

Adult Social Care - Accommodation for Working Age Adults: Strategic Thinking

To: Adults and Health Committee

Meeting Date: 12 December 2024

From: Executive Director of Adults, Health and Commissioning

Electoral division(s): All

Key decision: No

Forward Plan ref: Not Applicable for non-key decisions.

Executive Summary: This paper provides an overview of the approach being undertaken to address adult social care supported accommodation needs for working age adults across the County.

Recommendation: The Committee is asked to:

- a) scrutinise the content of the report.
- b) support the development of principles and next steps to expanding accommodation to meeting the current and future shortfall in accommodation for working age adults with complex needs.

Officer contacts:

Name: Richard Hills
Service Director: Commissioning
Richard.Hills@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Name: Shauna Torrance
Post: Head of Adult Social Care Commissioning
Email: Shauna.Torrance@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

1 Creating a greener, fairer and more caring Cambridgeshire

1.1 The approach outlined in this paper supports the following Cambridgeshire County Council ambitions:

1.1.1 **Health inequalities are reduced.** Good quality housing with the right care and support enables Cambridgeshire residents to achieve good outcomes in an environment that meets their needs. A supportive housing environment reduces risk of harm, promotes social inclusion and ensures access to good quality care and support. It also helps people to maintain a healthier lifestyle or manage their health needs more proactively, enabling them to maintain the best possible quality of life for longer.

1.1.2 **People enjoy healthy, safe, and independent lives through timely support that is most suited to their needs.** Having access to appropriate housing and support options ensures that residents of Cambridgeshire with care and support needs are able to live safely and independently in services that can flex to meet their needs, help them to maximise their quality of life and ensure they can achieve the best possible outcomes. Supported housing or independent living are particularly key in helping people to gain skills and make lasting improvements that will help them to gain confidence to live independently and achieve their goals.

1.1.3 **People and communities prosper because they have a resilient and inclusive economy, access to good quality public services and social justice is prioritised.** Housing with care and support can reduce social isolation, ensure that people can play an active role in their local community and are able to access local amenities and opportunities. These services also contribute to the local economy through providing employment opportunities for local people.

1.1.4 **People are helped out of poverty and income inequality.** Those within housing with care and support are assisted with finances and maintaining a stable income. This may be through ensuring timely access to financial assessments to ensure care costs are affordable or enabling access to benefits as well as opportunities to develop skills that will aid them in accessing employment in the longer term.

2 Background

2.1 Cambridgeshire County Council has a duty under the Care Act 2014 to promote and support the wellbeing and independence of a person when it is carrying out a care and support function, or making a decision in respect of them. . Whilst the Council aims to work with people to support them to remain within their own homes wherever appropriate, this is not always possible. Research has shown that there is an intrinsic link between a person's housing and their health and wellbeing with poor quality housing costing the NHS an estimated £2.5 billion per year.¹ It is therefore important that a range of accommodation options is available to secure the best possible outcomes for the person in question as well as their informal carers and support network.

2.2 Demand for accommodation to support people with more complex care and support needs is increasing. Whilst we have successfully expanded capacity for older adults requiring a

¹ HAPPI Report, Best & Porteus 2012

care home in recent years, there is an increasing shortfall in capacity for supported accommodation to meet the needs of working aged adults with learning disabilities, autism and mental health. As evidenced within the [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment](#), this is predominantly being driven by a rise in the number of younger adults with increasingly complex needs transitioning into adulthood and leaving education and therefore require ongoing support. This is resulting in people waiting longer to receive the right level of support to meet their needs with some people being placed in an out of county option or the Council purchasing accommodation at an increased cost. Addressing the shortfall in accommodation is therefore considered a key market shaping priority and will prove fundamental to achieving the aims set out in the corporate ambitions and [The Joint Health and Wellbeing Integrated Care Strategy](#).

