

OPEN

BRIEFING REPORT

Adults and Health Committee

18 November 2024

**Care Quality Commission Assurance
Process – Self Assessment**

**Report of: Helen Charlesworth-May, Executive Director of Adults,
Health and Integration**

Report Reference No: AH/27/2024-25

Ward(s) Affected: All Wards

Purpose of Report

- 1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with the self-assessment submitted to the Care Quality Commission (CQC) as the first stage of the local authority adult social care assurance process.
- 2 This work aligns to the priority within the Cheshire East Corporate Plan of: “a Council which empowers and cares about people”.

Executive Summary

- 3 The Health and Care Act 2022 introduced a new duty for the CQC to assess local authorities’ delivery of their adult social care functions under part 1 of the Care Act 2014.
- 4 The local authority assurance process begins when a local authority receives a notification letter from the CQC. Following receipt of this letter, each local authority is expected to submit a predetermined Information Return (IR).
- 5 One element of this return is a council’s self-assessment. The Cheshire East self-assessment, appended, sets out our assessment of strengths and areas for improvement against the four domains that form the basis of the assurance process; working with people, providing support, ensuring safety and leadership.

Background

- 6 The Health and Care Act 2022 introduced a new duty for the CQC to assess local authorities' delivery of their adult social care functions under part 1 of the Care Act 2014. The process known as 'local authority assurance' commenced in April 2023. When introduced it was anticipated that all local authorities would go through this process by April 2025.
- 7 The local authority assurance process begins when a local authority receives a notification letter from the CQC. Following receipt of this letter, each local authority is expected to submit a predetermined Information Return (IR) through a secure CQC portal within a 3-week timeframe.
- 8 One element of that return is the local authority's self-assessment of areas of strength and areas for improvement. At appendix 1 is a shortened version of the Cheshire East self-assessment.

Briefing Information

- 9 There is no requirement to submit a self-assessment, and there is no set format for the document. However, we have reviewed other organisations' documents and adopted a format that was structured around the four domains of the assurance process and highlighting areas of strength and areas for improvement.
- 10 The headlines from each section are as follows:

Working with People

- 11 This domain focuses on the assessment process and working with people under the headings assessing needs, supporting people to live healthier lives and equity in experiences and outcomes.
- 12 Our strengths are a:
- Strong focus on wellbeing and prevention and continued development of our offer to residents and families.
 - flexible and effective reablement service.
 - Well-established integrated working in mental health.
 - Positive partnership working with health, housing, voluntary sector, and other key agencies.
- 13 Our areas for improvement are:
- To increase the number of people receiving a direct payment.
 - Improving our service and offer to carers.
 - Develop our coproduction offer.
 - Develop our support planning with people with lived experience and carers.

Providing Support

- 14 This domain focuses on care provision, integration, service continuity, partnerships and communities.
- 15 Our strengths are a good understanding of the needs of our communities and the challenges faced by our providers. To address these challenges, we realise that we must work in partnership, doing things differently to manage demand, and deliver better outcomes for our residents within the resources that we have available.
- 16 Our areas for improvement reflect that we have too many older people receiving long term support in care homes and our average costs for supporting people with a learning disability and autism are high.
- 17 To address these significant priorities we have implemented an ambitious adult social care transformation programme. Our Prevent, Reduce, Enable programme will address the main contributory factors of why people are admitted to care homes. We will align strength-based practice to a range of interventions that support people to stay in their own homes for longer.
- 18 Our learning disability and autism programme will develop accommodation with efficient staffing ratios, increase shared lives, and develop trusted strategic partner arrangements that can deliver independent living with choice and control whilst balancing cost and efficiency.

Ensuring Safety

- 19 This domain focuses on safeguarding, including safe systems, pathways, and transitions.
- 20 Our strengths are:
 - Agreed processes for safe system transfers and the management of handovers.
 - The quality assurance monitoring of providers team being part of the safeguarding provider team.
 - Managing provider failure.
 - Multi agency Complex Safeguarding Forum with a risk enablement approach.
 - Legal Gateway process to ensure senior management oversight of greatest risks.
 - An experienced Local Safeguarding Adults Board (LSAB) independent chair a stable LSAB and a robust Quality and Performance Subgroup.
 - Strong links to Safer Cheshire East Partnership with robust oversight of domestic abuse related deaths.
 - Cheshire East is recognised as performing well in the Home Office Prevent benchmarking matrix.

21 Our areas for improvement are:

- Preparing for adulthood.
- Work with children's service colleagues to respond to Ofsted inspections.
- Reinforcing pathways and transitions between teams to ensure continuity of care and consistent decision making.
- Keep systems under regular review to ensure safety.
- Further promote the work of the LSAB with the wider Council and partners.
- Further work to raise awareness of learning from safeguarding adult reviews and domestic abuse related deaths.
- Further work to embed Making Safeguarding Personal outcomes.
- Work to achieve synergy and collaboration across the various boards.

Leadership

22 This domain seeks to ensure appropriate leadership of the department. Our strengths include consistent, stable, and inclusive leadership with our Principal Social Worker (PSW) a key leader in the team. We have robust grip and oversight of governance and performance and leadership oversight and guidance relating to key operational challenges and risks.

23 Our key areas for improvement are:

- Robust and consistent financial monitoring and support to help stabilise the financial position of the service and Council.
- A transformation plan to address 'Prevent, Reduce Enable'.
- Increase and enhance equality, diversity and inclusion across under-represented groups.
- Maintain recruitment across the service.
- Reduce levels of sickness and absence.
- Complete a workforce strategy to include both the employed and commissioned workforce.

Implications

Monitoring Officer/Legal

24 The CQC local authority assurance process links directly to an assessment of how well the local authority is meeting its statutory responsibilities under Part 1 of the Care Act 2014. The Health and Care Act 2022 provides the Secretary of State with powers of intervention in local authorities who are deemed to be 'inadequate'.

Section 151 Officer/Finance

25 There are no financial implications associated with the CQC local authority assurance process attributable to Cheshire East.

Policy

- 26 CQC local authority assurance relates to “A Council which empowers and cares about people” and relates to both Cheshire East residents and staff.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 27 Equality, diversity and inclusion are central themes that run through the CQC local authority assurance process. An Equality Impact Assessment is not appropriate at this stage of the process.

Human Resources

- 28 There are no human resources implications associated with this process other than allowing staff time to attend focus group discussions with the CQC.

Risk Management

- 29 The CQC assurance process includes a review of the management of risk.

Rural Communities

- 30 CQC assurance process includes a review of equity and experience in outcomes. Access to information, advice, and services by those who live in rural communities will be considered as part of this process.

Children and Young People including Cared for Children, care leavers and Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

- 31 The CQC assurance process will include a review of the transition of young people between Childrens and Adult Social Care Services, particularly in respect of Preparing for Adulthood.

Public Health

- 32 Individual wellbeing is central to the Care Act 2014. Additionally, one of the CQC Quality Statements relates to equity and experience in outcomes. The Public Health team have been actively involved in the preparing for the CQC assurance process. It is anticipated that there will be a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of Cheshire East residents.

Climate Change

- 33 There is no direct impact on climate change.

Access to Information

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Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Cheshire East CQC self-assessment
Background Papers:	Local authority assessments - Care Quality Commission