

Market Shaping Plan for Day Opportunities

Adult Social Care,
Commissioning, Improvement
and Assurance



Last updated: October 2025



Barnsley – the place
of possibilities.



BARNSELY
Metropolitan Borough Council

Introduction

This Market Shaping Plan has been developed as a calling card for Barnsley's care market. The plan describes what services we currently have, how they are utilised and what we want the market to look like in the future.

The Care Act sets out the market shaping duties mandated to councils to make sure local people can choose from a diverse, high-quality care market. This should be based on locally identified needs, demographics, trends and aspirations.

The statutory guidance expects councils to use 'a wide range of approaches to meet the needs of all people in their area who need care and support, whether arranged or funded by the state, by the person themselves, or in other ways'.

Councils must make sure their areas offer a diverse range of service providers and continuously encourage innovation. In shaping the market, we will:

- **Engage with care providers:** Developing strong partnerships and making sure they are well-supported and prepared to meet demand.
- **Increase choice and control:** Ensuring that people can choose from a wide range of care services that meet their personal preferences and needs.
- **Develop a sustainable market:** Creating a financially viable care market with long-term stability.

This plan should be read in conjunction with [our Adult Social Care Market Position Statement 2024-27](#), which provides a strategic overview of our vision to make our borough a thriving place of possibilities.

You can learn more about how the government describes market shaping by visiting [the Department of Health and Social Care's website](#).

Current supply of day opportunity services

What we mean by day opportunities

Day opportunities are activities in the community for adults with disabilities, including those with learning disabilities, Autism or physical health needs, and older people.

They are designed to help people live more independent and fulfilling lives, and these activities can take place in day centres or out in the community.

People can learn new skills, make friends, enjoy hobbies, volunteer or try out work-related activities, all with support from trained staff.

The support offered is tailored to each person's needs and goals so they can stay active and involved in their local community.

Day opportunities help by improving people's wellbeing, building their confidence, reducing loneliness and supporting them to be more independent. They also give family members and carers a much needed break from their caring responsibilities.

CQC regulation:

Most day opportunities are not registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC). This is because they typically do not provide services that require registration, such as supporting people with personal care tasks.

Day opportunity services in Barnsley

There are a small number of services in Barnsley providing day opportunities that are currently funded by the council. These include in-house services delivered by the council and those run by private companies, charities and voluntary organisations.

Each service offers a variety of supported activities, including arts and crafts, sports and leisure, education and employment, and community involvement. Table one below gives a more detailed overview of these services.

The three older people's services listed below have a contract with the council, which is due to end on 31 July 2026.

The three older people's services listed below have a contract with the council, which is due to end on 31 July 2026.

Other services operate under individual 'spot contract' arrangements, which provide flexibility while still allowing the council to monitor quality and ensure that support is delivered safely and effectively.

Table one

Service provider	Who they support	Key activities
Barnsley Council Supported Activities (our in-house day opportunities)	Adults with learning disabilities and Autism	Improving skills and knowledge, helping people to be independent, work or volunteer. They also help people learn to travel independently and take part in leisure and social activities.
Artworks Barnsley	Adults with learning disabilities and Autism	A creative arts organisation, helping adults with learning disabilities to achieve their potential and develop life skills through creative workshops and placements.
Opening Doors	Young people with learning disabilities	This service provides work experience opportunities, hydrotherapy, community access and support for developing independence.
Cross the Sky (Barnsley Civic Enterprise)	People with learning disabilities and Autism	A theatre company for people with disabilities. The group devise their own original musical theatre productions, inspired by autistic culture and the performers' lived experiences.
Greenworks Employment Support	People with learning disabilities	Supported employment through agriculture and horticulture, developing employment skills in grounds maintenance, selling produce and caring for a range of livestock.
Care2Care	Older people with dementia	A building-based service providing activities to enhance physical and mental wellbeing, personal care and support to maintain independence for people with dementia.
Age UK Barnsley	Older people	A building-based service providing personal care and support, a range of activities, such as arts and crafts, and social gatherings to enhance physical and mental wellbeing.
Tier Care	Older people	A building-based service providing personal care and support, social events, a chance to talk and enjoy a cooked meal as well as activities and exercise to enhance physical and mental wellbeing.

There are other day opportunity services operating in Barnsley that are not currently funded by the council. Like the providers listed above, they also play a key role in reducing isolation and promoting wellbeing. These services may be delivered by a charity, a social enterprise or be grant-funded, such as through the National Lottery.

