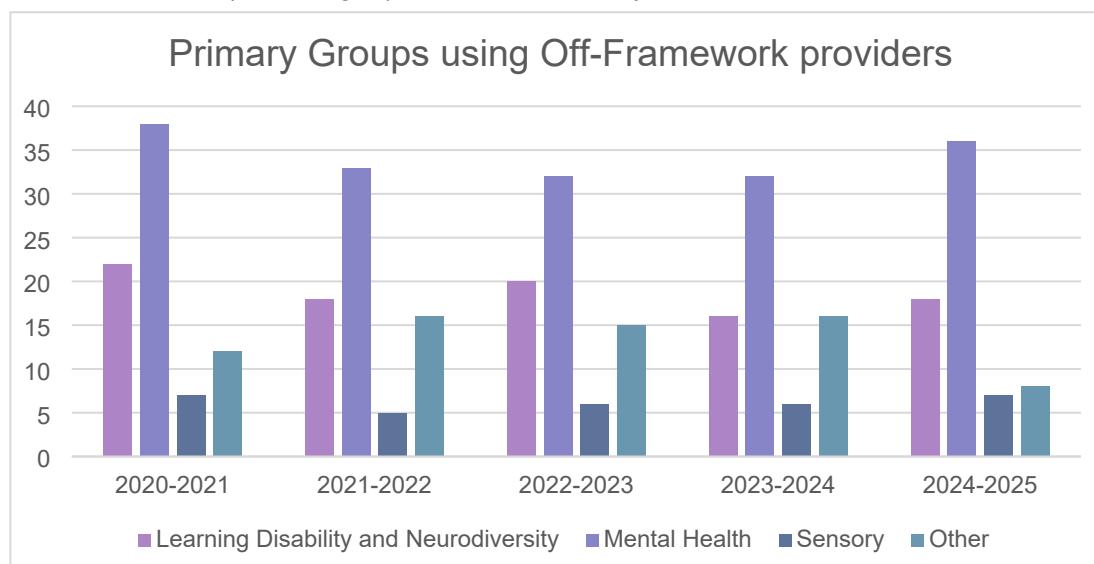
Under the new contract, we aim to develop 'move on pathways' within supported living services, enabling individuals to transition into more independent housing options and support services. While demand for supported living is rising, we expect that the introduction of these pathways will facilitate smoother transitions, allowing more individuals to progress through the service and ultimately require less support over time.



3.3. When comparing the cohort of individuals being supported by framework providers throughout the period 1st April 2024 – 31st March 2025, 48% (169 packages) are for people with a Learning Disability and Neurodiversity, 39% (140 packages) are for people with Mental Health issues and 13% (45 packages) have other primary support needs such as sensory needs, physical support, memory and cognition, and social support.



In comparison to individuals being supported by off framework spot providers, 52% (36 packages) are for people with Mental Health issues, 26% (18 packages) for people with Learning Disability and Neurodiversity, 10% (7 packages) for people with Sensory needs, and 12% (8 packages) have other primary support reasons.



The demand for Learning Disability and Neurodiversity services has increased by 7% when comparing these figures to the first contractual year 2020-2021, and across the lifetime of the contract has increased on average 2% each year.

The demand for Mental Health services has **increased by 55%** when comparing these figures to the first contractual year 2020-2021, and across the lifetime of the contract has increased on average 12% each year evidencing a growing need for providers who have experience and knowledge in this area.

Complex Needs

3.4. The Councils existing supported living framework providers frequently struggle to accommodate individuals with complex needs, requiring the Council to engage with off-framework spot providers to ensure appropriate support is delivered. Currently within Reading the term 'complex needs' is most commonly used with reference to individuals with complex mental health needs. There are no set criteria for determining the threshold of 'complex', but the following characteristics are considered 'complex' by Social Workers, the Eligibility Risk and Review Groups, and Commissioning Teams:

- Personality disorder
- Forensic history (involvement with criminal justice system)

- Alcohol/Substance use
- Current presenting behavioural needs requiring specialist intervention (for example property damage, physical aggression)
- History of placement breakdowns and/or hospitalisations
- Dual needs e.g. Mental Health and Learning Disability & Neurodiversity
- Bespoke accommodation needs/property adaptations
- Bespoke training that is essential to meeting the needs e.g. BSL, Sensory support
- Complex health needs

Using the above criteria, as of 31st March 2025, The Council is funding 41 individuals with 'complex needs' within supported living, representing 11% of the total supported living packages. 4 are supported by framework providers, with the remaining 37 being supported by off-framework spot providers (across 10 different providers).

