

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Health Scrutiny Committee
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Report for: Information
Report of: Nathan Atkinson, Corporate Director, Adults & Wellbeing

Preparing for CQC Assessment in Trafford

Following conclusion of initial pilot activity, local authorities will now be subject to mandatory inspections of their Adult Social Care functions by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) under the Health and Care Act 2022. It is imperative that the Council is prepared for inspection and has plans in place to meet the requirements of the national CQC Assurance framework. CQC have commenced the pre-work for mandatory on-site inspections starting in February 2024 with three local authorities in the south of England. There is an expectation that all local authorities with adult social functions will be inspected by March 2025.

Summary

This report should be read in conjunction with the accompanying PowerPoint presentation.

The report briefly outlines the CQC Assurance process, learning from other local authority pilot sites and how the Council has conducted an LGA Peer Challenge against the CQC Assurance framework in September 2023. This will inform the next steps in preparing for any future inspection in Trafford.

Recommendation(s)

Health Scrutiny are asked to note the content of this report and progress to date.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

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1.0 The CQC Assurance Process

1.1 The Care Quality Commission (CQC) have a new responsibility to independently assess how local authorities are delivering their Care Act functions under the Health and Care Act 2022.

1.2 The CQC assessment approach has been designed in partnership with a range of stakeholders and people who use health and adult social care services.

1.3 CQC will use a new single assessment framework to assess local authorities, using a subset of 9 quality statements focused across four themes:

Care Quality Commission Assurance themes	
<p>Theme 1: Working with people.</p> <p>This theme covers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessing needs • Planning and reviewing care • Arrangements for direct payments and charging • Supporting people to live healthier lives • Prevention • Wellbeing • Information and advice • Understanding and removing inequalities in care and support • People's experiences and outcomes from care. 	<p>Theme 2: Providing support.</p> <p>This theme covers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market shaping • Commissioning • Workforce capacity and capability • Integration • Partnership working.
<p>Theme 3: How the local authority ensures safety within the system.</p> <p>This theme covers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 42 safeguarding enquiries • Reviews • Safe systems • Continuity of care. 	<p>Theme 4: Leadership</p> <p>This theme covers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic planning • Learning • Improvement • Innovation • Governance • Management • Sustainability.

1.4 Local authorities will receive a CQC rating consistent with previous approaches to health and care services:

- Outstanding
- Good
- Requires Improvement
- Inadequate

2.0 CQC Assurance Framework Pilots

2.1 The CQC have conducted a series of pilots to test the application of the framework. The initial two conducted in 2022 were against a forerunner of the CQC assurance framework with Hampshire County Council and Manchester City Council. The results were not formally published.

2.2 This was followed by a further five pilots using the current framework to test the model. The pilots covered Birmingham City Council, Nottingham City Council, Lincolnshire County Council, North Lincolnshire Council and Suffolk County Council. The pilots were held in the summer/autumn of 2023 with results published on 8 December 2023. Four of the five local authorities received a Good rating, after moderation within CQC, with Nottingham receiving a Requires Improvement rating.

2.3 The CQC ascertained from the pilots that the quality statements at the centre of the assessments were broadly right and what local authorities expected. They also determined that the methods for assessment were broadly effective to provide the evidence to make a judgement on how well local authorities are discharging their duties against the Care Act 2014.

2.4 Following publication of the initial findings from the pilot sites, CQC announced that there would be a programme of selected inspections taking place with local authorities being identified in batches of twenty. Three local authorities were selected for inspection in February, all in the south of England, though at the date of production of this report, other sites had not been formally notified.

2.5 The intention is that CQC will have concluded inspection of all local authorities with adult social functions by March 2025.

3.0 LGA Peer Challenge: CQC Assurance Framework

3.1 The Council has an existing, self-managed, programme of improvement for Adult Social Care based on the concept of *Improving Lives Everyday*. This approach was launched to improve outcomes for people supported by Adult Social Care and to promote strength-based working, with a focus on prevention and early intervention. Progress against activity within this programme has helped inform the Councils self-assessment for the LGA Peer Challenge.

