

<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Decision Type:</b> Key
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<b>Report to:</b>	Cabinet	<b>Date:</b> 11 June 2025
<b>Subject:</b>	Adult Social Care Workforce Support Programme	
<b>Report of</b>	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing	

## Summary

In November 2022 the Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund (MSIF) was announced as part of the autumn statement. The primary purpose of the fund was to support Local Authorities to make improvements to adult social care services in their area, with specific focus on building capacity and improving market sustainability.

The government considered 3 target areas of improvement that would underpin these objectives. These were:

- Increasing fee rates paid to adult social care providers.
- Increasing adult social care workforce capacity and retention
- Reducing adult social care waiting times

Of those 3 target areas, local authorities could choose one, two or all three to focus on and each were linked to specific metrics that the Department of Health and Social Care would use to monitor performance.

In 23/24, Bury Providers, Bury Commissioning Team and our Bury System Workforce Transformation Lead co-designed and developed a suite of innovative, collaborative workforce solutions to support our care providers to address their workforce challenges. These were badged as the Adult Social Care Workforce Support Programme. The Council then used a portion of its MSIF allocation to fund this support programme.

In May 2024, an extension was granted for the programme to August 2025. The programme has continued to support independent sector providers in accessing permanent care staff, improving recruitment practices in the sector as well as reducing agency spend.

Over the last several years the Community Commissioning Team have developed and rolled out a suite of measures and programmes to support providers in Bury to provide the best quality care possible. Captured in the new, overarching **Together Towards Outstanding Care** they affirm Bury's commitment to working alongside Providers in continuing driving improvements across the Borough. The Adult Social Care Provider Workforce Support Programme is fundamental to that, and its extension allowed for the development and publication of the Adult Social Care Provider Workforce Strategy. It is this strategy that outlines the future workforce challenges in the sector and how the Council aims to tackle them alongside Provider

partners. This includes the commission of a refreshed, and improved Adult Social Care Workforce Support Programme.

The new Adult Social Care Provider Workforce Support Offer will positively meet all areas of the Let's Do It! Strategy. For example, it targeted at those staff **local** to Bury, giving them access to the best support from their employers. It will support providers to be **enterprising** in their recruitment and retention processes. **Together** with staff, providers and the Local Authority, it will improve delivery of care and support the people of Bury as well as the sustainability of local providers. Finally, it will promote training and development opportunities that encourage a **strength**-based approach to care and support.

This report is looking for approval to award a 3-year contract to the Council's Local Authority trading Company, Persona via a vertical arrangement (previously Teckal) that exempts the need for a full tender under the new Procurement Regulations.

The Commissioning Team have worked closely with Persona in developing a business plan to grow the Workforce Support Programme, improving outcomes, tackling the challenges faced by providers, all at no additional cost to the current commission.

### **Recommendation(s)**

1. Cabinet to approve the award of a 3-year contract to Persona under a vertical procurement arrangement for the delivery of Bury Council Adult Social Care Workforce Support Programme for total cost of £1,089,000.

<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>
£373,000	£358,000	£358,000

### **Reasons for recommendation(s)**

2. Persona is the Council's Local Authority Trading Company for Adult Social Care. It has its own workforce of 450 and over the years has developed core strengths in social care workforce management which have been recognised within Bury and Greater Manchester. Persona was the first adult social care provider to become a Member of the GM Good Employment Charter and has won awards with GMGEC for best large employer and best for inclusion. Persona has a strong reputation for workforce management and creative approaches to recruitment. Its position as a strategic partner to the Council puts it in a unique position to play an extended role in supporting the Council in its wider strategic aims. As a partner in the IDC Persona has a remit to work as a system partner to share best practice and expertise for the benefit of Bury.
3. Persona can deliver the current service, with additional support measures for providers on top, at a reduced cost compared to the current contract. This provides best value for money for the Local Authority.

