
Report to Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee

15 September 2023

Care Quality Commission Assurance – West Sussex County Council Self-Assessment for the delivery of Adult Social Care

Report by Alan Sinclair, Director of Adults and Health (DASS)

Summary

In preparation for Care Quality Commission (CQC) assurance of adult social care a self-assessment has been prepared against nine quality statements, mapped across the four themes of working with people; providing support; ensuring safety; and leadership, using the CQCs draft assurance framework.

Each theme is summarised by three areas to be most proud of or where there is evidence of good practice and three areas that need further improvement. These have been chosen using evidence of Care Act compliance, feedback from stakeholders and people who use our services, including from complaints and work to deliver the strategic outcomes as set out in the [Adult Social Care Strategy](#).

The two-year adults' improvement programme will address most of the areas identified for improvement. Others will be addressed through business-as-usual activity, as part of the directorate's annual business planning cycle.

Focus for Scrutiny

The Committee is asked to consider the self-assessment at Appendix A and provide any comments to the Cabinet for its meeting on 17 October.

Key Lines of Enquiry include:

Key areas for the committee to consider and comment on are:

1. Whether the self-assessment, as a baseline document, appropriately addresses the commitments set out in the CQC's draft assurance framework themes, in order to demonstrate how the Council is performing in its duties under the Care Act 2014.
2. How effectively the self-assessment provides evidence to support the narrative for areas to be proud of and areas identified for improvement.
3. How the committee intends to discharge its scrutiny responsibility to support service improvement by identifying specific parts of the self-assessment report.

The Chairman will summarise the output of the debate.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Health and Care Act 2022 provides for the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to undertake a regulatory assurance role of adult social care, assessing local authorities' delivery of their statutory duties. The Act includes a power for the Secretary of State to intervene following CQC assessment, where councils are considered to be failing to meet their duties.
- 1.2 The CQC has a phased approach to introducing assessments, with five pilot assessments at Birmingham City Council, Lincolnshire County Council, North Lincolnshire Council, Nottingham City Council and Suffolk County Council, which began in May 2023. Interim guidance from the CQC has been used for these. Learning from the pilots will be used to update CQC guidance.
- 1.3 The CQC is reviewing data from all local authorities in England focussing on the quality statements of assessing needs, care provision, integration and continuity. This will be done by reviewing published documents such as Market Position Statements and Joint Strategic Needs Assessments to identify themes and insight on access, commissioning, market shaping, workforce and personalisation. Findings will be published at a national level, potentially in the CQC's annual State of Care report, rather than by individual local authorities.
- 1.4 Assessments were expected to begin in September 2023 but will now be later in the year, with twenty local authorities assessed in each tranche. It is expected initial assessments for all local authorities will be completed within two years and the CQC will then confirm its approach to regular ongoing assessments.

Draft assurance framework

- 1.5 A draft assessment framework was published in March 2023 that comprises nine quality statements of commitments local authorities must make expressed as 'we statements', showing what is needed to deliver high-quality, person-centred care. These are mapped across four themes.
- 1.6 It is expected that the CQC will use evidence from people's experience, feedback from staff, service leaders and partners covering processes, and outcomes. Each local authority will identify a small number of people who are receiving care and support through the local authority to enable the CQC to look at their care records, which they refer to as 'case tracking'. CQC inspectors will speak to those individuals and those who support them, such as family members, as well as staff or any other professionals involved in the person's care. This will provide evidence to understand whether the care and support provided through the local authority is good or if it needs to improve.

Publication of findings and rating

- 1.7 Assessment reports will be published on the CQC website and will include a short summary of the key features of the local authority; the most up-to-date findings against the themes and for each quality statement; a focus on peoples experience of care including, what people have said about their experience and how it was used in the assessment; areas that need to improve, areas of strength and good practice and whether the local authority

is moving in the right direction. Local authorities will be able to check factual accuracy and completeness of evidence in the draft report, with a short period between the assessment and publication of the final report on the CQC website.

