

OFFICER DELEGATION SCHEME RECORD OF DECISION

Date:	19 th February 2026	Ref No:	2340
Responsible Officers:			
Matt Logan – Strategic Lead Natalie Bray - Commissioning Manager Hamaira Ashraf-Haroon – Commissioning and Quality Assurance Officer			
Title/Subject matter:			
Commissioning Bury Care Academy (Persona) to employ Experts by Experience to carry out quality checks of Learning Disability Supported Living Services as part of the Commissioning Teams overarching Together Towards Outstanding Care Strategy.			
Budget/Strategy/Policy/Compliance:			
(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		
Is publication still required? (see guidance)	Yes		

Introduction

The Community Commissioning Team have produced an overarching strategy, detailing their approach to supporting providers to deliver the best quality care. The **Together Towards Outstanding Care** strategy outlines Bury Council's commitment to continually working with providers, customers and partners to ensure the delivery of high-quality, person-centred care within the borough's commissioned providers.

This paper outlines how this will be turned into reality, with a team of Quality Checkers, made up of fully paid Experts by Experience, becoming an integral part of the quality assurance process of the Council; working alongside officers to quality check Learning Disability services and ensure people's control choice and dignity is respected.

Background

Quality Assurance Reviews are currently conducted by Commissioning and Quality Assurance Officers and while this process ensures compliance and identifies areas for improvement, there is recognition that it may not fully capture the nuances of the lived experience of the people receiving services.

Alongside voluntary sector partner, Bury People First, the Council carried out an engagement event with people with learning disabilities and autism. The aim was to identify what was important to them in the arrangement and delivery of their support and start to develop the mechanism to check that commissioned providers are meeting those requirements. The feedback gathered revealed people's significant concerns:

- Limited control over, and involvement in, the support planning processes.
- Challenges in effectively communicating their needs and preferences to professionals.
- Making decision about who supports them and their environment

Quotes from the event

- *"Staff don't always listen to what I want, it's what they want"*
- *"It's my life and I should make the decisions"*
- *"People need to listen to what we say in the way we say it"*
- *"I have to be in my pyjamas by 6pm so staff can do the washing. I don't want to be in my pyjamas at that time. I should be allowed to change whenever I want to"*

Further feedback has been sought via surveys and through the Quality Assurance reviews with 176 responses received many of whom mirrored the responses from the Engagement Session. Indeed, analysis of feedback themes indicates being treated with dignity and respect was top in concerns of customers.

We committed to working alongside people who use services to strengthen the customer voice; something essential for improving the quality and relevance of our services. This resulted in the establishment of the Experts by Experience Programme and Steering Group.

Made up of members of the Community Commissioning Team and people with lived experience, the Experts by Experience Steering Group coproduced a new, innovative quality checking process. Developed collaboratively from the outset, the approach ensures that people who draw on care and support help shape how quality is defined, measured, and improved. Led by the Experts, the group plays an integral role in the Council's Quality Assurance process; visiting supported living services, speaking directly with people who receive care, and ensuring that what matters most to them is recognised, acted upon, and embedded in practice. Bespoke training was provided to all Experts to equip them for this role, and the coproduced quality checking model was successfully piloted with partners at

Persona and Outreach Residential Services, demonstrating the strength and value of genuine partnership working.

Involving Experts by Experience in Quality Assurance can ensure that the "LETS DO IT" Strategy is delivered in a way that is truly responsive to the needs of Bury residents. This will lead to more effective, person-centred, and high-quality services across the borough.

Involving experts in quality assurance and service design ensures services meet community needs and supports with identifying **local** improvements missed by current quality assurance methods. The Experts will also offer new perspectives on what works well and what could be improved, based on their experiences. This will enable them to recommend practical, innovative and **enterprising** improvements and solutions.

In line with the "Working **Together**" principle, involving Experts by Experience will also ensure our Quality Assurance process engages with people in ways that suit them and ensuring all voices are heard and valued encouraging joint improvement

We are also clear that the training and development opportunities for the Experts will encourage **strength**-based approaches to care and support.

Outcomes

The outcomes of the Experts by Experience programme have been developed collaboratively with stakeholders:

- Improved service user satisfaction and outcomes.
- Improvements in service quality and person-centred care
- A more collaborative and inclusive approach to service design and delivery.