Table two provides more detail about these services. There may be other services that we don't currently know about offering day opportunities in Barnsley:

Table two

Service provider	Who they support	Key activities
Sun Healthcare	People with learning disabilities	Weekly drop-in session to reduce isolation and activities including bingo, raffle, crafts, games and pool.
Local Mencap	People with learning disabilities	Work and skills training, a sensory room and activities including music, karate, cooking, theatre and social evenings.
Disability Sport Barnsley	People with any type of disability	Inclusive sports and fun activities.
Barnsley Football Club Community Trust	People with any type of disability	Inclusive sports.
Age UK Barnsley	Older people	Skills, arts and crafts and personal care.
BIADS	People living with dementia	Sensory stimulation, painting, chair exercise, crafts, music, dancing and reminiscing.
Butterflies	People living with learning difficulties or dementia	Social group with activities and trips.
Physical Futures	People with physical disabilities	Social activities, personal care and assisted feeding.
Headways	People living with a brain injury	Peer support, social activities and outings.
Beacon South Yorkshire	Carers	Support for carers supporting people with substance misuse problems, disabilities, mental health conditions and dementia.

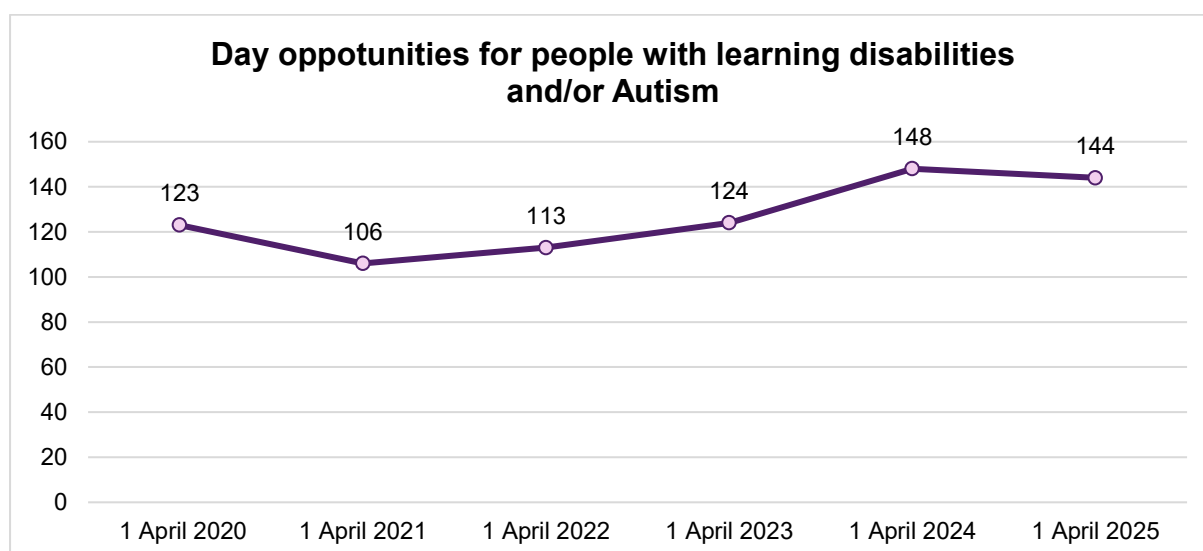
Capacity and utilisation

Learning disabilities and Autism:

Table three shows the utilisation of day opportunity services over a period of five years for people with learning disabilities and/or Autism. The services included are those listed in table one as supporting people with learning disabilities and Autism.

These figures are based on the number of people funded directly by the council each year, and do not include those who may have accessed the service through a direct payment or by funding their own support.

Table three



There was a drop in the number of people attending day opportunity services in 2020 and 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Over that period, services had to close, and people found alternative support.

Since then, we have seen steady growth in the number of people attending day opportunity services, except when there was a slight reduction in April 2025.

This growth is due to increased capacity from one provider and the launch of a new service in Barnsley. The percentage increases and decreases are shown below:

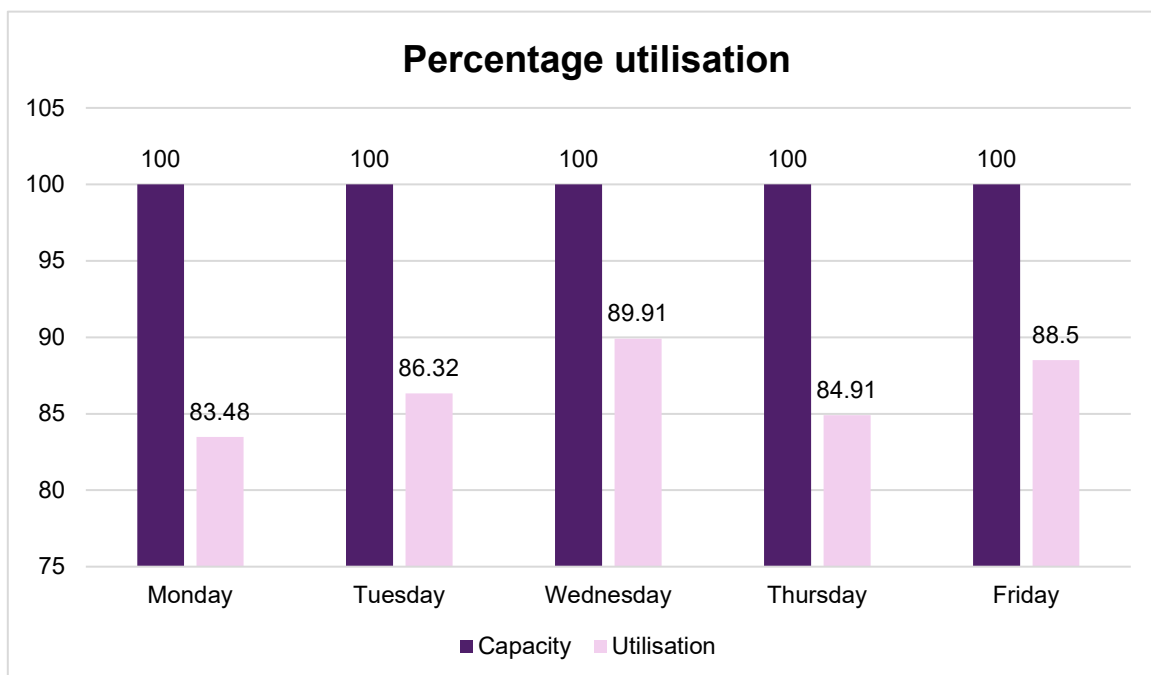
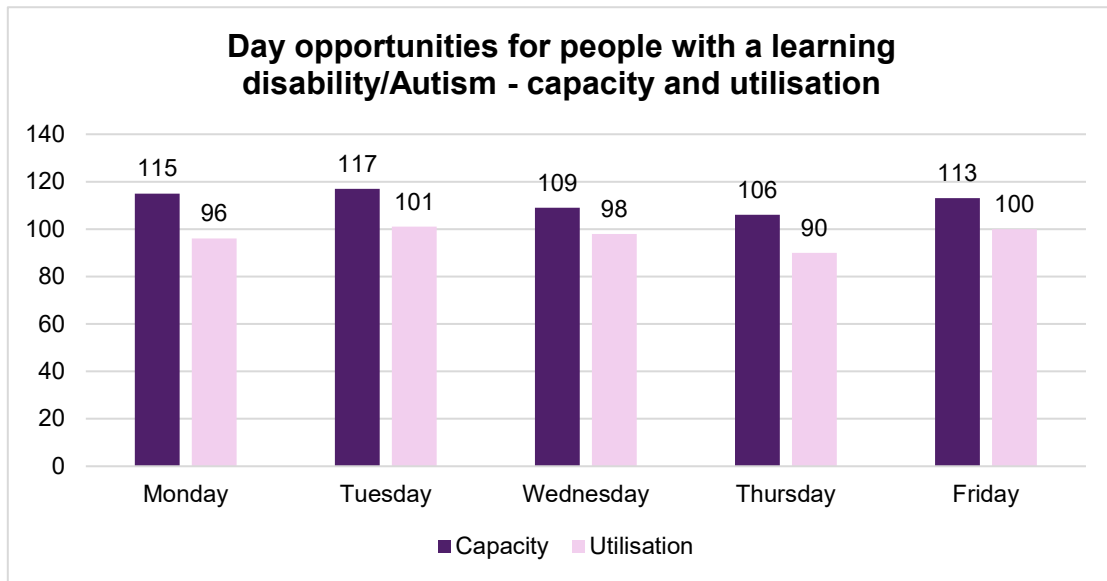
- April 2021 to April 2022: +6%
- April 2022 to April 2023: +9%
- April 2023 to April 2024: +19%
- April 2024 to April 2025: -2%

Learning disabilities and Autism - daily capacity and utilisation:

Table four shows the number of people with learning disabilities and/or Autism attending day opportunity services, broken down by attendance from Monday to Friday, and the capacity available within those services each day.

The services included in this table are those listed in table one as supporting people with learning disabilities and Autism.

Table four (data as of September 2025)



Most people who attend day opportunity services do so more than once a week to participate in activities of their choice. Table four indicates that there is currently capacity on all days across the different services the council funds.

Our in-house day opportunities service:

Our Supported Activities service currently provides most of the day opportunity placements for people with a learning disability and/or Autism in Barnsley.

In 2020, our in-house service supported 106 of the 123 people shown in table three. This number reduced to 94 in 2025 due to the service remodelling.

Historically, our day opportunities service was building-based, operating out of four buildings across the borough. The service now has two buildings, with most services being delivered out in people's communities. The service has also increased the number and type of activities available to the people they support.

