

**OFFICER DELEGATION SCHEME  
RECORD OF DECISION**

**TO BE UPLOADED TO THE INTERNET BY DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

<b>Date:</b> 24 October 2023		<b>Ref No:</b> 2184	
<b>Responsible Officer:</b> Adrian Crook - Director of Adult Social Services Author – Conor Fielding – Team Manager			
<b>Type of Decision (please refer to MO Guidance):</b>			
<b>Key</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Non-Key</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Freedom of Information Status:</b> <i>(can the report go in the public domain)</i> Yes			
<b>Title/Subject matter:</b> Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund – Waiting Times Priority			
<b>Budget/Strategy/Policy/Compliance:</b>			
(i) Is the decision within an Approved Budget?		Yes	
(ii) Is the decision in conflict with the council's policies, strategies, or relevant service plans?		No	
(iii) Does the decision amend existing or raise new policy issues?		No	
(iv) Is the decision significant and/or does it meet the £100,000 threshold for recording?		Yes	
<b>Equality Impact Assessment</b> [Does this decision change policy, procedure or working practice or negatively impact on a group of people? <b>If yes</b> – complete EIA and summarise issues identified and recommendations – forward EIA to Corporate HR]		No	

**Summary:**

The government made significant policy announcements relating to adult social care and has set 2 vital targets for improvement, these are:

- increasing fee rates paid to adult social care providers in local areas.
- increasing adult social care workforce capacity and retention.
- reducing adult social care waiting times.

Funding called the Market Sustainability Fund has been provided for council's to deliver these improvements.

This paper addresses in part one of those priorities – reducing waiting times.

Other papers addressing further the targets set will follow in quick succession.

**Wards affected:** N/A

**Consultations:** N/A

**Scrutiny & Review Committee Interest:**

**Options considered:**

**Decision** *[with reasons]*

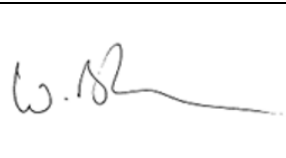
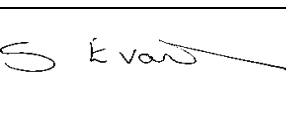
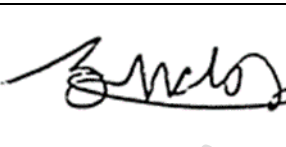
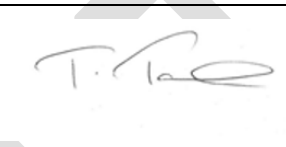
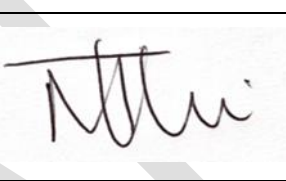
To meet the government's vital target area of improvement reducing adult social care waiting times it is recommended that the Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund is used to create permanent positions for the following posts:

Post	New Posts
Assistant Team Manager	1.0
Experienced Social Worker	4.0
Reviewing Officer	3.0

**Decision made by:**

**Signature:**

**Date:**

Executive Director – Health and Adult Care		19 October 2023
Section 151 Officer		21/10/23
Director of People and Inclusion		06.11.23
<b>Members Consulted [see note 1 below]</b>		
Cabinet Member		19 October 2023
Lead Member - HR		06.11.23
Opposition Spokesperson		

### Notes

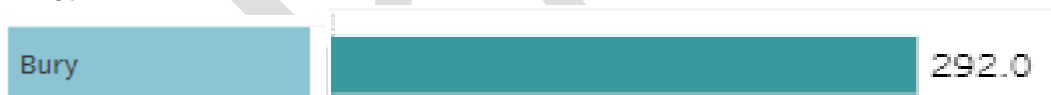
1. Where, in accordance with the requirements of the Officer Delegation Scheme, a Chief Officer consults with the appropriate Cabinet Member they must sign the form so as to confirm that they have been consulted and that they agree with the proposed action. The signature of the Opposition Spokesperson should be obtained if required, to confirm that he/she has been consulted. Please refer to the MO Guidance.
2. **This form must not be used for urgent decisions.**
3. Where there is any doubt, Corporate Directors should err on the side of caution and seek advice from the Council's Monitoring Officer.