- 3.2 There has been a long-standing programme of Peer Challenge within the North West region facilitated through the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) with options for short one or three day challenges session to focus on elements of Adult Social Care. However, Adult Social Care has not been subject to an inspection framework for over a decade. To prepare for inspection, obtain an objective view and to experience something as close as possible to the inspection process, the Council asked the Local Government Association to undertake an Adult Social Care Preparation for Assurance Peer Challenge for Trafford. This was conducted in September 2023. The Council was seeking an independent perspective on how prepared adult social services are for a Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection. The £30,000 cost of the Peer Challenge was primarily funded through a government grant of £26,720 awarded in September 2023.
- 3.2 A peer challenge is designed to help a local authority and its partners assess current achievements, areas for development and capacity to change. Peer challenges are improvement focused and are not an inspection. The peer team used their experience and knowledge of local government and Adult Social Care to reflect on the information presented to them by people they met, and material that they read.
- 3.3 Preparation for Assurance Peer Challenge teams typically spend three days onsite conducting the challenge, this process should be seen as a snapshot of the local authorities work rather than being totally comprehensive. All information was collected on a non-attributable basis to promote an open and honest dialogue and findings were arrived at after triangulating the evidence presented.
- 3.4 The members of the LGA Peer Challenge team were:
- Victoria Collins - Director of Adult Services Milton Keynes City Council, Lead Peer
 - Councillor Chris McEwan - Deputy Leader and Economy Portfolio Holder, Darlington Borough Council.
 - Phil Hornsby - Interim Corporate Director of Wellbeing, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council.
 - Gavin Butler and Alex Pitcher - Principal Social Worker and Practice improvement lead, Cheshire West and Chester Council.
 - Charlotte Hammond - Head of Service Adult Social Care Learning Disabilities and Autism Lancashire County Council.
 - Sally McGrail - Transformation and Improvement Lead Warrington Borough Council.
 - Kathy Clark - Challenge Manager, LGA Associate.
- 3.5 The LGA Peer Challenge team were in Trafford for three days between 26th – 28th September. Two of the team spent 12th – 13th September in Trafford to undertake a case file audit and to meet with stakeholders including people using services.

3.6 The LGA Peer Challenge team were given access to at least 150 documents including a self-assessment. Throughout the peer challenge the team had more than 31 meetings with at least 100 different people. The peer challenge team spent over 200 hours with Trafford Council the equivalent of 26 working days.

3.7 In arriving at their findings, the peer team:

- Held interviews and discussions with councillors, officers, partners, and carers.
- Held meetings with managers, practitioners, team leaders and frontline staff.
- Read a range of documents provided by Trafford Council, including a self-assessment, and completed a case file audit of 12 cases.

4.0 Key Messages from the LGA Feedback

4.1 Partners from GM ICB Trafford, Trafford Local Care Organisation, GMMH and the VCSFE such as the Community Collective and Trafford Carers Centre were involved in the pre-planning and implementation of the Peer Challenge, demonstrating genuine deep-rooted collaboration across the health and care system in the borough. The outcome of the Peer Challenge broadly mirrored the content of the Councils self-assessment document, though there were observations and recommendations from the LGA that helpfully identified additional areas of potential improvement. The more detailed feedback from the Peer Challenge findings is contained within the accompanying PowerPoint presentation to this report. The LGA Peer Challenge team's key messages to the Council were:

4.2 Developing the Neighbourhood Model

4.2.1 The Council has a strong focus on integrated work with health and health outcomes, particularly around hospital discharge and admission avoidance. The development of a Neighbourhood model should offer opportunities to co-produce with communities and develop a broader Adult Social Care focus in integrated teams, supporting people to live the life they want and fully embedding an early intervention and prevention approach.

4.3 Getting it right at the Front Door

4.3.1 The Council has a range of preventive and early intervention offers, but access relies heavily on social workers to undertake the initial conversations, which may not be the best use of resources and skills. More could be done to develop information advice and guidance, make access easier through a variety of channels, and provide self-serve options.

4.4 Safeguarding

4.4.1 There is work to do to ensure that the Council consistently applies thresholds for concerns and that safeguarding enquiries are working well. The Council should consider the right balance in skills and resources across all adult teams

to ensure concerns and enquiries can be responded to in a timely and person-centred way.

