



**Cabinet 21st January
2026**

Cabinet

Public



Provider Services Redesign (in-house)

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1. Synopsis

- 1.1 This report presents a proposal regarding the future direction of Shropshire Council's In house Day Services, inviting Cabinet to consider the recommendations set out. While the Council is committed to achieving improved outcomes for residents and ensuring value for money, the provision of such services through in-house arrangements is not a statutory requirement; rather, it is one available approach to delivering support to residents.
- 1.2 Following the financial emergency declared in September 2025, it has been essential to reassess all services, especially those with high costs or that are potentially not financially viable. In light of that financial review, as explained in more detail below, Cabinet is asked to approve: a consultation on a proposal to fully close Helena Lane Day Centre and a consultation on a proposal to close the Aquamira site and relocating its Day Service to another location. In addition, Cabinet is asked to approve a broader engagement about reshaping In-House Day Services. This engagement is distinct from, yet related to, the recent broader consultations regarding externally provided Day Care services.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 In line with Shropshire Council's Improvement Plan, a thorough review of In-House Day Service provision is essential to ensure the Council remains financially sustainable, focused on clear priorities, and able to deliver best value for

residents. The Improvement Plan sets out the need for immediate action to address significant financial pressures, strengthen governance, and align resources with strategic objectives. Reviewing In-House Day Services will enable the Council to assess quality, efficiency, and alignment with the Council's future direction, ensuring that provision is both effective and affordable. This approach supports the Council's ambition to be a modern, responsive, and high-performing organisation, as well as meeting its statutory duty to deliver services in the most efficient, economical, and sustainable way.

- 2.2 On 10th September 2025, Cabinet declared a financial emergency prompting a comprehensive review of all non-statutory services to ensure financial sustainability and alignment with strategic priorities. This report presents a proposal for the future direction of the Council's In-House Provider Services, with a particular focus on the sustainability and suitability of current day service provision for adults with learning disabilities and older people.
- 2.3 It is not a statutory requirement to provide services to meet Care Act assessed needs through In-House arrangements. Financial analysis, set out in more detail below, demonstrates that two centres in particular, Helena Lane Day Centre and Aquamira Day Centre, in their current forms have high operational costs, and reduced demand. Specifically, Aquamira's high costs are driven by the maintenance of a hydrotherapy pool, while Helena Lane operates at a substantial deficit due to a significant lack of demand for the service.
- 2.4 Whilst this financial analysis suggests that neither Helena Lane or Aquamira Day Centres are viable, no final decisions have been taken on them. The report emphasises the need for robust, transparent consultation and engagement with all stakeholders, including service users, families, staff, and unions, to provide an opportunity for alternative options to be raised and reduce adverse impacts on vulnerable groups. An Equalities, Social Inclusion and Health Impact Assessments (ESHIA) has been completed to inform decision-making. In line with the Council's statutory duties, the report recommends an eight-week public consultation on the potential closure of Helena Lane Day Centre and the relocation of the Aquamira Day Service to an alternative venue. As stated above, no final decision has yet been taken on either day centre, and the Council remains receptive to solutions which could keep them open in a financially sustainable manner.
- 2.5 If following the period of consultation, the proposed closure of the Helena Lane Day Centre and the closure of the Aquamira site are approved then the closures are expected to deliver an approximate saving of £222,380 per year, supporting the Council's commitment to fiscal responsibility and the development of a modern, sustainable model of care. Transition planning and proactive engagement will be essential to safeguard continuity of care and support for affected individuals.
- 2.6 While it wouldn't necessarily bring further savings, the council still needs to further modernise day services by focusing on more flexible, person-centred support. Alongside traditional day care, individuals will have access to employment,

supported work, and volunteering through partnerships like the 'Enable' team. Taking a tiered approach, matches support to individual needs and aims to improve independence, social inclusion, and well-being, while ensuring efficient resource use and statutory compliance. As such, this report also recommends that cabinet endorse an eight-week public engagement on the reprovision of the remaining In-House Day Services.