- 1.8 Ratings will be published when the CQC believe it has gathered enough evidence to make a judgement and will be in the form of an overall rating and score for each quality statement, the precise methodology has yet to be published. It is expected to indicate where a local authority sits within a rating, and whether it is nearer the upper or lower threshold. Ratings categories are draft at this stage but are expected to be as follows:

- 4 = exceptional standard
- 3 = good standard
- 2 = some shortfalls
- 1 = significant shortfalls

2. West Sussex County Council Self-Assessment

- 2.1 The self-assessment report (Appendix A) has been developed using the ADASS 'Getting Ready for Assurance: A guide to support the development of your adult social care assessment'. It provides an objective and honest self-assessment of the Council's strengths and areas to improve, driving the focus of improvement planning. The report is a baselining exercise, which will be updated on a three-monthly basis as improvements are delivered and whilst the County Council awaits its assurance visit from the CQC.
- 2.2 The self-assessment report uses the four themes from the CQC's draft assurance framework, attached as Appendix B. Each theme has been summarised by three areas that the service is most proud of or where there is evidence of good practice and three areas for further improvement. These have been chosen by using evidence from analysis of the Council's Care Act compliance, feedback from stakeholders and people who use our services, including from complaints and work to deliver the strategic outcomes as set out in the Adult Social Care Strategy.
- 2.3 The following paragraphs summarise this work.

Theme 1 - Working with people

- 2.4 ***What we are most proud of*** - The **mental health service** offer is an area to be proud of, evidenced by the increase in Care Act assessments being carried out, which have been underpinned by robust mental health social work practice. The operation of the **Prevention Assessment Teams** is ensuring people who might otherwise not be eligible for adult social care have access to multi-disciplinary, community centred support, advice, and guidance at an early stage in their journey. The continued development of **extra care** models across the council has delivered outcome focused services, with people at the heart of care planning and delivery, which is integral to a strength-based approach to practice.
- 2.5 ***Areas for improvement for 2023/25*** – The further development of our strengths-based approach to practice, the benefits of which are evidenced

within the self-assessment and ensuring this is replicated across the service is part of the service's work programme. A focus on managing demand for assessments (including those awaiting assessment in hospital), reviews, and deprivation of liberty safeguards requests, including financial assessments and further work on hospital discharge processes, are also essential to address the nationally recognised increasing demand for adult social care.

Theme 2 - Providing support

- 2.6 **What we are most proud of** - The Council's approach to provider fees and annual uplifts over the last two years has supported adult social care provider services, as has the ongoing work with providers to examine the current mix of services and explore opportunities to develop existing services or create new ones. This gives evidence of a **focus on quality provision and sustainability of the care market**. There is also evidence of close **partnership** arrangements with key stakeholders and support to the provider workforce, through the **Great Care Employer Scheme**, which has been recognised as good practice by both Skills for Care and NHS England.
- 2.7 **Areas for improvement for 2023/25** - The improvement programme will deliver **commissioning strategies and market position statements**, as informed by a self-assessment of compliance against Care Act Chapter 4 – Market Shaping and Commissioning - with 41% of must dos, either partly or not met. This will support more modern, cost-effective commissioning. One objective is ensuring commissioning standards are applied regularly across all activities to ensure examples of current good practice are delivered. The self-assessment identifies the need to embed **outcome-based commissioning**, through co-production so all contracts for services have stated requirements around person-centred approaches. The service is not confident all services are delivered in this way and wants to better understand how inclusion and diversity priorities are reflected in service design and delivery, in particular removing barriers to service access and that **commissioned services address inequalities** through pro-active approaches.

Theme 3 - Ensuring safety

- 2.8 **What we our most proud of** - The service is proud of the work of the West Sussex Safeguarding Adults Board (WSSAB) and the benefits in learning evidenced by Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs). **Pan Sussex threshold guidance that provides a consistent approach to section 42 decision making used by the Safeguarding Adults Hub**, has been welcomed by partners. The Council can also evidence effective **partnership working** in response to provider issues and service failure, with six provider failures, impacting on thirty people in the first six months of 2023. The self-assessment of compliance against Care Act Chapter 5 – Provider Failure – also support this view, with all must dos met.
- 2.9 **Areas for improvement for 2023/25** - It has been recognised that there are several referrals being made into the safeguarding pathway that relate to quality concerns and therefore, **the quality pathway** needs to be refreshed. The improvement programme already has a project underway to address the improvements required for those transitioning from children to adults' services, having been identified through the self-assessment of compliance

against Care Act Chapter 16 – **Transitions to Adult Care and Support** - with 29% of must dos, either partly or not met. The response rate to questionnaires issued to gather **feedback on the safeguarding process** are low and improvement is required to ensure the voices of people with experience of the safeguarding process are captured to inform practice.

