

Report to Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee

11 March 2024

Subject:	Preparation for Care Quality Commission (CQC) assurance of Adult Social Care in Sandwell.
Director:	Rashpal Bishop Executive Director of Adult Social Care
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1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Board considers and comments upon Sandwell MBC's preparation for Care Quality Commission (CQC) assurance of its discharge of statutory adult social care responsibilities, detailed in point 4 of this report.
- 1.2 That the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Board advises on how and when it would like to be updated and involved with progress with preparation.

2 Reasons for Recommendations




- 2.1 CQC is the regulatory body for providers of health and social care to adults in England. The Health Act 2022 gave CQC a new responsibility to give a meaningful and independent assessment of care in a local area. A key part of this is assessing how local authorities with adult social care responsibilities meet their duties under Part 1 of the Care Act 2014. CQC published the full guidance for local authorities in December 2023 and have commenced assurance of local authorities. A report is



published at the end of each assurance assessment, with an overall rating provided on a four-point scale from “Outstanding” to “Inadequate”.

2.2 Sandwell’s Adult Social Care Directorate are preparing for assurance, with an assurance visit from CQC expected at any point within the next 18 months.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p>Best start in life for children and young people There is a responsibility under the Care Act 2014 to ensure effective preparation for adulthood for young people likely to need adult social care support when they turn 18. Good preparation for adulthood helps young people to realise their aspirations.</p>
	<p>People live well and age well Part 1 of the Care Act 2014 includes provisions to ensure that adults who meet eligibility criteria are appropriately supported. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessing and providing appropriate support, with regards to people’s needs, wishes and protected characteristics. • Appropriately safeguarding adults at risk from abuse and neglect. • Ensuring that a good range of care and support options are available to people. <p>Our vision for adult social care in Sandwell prioritises prevention, rehabilitation, and care, so that we can support people to live as independently as possible for longer.</p>
	<p>Strong resilient communities Good adult social care builds on people’s existing support networks within the community. We are introducing this way of working in partnership with our residents and communities in Sandwell. This is often known as “strengths-based practice”.</p>



4 Context and Key Issues

CQC Assurance Approach

- 4.1 Between April and September 2023, CQC piloted its new assurance assessment approach with five local authorities. These were Birmingham City Council, North Lincolnshire Council, Lincolnshire County Council, Nottingham City Council, and Suffolk County Council. Of these, Nottingham City Council received a rating of “Requires Improvement”, whilst the remainder received an overall rating of “Good”.
- 4.2 Learning from the pilot sites led to the publication of full guidance for local authorities on the format and methodology for assurance. The full guidance is available at <https://www.cqc.org.uk/local-systems/local-authorities>. CQC will be assessing how well the local authority delivers against 4 key themes:
- Working with People
 - Providing Support
 - How the Local Authority Ensures Safety within the System
 - Leadership
- 4.3 Each Theme has two or three Quality Statements against which the local authority will be assessed. There are nine Quality Statements in total. A full list of the Quality Statements and the Themes they relate to is provided in Appendix 1.
- 4.4 CQC will use a number of methods to assess a local authority’s effectiveness against each Theme and Quality Statement. This includes information already in the public domain, performance data, feedback from partners, and talking with people who use services, their carers, staff, and elected Members.
- 4.5 A local authority will receive eight weeks’ notice of an assurance assessment. Specific information is required within three weeks of this notice. This includes:
- An Information Return, which consists of specified information on performance, policies, and procedures.
 - A list of fifty cases which represent both the diversity of the population of the local authority and the range of presenting needs



of people supported by adult social care. Permission must be sought from people to share their information with CQC and ensure that they would be happy to speak with inspectors. From this list, CQC will select six people to assess in detail, including speaking with them directly.

- A self-assessment from the local authority of how well the council believes it is doing against the Quality Statements and the evidence for this. This is not mandatory, but strongly recommended by CQC to enable it to focus its activity when on site.

4.6 CQC has now started its programme of assurance visits to local authorities, with the first authorities to be assured notified towards the end of December 2023.