- 2.7 This report invites Cabinet to agree the commencement of the recommended consultations and engagement processes, with the overall aim of ensuring that future provision is both effective and affordable, and that the Council continues to meet its statutory obligations in the most efficient and equitable manner.

3. Recommendations

3.1. Cabinet is asked to:

- (i) agree public consultation for 8 weeks on the future of Helena Lane Day Service, including the potential option to close the service. New admissions should be paused during the consultation period to avoid further impact.
- (ii) agree public consultation for 8 weeks on the potential transfer of the Aquamira day service to the Abbots Wood site.
- (iii) endorse public engagement for 8 weeks on the reprovision of the remaining In-House Day Services Provision.

- 3.2 Following the period of consultation, final recommendations will be presented to cabinet for determination.

Report

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 4.1 The council has declared a financial emergency and the external auditors (Grant Thornton) recommendation calls for urgent action, including a thorough review of all services to identify the costs of delivering statutory responsibilities. Therefore, In-House provision should be reviewed in this light.
- 4.2 In the past twenty years, the approach to care provision has evolved significantly, moving from a 'care' model toward one focused on 'support'. The Care Act 2014 acknowledged this change, shifting care planning from simply specifying the 'provision of services' to articulating 'how eligible needs will be met'. Meeting these needs may involve informal support, universal services, community networks, direct payments, and if needed, traditional services.
- 4.3 In the late 20th Century, there was a programme of deinstitutionalisation that saw changes in policies promoting integration and normalisation, moving away from large institutions toward community care services. Day services were the focal

points for social inclusion, offering structured activities, education, and sometimes supported employment. The Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 and later the Care Act 2014 reinforced rights-based, person-centred approaches, emphasising independence and choice. The 1990's saw traditional building-based day centres redesigned to take a more person-centred approach, offering more flexible, community-based activities rather than fixed attendance at a day centre.

4.4 Day Services for Older People has transformed over recent years, moving away from passive, building-based provision towards active, personalised support that enhances quality of life. For older adults, this change means greater choice and control, opportunities to maintain independence, and access to stimulating activities that reduce loneliness and cognitive decline. Community-based hubs and flexible outreach models enable social connections, promote physical activity, and foster a sense of purpose through volunteering or learning. This shift aligns with the Care Act's emphasis on prevention and wellbeing, ensuring older people can age with dignity, remain active citizens, and feel valued within their communities.

4.5 For People with a Learning Disability, Valuing People 2001 and Valuing People Now 2009 were pivotal strategies that set out the vision for people with a Learning Disability, challenging traditional building-based centres, promoting social inclusion, employment and lifelong learning. This saw a move away from large day centres, to services creating community-based opportunities, enabling friendship through natural connections in jobs, college and leisure activities, rather than through attendance at a single Day Centre.

4.6 With the introduction of direct payments, personal budgets, personalisation and self-directed support, people were empowered to access support in different ways, maximising the use of community activities and employing personal assistants to access them. In Shropshire there are 439 people accessing day centres across 29 facilities that offer support to people with a learning disability. 178 of those people access In-House Day services.

4.7 There are eight In-House Day Centres and one Voluntary Service:

Abbots Wood	Aquamira	Albert Road	Avalon	Wild Teams
Greenacres Farm	Wayfarers	Helena Lane	Maesbury Metals	

4.8 As part of the council's aim of modernising day services, the reprovision of remaining in-house services should focus on delivering more flexible, person-centred support that aligns with contemporary models. This approach would ensure that, alongside traditional day care and day activities, individuals have clear pathways to access employment, supported employment, and volunteering opportunities. By fostering collaboration with employment support services such as the council's 'Enable' team, the reprovision aims to enhance outcomes for people with additional needs, supporting them to achieve greater independence, social

inclusion, and well-being. A future model should recognise that while some individuals will always require structured day care, others can benefit from supported or independent work, and the service will be redesigned to provide a tiered approach that matches support to individual capabilities and aspirations. This will enable the council to deliver statutory duties efficiently, maximise value for money, and ensure that resources are allocated to services that deliver the greatest benefit to service users and the wider community.

