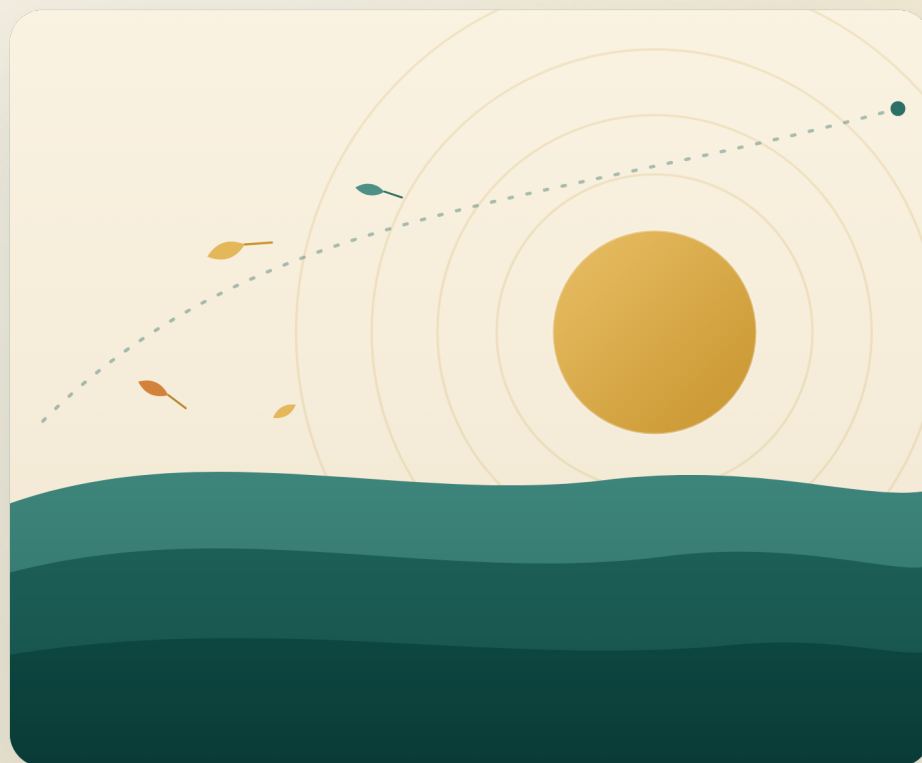


Why summer is the smartest time to prepare for *autumn tenders*



Obiajulu Okonkwo

Founder & CEO, The Good Practice Company



Many providers assume that summer is a quieter period for commissioning. While there may be fewer live opportunities in some areas, the most successful providers know that summer is preparation season, not waiting season.

Across the country, local authorities are reviewing demand, refreshing commissioning priorities, updating Market Position Statements (MPS), reviewing Sufficiency Strategies and planning future procurement. By the time autumn tenders are published, commissioners already know what they're looking for.

The question is: will you?

Rather than waiting for the next opportunity to appear on Contracts Finder, use this period to understand where the market is heading.

🔪 TEN QUESTIONS

The Market Readiness Review

Set aside an hour this week and work through these ten questions about your local market.

1 What services are commissioners saying they need most?

Read your local authority's Market Position Statement and identify the top three priorities. Treat the MPS as a starting point though, not gospel: many are years out of date.

The sharper intelligence comes from people. Attend meetings with the local authority, learn from their staff, talk to your commissioning contacts and value their opinions. They will tell you what the document cannot. In some areas commissioners now say they have too many SCAs, and much the same in supported living. Yet a real issue with supported living is that authorities often will not use a scheme if they were not fully consulted before it was built.

2 Which client groups are growing?

Are commissioners highlighting increasing demand across these groups? Write down the ones that align with your organisation.

Care leavers

Supported Living

Learning Disabilities

Autism

Mental Health

Complex Care

3 Where are the geographical gaps?

Commissioners often identify areas where provision is limited. If you have expansion plans, this intelligence should shape where you invest next.

