

Locality Provider Forums

Autumn 2025

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Introduction

The Care Market Shaping Strategy 2023-30 vision is:

Enable people to live their lives to the fullest through a vibrant and sustainable care market, supporting residents to develop their strengths and personal independence.

Aligned to the Adult Social Care Business plan priorities, our Market Shaping aims are:

- Increase provision for complex care
- Increase and evolve community-based services
- Develop a wider range of accommodation options
- Increase choice and control using Personal Assistants, Micro-enterprises and Individual Service Funds
- Improve our short term and early help service offer

Our Market shaping strategic deliverables and commissioning intentions have been converted into the 5 locality plans, providing a detailed reflection of local priorities and focus for the next few years.

What are we trying to do

We are addressing the key challenges facing the care market through a multi-dimensional approach;

Firstly, we are delivering on our countywide commitments and overarching strategic intentions. A number of programmes exist on this wider footprint.

Secondly, there are elements of consistency we are seeking to achieve even with systems and services which are locality orientated. Actions to achieve this are common to each area.

Lastly, we are identifying and responding to challenges that are specific and local to individual areas, districts, or localities.

This overarching approach enables us to implement commissioning strategies that reflect the unique needs and circumstances of each community, ensuring that our interventions are both relevant and impactful.

Countywide Commissioning

- Strategic planning across the entire county or region
- Ensures consistency, equity, and efficiency
- Aligns with statutory duties and county-wide priorities
- Supports market sustainability and integrated care

Consistent Locality-Based Commissioning

- Promotes co-production with residents and local providers
- Encourages innovation and preventative care
- Efficient use of ECC and other resources

Specific Locality-Based Challenges and Solutions

- Tailored to specific community needs and assets
- Responsive to particular issues and opportunities in a place

Combined Approach

- Balances strategic oversight with local responsiveness
- Improves outcomes and ensures meaningful service delivery

**Countywide Commissioning Plan –
taking place on a countywide
footprint**

County-wide commissioning

Challenges	Market Shaping	
	Ambitions	What actions are we taking
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Uplifts Care market financial sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure uplifts are in place at appropriate levels at the right time	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commence planning and governance Summer 2025 in order to secure ECC Cabinet approvals in early 2026
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue to work with our equipment supplier to enhance their offer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure equipment is available in a timely and efficient way for those that need it	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Further improve monitoring and oversight of the contract
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preparation for Local Government Reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure new unitary councils are not faced with difficult and immediate decisions upon formation• Continuity of care and secure supplier markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review list of contracts to plan ahead for those due to expire during transition period

**Locality-based work taking place
across all locality areas**

Locality - common commissioning plans

Challenges	Market Shaping	
	Ambitions	What actions are we taking
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intermediate Care; ensure people return home from hospital with the right service at the right time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embed Home to Assess model and ensure appropriate capacity in place for each area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mobilise new Home to Assess provider in each area by November 2025 Develop local relationships between ECL, ASC providers and the new H2a supplier
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Live at Home (LAH); ensure sustainable good quality supply in each area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement new framework in each area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mobilise new LAH providers from Autumn 2025 Develop local relationships with Tier 1 providers, locality social care teams and NHS community health service provider Design “test and learn” approaches to develop service models during the life of the new LAH framework

Mid Essex specific work

Mid Essex objectives

Objective	Challenges	Commissioning Priorities
To focus on rural adult social care commissioning, ensuring fair access, dignity, and community-based support for vulnerable individuals.	<p>Addressing rural challenges by recognising the unique needs of these communities.</p> <p>Leveraging the strengths of central cities as hubs of opportunity and innovation.</p> <p>Empowering rural areas through support for small businesses and local enterprises to meet community service demands.</p> <p>Expanding community services in hard-to-reach areas, with greater collaboration with the voluntary sector.</p>	<p>Establish a neighbourhood model, with central cities acting as anchor institutions that coordinate and extend tailored support to surrounding rural communities.</p> <p>Having better transport links between rural and city areas.</p> <p>Micro-Enterprise Grants: Provide funding and mentorship for small businesses that deliver community services.</p> <p>Volunteering Infrastructure: Build capacity in the voluntary sector through training, coordination, and recognition</p>

Locality-based commissioning

Challenges	Market Shaping	
	Ambitions	What actions are we taking
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Supported Living - disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">To bring more capacity onto the Supported Living framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Engagement with care providers then Framework re-opening (county wide) in late 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Intermediate care – continual pressure on capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Ensure correct balance of supply against other areasEnsure all parts of Mid-Essex have access to reablement supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Revisit modelling and analysis of supply and demand by local areas within Mid-EssexWork with ECL and ARC suppliers to develop workforce plans, if required, so that local staff are available in all parts of the area