## Alternative options considered and rejected

4. A full re-tender of the service was considered but the proposal made by Persona was competitively priced and delivered a greater level of support to providers so a re-tender was not sought.

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*Department:* Health and Adult Care  
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### Context

The Community Commissioning Team have developed and rolled out a suite of measures and programmes to support providers to provide the best quality care possible in Bury. This includes:

- The Quality Assurance and Improvement Framework
- The Levels of Support Framework
- Adult Social Care Provider Workforce Strategy
- Adult Social Care Provider Workforce Support Offer

This support and approach is now captured in the new, overarching **Together Towards Outstanding Care** strategy. This outlines the Council's commitment to working together with providers and communities to drive continuous improvement in the services it commissions. The strategy also affirms the Council's approach to engaging with and involving people who use services to determine what quality care looks like.

### Background

The Independent Provider Sector in Bury is diverse with 93 providers ranging from large national care providers to small local charities. Each provider is a separate employing organisation with its own employment terms and conditions, employing approximately a total of 4,600 staff. This workforce provides care and support to people in various settings with a range of support needs including:

- 49 Care home providers (nursing and residential),
- 24 Care at home providers
- 18 Supported living providers

Having the right level of workforce capacity and capabilities in this element of the system is crucial to ensure people are supported in the right place at the right time.

The Council commissions services from many of these providers and has a vested interest in ensuring that providers can operate with a workforce that can provide high quality care and support. Not all providers have the capacity to have a strong workforce

management infrastructure and need some support to enable them to operate as a good employer. There are also common issues which will arise across several providers where a shared support offer can be beneficial and provide the best value. Workforce challenges are set to become more pronounced in the coming months and years as the Employment Rights Bill is implemented. All of these factors require a strategic approach to cross-sector workforce planning and management.

### **Current offer**

Currently, the Council commissions a provider to deliver its workforce support offer that includes:

### **Centralised Permanent Recruitment Function**

A central recruitment team was established that providers could share all open, care and support vacancies with. The team advertised, screened and signposted relevant candidates into providers ready to interview.

### **BURY FLEX: A Centralised Shared Workforce Function**

A shared workforce initiative was built and piloted that allowed providers in Bury access to a “ready to work” bank of flexible workers.

The criteria for the Flex Workforce was for applicants to have 9 months or more UK experience in a care and support position and be fully compliant with UK, Right to Work legislation and CQC Regulation 19: Fit and better persons employed.

The Flex Recruitment Team would process all applications, compliance and training requirements. Once a worker was “ready to work” the workforce provider would facilitate the introduction into contractual casual employment, directly to each provider. Each provider was then responsible for payroll and working time directive requirements.

### **Care Development Programme**

The “**Bury Workforce Strategy Grow Programme**” has the workforce provider working alongside Bury College, Health and Social Care educational departments to streamline the transitioning of Health and Social Care students into Burys’ Social Care providers for both courses aligned, work experience placements and the opportunity to gain paid employment placements.

Bury Integrated Care Partnership (BICP) is a united group including social workers, nurses, GPs, hospital staff, the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector, as well as independent patient champion Healthwatch. The BICP Workforce Transformation Lead, alongside the workforce provider supported the development of a **central access point for workforce resources**. This vital central access allows everyone in the Health and Social Care in Bury to access information that can support workforce sustainability including Equality Diversity and Inclusion and Wellbeing resources. It also provides a destination to promote workforce training and development, funded initiatives such as Bury Flex and the central recruitment support.

Alongside the Commissioning Team, and as part of the Quality Assurance and Improvement Framework, we launched a **Registered Manager Leadership Development Programme**. The work by the Commissioning Team, including through Quality Assurance Reviews, has identified the lack of development opportunities and succession planning for those staff newly into Registered Manager roles is posing a risk to quality of services in Bury. A **free development programme** has been offered to those suitable to ensure they have the skills to prepare them for a managerial role.

The current offer costs **£381,000 per year**.