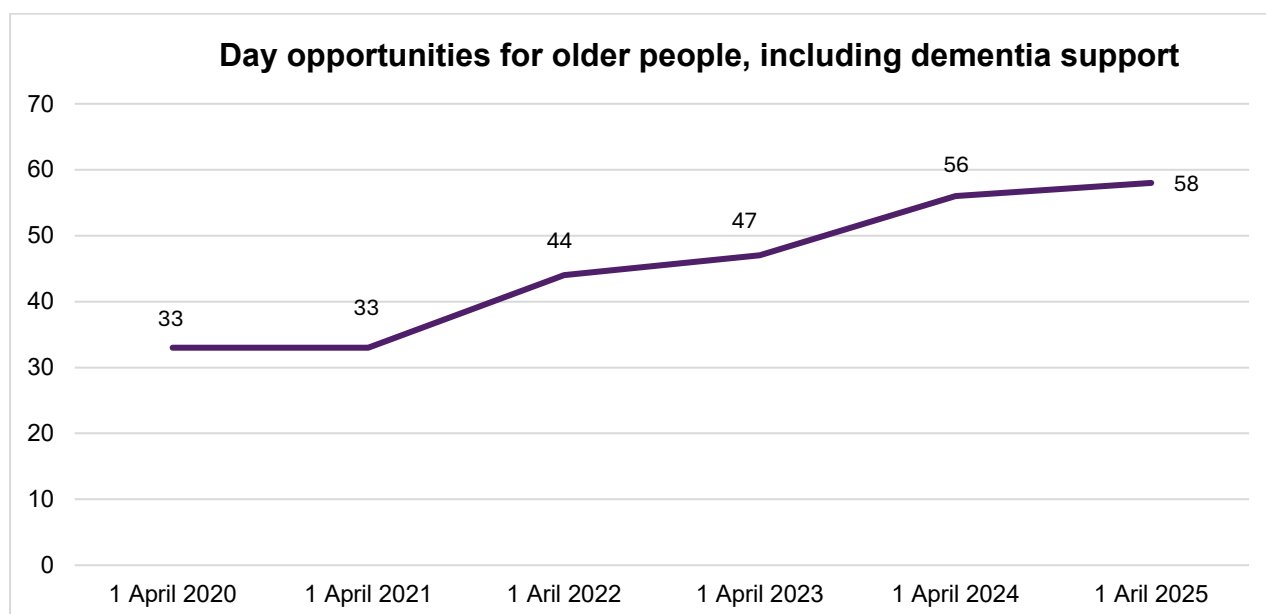
Our in-house day opportunity service is currently operating at full capacity based on the ratio of staff to people we support. However, the service continues to receive referrals from social workers and intends to review how sessions and activities are delivered to increase the number of people they can support.

Should the service increase its capacity, which will be achieved within existing resources, this is likely to reduce the number of people accessing external day opportunity services.

Older people, including those with dementia:

Table five shows the utilisation of day opportunity services over a period of five years for older people and older people with dementia. The services included in this table are those listed in table one as supporting older people and people with dementia.

Table five



There was a decline in the number of people attending day opportunity services in 2020 and 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Over that period, services had to close, and people found alternative support. One service closed during the pandemic and terminated its contract with the council. This service did not reopen.

Since then, we have seen steady growth in the number of people attending day opportunity services, with the largest increase in 2022 when services reopened after the pandemic. The percentage increases and decreases are shown below:

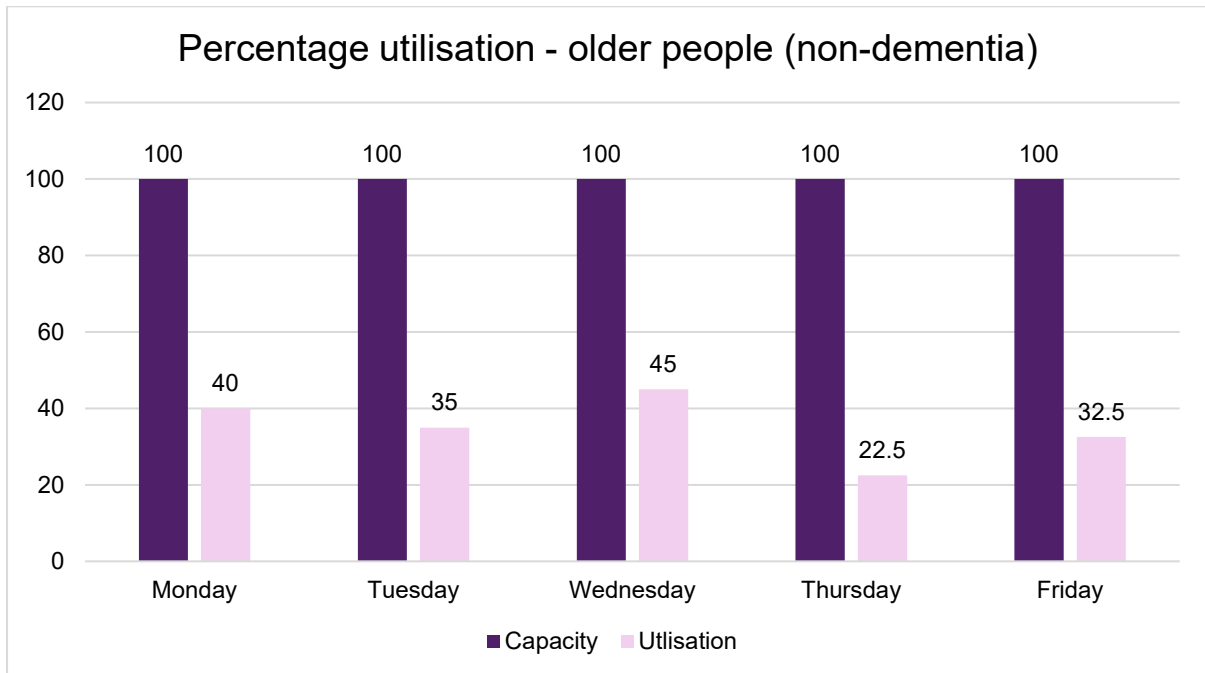
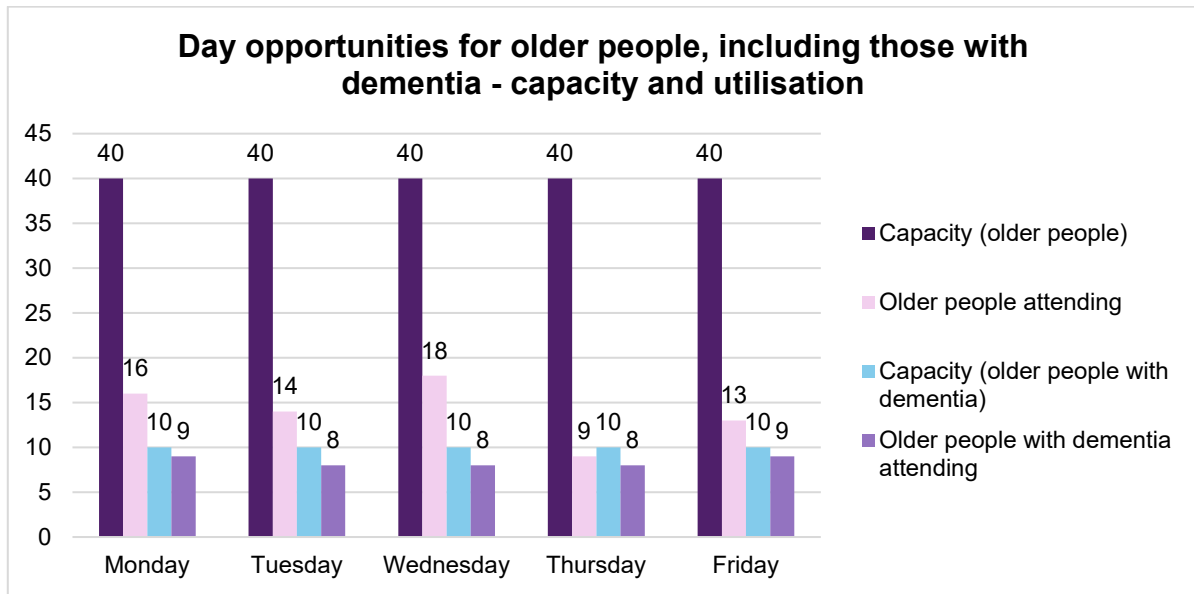
- April 2021 to April 2022: +22%
- April 2022 to April 2023: +6%
- April 2023 to April 2024: +19%
- April 2024 to April 2025: +3%