- 2.3 'Supported accommodation' refers to housing combined with support and/or social care services designed to help individuals live as independently as their needs allow. This can encompass various options, including nursing and residential care homes, extra care and supported accommodation arrangements. At present, the Council commissions a range of accommodation options which aim to enhance quality of life, promote independence and deliver high quality care and support to individuals but work is needed to expand and develop this.
- 2.4 Capital development of supported accommodation is not something adult social care can tackle alone. Whilst the District Councils handle local housing needs, including affordable housing and homelessness, the County Council is responsible for delivering statutory care and support to eligible residents. Adopting a collaborative approach is therefore essential to ensure that residents have access to an adequate choice of accommodation and that adult social care demand forms a part of the housing plans published by Districts Councils.
- 2.5 Internally working as 'One Council' and drawing upon the expertise and experience of other Council departments including finance, in-house services, strategic assets, public health, education and children's social care will also prove critical along with collaboration with wider independent sector providers, registered social landlords and property developers.
- 2.6 This paper aims to present an overview of how adult social care intends to address this challenge of expanding accommodation options for working age adults in three parts:
- 1) through providing an outline of demand shortfalls and current projections
 - 2) setting out the Council's strategic intentions to meet identified accommodation needs
 - 3) setting out the options and next steps

3 Main Issues

3.1 Current Demand

- 3.1.1 At present, there is a shortage of accommodation which satisfies the requirements of working-age adults with learning disabilities, autism, or mental health needs – often called 'Specialist' or 'Supported' accommodation. The shortage can be seen when we monitor wait times of service users who require a care placement, which also requires accommodation and compare to other groups.

3.1.2 Figure 1 shows in November 2024 the number of service users who had been waiting more than four weeks for an accommodation-based care placement. The graph shows that four in five of those people are working age adults, with supported accommodation being the most challenging accommodation to find.

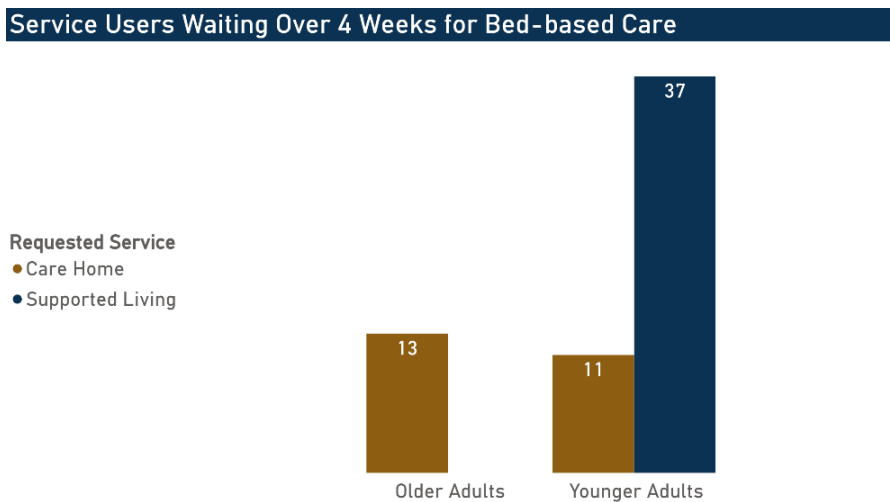


Figure 1: Service users waiting more than 4 weeks for accommodation-based care in November 2024

3.1.3 Figure 2 shows median wait times of service users seeking accommodation-based care over the past year. It shows a clear difference between the wait times of older and working-age adults, with older adults waiting an average of 12 days and working-age adults 80 days.