## 1. Background

- 1.1 The Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund ('the fund') was announced at the autumn statement in November 2022. The primary purpose of the fund is to support local authorities to make tangible improvements to adult social care services in their area, in particular to build capacity and improve market sustainability.
- 1.2 Under Section 3 of the Care Act 2014, local authorities have a duty to promote the efficient and effective operation of the market for adult care and support as a

whole. The ambition of the Care Act 2014 is for local authorities to influence and drive the pace of change for their whole market, leading to a sustainable and diverse range of care and support providers, continuously improving quality and choice whilst also delivering better, innovative, and cost-effective outcomes that promote the wellbeing of people who draw on care and support.

- 1.3 The government considers that 3 vital target areas of improvement underpin the overarching objective of building capacity and improving market sustainability. These are:
  - increasing fee rates paid to adult social care providers in local areas.
  - increasing adult social care workforce capacity and retention.
  - reducing adult social care waiting times.
- 1.4 This paper details how Bury will address in part the third priority – reducing adult social care waiting times.
- 1.5 Waiting times for a needs assessment under the Care Act increased during the pandemic and have remained stubbornly high since. This is a pattern that has been seen across the country and prompted the government initiatives to improve the situation.
- 1.6 Approaching Adult Social Care for support is often done in times of crisis and always after people have tried to support themselves. Having to wait to see a social worker risks unnecessary deterioration and escalation in needs and delivers poor customer service to the residents of Bury.
- 1.7 As of June 2023, Bury has 292 adults waiting for an assessment under the Care Act.

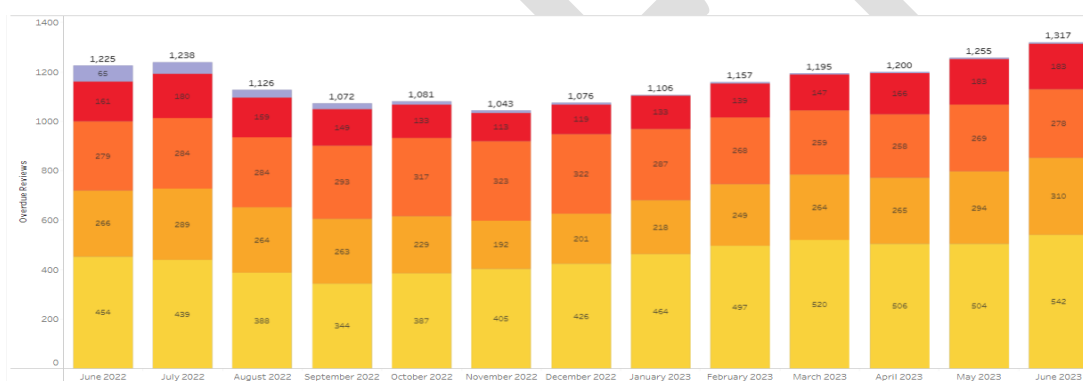


- 1.8 This compares to an average caseload of over 5500 people receiving care or social work support at any one time.
- 1.9 Whilst there has been some improvement in the last month, the average wait time for assessment is 30 days.



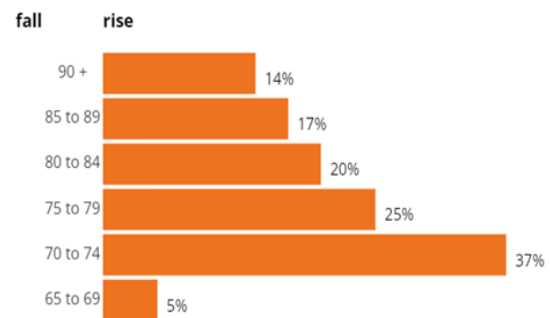
- 1.10 Many people who access our Rapid Response, Intermediate Care or Hospital services wait only a matter of hours or days, however, the median time in our community teams can be as much as 100 days. It is therefore vital we take opportunity of the government policy and its associated funding to address this issue.