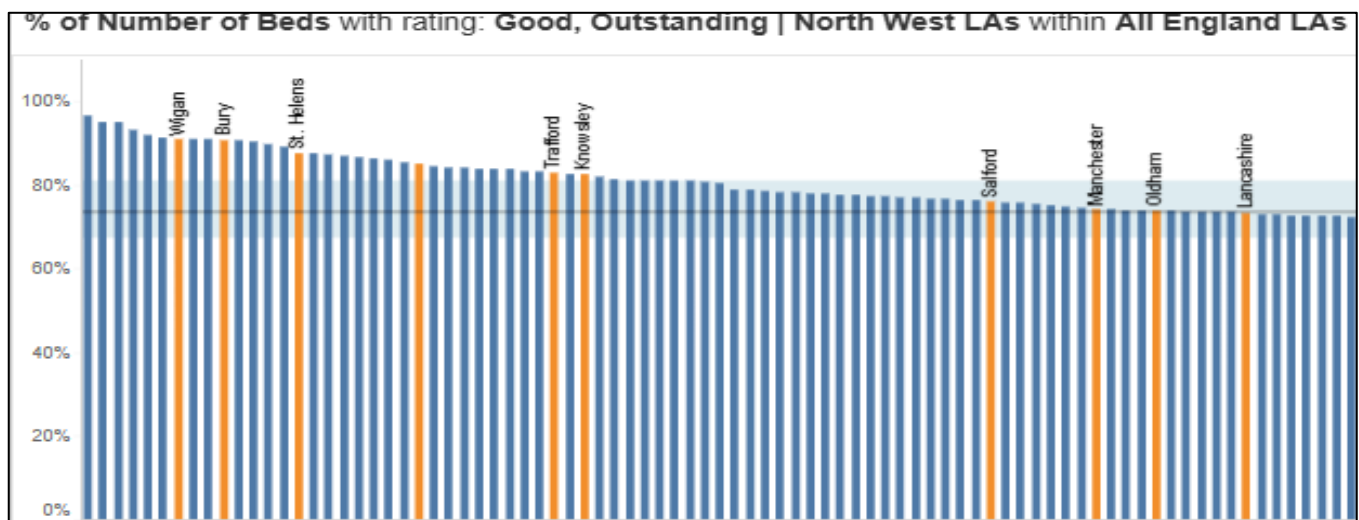
## Impact

Since the introduction of the **Adult Social Care Workforce Support Programme** there has been:

- **Decrease** in vacancy rate
- **Decrease** in leaver rate
- **Increase** in number of staff working in Adult Social Care in Bury

Out of all Local Authorities in England, Bury is now:

- **Tenth** in percentage of beds in Good and Outstanding CQC rated Care Homes.
- **90.9%** of Care Homes are rated Good or Outstanding
- **No** Care at Home providers rated Inadequate
- **No** Supported Living providers rated Inadequate



The **Centralised Permanent Recruitment Function** has averaged approximately **30** open vacancies a month spanning a wide range of positions, skill types and shift requirements.

The recruitment team worked to clear performance indicators that ensured candidates meet expectations, attended interviews and are processed to job offerings.

The key achievements by the team in the last 12 months were;

- Permanent employment offers for over **75 people**.
- **1 in 2** people that have interviewed for open vacancies have secured an offer.
- 84% have accepted the offer and started employment.
- 30% of applicants offered have been new to the social care sector.
- 70% of people offered, already have over 2 years' experience in sector.
- All offers of employment have been within a **5-mile radius of Bury**.

**BURY FLEX: A Centralised Shared Workforce Function** has:

- *Flexed* to meet the needs of care skills and skills provision required by providers.
- *Flexed* to fill the utilisation gaps caused by sickness, holidays and winter pressures.
- *Flexed* to match the needs of the workforce.

Feedback from many smaller providers was that they did not have the ability to add supernumerary employees to an already stretched financial commitments and this service “levels up” access to additional staffing needs.