Complex needs packages are routinely offered to framework providers to bid, but frequently this is unsuccessful. Available data suggests this is due to:

- Limited accommodation options – many shared units with compatibility being a challenge
- Little motivation for framework providers to take these packages on for capacity reasons

Of the 41 individuals, 24 are residing in Reading

Some of the known factors for people with complex needs living outside of Reading are:

- Accommodation requirements not commonly found in Reading, such as bespoke properties or single occupancy options
- Difficult family history requiring physical distance
- Ministry of Justice (MOJ) restrictions. As of 31/3/25 the Council is funding 12 individuals under MOJ restrictions of which 3 are required to live outside of Reading

3.5. Generally, within Reading Adult Social Care, individuals with Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities (PMLD) which can present with complex health conditions and additional sensory needs, are not included within the complex needs category. Individuals with PMLD needs are often placed in residential settings rather than supported living which is something the Council is keen to reduce by having providers who can meet complex, challenging and bespoke needs.

3.6. 17 new residential placements made between 1st April 2024 – 31st March 2025 were reviewed to ascertain whether any of the needs could be met by the framework in supported living. Upon reviewing the needs based on the information documented in the assessments, it was felt that should the right provider be available, with the right skill set, that 9 of the 17 could have been considered for supported living. Of the 9; 4 people had mental health issues, 4 had a learning disability & neurodiversity and 1 had the primary group of physical support. This indicates that by having providers on the framework with the required knowledge and capacity, could reduce the number of residential placements made in the future.

Current Pricing

3.7. The pricing structure for the current supported living framework is a price range model whereby during the procurement process the providers had to propose their hourly rates which were reviewed as part of the evaluation process. Over the lifetime of the contract the price range gap has increased between the lowest and highest paid due to annual inflationary price rises. At the start of the contract, a gap of £1.59 (£15.55 - £17.14) has increased year on year with the gap peaking at £3.14 (£17.67 - £20.81) during the financial year 1st April 2024 – 31st March 2025.

For the period 1st April 2025 – 31st March 2026, the price range gap has been reduced to £1.31 (£19.50 - £20.81) as part of the transition towards the new framework. This has meant that some providers were awarded a low, or no uplift for the period. This adjustment ensures greater alignment among all providers as we move forward with the implementation of a standardised hourly rate, promoting consistency and stability across the service.

Providers have also fed back that they are accepting referrals from other local authorities and health over Reading as they receive a higher hourly rate, this suggests that we are paying lower than nearby local authorities and Health. The placement of vulnerable individuals in Reading by other local authorities introduces potential financial and safeguarding challenges. Under Section 117 of the Mental Health Act, local authorities and NHS bodies have a legal obligation to provide free aftercare services to individuals previously detained under specific sections of the Act. If an individual receiving Section 117 aftercare is placed in Reading and subsequently detained again, the responsibility for funding their ongoing care may transfer to Reading, depending on their ordinary residence status at the time of their initial detention.

Quality

3.8. The current framework has a tiering system in place, where an Annual Quality Assessment (AQA) is completed with 40% of the quality aspect, and 60% of the hourly rate determining the Tier. Tier 1 providers get priority of tenders over those who are awarded Tier 2. It was intended that this process would increase quality, however due to being focussed on price and a lack of competition it did not give the desired outcomes.

Accommodation

3.9. The existing framework does not currently specify accommodation standards. However, to uphold the quality of housing offered to individuals, we are implementing minimum accommodation standards within the new contract. These standards will ensure that properties remain safe and compliant with [Supported Housing: National Statement of Expectations](#) or [REACH standards](#).