Objectives

- To embed the voice of lived experience in the Quality Assurance process.
- To promote person-centred care and support.
- To drive continuous improvement in service delivery.
- To empower individuals with lived experience.
- To embed co-production by employing people with lived experience as core contributors to Quality Assurance.
- To strengthen accuracy of quality checks through authentic, user-led insight gathered during service visits.
- To amplify resident voice by ensuring feedback from people receiving care directly shapes service improvements.
- To increase accountability and transparency in QA decision-making through independent lived-experience involvement.

- To identify risks and good practice earlier using insights not captured by traditional audits.
- To deliver social value by creating meaningful employment and skills-development opportunities for people with lived experience.
- To champion strength-based commissioning that builds on community, provider, and individual strengths to enable growth and independence
- To encourage organisations to value community and environmental resources, such as informal support networks, community resources and peer support groups.
- To use community, provider, and individual strengths to shape commissioning that empowers people and reduces dependency

Impact

Involving Experts by Experience aligns with best practice in social care, emphasising the importance of co-production and active participation in service design and review of services. By incorporating the feedback and insights of Experts by Experience within the Quality Assurance process we can deliver more responsive and effective services that better meet the needs and preferences of service users and improve overall outcomes.

Services will be better tailored to meet the needs and preferences of individuals ensuring that they are designed and delivered in a way that respects their autonomy, dignity and choices. By involving those who need care services in the Quality Assurance process, customer satisfaction is likely to increase

The programme will empower individuals with lived experience by actively involving them in reviewing and improving services, promoting inclusion and ensuring their voices are heard in the commissioning process.

Delivery Proposals

With the success of the pilot, the Commissioning Team set out to look at how the Experts by Experience Quality Checking Programme could be delivered. It was felt that the Commissioning Team did not currently have the capacity to line manage up to 4 new members of staff and provide the different levels of support to carry out the reviews, that the Experts might need. To ensure the programme was a success it was also felt that the team did not have requisite skill to support people with lived experience to carry out their role. Alternatives were sought and are outlined below:

Persona

Bury Council is fortunate in that it has Local Authority Trading Company in Persona, that are already a 'Good' rated provider of Learning Disability Support Living Services, support people with Learning Disabilities in their day services, are actively engaged in employing and supporting people with a learning disability into paid employment and are willing to work with the Council to develop innovative approaches. The Commissioning Team and Experts, worked alongside

Persona to pilot the Quality Checking approach and after this had been concluded they were invited to submit a proposal of how they could manage the programme and support the Experts permanently.

Their full proposal is attached as Appendix 1, however, in summary:

Recruitment

- Development of recruitment comms: advertising through Persona's usual routes as well as external via Bury People first, BEST, Ingeus.
- Hosting and delivering a recruitment day: the day will be designed to be accessible, creative with fun activities, observations and assessments. Focusing more on people's skills around holding an informal conversation and gathering information as well as feeding back. The activities undertaken at the recruitment day will focus on drawing these things out of the candidates.
- They will design accessible recruitment paperwork: examples of easy read and more simplified job descriptions and application forms are included in the full proposal.
- They will adapt their recruitment process at Persona and create an accessible onboarding process supported by their Workforce team and Employment Pathways Team. After which, their training and induction process as detailed below will begin.

Induction and Training

- Develop a purpose-built induction process which will include:
 - 'How to be a Quality Checker' training sessions
 - Mandatory training that will be required
 - Intro to Persona and their values
- There will be an element of inducting someone into the role and helping them gain an understanding of what a Quality Checker does. They will be following the fidelity model of Supported Employment for individuals; the place and train model. Helping people to learn the role by supporting them to undertake the role. With support fading away as their independence, knowledge and skills grow. All their Job Coaches are trained in 'Training in Systematic Instruction (TSI)' and therefore will be able to breakdown the role into separate tasks to teach and train.

Job Coach Support Element

All casual Quality Checkers will have support and access to our Persona Employment Pathways team (team of 3) who will support the induction, training and ongoing development of the newly recruited Quality Checkers, working beside Bury Councils Quality team.

A job coach will provide a package of support for the lifetime of the project. Support will be delivered as and when needed in line with quality checks, to be decided with Bury Council. Support will be provided in one of three levels; low, medium and high. The job coach will meet with everyone prior to induction and assess which level of support they will require within the role.

