

Budget proposals 2026/27: To cease directly providing adult respite in the community services, which will be commissioned from alternative providers

Consultation Summary Report

Why we consulted?

Councils across the country continue to face unprecedented financial pressures, and West Berkshire Council is no exception. The council is responding to increasing demands in adults' and children's social care services supporting our most vulnerable residents, and in other areas such as homelessness and home to school transport. The increases in demand, combined with higher inflation and increasing costs, are financially impacting the council and its suppliers.

In 2026/27, we need to find £6.4 million in savings or income generation. This figure assumes that Council Tax increases by the maximum 4.99%.

To fill the remaining gap, we have a range of options available, including changing how we provide services and making internal savings, for example: re-tendering contracts for better value for money, streamlining processes, and introducing new charges or increasing existing charges for some services.

In February 2026, we will set our budget for the financial year ahead (2026/27). To help shape that process, we asked local residents, communities and other parties for their views on how we could fund and prioritise the services we provide. We are also sought their views on two specific proposals.

For more information, please visit <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/balancing-our-budget>

Approach

We published the 'Balancing our Budget' consultation on our website on Monday, 1 December 2025 with feedback requested by midday on Monday, 12 January 2026.

Respondents were directed to a central index pageⁱ, which outlined the overall background to the exercise, and provided links to our 'Balancing our Budget 2026/27' survey, as well as the individual proposals on our Consultation and Engagement Hubⁱⁱ.

Each individual proposal page included further details on the specifics of what the proposal contained and what we thought the impact might be, along with any other elements we'd considered. Feedback was then invited through an online survey, and hard copies of the proposal documents and surveys were made available on request.

Each individual in receipt of services from ARC were written to separately.

As well as publishing the consultations on our website, we also emailed members of the West Berkshire Community Panel (around 2,500 people),

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Finally, we issued a press release on Monday, 1 December 2026 and further publicised our consultations through our social media accounts and residents' e-newsletters. We also placed posters in our main offices and made them available to Services to put up as required.

Proposal Background

West Berkshire Council's Adult Social Care Service currently provides an Adult Respite in the Community Service (ARC).

This service was originally set up to provide a short-term respite service but is being used as a regular service for nine clients that could be supported differently using alternative services.

Legislative and Statutory Requirements

The Care Act 2014 governs what services the council should provide as part of an individual's care package, what services the council doesn't need to provide, and how the council can charge for these services.

Proposal Details

To close the Adult Respite in the Community (ARC) Service and offer the nine client's alternative provision that could also meet their needs.

This proposal will save the council £28,300 per year.

Consultation Response

Number of Responses

In total, 41 responses were received.

There were 2 late submissions via email. The comments included have been considered.

We received 0 petitions.

Summary of Main Points

55.88% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed.

7.32% of respondents were people who use the service.

61.76% of respondents felt the changes might have a negative effect on people.

Respondents praised the need for the service and the benefits to both individuals and carers.

Respondents commented on the need for a smooth transition to minimise disruption and an alternative service needs to be of the same standard.

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Concerns for individuals who may not understand what is happening would have a negative impact on carers also.

Respondents said that respite services should not be lost, they are important for people's mental health and wellbeing.

Summary of Responses by Question

1. Which of the following best describes you?

	Number	%
A resident of West Berkshire	36	87.50%
A user of the Adult Respite in the Community service	3	7.32%
A West Berkshire business owner	1	2.44%
Employed by a business located in West Berkshire	4	9.76%
Employed by West Berkshire Council	6	14.63%
A Parish/Town Councillor	0	0.00%
A District Councillor	0	0.00%
A West Berkshire Council partner organisation	0	0.00%
A West Berkshire Council service provider	3	4.88%
Other - please specify	8	7.32%

Other

Employee of ARC

Parish Council

A user in receipt of Adult Social care in West Berkshire.

A clinical NHS employee.

Employed by a Supermarket - part time hours amount of which the ARC user can cope with

ARC

ARC worker

I am an Adult Respite carer [casual]

A worker of the ARC service

There were two further submissions after the deadline. The comments have been considered in the response.

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2. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal to cease directly providing adult respite in the community services, which will be commissioned from alternative providers?

