

# Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee Members' Briefing

## Update on the Local Government Association Assurance Challenge and Preparation for CQC Framework Assurance: 17<sup>th</sup> September 2024

### 1. Outcome of the Local Government Association Assurance Challenge

- 1.1. In preparation for the Care Quality Commission (CQC) assurance framework for Local Authorities, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (the Council) commissioned an independent peer review by the Local Government Association (LGA) to assess the ability of the adult social care service to deliver good care and support to people. This was also an opportunity to test our readiness for a Care Quality Commission (CQC) assessment.
- 1.2. The Assurance Peer Challenge took place between 9th and 11th July 2024. Eight peers completed an on-site visit, holding 36 interviews involving a range of over 150 people including the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Leaders, staff, partners, people with lived experience, carers and stakeholders.
- 1.3. Prior to the on-site visit, the peer Principal Social Worker from the LGA Assurance Challenge Team completed an audit of 8 case files, and spoke to the people (or their family member or advocate) whose case files were audited.
- 1.4. The LGA Assurance Challenge Team also reviewed the Local Authority Information Return that we submitted prior to the on-site visit. This is the list of 38 data items requested by the CQC, including the Self-Assessment (which was shared in draft form with Adults Health and Social Care Select Committee in June 2024).
- 1.5. Whilst the LGA Assurance Challenge did not provide a rating as we will receive from the CQC, it did provide feedback on strengths and areas for improvement via a headline feedback presentation at the end of the on-site visit, and a formal report received after the assurance challenge. This report is included at Appendix 1.
- 1.6. Overall, the LGA feedback was very positive and identified some strong practice, a supportive and committed workforce, and effective leadership and partnership arrangements. As critical friends, the Assurance Challenge team also identified scope for developing our emerging approaches for co-production, recording and record-keeping and to support evidencing of strengths-based working.
- 1.7. The key findings from the LGA Assurance Challenge were:
  - i. Strong and visible leadership noting how 'Powering Our Future' setting a strong strategic vision for the area
  - ii. A skilled and engaged workforce with a clear Focus on staff development enabling progression
  - iii. Evidence of good working relationships across the system to enable good outcomes for people
  - iv. Positive steps to embed co-production, noting the progress in developing the "Making it Real" Board.
  - v. A trusted and effective safeguarding partnership working across SBC and the wider system.
- 1.8. The peer review team also identified opportunities for the Council to develop current arrangements and build on good practice. Specific areas identified were:

- 1.9. Some processes and pathways result in people having to tell their story more than once and the front door to Adult Social Care has multiple hand-off points.
  - i. Opportunities for improved integrated working across the system for those people that need a higher level of support.
  - ii. Strategic leadership across the area of transitions from children's to adult services needs strengthening, including a stronger forecast of the financial implications.
  - iii. There is a need to improve the housing offer and more long-term planning, based on population need.
  - iv. Planning for workforce sustainability due to the high number of long-service employees and competition in the locality for some work (i.e. care staff)

## **2. Preparation for CQC Framework Assurance: Next Steps**

- 2.1. Formal notification of assessment was received from CQC on 24th June 2024 and we submitted our Local Authority Information Return and other required information by the deadline of 12th July. We now await notification of the on-site visit which is expected to take place by December 2024, with 6-8 weeks' prior notice.
- 2.2. The CQC Programme Steering Group has been re-instated following the LGA Assurance Challenge and will meet twice-monthly effective from September 2024. The Steering Group will provide assurance oversight and will monitor progress against the action plan, which has been updated to reflect the feedback from the LGA Assurance Challenge.
- 2.3. A separate six-week plan to prepare for the on-site visit has been developed to be implemented once we receive notification from the CQC. This includes key preparation activities which are being progressed with immediate effect. A small working group is progressing the action plan and meeting monthly to monitor progress.
- 2.4. The list of 50 anonymised cases is under monthly review to ensure that this is current, and case file summaries are being developed. The list will be requested by the CQC at the point of notification, with a definitive list of ten cases then requested for case-tracking.
- 2.5. The LAIR data and Self-Assessment are under planned and regular review to ensure that these remain current. Key performance data will be reviewed and monitored through the Liquid Logic Adults System (LAS) Strategic Group.
- 2.6. A communication plan is being finalised with the Communications team. This will include the key messaging for all stakeholders and specific support for staff which will be developed and progressed with Quality Assurance and Workforce Development colleagues.
- 2.7. Where the details of key contacts, groups, partners and networks have been shared with the CQC within the LAIR submission, these people have been contacted, the self-assessment has been shared, and opportunities identified to provide updates as well as to seek feedback to inform future iterations of the Self-Assessment.

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