

Adults and Health Committee

23 June 2025

CQC Local Authority Assurance Outcome

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

Report Reference No: AH/06/2025-26

Ward(s) Affected: N/A

For Scrutiny

Purpose of Report

- 1 This report is intended to update the Adults, Health and Integration Committee on the outcome of the Local Authority assurance visit by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) during week beginning 20 January 2025.
- 2 To advise members that Cheshire East received a 'Good' rating with a score of 75% with a link to the full Cheshire East CQC report.
- 3 At the time of writing this score was one of the highest scores for Council's deemed as 'Good'.

Executive Summary

- 4 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.
- 5 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. What follows is a period of desktop analysis by CQC, this includes, but is not limited to, publicly available information and data returns produced over the past 12 months by the local authority, and some discussion with providers and people who use and access services, prior to the local authority receiving 6-8 weeks' notice of an onsite visit.

- 6 The onsite visit in Cheshire East took place during week beginning 20 January 2025. During the onsite visit, the CQC met with a variety of individuals, including the Chief Executive, Executive Director of Adults, Health and Integration the acting Director of Public Health, the Principal Social Worker for Adults. elected members, groups of staff, partners and providers. Following the onsite visit CQC published a draft report and a rating for each of the 4 themes in what is known as the Single Assessment Framework (SAF). The draft report was shared with the Executive Director of Adults, Health and Integration who was given 10 days to comment on factual accuracy and was then subject to an internal CQC moderation process before being published as a final report on 14 May 2025.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Adults and Health Committee is recommended to:

1. Scrutinise the rating and feedback of the Cheshire East Council CQC LA Assurance Assessment of Adults Social Care.

Background

- 7 The statutory duties of adult social care services are set out in Part 1 of the Care Act 2014. The legislation places a duty on councils to support and promote the wellbeing and independence of working age disabled adults and older people, and their unpaid carers and gives them more control of their care and support.
- 8 CQC annual assessments of local authorities were abolished by the government in 2010, and as such the CQC stopped conducting inspections of adult social care services, which then focused primarily on adult safeguarding. After 2010, local authorities participated in 'sector-led improvement' on a regional and national basis involving teams of local authority managers conducting peer reviews of other local authorities either through the Local Government Association (LGA) or the regional networks of Associations of Directors of Adults Social Services (ADASS).
- 9 The 'People at the Heart of Care' white paper, published in December 2021, detailed proposed reforms to adult social care and health, and social care more broadly, with a particular focus on integration of health and care services.
- 10 The subsequent Health and Care Act 2022 placed a duty on the CQC to assess local authorities' delivery of their adult social care functions under Part 1 of the Care Act 2014. It also gave the Secretary of State power to intervene in failing local authorities.
- 11 In response to the Health and Care Act 2022, the CQC introduced a new 'Single Assessment Framework' (SAF) in July 2022. The SAF unifies assessment approaches for all health and care organisations in England to

make assessment simpler, more dynamic, and more evidence led. This includes care providers, whether run by local authorities or private and third sector providers, who have been continually assessed by the CQC since 2010.

- 12 The Single Assessment Framework maintains some aspects of previous CQC assessment frameworks including rating health and care organisations based on their quality, from outstanding to inadequate, and the five key questions, whether health and care organisations are safe, effective, caring, responsive to people's needs, and well-led.
- 13 The Single Assessment Framework replaces the old key lines of enquiry (KLOEs) and prompts with nine new 'quality statements' organised into four themes. These are referred to as 'we statements' as they're written from the perspective of the organisation being assessed and 'I' statements written from the perspective of people who use and access adult social care services. They draw on previous work developed with Think Local Act Personal (TLAP), National Voices and the Coalition for Collaborative Care on Making it Real.
- 14 The Single Assessment Framework also aims to improve consistency of assessment by highlighting six categories of evidence inspectors will collect: people's experiences, feedback from staff and leaders, observations of care, feedback from partners, processes, and outcomes of care.
- 15 In April 2023, the CQC announced that all local authorities would be subject to an assurance visit by April 2025. There followed a programme of pilot assessments between April 23 and September 23 in six local authorities, the results of which were evaluated prior to the widescale roll out of the programme.
- 16 Reports are to be published on the CQC website for each local authority. Reports include findings for each of the themes and each quality statement and will outline strengths and areas for development.

CQC will score each quality statement from one to four:

1 = Evidence shows significant shortfalls in the standard of care.