- 1.11 Section 27 of the Care Act states that a local authority must “keep under review generally care and support plans”. Whilst no time scale is legally stipulated, it is expected that this review will take place at least every 12 months, as outlined in 10.42 of Care Act statutory guidance.
- 1.12 Not reviewing a care and support plan promptly risks a person receiving care that may no longer be sufficient to meet their needs, or it may be more than they require and an opportunity to release that care to be used by someone else is missed. Waiting for a care package to be reviewed also delivers poor customer service to Bury residents.
- 1.13 In the same way that waiting for a new assessment has increased since the pandemic, so too has the number of people waiting for a review or reassessment. This has been compounded by the number of people needing a review to 4000 adults increasing by over 6% in the last 2 years.
- 1.14 Bury currently has 1317 people whose annual review is overdue. Whilst the majority of these are only just overdue, 183 are over 12 months overdue which means they have not had a formal review or reassessment for at least 2 years.

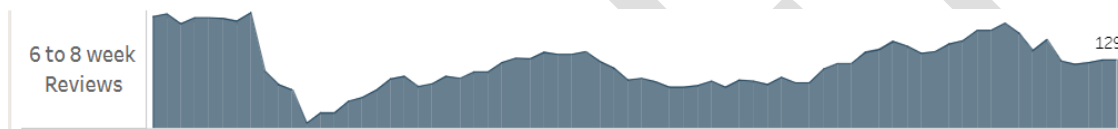


- 1.15 This does not mean that they have not had any support from adult social care as all adults can contact adult social care at any time to discuss their care and support needs and their situation is discussed and resolved promptly by a robust duty system that operates across our community teams.
- 1.16 Bury’s performance is on a par with other areas in GM and England but there is still considerable room for improvement. It is vital we take opportunity of the government policy and its associated funding to address this issue that exists now and mitigate continued future demand resulting from population change growth as illustrated here.

## Population change (%) by age group in Bury, 2011 to 2021



- 1.17 Additionally, people who have recently received a new or substantially changed package of care and support require a review of how this care is meeting their needs, with the review usually taking place 6-to-8 weeks after the new provision has started.
- 1.18 On average, across our community teams there are 150 people waiting for this type of review.



- 1.19 One final category of waits is where a person who has had an assessment of need and agreed a care and support plan waits for that care to become available.
- 1.20 Whilst capacity in the care home sector is limited, which can reduce choice, the wait for the most in demand service of domiciliary care is currently an average of only 2 days.
- 1.21 In total, at the end of June 2023, for all service types, only 18 people were waiting for their service to start, with the longest at 44 days and the median at 12 days.
- 1.22 As this wait is considered fast in comparison to many other areas, our Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund grant will not be used to address this issue. We will concentrate on reducing the waits for assessments, 6-to-8-week review and annual reviews.

## 2.0 Proposal

- 2.1 Following engagement with operational staff and managers in the department, it is proposed that Bury Council extend its reviewing team. In addition to annual reviews, the reviewing team will also take the lead on the 6-to-8-week reviews.
- 2.2 The review team is currently a team of 11 and made up as follows:

Post	Number
Manager	1.0
Experienced Social Worker	3.0
Reviewing Officer	7.0
Gross cost of team	£487,507 per annum

- 2.3 This team currently carries out ~1000 reviews/reassessments per year. To meet current demand and reduce the number of people waiting for: allocation, a 6-to-8-week review or an annual review, additional resources in this team are needed. As the majority of the reviews currently completed by the reviewing team are annual reviews, these require a reassessment which is more demanding on time.
- 2.4 Between 01/08/2022 and 01/08/2023, there were 384 initial 6–8-week reviews completed by the INT's, with a substantial number of these exceeding the 6-8-week recommended timescale. Exceeding the 6–8-week timescale increases risk of customer dependence.
- 2.5 It is proposed that the reviewing team will complete the vast majority of 6–8-week reviews within the social care system. These are usually considered to be a “light-touch” review and are usually less demanding on time resources to complete, as a full reassessment of need is not always necessary.
- 2.6 By expanding the reviewing team, this will create the opportunity to ensure that all these initial reviews are completed within the recommended 6–8-week timescale, reducing long term dependence.
- 2.7 It is proposed the team is expanded to meet this extra demand.