North Essex specific work

North Essex objectives

Objective	Challenges	Commissioning Priorities
<p>Continue to develop sustainably-sized, high-quality residential care services, ensuring that provision is sustainable, person-centred, and aligned with evolving needs and preferences</p>	<p>There is a high concentration of residential care services across the locality, but some are not meeting expected quality standards.</p> <p>A significant number of placements involve adults from outside the area, which can strain local resources and dilute community-based care.</p> <p>Frequent quality concerns, including leadership and governance issues flagged by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), contribute to instability and crisis management.</p>	<p>Shift focus from quantity to quality by planning for a transition from over-supply of residential-only services toward high quality residential with nursing, including the potential closure or repurposing of provision that does not meet standards.</p> <p>Implement tighter placement protocols to ensure out-of-area placements are only made when necessary and align with local capacity.</p> <p>Expand community-based alternatives, such as supported living, reablement, and outreach services, to better reflect the preferences and needs of local residents.</p>

Locality-based commissioning

Challenges	Market Shaping	
	Ambitions	What actions are we taking
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supported living – disabilities. Need to develop more complex care supply 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to develop more complex care provision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement with care providers then Complex Framework re-opening (county wide) in late 2025 then review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extra care – insufficient supply in the right places 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase supply of modern EC sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commence procurement of developer for Coppins Court Nov 2025. Determine if development at Lexden Springs can commence and procure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Older Peoples Care Homes – rebalance between residential-only and residential-with nursing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure no oversupply of residential-only (developing a sustainable market) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue discussions with large suppliers Work with planning departments to limit new residential provision
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring access to bedded care with an enablement ethos following a hospital stay 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appropriate number of Recovery to Home beds in place in both Colchester and Clacton. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reprocurement of the Recovery to Home model, to be in place pre Winter 2025-6

South-East Essex specific work

South-East Essex objectives

Objective	Challenges	Commissioning Priorities
<p>Expand access to affordable supported living options for adults with learning disabilities and mental health needs, ensuring provision is financially sustainable, person-centred, and aligned with local demand.</p>	<p>Limited provision: Only one supported living provider currently operates in Canvey Island, highlighting a significant gap in local disability accommodation.</p> <p>Unclear demand: There is insufficient data on current and future demand, particularly for young adults transitioning from children’s services.</p> <p>Community continuity: Even with low demand, there is a moral and strategic imperative to support individuals to remain within their communities.</p>	<p>Accommodation design: Young adults with disabilities increasingly express a preference for independence, such as “own front door” living arrangements. This supports the development of clustered flats or individual units within supported schemes.</p> <p>Long-term planning: Commissioning must anticipate future needs, including transitions from children’s services, population growth, and evolving care models.</p> <p>Cross-sector collaboration: Active engagement with district councils and housing teams is essential to align care commissioning with housing development</p> <p>Land availability: A review of land assets and planning permissions is needed to assess feasibility for new supported living developments.</p>

Locality-based commissioning

Challenges	Market Shaping	
	Ambitions	What actions are we taking
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extra care	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase supply of Extra Care housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commence procurement of the Rocheway developer in Dec 2025.• Look at alternatives for site finding in Castle Point following difficulties in identifying suitable site

South-West Essex specific work

South-West Essex objectives

Objective	Challenges	Commissioning Priorities
<p>Reduce homecare workforce shortages by addressing recruitment challenges linked to competition from London-based employers</p>	<p>Difficulty recruiting a skilled care workforce, particularly in homecare services.</p> <p>Retention issues due to competition from London, where higher wages and broader career opportunities attract staff away from the local sector.</p> <p>Rising cost of living, which impacts workforce affordability and service sustainability.</p> <p>Limited public transport links between rural and urban areas, restricting access to care jobs and services.</p>	<p>Partner with colleges and training providers to create care-specific pathways, apprenticeships, and work placements.</p> <p>Introduce fast-track onboarding and flexible entry routes to attract new entrants.</p> <p>Offer competitive local incentives, such as retention bonuses, travel allowances, and flexible working arrangements.</p> <p>Explore local housing partnerships to offer affordable accommodation for care workers.</p> <p>Invest in transport solutions, such as community transport schemes, carpooling networks, travel support funding.</p>

Locality-based commissioning

Challenges	Market Shaping	
	Ambitions	What actions are we taking
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extra care	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase supply of Extra Care Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue to work with Basildon District Council on plans for the Westgate scheme which is subject to planning approval

West Essex specific work

West Essex objectives

Objective	Challenges	Commissioning Priorities
<p>To increase the offer of affordable and high-quality accommodation solutions for adults with complex needs, including those requiring complex nursing care such as dementia.</p>	<p>There is a growing need for more supported accommodation, particularly for individuals with mental health conditions and complex needs such as dementia.</p> <p>The development of suitable facilities is hindered by the high cost of buildings and property development constraints, including green belt land restrictions.</p> <p>Harlow district faces challenges related to higher levels of deprivation and population density, increasing demand for accessible and affordable care solutions.</p> <p>In contrast, Uttlesford and Epping Forest have ageing populations with rising levels of complex care needs, requiring tailored accommodation and support models.</p>	<p>Strategic planning must balance affordability, quality, and accessibility, ensuring provision meets both current and future demand.</p> <p>Collaboration with district councils and housing authorities is essential to navigate planning regulations and identify viable development sites.</p> <p>Innovative models such as clustered supported living, mixed-use developments, and adaptive reuse of existing buildings should be explored to overcome land and cost barriers.</p> <p>Long-term forecasting and data-driven demand mapping will be critical to ensure sustainable investment and equitable service distribution across diverse localities.</p>