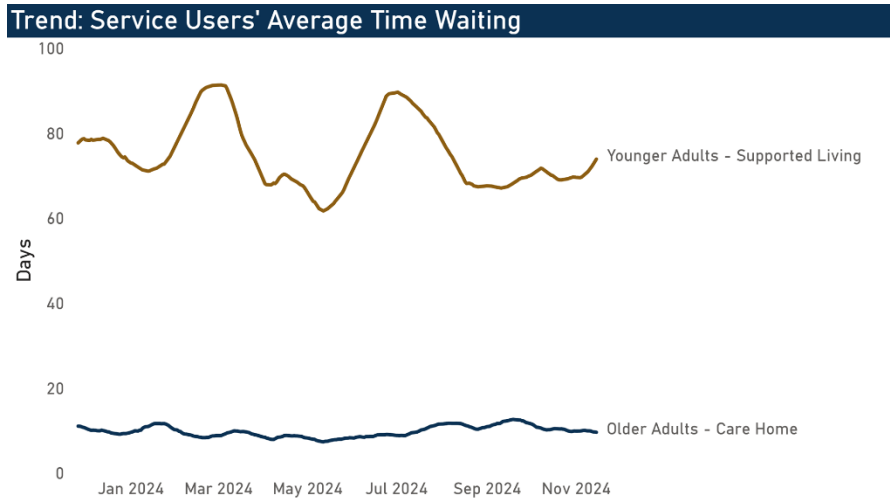


Figure 2: Median wait times for accommodation-based care placements over last 12 months

3.1.4 Working-age adults are likely to wait longer than older adults for a number of reasons including the 'socialisation period' to assess compatibility between service users and the accommodation/support package which may take several weeks. However, the size of the difference between wait times of older and younger adults demonstrates a shortfall in accommodation for the younger age group. Furthermore, while the wait times for older adults remains stable, the variance in younger adults' wait times over the period implies influence from external factors, i.e. market supply.

3.1.5 This is reinforced by the proportion of placements that have been made out of county for different types of accommodation. Figure 3 compares out of county placement percentages across cohorts.

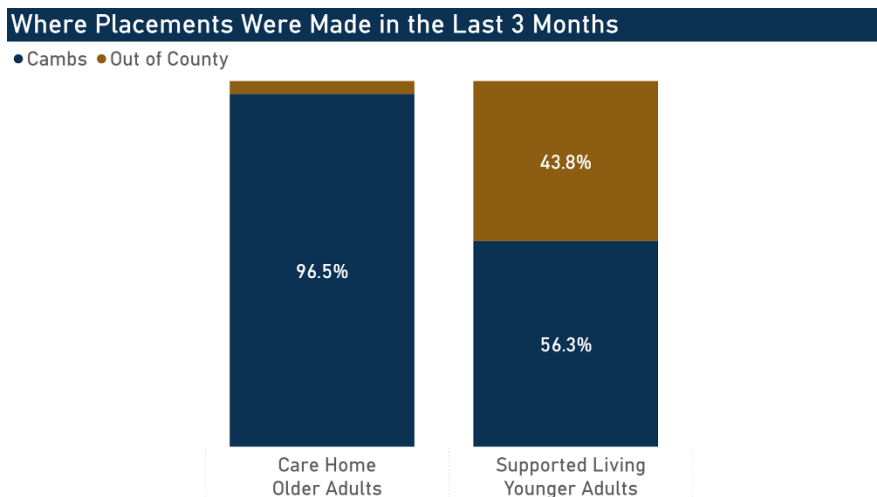


Figure 3: Percentage of placements made in or out of county over last three months

3.1.6 Over half of all placements made out of county are at the request of the service user or their family. The remaining proportion are made out of county because no suitable setting can be found which meets the service user's needs. Accounting for this, figures reveal that 1 in 5 supported accommodation placements are being made out of county because needs cannot be met in Cambridgeshire.

3.2 Future Demand is Growing

3.2.1 The demand on these accommodation-based placements will increase in coming years. In 2023, Cambridgeshire published a set of [Demand Profiles](#) which, for the first time, outlined demand forecasts for accommodation to support working-age adults at a district level. These were developed in partnership with district councils to ensure a shared view.

3.2.2 Figure 4 show estimates of additional bed capacity required to satisfy growing demand in each Cambridgeshire district. Our forecasts suggest that an additional 42 specialist placements will be required every year up to 2041 if nothing changes.