As the implementation of the [Supported Housing \(Regulatory Oversight\) Act 2023](#) progresses, with consultations currently underway, it is essential that the new contract is designed to be fit for the future. For accommodation-based supported living services, the Council requires clearer oversight of the housing component, particularly where providers receive enhanced rent payments and are registered as 'specified accommodation.' Strengthening this oversight will ensure that commissioned services remain cost-effective, meet appropriate standards, and continue to address evolving needs efficiently and sustainably.

3.10. There is a lack of providers who have developed pathway models through supported living, and therefore there is a limited number of individuals moving on from supported living into independent housing. This is something that we have consulted our current providers on, however there is little incentive for change. On average since recording voids in 2023, we have 35 voids per week in shared accommodation with a need for more self-contained units. These are required for both individuals with complex needs, and for those who require a step down into a more independent service. Whilst we acknowledge that for some individuals, they may always require a supported living placement, through proactive contract management and monitoring of key performance indicators (KPIs), we aim to motivate providers under the new contract to drive meaningful change, deliver measurable outcomes, and support individuals in achieving greater independence. This structured approach will ensure continuous improvement, accountability, and alignment with best practices in service provision.

4. The Proposal

Options Proposed

4.1. It is proposed to have an overall set of principles for the supported living market and workstreams that will support delivery of these principles. The principles will be core in

the new tender documents and will incorporate the views of people with lived experience:

Supporting the Life that Matters to You

- There is a lack of pathways through supported living services, and therefore we would aim for at least a third of people to move through supported living onto independent accommodation. Where supported living is likely to be long term, clear plans are in place to continue development and engagement in long term services

Suitable Accommodation

- Introduction of accommodation standards to ensure individuals have access to good quality accommodation that meets a person's needs.

Collaboration

- Good quality providers that are person focused, imaginative, support co-production and willing to try new ways of working.

Healthy

- A market that promotes and supports good physical and mental health.

Stable staffing

- Well-trained consistent staff that can meet service users' needs even if they change. Staff levels need to be sufficient to manage the demand in addition to any packages already held. Staff should share our supported living vision and be enthused to work collaboratively with the Council to deliver efficient care and strive to achieve personal outcomes and goals with individuals.

These principles will be part of the procurement process and future KPIs as part of contract management.

4.2. A three-year strategic workstream has been developed to ensure the principles are implemented and that individuals receive the right support in a sustainable, good-quality, and accessible local market. During this period, learning and best practices will be continuously integrated into the contract term ensuring ongoing improvements in service delivery and will become business as usual. A key priority is to create a care system that is not only viable and affordable but also centred around the needs and aspirations of the people it serves.

To strengthen this approach, funding for a social worker and occupational therapist was secured through an MTFS business case. Working collaboratively, they will engage closely with providers to deliver enablement training, carry out TEC assessments, and conduct outcome-based reviews. Their role will be essential in taking a holistic approach to evaluating accommodation-based services, ensuring cost-effective support arrangements while also facilitating opportunities for individuals to transition to lower-needs services or general housing when appropriate. This person-centred model will enhance independence, dignity, and overall well-being for those accessing support.

When	Task
Year 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recruitment 2x FTE fixed term operational posts.• Determine & agree the order in which we will roll these initiatives out across providers.• Co-produce an agreed approach for rolling out the initiatives across providers with clients and families.• Begin training providers & rolling-out a culture change with providers.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researching TEC options that are best suited to shared supported living services.
Year 2	<p>Deliver the following initiatives across all providers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting outcomes for clients which providers will then work to deliver, with the aim of maximising clients' independence and reducing the amount of care they require. • Installing TEC where possible. • Conducting place-based reviews to explore cost-effective configurations of hours & night-time support within group environments.
Year 3	<p>Complete the embedding of the new culture with the provider market, and operational teams, through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moving clients (who are ready) to more independent living options (based on developing a wider Supported Living Pathway into independence or services with lower-level support). • Ensuring all clients are being reviewed on a regular basis and that this learning from this is shared with wider Operational Teams and Providers (with an outcomes-focused mindset). • Ensuring contract management arrangements are holding providers to account in line with the proposed new ways of working by using the KPIs, sharing good practice and celebrating success stories, whilst holding providers to account if they are not working proactively to ensure outcomes are being met.