- 4.9 An initial Equality, Social Inclusion and Health Impact Assessment (ESHIA) has been completed to identify the likely impact of any proposed change across the Protected Characteristics as set out in the Equality Act 2010, ahead of the proposed consultation.
- 4.10 At this stage the impacts are considered to be neutral to low negative across groupings with a potential to be low to medium negative for those in the grouping of Age and Disability. Proposals for mitigation will be scoped and informed by the results of the consultation.
- 4.11 The impacts in terms of health and wellbeing for the individuals likely to be affected will also need to be informed by the results of the consultation.

Risk	Mitigation
Failure to properly consult on potential changes to In-House provision could result in legal challenge, particularly under the requirements of the Care Act 2014 and public law principles	Ensure a robust, transparent, and inclusive public consultation process is undertaken, with all affected stakeholders given the opportunity to contribute. Document all engagement activities and outcomes and update impact assessments accordingly.
Changes to services may disproportionately affect vulnerable groups, leading to adverse outcomes in health, wellbeing, or social inclusion.	Complete and regularly update an Equalities, Social Inclusion and Health Impact Assessment (ESHIA). Use findings to inform decision-making and develop targeted support or transition plans for those most affected
Failure to achieve planned savings or to deliver services within budget could undermine the council's financial position.	Undertake detailed financial modelling and scenario planning. Monitor costs and savings throughout implementation, and adjust plans as necessary to ensure financial objectives are met

Service changes may lead to a reduction in quality or interruptions in care.	Develop robust transition plans and maintain clear communication with service users and families
Changes may result in workforce instability or insufficient market capacity to meet needs, especially if services are outsourced or reconfigured.	Engage early with staff and unions. Develop workforce retention and redeployment strategies, and conduct market engagement to ensure sufficient, quality provision.
Poorly managed changes could damage the council's reputation with the public, partners, and regulators.	Communicate openly and proactively with all stakeholders, providing clear rationales for decisions and demonstrating commitment to quality and fairness.

5. Financial Implications

5.1. Shropshire Council continues to manage unprecedented financial demands and a financial emergency was declared by Cabinet on 10 September 2025. The overall financial position of the Council is set out in the monitoring position presented to Cabinet on a monthly basis. Significant management action has been instigated at all levels of the Council reducing spend to ensure the Council's financial survival. While all reports to Members provide the financial implications of decisions being taken, this may change as officers and/or Portfolio Holders review the overall financial situation and make decisions aligned to financial survivability. All non-essential spend will be stopped and all essential spend challenged. These actions may involve (this is not exhaustive):

- scaling down initiatives,
- changing the scope of activities,
- delaying implementation of agreed plans, or
- extending delivery timescales.

5.2. The financial review for Aquamira demonstrates that the building costs are disproportionately high, primarily due to the operation and maintenance of the hydrotherapy pool. Excluding internal market recharges, the total annual cost of operating Aquamira stands at £374,325 minus income of £19,200, with an average cost of £211 per person per day. This is substantially above the market benchmark of approximately £170 per day for comparable services. While Aquamira has a hydro pool that has been valued by some individuals who attended the service, it should be recognised that the council does not have a statutory duty to provide such a facility, and its maintenance represents an unnecessary additional financial burden. Councils operate leisure services under discretionary powers rather than a legal duty.