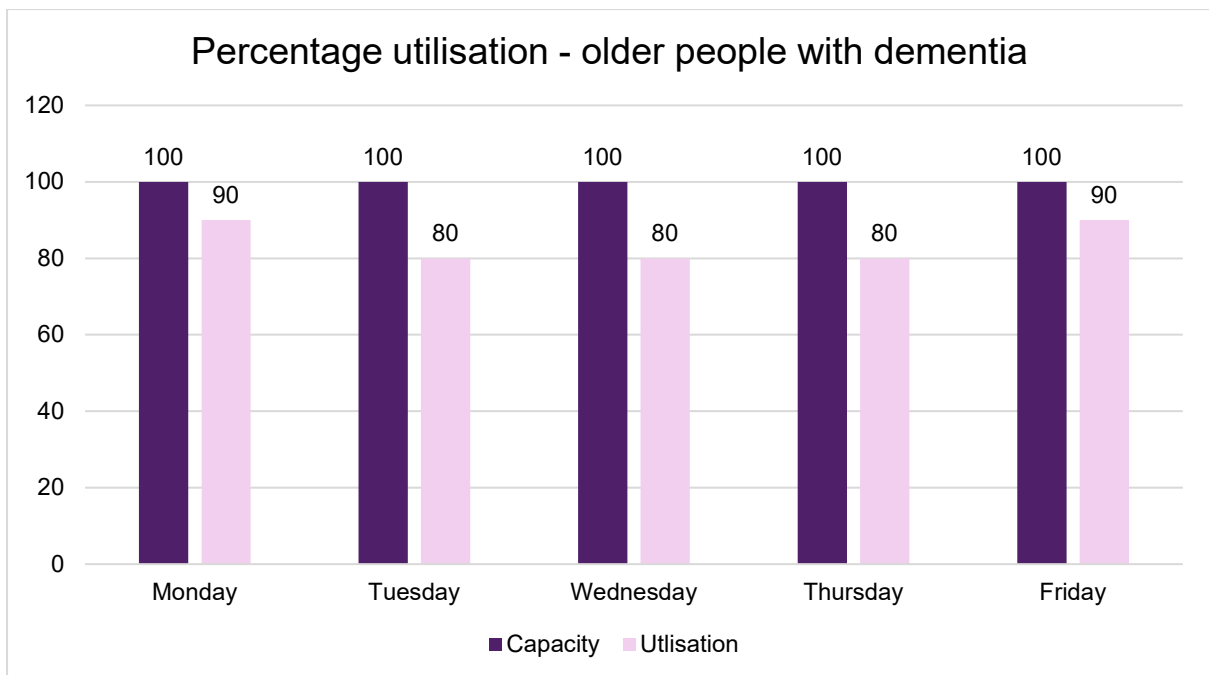
Older people, including those with dementia - daily capacity and utilisation:

Table six shows the number of older people, including those with dementia, who attend day opportunity services, broken down by attendance from Monday to Friday and the capacity available within those services each day.

The services included in this table are those listed in table one as supporting older people and people with dementia.

Table six (data as of September 2025)





Most people who attend day opportunity services do so more than once a week to participate in activities of their choice.

Table six indicates that there is currently capacity on all days across the services the council funds.

Whilst table five shows a steady increase in the number of people attending day opportunity services, the capacity within these services remains underutilised.

Referrals:

In 2024/25, there were 14 new referrals to the two older people’s day services.

As of September 2025, these services have had three new referrals since April 2025, suggesting that by the end of this financial year, the referral figures are likely to be lower than last year.

The older people’s dementia service received twelve new referrals in 2024/25 and, as of September 2025, has received twelve since April 2025, suggesting referrals this year could be higher.

However, these figures need to be considered alongside the number of exits from the service. Based on the figures provided in table five, there has been an overall net growth of 14 people across all three services since 2022.

Older people's day opportunity services experience higher turnover due to the age profile of attendees. Therefore, while we have seen growth reflecting our local demographics, including an ageing population, demand for services remains steady.

This is particularly evident in the older people's dementia service, where only one of the 19 people who started the service in 2024/25 remains in attendance.

The other 18 people have moved on to other, more intensive services, such as home care or residential care.

Services funded through direct payments:

Table seven shows the current utilisation of day opportunity services in Barnsley which are funded by the council through a direct payment arrangement.

There are currently 83 people in Barnsley using a direct payment to purchase day opportunity services, with most of those (80%) being people with a learning disability.

Table seven

Analysis of supply and utilisation:

- The overall supply of day opportunity services for people with a learning disability and/or Autism in Barnsley continues to increase, with a steady increase in utilisation. There are no waiting lists for services, and most of the current service providers have the capacity to accept new referrals.
- Our in-house service is currently operating at capacity, but we're reviewing its current model and structure with a view to offering more placements in 2026/27.
- More people are attending day services for older people, but the overall capacity remains underutilised. This includes the older people's dementia day service.
- A service specifically for those with a physical disability is being used by eight people through direct payments. There is capacity in this service, with referral rates remaining low.

- A small number of people are attending a bespoke service for those with an acquired brain injury. Referral rates for this service remain low.

Transport

When a person is assessed as having eligible needs for care and support under the Care Act, we should also consider how that person will receive that care and support. Where it is agreed that the person's needs will be met through a day opportunity service, we must then consider how the person will get to that service.

This can include using their own transport, support from family or friends, local public transport, transport offered by the service provider or council-arranged transport.

Learning disabilities and Autism:

People who use the council's day opportunity services get support to travel in several ways. We don't currently fund transport for people with a learning disability as part of their care package because we encourage independence and help people make their own travel arrangements.

This may include public transport, lifts from family and friends or using community transport, such as Dial-a-Ride, for a small cost. Some other day opportunity providers also include transport as part of the service they offer.

Older people:

As of September 2025, the council were supporting 48 people financially to attend day opportunity services. This includes the use of council transport and transport provided by an external company.

The total cost of this transport to the council is £355,000 per year, averaging out at £7,396 per person. The number of people on each bus varies each day, with the lowest being six and the highest being twelve.