4.3. We plan to utilise the use of Lots to meet the need and therefore are drafting the service specifications for:

- Lot 1 (supported living). This is an accommodation-based area of the market where the Individual would have a separate contract for their tenancy, however the property is *usually* sourced by the care provider, or the care provider is expected to have an SLA (service level agreement) with the landlord. Our contract would be with the care provider who would provide the care and support required for the individual. The accommodation is usually shared, however can also be a single dwelling. Lot 1 will have a standardised cost.
- Lot 2 (Community Support). This is where a provider does not source the accommodation, and the person already has their own accommodation. They support an Individual from their own property (this could be living with family, already holding their own tenancy, home ownership etc). The worker travels to multiple address whilst on shift and therefore is not based at one service or property. Support could be delivered within the property for tasks such as sorting through correspondence, upkeep of the property, or could be supporting outside the home for tasks such as attending appointments, activities, getting to college etc. Lot 2 will have a standardised cost.
- Lot 3 (complex). This could be either an accommodation-based service, or community-based support. However, the individual has been assessed as

having complex/challenging needs that requires a provider who is able to manage these and has a greater level of skill and knowledge. This could include additional bespoke training such as TEACCH, de-escalation, robust risk assessments, stable experienced staff, and the potential for delegated healthcare tasks. The cost model for Lot 3 has not been determined yet. We are exploring the approach other local authorities have taken which vary from quoting a price per mini tender and having a weighted score, a price range, or tiering of costs alongside a criteria.

- 4.4. By introducing Lots into the new contract, Reading can ensure we have enough providers in place to meet the varying need whilst promoting choice and securing a sustainable market. For example, currently, there is one framework provider offering community support, and therefore are bidding and being awarded a high number of community packages meaning there is a lack of choice and presents a risk should the provider fail. In the last financial year, they have been awarded 90% of community packages. By having a Lot bespoke to providers offering community support (under Lot 2), it reduces the risk and possible disruption for individuals.
- 4.5. We have reviewed supported living frameworks/dynamic purchasing systems commissioned by other local authorities to ascertain their approach. 5 out of the 9 authority documents reviewed evidence the use of lots, with the 5 also having a lot specifically for complex needs evidencing the demand in this area of the market. We also met with authorities to discuss opportunities to joint procure this lot, however whilst all were open to exploring this further, timelines did not align and there were differing ideas, therefore these conversations will continue but we are unable to joint commission at this time.
- 4.6. Under Lot 1 (supported living), we are going to introduce minimum accommodation standards along with an onboarding process of properties to ensure providers we commission with acquire properties that meet our requirements. The responsibility of health and safety of the property currently sits with and will remain with the landlord. This new process would also include obtaining information similar to Housing colleagues working in line with the Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme, therefore ensuring we have an annual gas safety certificate, electrical certificates, a copy of the tenancy, service level agreements etc. By having these processes in place, it will not only support the wellbeing of the individuals using the service but will also allow us to ensure there is an appropriate divide between the housing aspect, and care and support being delivered and that the property on offer is affordable. We are awaiting the outcome of the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023 consultation before designing this proposal as this could impact how this is regulated. In the meantime, we are recommending a self-assessment based model.
- 4.7. The current framework has a price range that has not worked due to inflationary price rises each year of the contract and the gap between the highest and lowest paid providers increasing each year. Therefore, the decision has been made to create a standard rate as seen with other local authorities.
- 4.8. The new supported living framework would include the use of a tiering system based on KPIs being met, thus driving competition and incentivising providers to deliver high quality support. KPIs will include indicators such as individuals meeting outcomes/achieving goals, health checks being completed, and bidding activity.
- 4.9. We are recommending a 5 year contract with possible extensions for a further 5 years. This will allow us to collaboratively focus on innovation and continuous improvements, enhanced relationships with providers and pricing stability whilst enabling providers confidence to invest in the local market.

Additional Options Considered

- 4.10. The do-nothing option would be to let the contract expire on the 31st of March 2026 and continue with only spot purchases. This would be a high risk as it would mean that each package would need to be negotiated on price and terms. There would be little control of providers entering the market and could lead to increase monitoring and quality work.

It would prevent providers having the security to invest in the area and have confidence in getting work.