Flex enabled employees of the care sector to build “portfolio careers” and facilitated the ability to work across a diverse range of services, enhancing skills and sharing knowledge and capability with others. Flex was and is about ensuring employees remain working in sector or have the social care sector as a secondary employment opportunity.

The Flex team also run consistent wellbeing and performance checks to ensure both worker and provider are receiving the best service possible.

During the initial pilot phase Bury Flex was able to offer over **900 extra hours** into sector and each worker currently offers an average of 18 additional hours per week.

The Local Government Association were looking for outstanding examples of person centred approaches to recruitment and included Bury Flex as a case study earlier this year: [Bury Council, Bury Integrated Care Partnership and UTS: Working collaboratively with system partners and adopting a person-centred approach to recruitment | Local Government Association](#)

## Case Study

Supporting Lifestyle, Home Care Services with Bury Flex

A family-run organisation providing domiciliary care to the Northwest.  
Supporting adults with a variety of care needs. Contact [leanne@homecarebury.co.uk](mailto:leanne@homecarebury.co.uk)

### Challenges

- Recruitment is EXTREMELY tough into community as the provision requires 80% females and drivers or people happy to do long walking shifts both early in the morning and late into the evenings.
- Gaps of 400+ hours per week across Bury.
- Due to 4 closing services an additional 1000+ hours required per week.
- Cost of compliance and training for candidates not comfortable in home care provision.

### Impact of Bury Flex

- Filled all emergency gaps in workforce.
- Works alongside perm hiring and temporary and fully flexible employees.
- Access to complex skills.
- Removed need to hire agency workers who NEVER meet the criteria.
- Flex hires have become sponsored perm hires.
- Consistently trained and supported by Lifestyle and Flex team.

### Testimonial

*The Bury Flex workers are simply fantastic, they are clearly screened and selected well. We have never had to refuse a worker or not invited them back into a further shift. All can provide great care and have the competencies and communication skills to excel.*

*We have recently sponsored 2 to come FT with us and are keen to hire more flex workers to support our imminent increase in care requirements.*

Logos: Bury Council, Bury Integrated Care Partnership, Lifestyle Homecare, BURY FLEX

It is clear that the offer has been incredibly successful, and some elements have received great interest at GM and on a national basis. It has proved that putting resource into supporting the sector around workforce issues can have a positive impact. There is no doubting this has provided solid foundations from which to build the enhanced workforce support offer which is now needed to take the sector forward over the coming years.

What is required from a workforce support offer is detailed in the Adult Social Care Independent Provider Workforce Strategy 2025-27. This describes a number of priorities and areas for action for the coming years under the headings of **Attract and Retain, Transform and Train**.

### Proposed enhanced Adult Social Care Provider Workforce Support Offer

This proposal is for a Workforce Support Offer to be provided by Persona to support delivery of the Independent Provider Workforce Strategy. It is proposed that this is a 3-year contract allowing time to establish a robust offer, deliver the initial aims of the Strategy and engage with providers to regularly refresh the strategy and associated action plan. This proposal is designed to support the delivery of all areas of the strategy and offers tailormade local solutions in all areas.

# Workforce Hub

Attract and Retain	Transform	Train
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Centralised recruitment support</li> <li>•Co-ordination of 'Be the difference' campaign</li> <li>•Social care career academy</li> <li>•Early careers promotion and support</li> <li>•Student placement, work experience and volunteer co-ordination</li> <li>•Influencer program</li> <li>•Career progression via talent pool promotion and management</li> <li>•Roll out of Care Friends App</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Delivery of Bury Flex</li> <li>•Improvement of agency management</li> <li>•Delivery of Provider Excellence Program</li> <li>•Social Care Career Academy</li> <li>•Training opportunities</li> <li>•Improved uptake of ASC-WDS</li> <li>•Improved engagement with GMGEC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Deliver leadership training</li> <li>•Develop a talent pool to support career progression</li> <li>•Develop career pathways from early careers right through</li> </ul>

The workforce hub will be a dedicated team who will work closely to build relationships with independent sector providers to better understand their specific workforce challenges and promote the solutions available via the workforce hub.