Theme 4 - Leadership

- 2.10 **What we are most proud of** - The publication of the Adult Social Care Strategy evidences the strategic direction of the service, with a **clear improvement programme** that has been supported by political and executive leaders. **Internal governance structures, roles, and responsibilities** are clear and well established at a senior level across the directorate. The **quality framework and collaborative audits** evidence a culture of performance and continuous improvement, celebrating success and, where required, taking action to improve.
- 2.11 **Areas for improvement for 2023/25** – Further development and embedding of **performance and financial management** frameworks at all levels is required. Work has begun to improve financial authorisation processes to make them more robust and transparent, improving oversight and ability to forecast budget trends. There is a need to evidence the use of high-level outcomes, inequalities and insights data. The **availability and use of data** has improved in recent years, but more is needed to understand current and future demand, inequalities and gaps in supply and wider demographic and societal changes to help improve outcomes for residents. The service is proud of its workforce and, although it has a considerable range of **learning and development opportunities** on offer to staff, an overarching adult social care workforce strategy with ambitions for the social care workforce is in draft and scheduled for sign off by the Autumn.

3. Communications

- 3.1 The self-assessment report will be shared with all adult social care staff for comment and feedback which will be considered along with comments from the Committee and presented to Cabinet on 17 October.
- 3.2 The self-assessment report will be reviewed every three months and updated whilst the County Council awaits its assurance visit.

4. Contribution to achieving our Climate Change Strategy

- 4.1 Through the change opportunities afforded by proposed new models, new services and service redesigns as part of the improvement activity as set out in the report, the service will contribute fully to the corporate ambitions on climate change, to be a net zero carbon organisation by 2030 and transforming how we work. Climate Change has been embedded in all project documentation managed by the Programme Management Office, which is used for the Adult Social Care Portfolio Board and Improvement and Assurance Board, where all improvement projects are governed.

5. Finance

5.1 The Council's net budget for adult social care in 2023/24 is approximately £242m, which has risen by 24% over the last five years. Around 95% of this relates to the cost of funding the social care needs of approximately 8,500 residents who meet the national eligibility criteria in the Care Act. The Council has also committed £8m of additional funding to deliver a programme of improvement within the adult social care directorate over the next two years, as highlighted within the self-assessment report and will build on the significant work to date.

6. Policy alignment and compliance

6.1 The self-assessment is supported by the Adult Social Care Strategy which sets out five priorities to guide the future development of adult social care services within the context of the Council Plan.

7. Our Council Plan

7.1 Developed from the County Council's reset plan in 2020/21, 'Our Council Plan 2021-2025' sets out the council's priorities over the next four years and the outcomes we want to achieve for people who live and work in West Sussex. Our focus is on four priorities, which are:

- Keeping people safe from vulnerable situations
- A sustainable and prosperous economy
- Helping people and communities to fulfil their potential
- Making the best use of resources

8. Legal implications

8.1 There are no legal implications.

9. Equality duty and human rights assessment

9.1 The service is on a journey to move from an Equality Act compliance focus to one which embodies inclusion and truly person-centered services and support. Key decisions taken include an assessment of any equality implications of proposals and how, if necessary, these will be mitigated for people with protected characteristics. The long-standing Adults' Services, Customer and Carer Group, the Minorities Health and Social Care Group and the Learning Disability and Autism Partnership Boards meet regularly and serve as critical friends to the service.

10. Public Health

10.1 Adult Services works in close partnership with Public Health and the voluntary and community sector and other partner agencies to increase the range of options open to people to support their wellbeing, as well as reaching people earlier before they require adult social care services.

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Appendices:

Appendix A – WSCC Adult Social Care CQC Self-Assessment

Appendix B – CQC Assurance Framework Themes and Quality Statements