- 4.11. This would affect market sustainability and increase the chances of providers using other local authorities rather than Reading.
- 4.12. Another option would be to have another contract up to 5 years; however this doesn't give providers longevity to invest in the Reading market. The proposed option allows a break point at 5 years to reflect the effectiveness and quality of the contract, and local market conditions to ensure it meets our expected outcomes.

Tender Options

- 4.13. Several procurement approaches were considered to determine the most effective model for commissioning services while ensuring compliance with procurement regulations.

One option considered was an open framework, which would maintain consistency with the Light Touch Regime in terms of scope, award criteria, and contractual terms. This approach requires scheduled and prescriptive reopening, allowing new providers to competitively enter the framework. However, if the framework sufficiently meets service needs, reopening may be unnecessary and could lead to an excess of providers relative to actual demand. Such an imbalance may result in inefficiencies and reduced viability for both commissioners and providers.

Another approach explored was the dynamic market framework, which introduces additional flexibilities but presents certain restrictions that could hinder the achievement of key procurement objectives. While a dynamic framework allows providers to join at any point and offers adaptability, it may impose limitations on strategic oversight and contract stability. These constraints could prevent the Council from maintaining the necessary level of control over service delivery and ensuring cost-effectiveness within the contractual arrangements

By carefully weighing these procurement models against regulatory compliance and long-term service needs, the Council has selected an approach that balances accessibility for providers with robust contract management, ensuring sustainable and high-quality service provision.

5. Contribution to Strategic Aims

- 5.1. The new framework will contribute to the Reading Borough Council Plan 2025-28 which sets a vision to 'to help Reading realise its potential and ensure that everyone who lives and works here can share in the benefits of its success'
- 5.2. One of five stated priorities in the Council Plan is to 'safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children'. An objective to achieve this is to 'support those who need social care services to live as independently as possible in their homes with improved wellbeing'.
- 5.3. This proposal directly supports the achievement of this priority and objective by ensuring that the service is designed to help individuals live independently at home. Through outcome-focused support, providers will implement an enablement or reablement approach that promotes positive well-being and enhances quality of life.
- 5.4. This proposal also links to the Council's principles; it puts residents first by prioritising their independence and current life, keeping this in place as far as possible. Residents will continue to be able to exercise choice over their support as they will continue to have a range of providers to choose from. The current and planned engagement with users of supported living services ensures that the Council will involve, collaborate with, and empower residents.

6. Environmental and Climate Implications

- 6.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).

6.2. Environmental and Climate Change will be part of the Social Value assessment and will ask providers how they can help meet our carbon neutral target. This will include staff travel, local recruitment and measures to make accommodation-based services more energy efficient. Additionally, the new contract will have minimum accommodation standards to ensure that properties meet our expected standards.

7. Community Engagement

7.1. We are currently developing a “Working Together Supported Living Group” and have invited all individuals who are supported by providers under the current framework. We have received responses from 26 Individuals (9% of invites) who would like to join. The first group meeting took place on 15th May 2025 with 8 attendees, and we will be holding one meeting per month moving forward. This will allow us to gather feedback, along with working collaboratively on areas of the specification and contract.

In addition, we have also met with Individuals from 3 properties to discuss supported living and identify their values when discussing the services. Feedback included wanting to feel safe in their home, having similar interest to others in the property, being able to decorate bedroom, working towards goals/outcomes, feeling relaxed at home.

8. Equality Implications

8.1. An Equality Impact Assessment has been initiated and will be completed prior to the tender. Is it not expected that the service design has been changed to a level that would impact, but due to the size and reach of the tender consideration will be given.

8.2. Consideration will be given to if a provider fails to get on the framework, as an agreed approach will need to be considered. This will include:

- Moving individuals from an off-framework spot provider to a on framework provider with the opportunity of Direct Payments, for those who wish to remain. This would need Operation Team to dedicate resources to complete reviews and move people as needed.
- For accommodation-based services where Reading BC purchases the care for all individuals, we would need to liaise with the landlords about seeking a new care provider. This would need legal input and Operation input to ensure reviews and support the individuals effected.
- If a provider leaves the market, then consideration will be to work with the provider to tender out all the work and TUPE staff to minimise impact to individuals.
- Continuing a contract with the provider under SPOT purchasing

9. Other Relevant Considerations

9.1. There are any no other issues to consider relevant to this report.

10. Legal Implications

10.1. Local Authorities have a duty to prevent, reduce or delay needs for care and support under The Care Act 2014 (s.2) for all adults including carers. These aspects are all covered in the tender documentation. As the contract value exceeds the applicable threshold for the Light Touch Regime, the procurement process must adhere to the competitive procurement requirements set out in the Council’s Contract Procedure Rules and the Procurement Act 2023 to ensure compliance with regulatory obligations.