Preparation for Assurance in Sandwell

4.7 Sandwell MBC started preparation in 2023 with a readiness review undertaken by West Midlands Association of Directors of Adult Social Care (WM ADASS) which took place in June 2023.

4.8 Work is in progress to ensure that Sandwell MBC is fully prepared for assurance inspection. This includes:

- A refresh of the self-assessment prepared in 2023: this is to ensure that we have an updated presentation of the position of adult social care in Sandwell, that includes the views of people who use services and frontline staff. It is important that Sandwell showcases good and innovative practice, as well as being transparent about areas of challenge, and our plans to address these.
- Identifying the fifty cases to be shared with CQC and securing permission from people and their carers for information to be shared.
- Ensuring that practical arrangements are in place to ensure that the assurance visit runs smoothly.
- Updating information that CQC will require in the Information Return.
- Engaging in regional and national learning around CQC assurance preparation. This includes learning from the pilot sites, and close links with Birmingham City Council as our neighbour to engage in learning from their experience of assurance.



- It also involves working with Children’s services to learn from their extensive experience of Ofsted inspections

Communication and Engagement

- 4.9 Staff and the Leadership team have been briefed on the requirements of CQC assurance. This activity will be extended through the development of a Communication and Engagement plan that will:
- Ensure partners in the statutory and voluntary, community and faith sectors are kept updated on activity related to CQC preparation and are advised on how they can contribute.
 - Support staff to be prepared for CQC assurance and that they feel confident in giving an authentic and informed view of how their work contributes to positive outcomes for Sandwell’s residents, as well as talking about challenges and how these are being addressed.
 - Regularly inform Leadership, Elected Members and staff working in the wider Council aware of the work that the Adult Social Care Directorate is doing to prepare for assurance.

Governance and Resourcing

- 4.10 A CQC Assurance Board, chaired by the Executive Director of Adult Services (the statutory DASS) meets fortnightly to oversee progress on this work.
- 4.11 ADASS and the Local Government Association (LGA) have strongly recommended that adequate resourcing is provided to support activity related to preparation for inspection and assurance. An Interim Assistant Director for Transformation and CQC has been appointed to provide support and assurance for this work.
- 4.12 Weekly meetings take place between the Lead Member for Adult Social Care, the Director of Adult Services, and the Interim Assistant Director for Transformation and CQC to ensure the active engagement and oversight of the portfolio holder.

Continuous Improvement

- 4.13 It is important to recognise that CQC could visit Sandwell at any point within the next eighteen months, and that the position of adult social care



will undoubtedly change within that time. This means that CQC assurance should not be viewed in isolation but is rather part of the continued improvement of adult social care as Sandwell seeks new and better ways to support our residents in the context of increasing demand and financial constraints in local government.

4.14 The regular update of preparation material for CQC assurance will remain a practical task between now and the date of the visit from CQC. However, the Adult Social Care Directorate remains focussed on how it can continue to listen to feedback from people who use services, partners, and staff, to deliver our vision of supporting people to live with independence and dignity.

5 Implications

Resources:	Additional resources have been identified to support the CQC preparation work within existing budgets as identified in point 4.11.
Legal and Governance:	No implications in relation to this report
Risk:	No implications in relation to the content of this report.
Equality:	No direct equality impacts for the content of this report, although it should be noted that local authorities are expected to demonstrate how they consider equality implications through the assurance assessment under the Quality Statement “We actively seek out and listen to information about people who are most likely to experience inequality in experience or outcomes. We tailor the care, support, and treatment in response to this”.
Health and Wellbeing:	No direct health and wellbeing implications for the content of this report, although it should be noted that local authorities are expected to demonstrate how they support health and wellbeing through the discharge of adult social care duties in the Quality Statement “We support people to manage their health and wellbeing so they can maximise their independence, choice and control. We support them to live healthier lives and where possible, reduce future needs for care and support”.
Social Value:	No implications for the content of this report.



Climate Change:	No implications for the content of this report.
Corporate Parenting:	No implications for the content of this report.

6 Appendices

Appendix 1 – CQC Themes and Quality Statements.

7. Background Papers

None.