- 5.3. There is a strong network of alternative support available locally to Aquamira, including alternative day services, direct payments, personal assistants, and various community and voluntary sector services. Day Service to an alternative venue such as Abbots Wood would reduce the costs of running the day service by £85,920, minus £25,620 of projected income from external income, making an overall projected reduction of £60,300 per year. As this site is council owned, a further savings calculation would be required to establish how much would be saved overall by the council, as this will depend heavily on the future use of the site.
- 5.4. The financial analysis for Helena Lane demonstrates that, despite the absence of accommodation costs in the reported figures, the service is not financially sustainable in its current format. The annual cost of running the service stands at £180,190, minus a projected income of £18,110, which gives an average running cost of £244 per person, per half day. It is important to note that the true cost of running the service is even higher, as building costs are not incorporated due to the centre's location within a larger council facility. Generally people are now using alternative provision. Seven out of the eight attendees pay privately for the service at an agreed fee, but this has been heavily subsidised. Fees and charges are currently under review for 26-27. People's needs could continue to be met in an alternative way. If the service were to close, it would generate an annual saving for the council of £162,080.
- 5.5. A range of alternative support options is available locally, including direct payments, personal assistants, and a diverse selection of community and voluntary sector services. The nearest equivalent Day Service is approximately 10 miles away, with a daily charge of £50. While there are no other local day centres within Ludlow itself, an increasingly community-inclusive approach has led to the development of various local services. Examples include luncheon groups supporting individuals with additional needs, such as Hands Together Ludlow, which provides befriending services, Men's Shed, digital inclusion initiatives, community lunches, Food Hub, and Community Fridge.
- 5.6. Ludlow Assembly Rooms offer not only theatre and film but also a wide variety of community classes, complemented by other services, providing assorted meal options. Community services in Church Stretton deliver additional services, such as 'meet and eat' programmes. Ludlow Library acts as a vibrant community hub, delivering a broad spectrum of social and wellbeing activities aimed at reducing isolation and promoting inclusion. Regular sessions include Knit and Natter, Rhyme Time for families, Sitting Ballet for gentle movement, and Ludlow Gaymers for LGBTQ+ engagement, alongside learning opportunities like digital support drop-ins, creative writing groups, and the Community Clay Club. Furthermore, monthly poetry socials, Citizens Advice sessions, and councillor surgeries enhance access to support and foster community engagement.

5.7. All other spending is continually monitored on other days services, ensuring efficiency in operations. It is not suggested that a re-provision/ redesign of the remaining services would generate any further additional savings. However, this will provide better value for Shropshire residents accessing services.

5.8. While In-House services may be exempt from public procurement rules, the council must still ensure fairness and transparency with consideration of the Best Value duty under the Local Government Act 1999.

5.9. Based on financial analysis of the potential changes, reduction in costs could be significant:

Financial Year	Quarter	Projected savings
26-27 - Q1	£0 (redundancy costs)	£111,190
26-27 - Q2	£0	
26-27 - Q3	£55,595	
26-27 - Q4	£55,595	
27-28	-	£222,380
28-29	-	£222,380
29-30	-	£222,380

6. Climate Change Appraisal

6.1 While the aim is to provide services locally to where people live, changes to service provision could result in people having to travel further afield to access suitable facilities that could increase vehicle emissions.

7. Background

7.1 The Council has offered In-House services for many years. Prior to 'Compulsory Competitive Tendering', most care was delivered internally, guided by public sector principles. While not legally required, Councils use In-House provision to meet obligations under the Care Act 2014 to address or prevent care needs. Operated directly by the council, these services are strictly non-profit.

7.2 There are eight Day Services and a volunteer service.

- i. Abbots Wood is a progressive day centre in Shrewsbury for adults with learning disabilities. The service offers a wide range of activities, including arts and crafts, quizzes, exercise (with a small gym), gardening, cooking, music, and computer sessions. There are also outdoor activities such as cycling and gardening, and regular community outings. Abbots Wood operates a person-

centred approach, supporting independence and individual outcomes, and works closely with the Wild Teams for nature-based activities.