10.1. In accordance with the Council Constitution as the value of the SLF is over £500,000 per year it is a key decision, it states under 13.3.2 ‘*A Standing Committee may specifically delegate a key decision to an officer for them to make. In which case, the decision when taken by the officer, should be formally recorded by them*’.

- 10.2. Legal Services have been instructed to support with the procurement and assist with the drafting of contract documents and schedules.
- 10.3. The Light Touch Regime (LTR) is a procurement framework that applies to specific services, including social care, allowing for more flexible commissioning compared to standard procurement rules. While it streamlines the process, it does not reduce the importance or level of scrutiny involved; rigorous procedures are still required to ensure quality and accountability.

Given the length of the contract and the need for adaptability in responding to evolving service demands, commissioning this service under the LTR would be the most efficient approach. It provides the Council with the flexibility to design competitive tendering procedures suited to light touch contracts under the Procurement Act. This means the Council can fully utilise the new competitive flexible procedure, ensuring services meet local needs while maintaining compliance.

This approach enables the Council to manage procurement in a way that supports service continuity, innovation, and efficiency, while still maintaining high standards in care provision.

A procurement strategy has been completed and agreed by the procurement board on 13th May 2025 which discusses the different procurement options in more detail

11. **Financial Implications**

- 11.1. There are 2 Medium Term Financial Strategy business cases, Supported Living Cost of Care Pressure (DCASC-2526-05) confirming £1.527m across the financial years 2026/27 and 2027/28 to support the pressures DCASC will incur within the Supported Living market as a result of retendering the existing Supported Living framework, and an Supported Living Efficiency (DCASC-2526-06) which outlines the steps to be taken with the aspiration to fully mitigate those costs. We will work with providers on the new framework to:
 - Work with clients and their families to foster a culture change within supported living (from a long-term “maintaining” environment to a more short-term, enablement-focused environment).
 - Install TEC where possible.
 - Conducting place-based reviews to explore cost-effective configurations of hours & night-time support within group environments.
 - Training staff in re-/enablement approaches - and setting outcomes for clients which providers will then work to deliver, with the aim of maximising clients’ independence and reducing the amount of care they require.
 - Moving clients on to more independent living options once they are ready to do so (based on the assumption that a sufficient option can be developed as part of a wider Supported Living Pathway).

- 11.2. We are testing these approaches with a selected provider in 2024/25 as part of our recovery plan, as well as reviewing the highest cost supported living placements to determine the extent to which this can deliver savings. Savings to date £111k in-year / £236k full-year effect. Because the Supported Living Pressures business case is requesting £1.527m (which equates to 10% of our current spend on Supported Living), we aim to use these approaches to deliver an equivalent level of efficiencies.

	Net Change to Revenue Budget			
	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Total
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
DCASC-2526-06	(376)	(575)	(576)	(1,527)

DCASC-2526-05	0	752	775	1,527
	(376)	177	199	0

11.3. The budget for the overall supported living contract is within the placements budget within Adult Social Care budgets.

12. Timetable for Implementation

12.1. Work is underway to deliver market efficiencies, improve quality of services, outcomes for individuals and oversight of the market. There is a change programme in development and savings have already been made and are expected to grow over the next 3 years of the project. This will additionally work on increasing service user voices in development of services and improve move on pathways for those who are assessed as being able to move into independent accommodation with the right support and wider network.

12.2. Procurement Timeline:

Approval at ACE Committee	2nd July 2025
Publish on InTend	10th September 2025
Evaluation & Scoring	14th October – 14th November 2025
Award	18th November – 16th December 2025
Mobilisation	13th January – 1st April 2026
Contracts	6th January – 31st March 2026
Contract Start	1st April 2026

13. Background Papers

There are none.