

OFFICER DECISION NOTICE



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This notice is to be used for the following types of officer decisions. (Select one option).

- A.** Decisions taken by officers under a specific express delegation from Council or a Committee.
- B.** Decisions taken by officers under a general delegation from Council or a Committee, which relates to (i) a permission or a licence, or (ii) the rights of an individual, or (iii) a contract or expenditure **over £100,000**.

1. Title of decision:	Berkshire Neurodivergent Transformation Procurement of Needs and Strengths Tool
2. Date of the decision:	10 March 2026
3. The decision maker:	Executive Director Children's Services

4. Decision details:

Agreement to sign off the progression to market and procurement of the Berkshire Neurodivergent Needs and Strengths Tool.

Reading will act as 'lead agency' for this Berkshire wide procurement (formalised in a shared MOU and in each organisations formal decision making and approval cycles).

Reading Borough Council's contribution to the costs of the Needs and Strengths Tool is £30,000 over three years. The remaining contributions are from the Berkshire Local Authorities and Thames Valley Integrated Care Board.

Reading will lead the procurement on behalf of Berkshire with a total value not exceeding £600,000 in a three-year period. A Memorandum of Understanding, led by Reading's Legal Team and signed by all nominated Directors has been completed to support this joint arrangement.

5. Reasons for the decision:

Reading Borough Council has led the strategic transformation and re-design of the SEND system in Berkshire to introduce a new Neurodivergent Needs and Strengths Tool to identify neurodivergent characteristics in children within an hour within the community, and inform adjustments for home, school/setting and community.

This development responds to urgent need to improve the experiences of Berkshire children due to children waiting up to seven years to receive clinical assessments/ diagnosis of neurodivergence, far in excess of national waiting times; and a lack of aligned support or advice to adjust for neurodivergence in the community. This systems change in Berkshire was initiated ahead of the national SEND Reforms but is entirely in keeping with these Reforms.

Hosting the Procurement in a Local Authority is essential to support prompt decision-making and affective Lite Touch Procurement across the partnership.

Each partner agency undertook informed corporate decision-making approval of the joint procurement of the Needs/Strengths Tool on the following dates:

Organisation	Approving Internal Governance
Bracknell Forest Council	DMT (Strategic Partners Meeting) and CLT – approved 27 th January 26
Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead, Achieving for Children	CSMT – approved 27 th January 26
Reading Borough Council	DMT – approved 5 th January 26
Wokingham Borough Council	DLT and CEO briefing – deferred due to SEND inspection disruption, approved 11 th February 26
Slough Borough Council	DfE Appointed Improvement Chair Briefed & Supporting – 16 th January 26
West Berkshire Council	Approved 23 rd Feb 26
Frimley ICB	Director approved January 26
BOB ICB	Director approved January 26

This is further underpinned by the shared Memorandum of Understanding across the Berkshire commissioning partners, finalised on 14th January 2026

An ODN is advised to support this strategic integrated commissioning.

6. Alternative options considered (if any) and rejected:

A detailed Options Appraisal for the development, design or commission of the Needs and Strengths Tool was developed, following extensive review of the national evidence and the review and co-design of evidence-based practice from elsewhere with 1500 co-production partners. The Options Appraisal is a confidential Background paper because of its commercial sensitivity.

7. List of open Background Papers:

- 1) Berkshire Neurodivergent Programme Plan
- 2) Berkshire Neurodivergent Risks and Issues Log

8. List of confidential or exempt Background Papers:

Berkshire Neurodivergent Options Appraisal

9. Equality Considerations:

500 members of the Berkshire lived experience community have actively participated in the codesign of the systems Neurodivergent Transformation. This has included detailed discussion of the impact on equalities and inequalities within the system, further supported by the national analysis of the Children’s Commissioner, which highlights lack of access to timely neurodivergent review/assessment this as an ‘equalities issue’ impacting adversely on children in poverty and with complex needs.

10. Any other matters taken into consideration:

Legitimate expectation of consultation

Procedural requirements

<input type="checkbox"/> Public Health implications	<input type="checkbox"/> Environmental or Climate Change
<input type="checkbox"/> Health and Safety	<input type="checkbox"/> Risk Management implications
<input type="checkbox"/> Transparency of Information (FOI etc)	<input type="checkbox"/> Privacy Impact Assessments
<input type="checkbox"/> Human Rights Act Duties	<input type="checkbox"/> Armed Forces Covenant
<input type="checkbox"/> Corporate Parenting	<input type="checkbox"/> Community Safety
<input type="checkbox"/> Regulatory duties	<input type="checkbox"/> EU withdrawal
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	
Details of the matters taken into account: None to note.	

11. Legal considerations

RBC's legal team have approved the final content of the arrangements and overseen the MOU.

12. Financial considerations

Funding arrangements are summarised here:

- An overall budget envelope of £240,000 over two years is proposed. This equates to an annual budget of £120,000 per 12 month period.
- Procurement rules require a specification to be advertised with +1 year extension provision, optional to the commissioner, totalling a maximum of £360,000 over a three year period.

After a series of discussions, the following agreements have been reached for the first two years:

- An annual contribution of £60,000 from the Thames Valley Integrated Care Board.
- The remaining £60,000 annual cost has been subdivided between the six Local Authorities.

Reading Borough Council's Funding commitment is met from grant funding i.e., the Prevention Grant.

13. Internal consultations

None

Sections 13-18: To be completed only for Decision A (express delegation from a Committee)

14. The name of the Committee:

15. Date of the meeting:

Click or tap to enter a date.

16. Minute number:

17. The delegation given by the Committee:	
18. The name of any member of the committee who declared a conflict of interest in relation to the decision:	
19. Any councillor or officer required to be consulted prior to the exercise of this delegation and details of their response.	