Their engagement with providers will provide essential information to inform the year 2 strategy action plan and to enable the strategy to be regularly refreshed and updated. The key features of the delivery model are as follows:

## Attract and Retain

### 1. **Centralised Recruitment Support**

The team will implement systems to enable any provider to advertise a role through the workforce hub. This will make the recruitment process less onerous for providers and will give a more consistent candidate experience, reducing the likelihood of people dropping out of the process because of frustrations or delays in recruitment processes. The system will allow the workforce hub team to advertise the role on behalf of the provider using their logo and key information/documentation on the advert. The advert will be posted to a range of established and proven jobs boards as well as the Social Care Career Academy website. They will then receive all enquiries for the roles and complete initial screening of candidates before putting those who meet screening requirements through to the provider for interview. They will monitor all recruitment through the workforce hub to keep track of timescales at each stage and will be able to have oversight to retain suitable but unsuccessful candidates in a talent pool as a proactive means of filling future roles.

### 2. **Co-ordination of the Be the Difference campaign**

The team will produce comms and marketing materials to support the *Be the Difference* campaign. They will also host regular careers events under this banner, co-produced with the Influencers and people with lived experience, and

will have access to a branded information vehicle to take out into the local community and events to promote jobs and careers in social care. They will run an annual *Be the Difference* staff awards event for all staff and volunteers within social care to celebrate good practice, recognise the workforce and provide a focal point for media promotion of working in the sector.

### **3. Social Care Career Academy**

The workforce hub will be branded to candidates as a Social Care Career Academy. This will be a one-stop-shop for people looking to volunteer, work, or learn in social care. The hub will work in partnership with key stakeholders to establish a website where all centralised recruitment jobs will be advertised and information about career pathways and learning opportunities can be hosted.

### **4. Early careers promotion**

The workforce hub team will proactively work with schools and colleges to attend careers events to promote the roles and opportunities available. They will act as Enterprise Advisors in local high schools, and they will also work proactively with providers to facilitate workplace insight sessions such as workplace safaris. This will ensure there is a consistent approach to early careers and support providers to deliver positive sessions for students. The team will also seek to include people with lived experience of care in sessions wherever this is appropriate.

### **5. Student placement, work experience and volunteer co-ordination**

The workforce hub team will act as key liaison with local colleges and will engage providers in providing work experience and work placements to a consistent standard. This co-ordination will reduce the administrative burden on both the colleges and the providers and will offer an improved quality of placement and therefore student experience. They will seek to enter students who have had a placement or work experience into an early careers talent pool with the aim of ensuring that as many as possible are proactively supported into employment in the sector. They'll provide mentoring and support to students to enable them to attain their preferred job role.

### **6. Influencer Program**

The team will set up and co-ordinate an Influencer program which will support the early careers work and the *Be the Difference* campaign. Existing staff working in social care across a range of providers will be incentivized to become part of a pool who can go out and about to careers events promoting the role. People with lived experience of social care will also be encouraged to consider being part of the Influencer program.

### **7. Talent pools**

The team will oversee all candidates for roles advertised via the central recruitment function and all students and volunteer placements. They will encourage everyone who comes through the Social Care Career Academy to

join a specific talent pool based on their skills and aspirations. Talent pools will be used to support people to learn and develop and to target specific job roles and opportunities that may arise. For example, a talent pool could be established for aspiring first line managers. People in the talent pool could be signposted to additional learning and development opportunities that could support their career progression. When a first line supervisor role comes available the talent pool could be approached in the first instance to see if there is a suitable applicant available.

#### **8. *Care Friends App***

The team will have access to up to 2000 Care Friends App licenses. Care Friends App is an app which makes it easy for the existing workforce to share job opportunities with their networks and earn rewards in return. It is an enhanced version of refer a friend which has been proven to have a significant positive impact on recruitment in social care. The 2000 licenses could be rolled out on an ongoing basis to providers or based on year 1 funding for the provider to trial the system on the basis that if they wish to continue beyond year 1, they then fund it themselves and other providers can then benefit from the available licenses.