District	2022 Demand	2041 Forecast Demand	Increase Over 19 Years	Increase Each Year
City	144	242	98	5.2
East Cambs	151	247	96	5.1
Fenland	231	449	218	11.5
Hunts	250	464	214	11.3
South Cambs	191	364	173	9.1
Total	967	1766	799	42.1

Figure 4: Forecasted demand for specialist beds 2022-2041

3.3 The market is not prioritising the accommodation most needed

3.3.1 Working with local district Council partners and feedback from local property developers and providers, the commissioning team maintain an overview of accommodation which is due to be developed across all age categories and types of accommodation. At present, this extends to the next 2 years. From this, we are aware that multiple accommodation developments are due to be completed by 2026 across a range of providers, providing additional bed capacity to the Cambridgeshire market. Some of these developments are being progressed in consultation with commissions and in response to published demand profiles, others represent organic growth in the market. However, we are in contact with all developers to ensure they have a robust understanding of the type of accommodation required and affordability requirements. Figure 5 shows this 'pipeline capacity' by district and bed type for working aged adults:

District	Supported Living
City	24
East Cambs	2
Fenland	22
Hunts	31
South Cambs	6
Grand Total	85

Figure 5: Additional beds from supported accommodation developments due for completion by 2026

3.3.2 This pipeline of new developments will have a positive impact on the Council's ability to meet the growing need for accommodation to support working age adults. Figure 6 shows the remaining pipeline capacity after adjusting for increased demand over the next two years. Any developments of 'surplus' accommodation over and above the requirements of adult social care will not be directly commissioned by the Council and may be accessed by the NHS and self-funders. Commissioning arrangements will be closely monitored to ensure that we limit the number of voids being funded at any one time.

Pipeline Surplus After Two Years: Specialist Accommodation

District	Increased Supply	Increased Demand	Surplus / Deficit
City	24	10	14
East Cambs	2	10	-8
Fenland	22	23	-1
Hunts	31	23	8
South Cambs	6	18	-12
Total	85	84	1

Figure 6: Surplus supply of new specialist beds after two years

3.3.3 Figure 6 demonstrates that at present, new accommodation for younger adults will simply keep pace with growing demand. This will barely maintain the status quo of Supported accommodation availability, which already leads to one in five placements going out of county as detailed in paragraph 3.1.6

3.3.4 There is a need to take a longer-term view of demand to enable us to proactively and sustainably plan for a pipeline of suitable housing over a five and even ten-year timeline. Figure 7 shows for each Cambridgeshire district how the increase in future demand over the next 10 years compares with pipeline capacity from the next two years alone for working age adults:

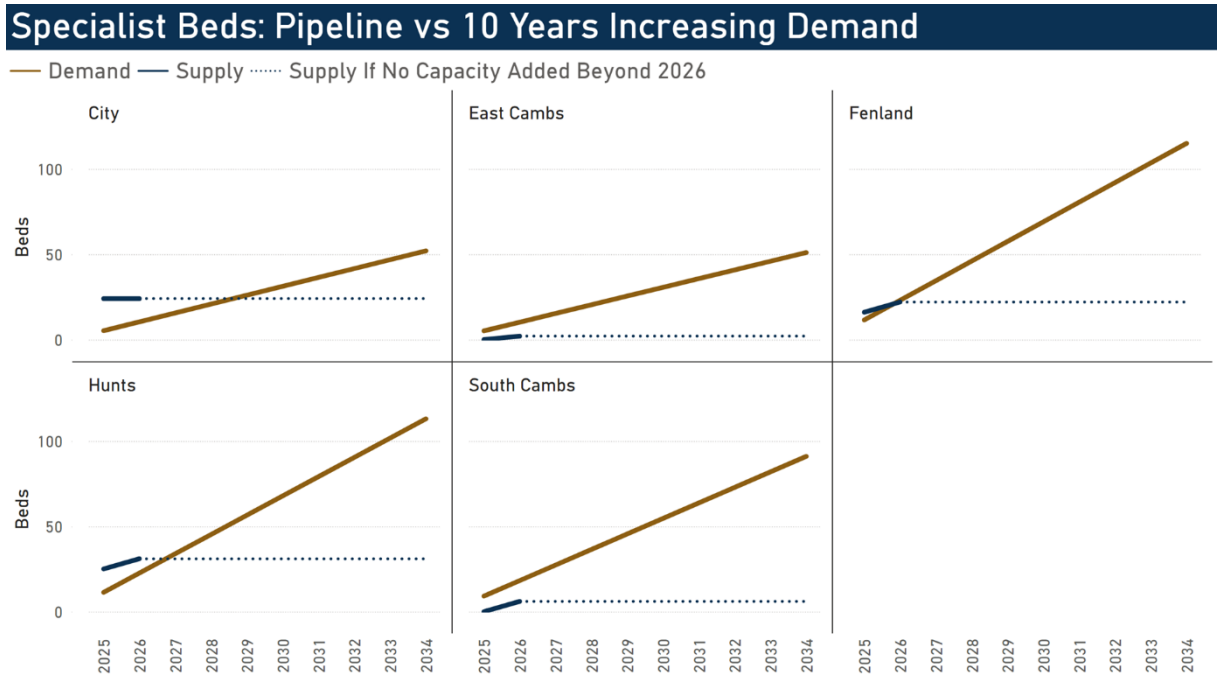


Figure 7: 2 Year Pipeline capacity of specialist beds compared to 10 years of increasing demand

3.3.5 The above shows that planned developments will merely keep pace with increased demand over the next two years and beyond that there is a significant shortfall in accommodation to meet the needs of working age adults. We must seek to encourage new provision of specialist accommodation beyond 2026 and at a faster rate.

3.4 Strategic Intentions and Priorities

3.4.1 In determining 'what good looks like', the Council have drawn upon a wealth of research and guidance on best practice in adult social care accommodation to inform the development of the following strategic intentions and principles:

1. Maintain a preventative and strengths-based approach: We will prioritise the importance of supporting people to remain in their own home, where possible, by ensuring we offer the right level and standard of preventative community which are developed and delivered in partnership across local communities. We are also reviewing our current homecare offer to ensure it uses a more enabling approach to maintaining people's independence accounting for their wider wellbeing as well as the delivery of personal care. Where someone does require alternative accommodation and can hold their own tenancy, we help them to access appropriate long-term accommodation. With this in mind, the use of local district council housing stock for people who are eligible for social housing will be considered the Council's primary route to sourcing accommodation for people with general care and support needs.

Where this is not possible, we will strive to help people to remain independent through "housing with care" solutions. Whilst recognising that more traditional Care Homes options will have a part to play in supporting those with the most complex needs, we wish to explore alternative housing options for working age adults, which may offer better outcomes by allowing for greater levels of independence. This will include supported accommodation options thereby reducing the volume of people entering residential care. These arrangements will seek to ensure that the support delivered to people within these settings is managed separately to their tenancy arrangements, with all opportunities to take a more enabling approach and use technology to increase their independence harnessed.

2. Co-production is prioritised: We will seek to ensure that all new services are co-produced to deliver better outcomes for people, build stronger communities and enhance the value and quality of our services. Individual developments and projects will draw upon well-established networks, groups and partnership boards to do this and we will seek to continuously improve the approach taken through reviewing and sharing lessons learned.

3. Maintain an evidenced based approach – We will seek to build upon the work already undertaken to understand and forecast future demand for accommodation within adult social care through utilising census data, data from District Councils, and other information sources. We will ensure we maintain an up-to-date accommodation needs assessment which will be published and used to plan for a longer-term pipeline of future developments.

4. Address gaps in capacity and increase choice and control – There is an urgent need to address the shortfall in specialist accommodation for people with learning disabilities, autism and mental health. In doing so, we will seek to create a mixed care market comprising of a range of delivery models across in-house and independent sector services. This will aim to offer maximum choice to people, create a good balance of provision across all areas of the County and ensure that an ongoing reduction in the number of people placed out of county due to a lack of appropriate provision within County is prioritised.

5. Ensure accommodation developed is fit for the future and appropriately located –

We recognise that the design of accommodation has a material impact on the outcomes of people accessing it and impacts on the environmental footprint of the Council. In conjunction with our partners and key stakeholders, we will seek to promote the development of housing with care solutions which include intergenerational possibilities, good design principles and adhere to best practice standards including the 9 Reach Standards² as well as models which have worked elsewhere.