Post	Total Number in New Team	New Posts
Manager	1.0	
Assistant Team Manager	1.0	1.0
Experienced Social Worker	8.0	4.0
Reviewing Officer	10.0	3.0
Gross cost of team	£867,981	£380,474

### 3.0 Benefits

- 3.1 Community teams not having to complete the 6-to-8-week review releases capacity to allocate social workers to people currently waiting to be allocated for an assessment under the Care Act.
- 3.2 Removing the need for the community teams to complete the majority of 6-to-8-week reviews will ensure the numbers of people waiting to see a social worker drops.

- 3.3 Many of the 6-to-8-week reviews waiting to be completed in community teams come from the discharge of patients from intermediate care or hospital, here continuity of worker is not paramount, whereas responsiveness of review is. People being discharged from health settings can often be over prescribed care which when settled at home is often more than required. This causes unnecessary expense for the user and risks creating dependency.
- 3.4 A more responsive review in these circumstances means care packages are adjusted faster, releasing care back into the system, ensuring dependency and unnecessary costs to the user are not created and delivering a cost reduction to the authority.
- 3.5 Where continuity is paramount, the community teams will retain the six-to eight-week review.
- 3.6 An expanded reviewing team will ensure those people waiting for an annual review are able to have a review in a more timely manner. The reviewing team completing most of the community teams annual reviews releases capacity to allocate social workers to people currently waiting to be allocated for an assessment under the Care Act.
- 3.7 The majority of the initial 6–8-week reviews to be completed by the reviewing team will be ‘light touch’ and less demanding on time resources when compared to annual reviews.
- 3.8 As well as completing initial 6–8-week reviews, additional resources on the reviewing team will also support with being able to offset increasing overdue annual reviews. It is calculated that at an average of 3.9 reviews per worker per working week, 17 operational reviewing staff will be required to meet the target of no annual reviews overdue by 6 months, 12 months after team expansion.

#### **4.0 Additional benefits**

- 4.1 Additional benefits have been identified from investing in the reviewing team rather than directly in other community teams which is why this model of meeting the requirements of the Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund has been chosen.
- 4.2 Workforce Development – The reviewing team has proved itself a successful gateway to a career in social work. Recruiting staff into an unqualified role as a reviewing officer, and then providing training and then a degree apprenticeship is seeing workers progress to qualified social workers.
- 4.3 This policy is aligned to the department workforce strategy and is pivotal to ensuring the department creates sufficient social workers to meet its recruitment needs.



- 4.4 Additionally, the policy is aligned to the Council's intent to grow the skills and knowledge of its workforce. Unqualified posts in the service will be used in this way.
- 4.5 Financial Efficiencies - Within financial year 22/23, utilising strength-based practice and more timely reviews the reviewing team achieved >£1.3million in savings on existing care packages, significantly exceeding the annual target.
- 4.6 An expansion in the number of reviews that can be undertaken in this way will further reduce waste and inefficiency in the care budget that results from non-strength-based packages of care or overprescription of care not resolved by more timely review.
- 4.7 Taking into account previous financial performance of the reviewing team, it is expected that the expansion of the service will be cost neutral within 18 months ensuring continuity to provision beyond the life of the Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund policy.

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## 5.0 Funding

- 5.1 The first 2 years of operation will be funded by the Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund.
- 5.2 The annual cost will be £380,474.

## 6.0 Human Resources

- 6.1 The following posts will be created and existing and evaluated job descriptions will be used and are available on request.

Post	New Posts
Assistant Team Manager	1.0
Experienced Social Worker	4.0
Reviewing Officer	3.0

- 6.2 To ensure that the proposed positions can attract the most suitable candidates, it is recommended that the new posts are permanent rather than fixed term, as fixed term contracts may deter applications from external candidates who may currently be in permanent employment.
- 6.3 If the grant funding should end after 2 years these new posts will be absorbed into the existing service as vacant posts become available

## 7.0 Recommendation

- 7.1 To meet the government's vital target area of improvement, reducing adult social care waiting times, it is recommended that the Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund is used to create permanent positions for the following posts within the reviewing team:

Post	New Posts
Assistant Team Manager	1.0
Experienced Social Worker	4.0
Reviewing Officer	3.0