This level of support will be reviewed ongoing between the employee, job coach and Bury Council and if deemed too much or too little support is being provided the package of support can change.

Support can consist of (depending on need).

- Job Coach 1:1 support during training and induction process
- 1:1 In-work support during service visits/quality checks
- Support to individuals to summarise the outcomes and feedback from the quality checks in a method that is suitable for them – e.g. written, verbal, recorded
- Travel training where appropriate or support to develop the options for travelling to and from service visits
- Promoting independence at all stages
- Debriefing post service visit with each quality checker – what's working/what's not
- Job coach support during the supervision process – ensuring Persona processes for supervision are made more accessible with Job Coach guidance
- Support with timesheets, understanding payroll, additional training
- Collaborating with the individuals and the council to identify and embed any creative tools and resources to ensure sustainability and produce a reduction in direct job coach support by individuals becoming more independent in their roles – which will work towards reducing the cost to the council for the overarching ongoing support (to be agreed on an individual basis)
- Developing a buddy system internally within the Council Commissioning and Quality Assurance Officer; identifying the best people to buddy up with each Quality Checker to offer ongoing support where needed as the Job Coach fades away. This would be provided in any external place of work, and the job coaches will be on hand to step up support if/where needed
- Job Coaches will begin to fade away and step back as people's individual skills develop, but the overarching line management will continue and working with the Commissioning Team will provide the opportunity to regularly review and identify any need for job coach support to step up and step down.

Overarching Line Management

- Line management of all casual Quality Checkers and job coaches who are supporting including supervisions, annual appraisals and regular informal catch ups
- Processes for timesheets, pay, IT support and workforce support
- Liaising with the council to arrange dates for work and organising the casual Quality Checkers to attend, ensuring travel and expenses are considered and costs covered
- Dealing with any performance management concerns and gathering feedback from Bury Council to feed into our employees training and development plans.

Cost

Persona proposes an hourly rate to the council of **£39.50**. This hourly rate includes all costs, including Real Living Wage hourly rate for the Quality Checkers, recruitment, induction and training costs, along with ongoing Job Coach support.

The number of hours of support everyone will require will depend on their assessed level of need at the point of recruitment. But for all 4 individuals,

Persona have assumed that it will not exceed the 700 hours per annum suggested by the pilot. Therefore, the total cost per annum to recruit, oversee and support 4 individuals with Lived Experience into casual Quality Checker roles to work as in-reach for Bury Council will not exceed **£27,650 p.a.** but could potentially be lower depending on level of support needed.

The cost for this will be met through the DASS held Development Fund so is affordable, and is forecast as part of M3.

Benefits

- Persona have experience of recruiting, training and supporting people with lived experience and currently employ people to quality check their own services.
- Whole programme offer; recruitment, training, support and line management. Limited impact on capacity of Commissioning Team.
- Utilising Council LATCo for the reason why it was developed; to support in areas of demand for the Council and allow for innovative approaches.
- Support can be flex up/down depending on need, reducing long term cost

Risks

- Provider perception: Persona is both a service provider and proposed delivery body for the Quality Checkers. This dual role may compromise, or be perceived to compromise, the independence and integrity of Quality Assurance activity
- Perception of conflict of interest when the Experts have to quality check Persona services
- There is a risk that the core purpose of the quality checking and the principles of co production and co delivery established during the pilot could be diluted or lost

BuryEST

Bury Council also have an internal service, specifically commissioned to support people into paid employment and provided on site support to maintain that role. They were also invited to submit a proposal which is included in Appendix 2 and summarised below:

Options	Description	Key Benefits	Cost per employee
Option 1	Recruitment Journey and In-Work Support for Non-Bury EST Customers (No Management Responsibilities)	Enhances diversity and accessibility; transparent cost structure	£2,422.75 After the first year the ongoing costs will be on a consultancy fees basis to cover training costs
Option 1a	Recruitment Journey and In-Work Support for Existing Bury EST Customers (No	Cost-neutral for the Council; enhances diversity and accessibility;	£0 After the first year the ongoing costs will be on a consultancy fees basis to cover training costs