Locality-based commissioning

Challenges	Market Shaping	
	Ambitions	What actions are we taking
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Supported living - disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">To bring more capacity onto framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Engagement with care providers then Framework re-opening (county wide) in late 2025 then review
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Older people care homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Increase nursing capacity at rates sustainable for the Council.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Scoping exercise on options Dec-Feb 2026

Winter planning 2025-26

Approach and principles

- Our approach seeks to build on initiatives from 2024/25 and strengthen what was already in place.
- This includes the continuation of initiatives such as dementia discharge support and process improvement such as the continued roll out of the Reablement Decision Tool which supports better use of capacity we have in place.
- It is based on the learning from previous years and principles agreed with partners that have helped shape our approach. The principles agreed were:
 - To comply with the guidance around funding sources
 - Do not further complicate systems – build on what’s already there with a focus on ‘home first’
 - Bring providers into the planning conversations where possible
 - Work collaboratively across Health and Social Care to support design, implementations and visibility of our initiatives
 - To explore admission avoidance solutions where funding source guidance allows
 - Focus on fewer but larger interventions, which will support clearer evaluation of impact
 - Where possible, build in the ability for provision to flex for demand
 - Ensure good data collection and systemic sharing of insight

Intermediate Care

- We are working across the system to enhance our intermediate care offer and develop a model which will increase the numbers of people who are supported to stay at home, promote greater use of care technology and continue to reduce the need for long-term care. It will also:
 - Improve flow & efficiency across services.
 - Focus on outcomes rather than hours of support.
 - Be integrated and guided by a single joined-up service specification.
 - Ensure protected capacity for admission avoidance.
 - Focus on continuous improvement across health and care services.
- We are implementing our new Home to Assess (H2a) services (replacing the 'bridging' model) with a focus on ensuring adults go directly into reablement services where appropriate. This will result in fewer hand-offs and faster pickups of reablement, supporting good hospital flow over winter and beyond.
- These new H2a contracts include flexibility to step up or down capacity should trend information suggest that is required. The need to do this will be agreed via the ECC Priority Review Meeting which takes place every Friday.
- Similar flexibility is also a feature of our Alternative Reablement Capacity (ARC) contracts.
- Our Intermediate Care programme will further support health and care services over winter via:
 - Joint work on reviewing decision making points and Intermediate Care pathways to build a shared understanding of responsibilities and agreed criteria– including Continuing Health Care.
 - Procurement activity timed to ensure new contracts are mobilised before the winter period (H2a and Recovery to Home in North Essex).
 - The development of an dashboard to provide more detailed insight on use across the different services and the county.

Essex BCF

Our winter plans are supported by the Better Care Fund which fund several countywide and locality initiatives that support admission avoidance, reducing readmissions and discharges.

Countywide:

- Our Care Technology continues to grow with 14,000 people benefiting from care technology helping to keep them independent in their own homes. It is expected this service will grow to support 19,500 people by March 2026.
- Our BCF plan also recognises the significant contribution carers make to preventing admissions and care needs escalating. Our carers offer funded through the BCF will provide:
 - A central point of Carers can contact directly for early information and guidance and can be referred on to our specialist offer or to social care. Call handlers are trained to identify people that call for other services as carers.
 - Specialist Carers Pathway Co-ordinators are working with partners to improve identification of unpaid carers and their access to support.
 - specialist support that includes; practical solutions to address specific challenges; and solution-focused interventions such as conflict resolution, mediation and emotional wellbeing support.
- Other key schemes and initiatives are:
 - Dementia Community Support Service
 - Funding allocated for 'spot' reablement demand
 - We are also working on maturing our TOCH teams to support effective pathway identification and utilisation, making sure people are accessing the right services at the right time.

Locality initiatives

- We also remain committed to expanding the reach of local initiatives at an alliance level which help connect individuals to community-based support that reduce admission and readmission to hospital and residential care including:
 - Falls prevention initiatives such as slipper swaps and information, advice and guidance on strength and balance home exercises to prevent falls, local groups to connect with, and wider social care support.
 - Voluntary and Community Sector discharge support to help people re-settle at home after and admission.
 - Therapy support to Additional Reablement Capacity service

Management oversight and escalation

We continue set a Local Authority Provider Escalation Level (LAPEL) level which guides us in standing up/down infrastructure for response to pressures, including frequency of system calls and reporting.

Senior Leaders convene at the weekly Priority Review Meeting (PRM) to set this level and review our SITREP report as well as give position statements from each locality area. This forum is key in coordinating the ECC response around winter.