	Number	%
Strongly agree	9	26.47%
Agree	3	8.82%
Neither agree nor disagree	3	8.82%
Disagree	7	20.59%
Strongly Disagree	12	35.29%
Total	34	99.99%

3. Is there anything you think we should be aware of in terms of how this proposal might impact people? For example, do you think it will affect some individuals more than others?

	Number	%
Yes	22	64.71%
No	12	35.29%
Total	34	100%

4. What do you think we should be aware of in terms of how this proposal might impact people?

Service users need continuity and consistency and a potential change in service could have a negative impact. As the service users are used to the venues, they attend these should be continued to being with for continuity.

One respondent felt that Shared Lives (the proposed alternative) would not be able to do all the social events that ARC currently provides.

Individuals will be sensitive to any changes, and this will need to be managed well.

5. Do you think our proposed change might have a negative effect on you or other people?

	Number	%
Yes	21	67.76%

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	Number	%
No	38.24%	13
Total	100	34

6. What suggestions, if any, do you have for how we could minimise the negative effect should we proceed?

In summary:

- People will need support to transition to an alternative provision.
- Standards need to be maintained in a new service.
- Maintain respite services for the health and wellbeing of carers.
- Where there are friendship groups this should be maintained.

7. Do you have any suggestions on how we might save money or increase income in the Adult Respite in the Community service?

	Number	%
Yes	11	35.35%
No	23	67.65%
Total	34	100%

8. What suggestions do you have for how we might save money or increase income in the Adult Respite in the Community service?

Reduce the number of sessions offered from 2 to 1 per month.
 Utilise students to support individuals.
 Partner with other organizations.

9. Do you have any further comments?

Feedback included recognition that the service is appreciated by both users and family, the use of capital assets need to be managed effectively, if making a saving by switching the provider is possible it should be done, respite should not be lost as it is important for people's mental health and wellbeing.

10. What is your gender? (Optional)

	Number	%
Male	15	48.39%
Female	14	45.16%
Other	0	0.00%
Prefer not to say	2	6.45%

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	Number	%
Total	31	100%

11. How old are you? (Optional)

	Number	%
Under 18	0	0.00%
18-24	0	0.00%
25-34	1	3.23%
35-44	5	16.13%
45-54	6	19.35%
55-64	6	19.35%
65-74	8	25.81%
75 and over	1	3.23%
Prefer not to say	4	12.90%
Total	31	100%

12. Please tell us your postcode, excluding the last two letters, e.g. RG14 5

RG8 8
RG18 9
RG31 7ZL
RG14 5
RG7 5
RG315
RG18 3
RG7 6
rg31 6
RG14 3aa
RG14 1
RG18 4BZ
RG20 0
RG20 4
RG18
RG18 3
RG14 6
RG7 3
RG14 7
RG14
rg147eb
RG14 7

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rg31 4
RG8 7
rg198
RG14 2
Rg14 1rj
Rg14 7
RG14 6

13. What is your ethnic group? (Optional)

	Number	%
White English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British	1	4.00%
White Irish	22	88.00%
White other	0	0.00%
Gypsy, Irish Traveller or Roma	1	4.00%
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups	0	0.00%
Asian or Asian British	1	0.00%
Black, Black British, Caribbean or African	0	0.00%
Other ethnic group	0	0.00%
Prefer not to say	0	
Total	25	100%

14. Do you have a disability, long-term illness, or health condition? (Optional)

	Number	%
Yes	13	52.00%
No	11	44.00%
Prefer not to say	1	4.00
Total	25	100%

Officer conclusion and recommendation can be found in the associated Overview of Responses and Recommendations document.

Melanie O'Rourke
Service Director
Adult Social Care
13/01/26

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***Please note:** In order to allow everyone who wished the opportunity to contribute, feedback was not sampled. Therefore this wasn't a quantitative, statistically valid exercise. It was neither the premise, purpose, nor within the capability of the exercise, to determine the overall community's level of support, or views on the proposals, with any degree of confidence.*

The feedback captured therefore should be seen in the context of 'those who responded', rather than reflective of the wider community.

ⁱ <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/balancing-our-budget>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/consultations>