#### **9. *Survey Co-ordination***

The team will undertake periodic surveys in order to gather key information from the independent sector workforce on key themes at a local level. They will then benchmark this back against regional and national data and use the insights to inform the future strategy and action plan.

### **Transform**

#### **1. *Bury Flex***

The workforce hub team will continue to work with the current workforce provider to operate the Bury Flex offer, using the centralised recruitment approach to create a talent pool of flexible, experienced workers. These workers will have recruitment checks undertaken, and essential training in place to be ready for work and will be made available to independent providers as a means of covering rota gaps without the need to go to an agency. The team will review how Bury Flex is working and identify options for the future of the scheme.

#### **2. *Agency Management***

In addition to the Bury Flex offer, the team will liaise with providers to understand the extent of agency usage and the challenges associated with this. They will consider a range of options to improve the approach to agency usage, including consideration of a supply chain management solution.

#### **3. *Provider Excellence Program***

The workforce hub team will liaise with providers and commissioners to identify the key themes arising from the Commissioning Team Quality Assurance Reviews and the wider operating context. They will use this information to agree the priority areas for improvement. These will form the basis of a Provider Excellence Program. The program will comprise a mixture of quarterly face to face learning events and on-line resources which the team will design and deliver.

#### **4. *Training opportunities***

There are a number of updates, training resources, networks and events provided by Skills for Care, GMCA, NHS-GM, NW ADASS, CQC and legal firms to mention a few. It can be hard to engage in all of this and some smaller providers may find it hard to release capacity to attend. The Team will horizon scan to create a one-stop-shop of information so that providers can have one place to look to find out what's coming up and what events and resources could be beneficial to them. They will also attend events and provide the materials or summaries from these in a central place that all providers can access. In addition, they will provide training and support to providers on specific workforce-related topics e.g. inclusive recruitment.

#### **5. *Improved uptake of ASC-WDS***

A key focus of the team will be to identify which providers are engaging with ASC-WDS, what the barriers are to engagement, and to then work with providers to increase uptake. The current uptake of 48.5% (January 2025), falls below the GM average of 52.5% and well below the best performer, Blackpool (85.4%). The team will seek to understand how others have improved performance and to work in collaboration with Skills for Care colleagues to improve uptake against targets agreed with commissioners.

#### **6. *Improved engagement with GMGEC***

Increasing the number of providers who are members or supporters of the GM Good Employment Charter is essential to achieving consistently high standards of employment across the sector. Attraction and retention will be improved whereas many employers as possible are perceived to be 'good' employers. The team will work with providers to understand barriers to signing up as a supporter and to encourage and support providers to take this step. They will also support providers on their GMGEC journey by sharing best practice and creating a community of practice.

### **Train**

#### **1. *Leadership training***

The team will work with providers and commissioners specifically to understand any development needs in respect of leaders and managers. They will provide access to a range of resources to support leadership learning and will commission a minimum of 1 cohort of more formal leadership training per year. They will also provide access to coaching/mentoring on a group/individual basis for new Registered Managers or those identified as needing additional support.

## **2. Career pathways**

The team will work across providers to identify great examples of career pathways from the Influencers and beyond. They will capture these career pathways as case studies and examples via video and narrative and will use these on the Care Academy website and at careers events. They will also be linking in with the government Care Worker Pathways.

