

Vulnerable Adults, Health and Communities Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Date:	18 January 2024
Classification:	General Release
Title:	Care Quality Commission Assurance Framework Update
Report of:	Director of Adult Social Care
Cabinet Member Portfolio	Councillor Nafsika Butler-Thalassis Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Voluntary Sector
Wards Involved:	All
Policy Context:	Fairer Westminster
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1. Executive summary

- 1.1. The Care Quality Commission (CQC) has a new approach to assessing how local authorities meet their Care Act duties, and this was introduced as part of the Health and Care Act 2022.
- 1.2. The CQC has completed 'test and learn' and 'pilot' assessments, and this report summarises the results from these and the key lines of enquiry they used.

2. Key Matters for the Committee's consideration

- 2.1. Members are invited to note the CQC Assurance Framework outlined in this report and ask further questions about it.

3. Background and the four themes

- 3.1. The CQC has a new approach to assessing how local authorities meet their Care Act duties, and this was introduced as part of the Health and Care Act 2022. Unlike Children's services, Adult Social Care hasn't been 'inspected' in nearly 15 years.
- 3.2. From April 2023, a new approach to regulation was introduced, using a single assessment framework. This framework will apply to both local authorities and

integrated care systems. The single assessment framework is based on 4 themes and a set of quality statements, and it describes what good care looks like.

- 3.3. The CQC has undertaken 'test and learn' activities and 'pilot' assessments involving 7 local authorities this year (including Birmingham, Suffolk, Nottingham, North Lincolnshire and Lincolnshire). The Council was due to be informed by early December if it had been selected for the first tranche of 20 council inspections. The first 3 sites selected for inspection thus far are Hounslow, Hertfordshire and West Berkshire. As per Government approved updated guidance published on 8 December 2023, there is expected to be an 8 week notice period and a submission deadline for self-assessments and other information requests. The onsite inspection is due to be a 5-day period.
- 3.4. The four themes are outlined below:
 1. **Theme 1: Working with people** (assessing needs, supporting people to live healthier lives, equity in experiences and outcomes)
 2. **Theme 2: Providing Support** (care provision, integration and continuity, partnerships, and communities)
 3. **Theme 3: Ensuring Safety** (safe systems, pathways and transitions, safeguarding)
 4. **Theme 4: Leadership** (governance, management and sustainability, learning, improvement and innovation)
- 3.5. The key questions to consider are:
 1. Are we meeting our Care Act responsibilities?
 2. What is the quality of care in Westminster?
 3. Have we improved outcomes for people?
- 3.6. The possible outcomes are Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement or Inadequate.

4. CQC 'test and learn' and pilot activity

- 4.1. Early in 2023, the CQC conducted two 'test and learn' assessments at Manchester City Council and Hampshire County Council. Five other local authorities took part in pilot assessments. These are: Lincolnshire County Council, Nottingham City Council, Birmingham City Council, Suffolk County Council, and North Lincolnshire County Council.
- 4.2. Through informal networking and the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS), officers have contacted these councils to gather feedback about the approach, interview structure, key lines of enquiries and their lessons learned.
- 4.3. A key reflection is that this is not just an assessment of Adult Social Care. It is an assessment of how the whole Council works together to deliver Adult Social Care and achieve service users' outcomes.
- 4.4. The CQC will interview a mix of staff from across the department, with interviews being linked to the 'I and We' quality statements. Whilst the focus is on frontline staff

interviews, there may also be an ask for inspectors to meet with Members and senior leaders.

- 4.5. The pilot sites' assessment reports were published on 17 November 2023. Results were summarised as areas of strength, areas of development, and people's experiences (see table below for ratings). The CQC will be incorporating its learning from the pilots and evaluation into its formal assessment approach.

Council	Assessment Date	Rating
Lincolnshire County Council	11 May 2023	Good
Nottingham City Council	11 May 2023	Requires Improvement
Birmingham City Council	11 May 2023	Good
Suffolk County Council	2 June 2023	Good
North Lincolnshire Council	2 June 2023	Good

5. Overall key themes of feedback from pilot reports

- 5.1. The reports included numerous feedback themes, which are outlined more in this section. These included: the services available to people and the time taken to receive them, information and advice, and provision of accessible information.
- 5.2. There was also a focus on partnership working and collaboration across the whole health and care system (including voluntary sector partners), making sure all staff and leaders understand the borough-specific challenges and inequalities, and co-production. There was also a strong emphasis on commissioning.
- 5.3. The reports also covered leadership, effective governance, making sure frontline teams understand their practice model and what they are aiming to achieve, and staff moral and wellbeing.
- 5.4. The reports also showed that councils should be able to demonstrate strong examples of prevention, pathways and approach for young people in transition to adult services, and housing and accommodation approaches and suitability. There was also feedback related to safeguarding investigations and direct payments.

**If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the Background Papers, please contact Khatija Rasool,
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APPENDIX:

<https://www.cqc.org.uk/local-systems/local-authorities>