They are picked up at their home addresses, taken to the day service and returned home at the end of the day. The majority of people using transport use the service more than once per week to travel to and from a building-based day service.

Feedback from people who use our transport services:

Older people have told us they appreciate the transport we provide for the friendly staff. However, opinions vary on the duration of the bus rides, with some people saying they feel they spend a long time on the bus to and from the service.

Concerns have been expressed by Adult Social Care staff about the impact of travel time getting to the day service along with some very early pick-ups and late drop-offs at the end of the day.

Financial analysis

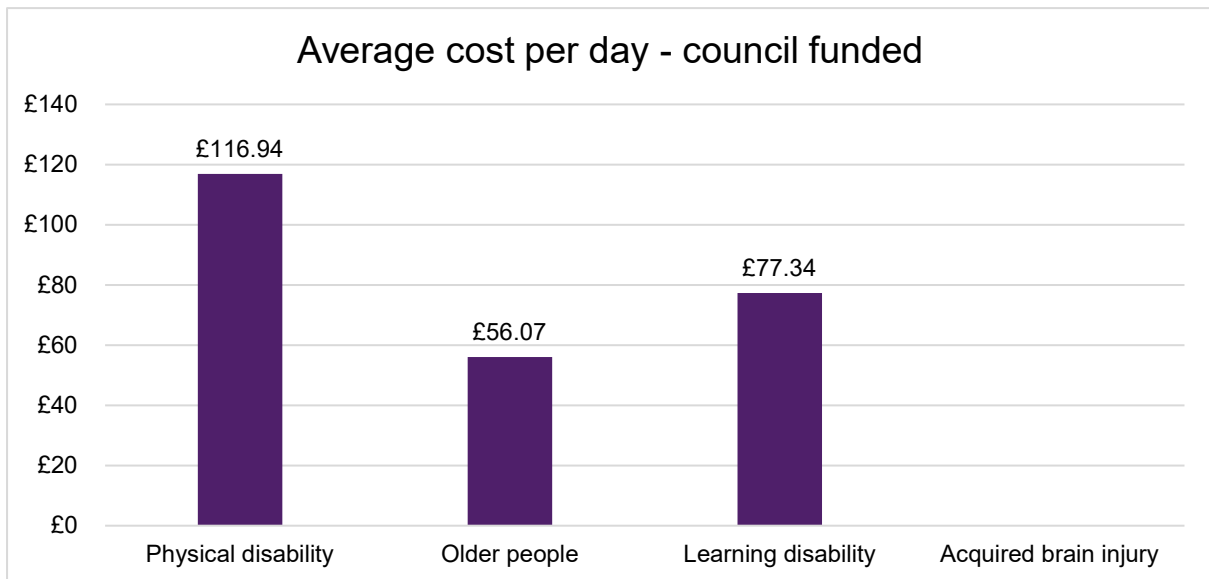
In 2025/26, the council is expected to spend around £2.5 million on day opportunity services. The majority of this spend is associated with supporting people with a learning disability. However, this figure includes the cost of delivering our in-house day opportunities service, which reflects the full internal operating costs of running a council-managed service.”

Funded services - average cost per day by client group:

Table eight sets out the average cost per day for people attending day opportunity services. This is broken down by client group.

This table shows the costs for council-funded services and does not include those purchased using a direct payment. Direct payment rates can be found in table nine.

Table 8



The higher rates shown for learning and physical disabilities likely reflect the complexity of need for these groups, requiring a higher staff-to-person ratio.

Funded services - average cost per day by client group (direct payments):

Table nine shows the average daily rate for day opportunity services funded by direct payments. Some providers charge higher rates due to the complexity of required care and support.

Table 9



Tables eight and nine suggest a disparity between the daily costs of day opportunity services when purchased directly by the council or purchased using a direct payment arrangement. For people with a physical disability, the average daily rate is higher when services are purchased by the council. However, this may reflect a complexity of need whereby the council is managing the care package of a person whose unable to manage a direct payment arrangement themselves.

The average costs for older people are similar to the direct payment rate, showing as slightly higher. For people with a learning disability, the average cost per day is higher when using a direct payment.

This could reflect that the figure used in table eight is an average of day rates, including those used for our in-house day opportunities service, which is not reflective of actual cost as this rate includes the overheads associated with the council's overall provider service model.

Feedback from staff, providers and people with lived experience, including unpaid carers

In the development of this Market Shaping Plan, we consulted staff from our in-house day opportunities service, external providers, people who currently use day opportunity services in Barnsley and unpaid carers.

Their feedback will inform our commissioning intentions.

Overall, stakeholder feedback on existing services was positive. People like the range and variety of services and activities available locally, and they feel that their needs are being met.

People who use our services described day opportunities as helping them to meet other like-minded people, preventing social isolation, and keep their minds and bodies active. Unpaid carers described their loved one's access to day opportunity services as a welcome break from their caring role.