4.5 Strategic direction and commissioning strategies

4.5.1 The golden thread from corporate strategy and vision needs to be developed to support a simple clear vision for Adult Social Care, which can shape plans and strategies. These need to be supported by SMART plans for delivery and improvement for the next 3-5 years.

4.6 Mental Health

4.6.1 There is a need to increase assurance regarding mental health services provided under the existing s.75 agreement with Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust (GMMH). Evidence of the need to improve mental health services was presented in the self-assessment and there was a dedicated session with managers focussing on this provision. However, the Council did not request mental health as a focus for the peer challenge and no people with lived experience or frontline practitioners were interviewed as part of the peer review. As a result, the review findings were not detailed in relation to mental health services.

5.0 Immediate Response to the LGA Peer Challenge Feedback

5.1 Following conclusion of the LGA Peer Challenge at the end of September, activity immediately commenced to address some of key findings from the feedback provided at the end of the session and from the final report received in December 2023.

5.2 Priority areas of improvement have been identified in a high-level plan based on the LGA feedback. There has been agreement to establish an Improving Lives Everyday Development Board with independent chair to oversee delivery of the plan and to track progress against areas requiring improvement.

5.3 A working group for performance data has been established and three temporary business analysts employed, using external grant funding, to support the development of dashboards to ensure better use of data to inform decision making.

5.4 A new Trafford Strategic Safeguarding Partnership (TSSP) Board Manager was appointed in October 2023 and has made significant inroads into improving the functions of the Board. For example, a TSSP Effectiveness sub-group is being established to give assurance on safeguarding multi-agency activity.

5.5 Support from the LGA consultancy for adult social care through Partners in Care and Health has been secured to provide independent support for commissioning and safeguarding activity. This is at no additional cost to the Council.

- 5.6 A review of the Principal Social Worker and supporting functions has commenced reflecting the importance of the role in the CQC Assurance process.
- 5.7 A working sub-group of DASS Assurance - a long established monthly meeting chaired by the Corporate Director, Adults & Wellbeing to oversee Directorate performance has been agreed for priority activity on workforce, linking into the wider system work across Trafford and into Greater Manchester.
- 5.8 Partners in Care and Health have been tasked with conducting briefing sessions to support staff preparation for inspection, applying learning from the pilot sites. These commenced 16 January 2024.

6.0 Next Steps - Planned activity for CQC readiness

- 6.1 Given the complexity of the preparations for the framework aligned to existing activity to support the recent SEND area inspection and transformation projects to support delivery of savings all interfacing with the CQC Assurance work, a Programme Management approach is required to bring activity together, considering risks, interdependencies and to reduce duplication. Programme management support has been secured from 2 January 2024. This will increase capacity and provide dedicated focus when building the governance framework and programme plan to support delivery of the required improvements.
- 6.2 A monthly Improving Lives Everyday Development Board is to be chaired by an independent person (currently under recruitment for February 2024). This Board will oversee delivery of the programme plan for CQC Assurance. A key element of this will be ensuring that the Councils self-assessment and evidence base is refreshed on a quarterly cycle so that the Council is ready when CQC make contact to conduct an inspection of Adult Social Care.
- 6.3 The Programme plan will be aligned to the activity contained within the existing GMMH Trafford improvement plan, which is hosted by the organisation with a focus on GMMH group priorities and local mental health related issues. It is important that 6.4 the plan is expanded to ensure social work elements outlined in the s.75 agreement with the Council are incorporated to provide additional assurance and to engender positive change.
- 6.4 The Health and Care Act 2022 also introduced mandatory CQC inspections for Integrated Care Boards (ICBs). It is anticipated that there will be an inspection of the Greater Manchester ICB in due course. There is of course significant crossover into the Adult Social Care CQC Assurance Framework and therefore the involvement of partners from GM ICB Trafford in the LGA Peer Challenge has been critical in assisting in their preparation, but also raising awareness of the Adult Social Care offer.
- 6.5 Activity has commenced on the development of the Adults & Wellbeing Directorate Vision, Target Operating Model (TOM) and Outcomes Framework.

This needs to ultimately sit above the Programme Plan for CQC Assurance. The focus must be on improving the outcomes of Trafford residents through more effective service delivery, not solely on passing inspection. If the Council gets the offer right, then the inspection outcome should reflect this.