The real opportunity is in the difficult areas authorities struggle to cover. Work out how you would serve them, and get your costs right before you apply. When commissioners talk to providers about these areas, too many arrive without a plan, or fail to demonstrate their case graphically. They simply ask for more money. Be the provider who turns up with a costed, evidenced solution instead.

4 What challenges are commissioners repeatedly talking about?

Look for recurring themes. These are often the problems that future tenders will seek to solve.

- Workforce shortages
- Limited specialist accommodation
- Delayed hospital discharge
- Housing shortages
- Quality concerns
- Provider sustainability

5 What evidence are commissioners asking providers to demonstrate?

Review recent tender documents. The recurring themes tell you what evidence to strengthen before the next procurement.

Co-production

Outcomes

Safeguarding

Workforce development

Quality assurance

Mobilisation

Partnership working

6 Which contracts are coming to an end?

Check your local authority's Contracts Register and Procurement Pipeline. Frameworks don't last forever, and knowing when contracts expire gives you time to prepare before opportunities are advertised.

Are you actually ready?

If a tender worth £2 million was released tomorrow, could you submit a high-quality response? If not, summer is the perfect time to close these gaps.

Readiness now goes well beyond paperwork. Commissioners increasingly expect the right technology: good care software, ideally one of the approved systems such as CareVision, used with AI in a way that protects dignity and privacy. They also look for robust cyber security, a stable workforce and clean financials.

- Policies and recognised quality standards
 - Certified training records (LDSS access)
 - Mobilisation plans
 - Case studies and references
 - Quality assurance evidence
 - Staffing capacity and retention plan
 - Financial information and proper insurance
 - Care software and AI integration (e.g. CareVision)
 - Cyber security: DSPT and LSCR access
 - Trade union access
 - Any sponsored-worker dependency, understood
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Calculate your Market Opportunity Score

Score each service from 1–5 in three areas, then multiply. The result shows exactly where your organisation should focus its time, investment and business development.



Supported Living for Care Leavers

100

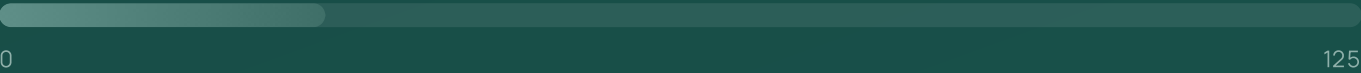
Demand 5 × Strategic Fit 5 × Readiness 4



Domiciliary Care

30

Demand 3 × Strategic Fit 2 × Readiness 5



READ BEFORE AUTUMN

Five documents every provider should read this summer

Together, these give you a clear view of future demand, commissioning priorities and potential procurement opportunities.



MPS

Market Position Statement

The local authority's signal of where demand is heading and what it wants from the market.



JSNA

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

The evidence base for population need across your area over the coming years.



SS

Sufficiency Strategy

Where applicable, how the authority plans to secure enough of the right provision.



PFP

Procurement Forward Plan

A view of what's coming to market and roughly when it will be advertised.



CR

Contracts Register

Which contracts are live, and (crucially) when they expire.

LOOK AHEAD

The needs will keep moving. Be ready anyway.

There is a deeper challenge behind all of this: what commissioners say they need is inconsistent, and it will keep shifting as the Employment Rights Act, Fair Work reforms and zero-hours changes come into play. Adult social care providers have to be business aware, so that when change comes (and it will), it is met as something expected, not a surprise.

THIS WEEK

Your one-hour challenge

Five moves you can make before autumn arrives.

- 1 Download your local authority's latest **Market Position Statement**.
- 2 Identify the **three biggest service gaps** in your area.
- 3 Check which contracts are due to **expire over the next 12–18 months**.
- 4 Complete the **Market Opportunity Score** for each of your services.
- 5 Create a **90-day action plan** to improve your tender readiness.

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The providers who
win autumn tenders
rarely start preparing
in autumn. They start
in *summer*.

TGPC

*The Good Practice Company: strategic growth partner
for UK health and social care, helping providers build
compliant, commercially successful and sustainable
services.*

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