- ii. Albert Road Day Service, also in Shrewsbury, is a smaller centre supporting around 27 adults with learning disabilities. It provides both onsite and offsite activities, such as gardening, arts and crafts, group cooking, travel training, and community engagement. The service is known for its supportive environment, flexible approach, and involvement in local projects like LovelyLand and the Wild Team, promoting health, wellbeing, and outdoor adventure.
- iii. Aquamira, based in Sutton Park, Shrewsbury, specialises in supporting adults with profound and multiple learning disabilities. The centre offers a holistic and therapeutic approach, multi-sensory experiences, gardening, arts and crafts, cookery, and digital activities. The service is highly person-centred, with keyworkers supporting everyone's health, wellbeing, and independence. The service has onsite access to a hydrotherapy pool and Sensory Room.
- iv. Avalon Day Opportunities in Oswestry provides a broad range of activities for adults with learning disabilities, including gardening, crafts, sensory room sessions, bingo, karaoke, photography, and shop-and-cook groups. The service also supports offsite voluntary work and community projects, aiming to promote independence, social inclusion, and personal development in a relaxed and supportive environment.
- v. Greenacres Farm, near Baschurch, is a 16-acre working farm offering day opportunities for adults with learning disabilities. Attendees learn skills in horticulture, agriculture, animal care, catering, woodwork, and concrete production. The farm also features a sensory garden, outdoor gym, and accessible cycle path. Greenacres promotes independence, social inclusion, and community engagement, and provides opportunities for recreation and skill-building in a safe, supportive setting. There also a house on site that is currently not used.
- vi. Helena Lane Day Service is specifically designed to support older people. The service offers a range of daytime activities and support, aiming to promote independence, social engagement, and wellbeing for its attendees. More recently due to a lack of demand, the service has reduced its offer to half days, three times a week.
- vii. Maesbury Metals in Oswestry is a specialist day service focused on upcycling, metalwork, and woodwork for adults with learning disabilities. Service users develop skills in welding, woodworking, arts and crafts, and mosaicking, producing items for sale at craft markets and community events. The centre also supports social skills, community access, and self-advocacy, fostering independence and creativity in a workshop environment.
- viii. Wayfarers Day Centre in Market Drayton provides a variety of meaningful activities for adults with learning disabilities, including independent living skills,

physical and leisure activities, gardening, arts and crafts, and sensory sessions. The centre emphasises inclusion, choice, and community participation, offering regular outings, fundraising events, and opportunities to develop life skills and independence.

- ix. The Shropshire Wild Teams are volunteer conservation groups for adults with learning disabilities and/or mental health needs. Participants engage in countryside management tasks such as habitat management, ground clearance, hedge laying, and wildlife surveys. The programme promotes physical activity, wellbeing, confidence, and social skills, using Shropshire's natural environments as a therapeutic and educational resource. Sessions rotate between day centres and are tailored to participants' interests and abilities.

8. Additional Information

- 8.1. A broader review of all other in-house provisions will be conducted. If additional changes are suggested that need cabinet approval, they will be presented in future cabinet reports.

9. Conclusions

- 9.1. The financial analysis suggests that both Helena Lane and Aquamira have excessive running costs that could be mitigated. Helena Lane operates at a substantial financial deficit. Similarly, Aquamira's running costs are hampered by excessive building costs, particularly those linked to the hydro-pool, further compounding its financial unsustainability. Declining attendance and reduced demand for these services underscore a potential need for future change.
- 9.2. No decision has yet been made about the future of the In-House Day services. The council is open to alternative suggestions. To thoroughly assess these services, a consultation will be required to consider potential changes, such as possibly closing Helena Lane Day Centre and moving Aquamira Day Service to another location. Careful transition planning and proactive involvement with service users and their families are crucial to ensure continuity of care and support. The focus remains on the council meeting people's eligible needs through relocation and reprovision, while maintaining financial sustainability.
- 9.3. There are 23 individuals who access the two services that could be mostly affected. A social work assessment would be offered to all affected individuals, with a focus on a strengths-based approach to promote independence and facilitate access to community-based activities as appropriate.
- 9.4. If there were any changes that would affect the overall use of the pool by private users, individual discussions will take place.

9.5. The total reduction in spend from the potential changes is approximately £222,380 per year.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Local Member: All

Appendices

Appendix 1- Equality, Social Inclusion and Health impact Assessment (ESHIA)