Additionally, the location of all accommodation will be assessed with a view to ensuring people are able to maintain links with local communities and networks of support. It is therefore important that accommodation is located in places where there are good transport links, particularly public transport and a good level of access to local services such as GP surgeries, shops, post offices and social activities. Any risks relating to recruitment and retention of support staff will also be considered.

3.4.2 Over time, we envision that the progression of these intentions will enable the Council to achieve the following outcomes:

- A reduction in average waiting time for supported accommodation for working aged adults resulting in improved outcomes for these individuals and often their informal carers.
- A gradual expansion of capacity in line with evidence of increasing demand to ensure the Council can continue to support people to achieve good outcomes and maintain choice and control.
- Expansion of a preventative approach will support the continued decrease in the number of people entering a care home setting and increase the number of people living within their own homes or a setting able to provide 'housing with care'.
- A decrease in the number of out of county placements made to ensure that wherever possible people requiring accommodation can continue to remain living within their local area and close to their community, family and network of support.
- A reduction in the number of placements made outside of established procurement frameworks resulting in a greater control of cost.

3.5 Current Position

3.5.1 To date, focus has been given to developing a robust understanding of the current shortfall in available accommodation as well as projected demand to ensure we are able to progress developments in an evidenced based way. This has led to the following being progressed:

- **New Development Pipeline** – Through the links we hold with the District Councils, we are now able to track the development of new accommodation options across the County from planning application through to completion of build and where required Care Quality Commission (CQC) Registration. This currently covers the next 2 years and enables us to have a clear overview of where and when current and future demand will be met so we can target resource to address the longer-term gap in partnership with the local market and use of capital funding.

² [REACH Support for Living - Paradigm \(paradigm-uk.org\)](https://www.paradigm-uk.org/)

- **Expansion and update of existing accommodation framework** – In response to the current evidence base, proactive action has been taken to re-open and expand existing accommodation frameworks wherever possible to increase capacity available. A good example of this is the Mental Health and Autism Accommodation Framework which features within the current business plan. By engaging with the local market and re-opening the framework we not only hope to increase accommodation options for people with these needs but also achieve a projected cost avoidance saving of £400k over the course of the next two years.

3.5.2 Development of a new approach to expanding the volume and type of accommodation available in Cambridgeshire is complex and multifaceted. It requires coordinated engagement and input from a wide range of stakeholders, often a significant financial investment, proactive adjustments in response to risks arising (e.g. impact of inflation on building costs) and a multi-year delivery plan. Many of these aspects have impacted on existing business cases and developments, challenged the current skills mix and expertise held within adult social care commissioning team and the standardised processes and procedures held within the Council. This has resulted in progress to date being slower than expected.

3.5.3 However, we have now established an Accommodation Board which will aim to kick start this process and features representation from Property Services, Finance, Policy and Insight Teams. The Board will also include the Education Capital Programme Team whom Adult Social Care have formally engaged to support with this work due to their experience of driving forward the education capital programme.

3.6 Ongoing Development

3.6.1 Building on this work, focus now needs to be given to meeting the current shortfall in capacity and ensuring growth in supported accommodation to meet demand projections. This will require an approach which is flexible and explores a range of different routes in a very placed based and person-centred way. Given the trends outlined above, capital funding is likely to be targeted at addressing the current and future shortfall in specialist accommodation to meet the needs of working aged adults. These include:

- **General Housing:** Work needs to be undertaken in partnership with the District Councils to understand how we ensure that those with an assessed adult social care support need can be appropriately prioritised for general housing allocation. As part of this we will need to explore whether any improvements can be made to current links and knowledge sharing arrangements across housing and social care teams and ensure there is a clear understanding across organisations and teams.
- **Development of Strategic Partnerships with local Registered Social Landlord (RSL):** The Council has taken a proactive approach to engaging with local RSL's to ensure they have a good understanding of current and projected need for supported accommodation and the opportunities that this presents to them. This could and has resulted in RSL's investing in development of supported accommodation in the knowledge that there is a waiting list of people ready to access accommodation on completion.