## **Funding Required**

To deliver the extensive program of workforce support outlined above the following budget would be required:

<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>
£373,000	£358,000	£358,000

## **Outcomes and Impact**

The outcomes would be developed between the Commissioning Team and Persona but are likely to include:

- Improved number of applicants for roles
- Improved quality of applicants for roles
- Reduction in vacancies
- Reduction in drop-out during recruitment process
- Improved candidate experience
- Increase in Bury Flex usage
- Reduction in agency usage
- Reduction in agency cost
- Improved quality of services
- Increased uptake of ASC-WDS
- Increased uptake of GMGEC

## **Governance**

To govern this work the workforce hub will establish a Provider Steering Group. This group will oversee progress against the agreed workplan and will provide a regular report back to the IDC Strategic Workforce Group. Commissioners will receive regular reports in respect of service performance and outcomes and an annual report reviewing performance and proposing an action plan for the following year.

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## **Links with the Corporate Priorities:**

The new Adult Social Care Provider Workforce Support Offer will positively meet all areas of the Let's Do It! Strategy

**Local:** Support those staff who live and work in Bury to get the best support from their employers and access roles that meet their needs and allow them to develop in their careers.

**Enterprise:** Support providers based in Bury with their recruitment practices as well as supporting their ongoing sustainability and ability to meet the needs of vulnerable people in the Borough

**Together:** Improve the delivery of care and support, sustainability and sufficiency of care in partnership with staff and providers.

**Strengths:** Promoting training and development opportunities that encourage strength-based approaches to care and support of the people of Bury.

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### Equality Impact and Considerations:

*Please provide an explanation of the outcome(s) of an initial or full EIA and make **specific reference regarding the protected characteristic of Looked After Children**. Intranet link to EIA documents is [here](#).*

5. A full EIA has been completed identifying potential impacts on specific characteristics. The programme recognises the importance of inclusive best practice and actions within the programme address disadvantages and barriers people with different protected characteristics experience. All impacts are therefore neutral or positive.

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### Environmental Impact and Considerations:

*Please provide an explanation of the Environmental impact of this decision. Please include the impact on both **Carbon emissions** (contact [climate@bury.gov.uk](mailto:climate@bury.gov.uk) for advice) and **Biodiversity** (contact [c.m.wilkinson@bury.gov.uk](mailto:c.m.wilkinson@bury.gov.uk) for advice)*

6. Aspects of the workforce support programme will allow potential staff to enjoy more flexible employment including those working in domiciliary care being able to walk to care visits rather than use a vehicle.

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### Assessment and Mitigation of Risk:

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
Providers do not engage with the offer resulting in poor outcomes, outputs and return on investment	Persona to take proactive approach in contacting and working with providers. Making the offer readily visible and working alongside Commissioning Team.

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### Legal Implications:

7. As noted above, Persona is a wholly owned company of the Council, set up under what were known as Teckal rules formalised within the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. The Teckal exemption is known as a vertical arrangement under the Procurement Act 2023 and it allows the Council to make a direct award to Persona due to its status.
8. Notwithstanding the wholly owned nature of Persona, it is a separate legal entity to the Council and the parties should enter into a formal contractual arrangement in the usual way.
9. Section 5, Care Act 2014 requires local authorities to promote the efficient and effective operation of a market in services for meeting care and support needs with a view to ensuring variety of providers providing a variety of services and efficient information to enable a well informed decision about how a person wishing to access services can meet those needs. The MSIF was introduced to support the fulfilment of this duty.

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### **Financial Implications:**

*To be completed by the Council's Section 151 Officer.*

10. This investment is fully funded by the Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund (MSIF). The MSIF is recurrent funding and the investment requires no additional cost to the HAC Directorate revenue budget.
11. As part of the monthly budget monitoring cycle, Finance and HAC Directorate commissioning team will track the expenditure linked to the proposals set out in this report ensuring that all expenditure aligns to the funding provided.
12. Any financial risks/pressures identified will be highlighted to the Director of Adult Social Services as part of the monthly budget monitoring cycle whereby an action plan will be deployed to mitigate any financial risks/ pressures

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### **Appendices:**

Bury Council Adult Social Care Independent Provider Workforce Strategy

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### **Background papers:**

*Please list any background documents to this report and include a hyperlink where possible.*

**Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.**

Term	Meaning