Some gaps were shared, and suggestions for how we could improve our service offer included services being available closer to people's homes, flexible services

that can be offered at different times of day, and services that can still meet people's changing needs without them having to find alternative care and support.

Key themes from stakeholder feedback:

- People want to access services closer to their home and community.
- They want to access services flexibly, which may sometimes mean activities outside of the current office hour model.
- They want to be able to take part in meaningful activities that support them to stay active and mobile.
- They want to be able to keep their support when their circumstances change, for example, as they get older or are diagnosed with a condition like dementia.
- They appreciate the transport offered but find the long journeys a challenge.
- Carers want to know their loved ones are safe when they are in receipt of a service that gives them a break from their caring roles.

Future demand for day opportunities in Barnsley

- The overall population in Barnsley has increased by 5.9%, from 231,200 in 2011 to 244,600 in 2021.
 - 0- to 19-year-olds make up 22% (54,400) of Barnsley's population.
 - 20- to 64-year-olds make up 58% (142,800) of Barnsley's population.
 - 64+ year olds make up 20% (47,400) of Barnsley's population.
- The number of residents aged 65+ in Barnsley is predicted to reach 60,500 by 2030, representing an increase of 33% from 2016.
- Current trends suggest there will also be a 21% increase in the number of people aged 65+ receiving longer-term support by 2030.
- While the population in Barnsley is growing, as outlined earlier in this plan, we currently have capacity across all day opportunity services and are therefore not looking to increase capacity in the short term.
- There has been limited growth in demand for day opportunity services since 2021 - 17% in learning disability services (21 people) and 32% in older people's services (14 people).

- People are presenting with much more complex care needs, requiring a more holistic, coordinated and resource-intensive approach to support people effectively.
- Changes to how day opportunities are offered as part of a person's care assessment have already commenced, blending the support delivered with other contracted agencies or the voluntary and community sector.
- Strength-based assessments mean that people are being supported to access local voluntary and community services as an alternative to funded support.

Our commissioning intentions

This Market Shaping Plan aims to provide people in Barnsley with an overview of the services we currently offer and the services we will need from providers in the future.

The plan is not designed to share procurement opportunities but should help care providers shape and develop their services based on:

- An understanding of current and projected demand.
- Feedback from those who access services.
- A set of principles that commissioners will use when developing future models and/or contracts.

Our commissioning intentions are therefore based on:

- Enabling provision that offers flexibility and choice for both the people who use our services and their carers.
- Taking the opportunity to access existing community assets.
- Offering care and choice of service in a location that requires minimal travel time.
- Considering age-appropriate, specific services to include people transitioning into adulthood.
- Enabling more flexibility to people with direct payments.
- Providing access to activities that support people's physical and mental wellbeing.

- Encouraging joined-up working with local neighbourhood teams and services.
- Culturally tailored to meet cultural and personal preferences.
- Person-centred, co-produced and developed with the people who use our services and their carers.
- Delivered closer to people's homes and in communities they are familiar with, avoiding the need for unnecessary travel.

Our priorities for 2026/27

Our commissioning priorities for 2026/27:

For older people and those with physical disabilities:

- We will develop a framework agreement (a list of preferred providers) for providers who can deliver support to anyone who needs a day service. Referrals will be managed through our brokerage service, which will help people find a service that meets their needs.
- Arrangements for those currently using day services will not change unless any of the current providers do not want to apply to be on the framework or are unsuccessful in their application. People affected by this will be reviewed and supported to find alternative services.

For people with learning disabilities:

- We will maintain the current arrangements for our in-house day opportunities service for people with learning disabilities.
- We will continue to work with the service to support small growth and address potential gaps in service provision.

Transport:

We will review our current arrangements, including those accessing transport, as our data suggests that it is not delivering good value for money.

Rationale for change:

- The council is currently purchasing care and support from a small number of providers without a contract. The framework agreement contact will help us formalise arrangements with those successful providers.

- A framework contract will also provide an opportunity for more providers, including those from the community and voluntary sector, to enter into a contractual relationship with the council. However, it will still be the responsibility of the provider to promote their business, as a framework agreement will not guarantee business.

Rationale for the changes - older people and physical disabilities:

- The current service provision is underutilised and unlikely to be sustainable long-term. This may mean some providers no longer wish to continue offering these services and may not wish to apply to join the framework.
- The current model does not support the principles developed using feedback from the people who use these services and their carers.
- The current spend on transport is significantly more than the budget set aside for this service. We therefore need to reduce spend in this area.

Rationale for the changes - learning disabilities:

- The service continues to receive referrals despite operating at full capacity. Small growth will therefore allow them to accept more referrals.
- Where gaps have been identified, these relate to the very specific needs of one person or a small group of people. At present, these numbers are too small to require commissioning a separate external service.