However, there is also further opportunity for work to be undertaken in partnership with the Strategic Assets Team to explore whether the sale of any of the existing Council assets marked for disposal directly to an RSL at full market rate could be facilitated. If

successful, this approach would enable the Council to secure a capital receipt for these assets whilst also providing adult social care with additional placement capacity locally. The current capital allocation could be utilised here to support with the costs of developing the site rather than purchase of land subject to the approval of a business case. This could result in a much smaller capital investment being required which will support financial viability of new developments and allow adult social care capital allocation to work harder and go further

- **Release of Council estates for specialist supported accommodation:** Alternatively, Council-owned assets identified for disposal could also be reallocated to adult social care to work alongside strategic assets to re-develop the sites to meet supported accommodation requirements utilising the current capital allocation within the business plan. Whilst this wouldn't result in a capital receipt being achieved, it would enable Council owned assets to meet local need for services within the County and is something currently being pursued within Children's Services with the building of two new residential homes.
- **Redevelopment of existing adult social care or children and young people estate:** The Council currently operate several in-house services across adult and children's social care departments. In fact, the in-house learning disabilities service already provides supported accommodation and residential services. It may be that there is opportunity to expand this offer and utilise the capital allocation within the business plan to re-develop or upgrade existing buildings to either expand this service offer or meet the change in need described in paragraph 3.1.
- **Purchase and development of new sites:** The capital allocation held within the business plan can be utilised to purchase new sites, retain the land and act as landlord to potential developers, RSLs and/or care and support providers. Whilst this will enable the Council to meet the needs outlined above and retain maximum control over the asset, a much greater capital investment will be required.

3.7 Next Steps

3.7.1 Over the next 12 months, the Commissioning Team will be working in close partnership with the Policy and Insights Team, Capital Programme Team, Property Services and Finance to:

- **Refresh the current demand profiles** incorporating updated census information and looking to disaggregate care home demand projects by bed type and age to enable some more sophisticated analysis to be undertaken.
- **Build a pipeline** of developments beyond the current two-year timeframe in partnership with local district councils.
- **Develop a plan to target capital funding** allocated to address the current and projected need for accommodation identified in demand profiles.
- **Meet and engage regularly with local Registered Social Landlords and property developers** and issue an annual survey to ensure understanding of adult social care need and facilitate the work of the Accommodation Board
- **Review options for accessing Council-owned sites** marked for disposal whether that be for re-purpose or facilitating a capital receipt.
 - Undertake targeted reviews of the Learning Disability Supported Living Framework and the Mental Health and Autism Accommodation Framework to

ensure support arrangements continue to expand in line with projection of need and accommodation.

3.7.2 We expect to return to Adults and Health Committee in June 2025 with an update on the progress of this work, a business case and a plan to deliver additional accommodation utilising the capital funding allocated.

4. Alternative Options Considered

4.1 Not applicable.

5. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

5.1 A significant amount of research, planning and engagement has taken place to build the foundations of a long-term accommodation programme which will focus on meeting the identified shortfall in accommodation both now and in the future. This approach has also helped to ensure we have the right skills mix, engagement and input from across Council departments, partners and other stakeholders to make this happen along with a sizeable capital allocation to help drive this forward where required.

5.2 Whilst a number of actions have been taken to improve and update existing commissioned arrangements to expand capacity, focus must now be given to working with identified stakeholders to adopt new and innovative ways to meet the growing demand for these services in a way which is person centred but also sustainable. Exploration of the areas outlined within paragraph 3.3 will prove key to achieving the outcomes set out within this paper.

6. Significant Implications

6.1 Finance Implications

Meeting the current and future demand for accommodation will require investment but will also bring associated cost avoidance savings some of which already form part of the business planning process as outlined within paragraphs 2.5 and 3.3.1. An investment of £12m is built into the proposed capital programme for 2025-26 and beyond for specialist accommodation.

6.2 Legal Implications

Ensuring compliance with the Council's duties under the Care Act 2014.

6.3 Risk Implications

6.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

6.5 Climate Change and Environment Implications

7. Source Documents