	Management Responsibilities)	transparent cost structure.	
Option 2	Recruitment Journey and In-Work Support with Management Responsibilities (Non-Bury EST Customers)	Management support; predictable annual costs	£2,983.75 After first year £1,331 + any additional consultancy fees to cover training costs
Option 2a	Recruitment journey and in-Work Support with Management Responsibilities (Bury EST Customers)	Management support; predictable annual costs	£561 After the first year £1,331 + any additional consultancy fees to cover training costs
Option 3	Bespoke Combination	Customisable to specific requirements; balances cost-efficiency with support intensity	Any combination of the above

BuryEST have recommended Option 1 as this offers the reassurance of a Supported Employment service, offering ongoing support to the new employees, embedding them into the workplace and aligns with the Council's inclusive values, creating a diverse workforce. It also follows the nationally recognised Supported Employment model. This would require a member of the Commissioning Team to provide Line Management Support.

The annual cost for 4 Experts by Experience would therefore include their salary of 700 hours x £12.60 RLW (plus 20% oncosts) = £10,584 plus £2,422.75 per Expert. Total cost of the BuryEST proposal is therefore: **£20,275**

Benefits

- BuryEST have been specifically established to support in this area and have the experience of recruiting, training and supporting people with lived experience.
- Lower annual cost compared to Persona.
- Provider Perception; Experts are employed by and work for the Council.
- The Commissioning Team Line Management Support will ensure that the Experts by Experience are fully integrated and recognised as valued members of the team

Risks

- Not whole programme offer; while they would recruit, train and provide on-site support; line management of the Experts would have to be delivered by the Commissioning Team. This would impact on the capacity of staff/s.

- While they have experience in supporting people into employment and on-site support; they do not have experience of supporting quality checking of services and what that entails. Persona already do this for their internal services.

Recommendation(s)

Approval to commission Bury Care Academy (Persona) to deliver the Experts by Experience Quality Checking Programme. They have the necessary experience of recruiting and supporting people with lived experience in quality checking supported living services. They will manage the whole process including line management, reducing the impact on Commissioning Team capacity.

Cost is **£27,650 p.a.** but could potentially be lower depending on level of support needed.

Governance

To ensure effective governance the current Experts By Experience Steering Group will oversee the implementation and ongoing development, ensuring alignment with strategic objectives. Changes in Supported Living quality assurance outcomes will be identified in the Provider Performance Management Meetings and will be reported to Commissioning Leadership Meeting via updates to the overarching team improvement plan and quarterly State of the Market report.

Appendix 1

Persona proposal



Bury Council -
Persona Quality Che

Appendix 1

BuryEST proposal



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Approval to recruit to newly created vacancies

NB: Chief Officer graded roles require AD HR and AD Finance approval

Decision made by:

Signature:

Date:

Executive Director:		22 July 2026
Advised by HR Business Partner	NA	
Advised by Finance Business Partner	Nikki Wood-Hill	22.07.26
Lead Member (for noting)		20 August 2026
Chief Officer graded roles: Assistant Director of HR	NA	
Chief Officer graded roles: Advised by Assistant Director Finance / Chief Accountant	NA	
Member Consulted (only if applicable) <i>[see note 4 below]</i>		
Notes 1. In most cases a single signature is required in accordance with the Table below. 2. The form must be published if expenditure is over £100K. However, this must be after all the required contract documentation has been completed. This is to avoid publishing exempt confidential information. 3. A report to Cabinet must be made if expenditure is over £500K. 4. In a small number of cases in accordance with the requirements of the Officer Delegation Scheme, consultation is required from the appropriate Cabinet Member who must sign the form to confirm that they have been consulted and that they agree with the proposed action. Please refer to the Guidance. 5. This form must not be used for urgent decisions. 6. Where there is any doubt officers should always err on side of caution and seek advice from Democratic Services, the Monitoring Officer or Corporate Procurement where applicable.		

EXPENDITURE APPROVAL TABLE

Approval Limit	Approval By
Over £500,000	Cabinet
Over £250,000 to £500,000	Chief Executive
Over £100,000 to £250,000	Executive Director
Over £50,000 to £100,000	Director/Assistant Director
Over £10,000 to £50,000	Head of Service
Up to £10,000	Service Lead

For Chief Officer Graded Roles:

Assistant Director HR Approval
Assistant Director Finance / Chief Accountant Approval