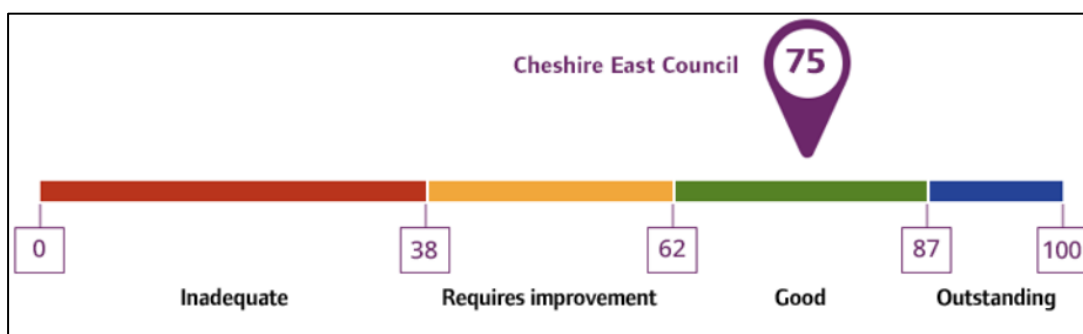
2 = Evidence shows some shortfalls in the standard of care.

3 = Evidence shows a good standard of care.

4 = Evidence shows an exceptional standard of care.

These scores are then added up to produce overall rating. Overall ratings, based on the inspection will include four categories - inadequate, requires improvement, good or outstanding. The overall rating will also show where an authority is within the category, for example whether it is in the upper threshold of good close to outstanding.

At the time of publication CEC was the third highest scoring LA, scoring 3 - evidence shows a good standard of care for each of the quality statements. Scores above Cheshire East at 75% were 78% and 89%, categories for scoring can be seen below.



Scrutiny/Briefing information

- 17 On 12 August 2024 Cheshire East received formal notification of a CQC assurance visit and were one of six local authorities in the North-West to be notified. On receipt of the notification, the local authority had three weeks to submit an Information Return to the CQC portal. This included a Self-Assessment of the local authority's position in relation to the four themes of the Single Assessment Framework and nine quality statements. Cheshire East completed this information within the required timeframe.
- 18 Cheshire East received notification of the intended CQC inspection on 12 August 2024 and notification of the onsite visit on 4 November 2024.
- 19 During the period between the submission of the Information Return and the onsite visit, the CQC undertook analysis of publicly available data in relation to Cheshire East and contacted a number of our providers and partner agencies. At the point of informing us of the date of the onsite visit the CQC requested an anonymised list of 50 people who have used or have accessed services within the past 12 months. From this list, CQC selected 10 individuals to contact to discuss their experience (having obtained consent).
- 20 The Reform, Assurance and Development team collated data for the information return and have been the single point of contact for the purpose of CQC local authority assurance. The team coordinated the CQC onsite visit in conjunction with the Executive Director of Adults, Health and Integration and the Directorate Management Team. The onsite visit comprised of meetings with staff, partners, providers, elected members and experts by experience. Prior to the onsite visit, the CQC held a set up meeting with the Executive Director of Adults, Health and Integration and members of the Directorate Leadership team. This provided an opportunity to highlight the strengths of Adult Social Care, Health and Integration, in addition to the areas of improvement that we had identified from the self-assessment and were already working on as part of an Improvement Plan linked to the wider Council's Transformation Plan.
- 21 Papers in relation to CQC Local Authority assurance have previously been brought to the Adults and Health Committee for update and scrutiny. The Adults, Health and Integration Committee were advised of the date of the onsite visit.

- 22 A regular briefing for members was established to provide insight into our preparation, whilst ensuring check and challenge. This included representatives from each group represented on the Committee.
- 23 A communication plan was implemented including regular updates with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Adults Health and Integration Committee.
- 24 Following the submission of the CE self-assessment and information return items in September 2024, a local LA Assurance Improvement Plan and Improvement Tracker were formed, these are reviewed regularly with theme leads and ASC managers, also discussed at various Service meetings with progress being monitored. The Improvement Plan will be taken to Committee quarterly.

The main areas for improvement against the four CQC themes are:

Working with people	Providing Support	Ensuring Safety	Leadership
Increase the number of people receiving a direct payment.	Increase the number of people supported outside care homes.	Further develop transition process (preparing for adulthood) with Children's Social Care.	Maintain recruitment across the Service.
Improve service and offer to Carers.	Further develop co-production with people and partners.	Increase links between Safeguarding Boards and wider Council, sharing risks, reviewing systems for safety and promoting the Board's work.	Reduce levels of sickness and absence.
Further develop EDI resources.	Review the cost of supporting people with a learning disability and autism.	Improve awareness raising of learning from safeguarding adult reviews and domestic abuse related deaths.	Complete workforce strategy to include both internal and external workforce.
Improve waiting lists and waiting times.	Develop community-based model of support for people living with dementia to ensure timely discharge from hospital.	Further work to embed Making Safeguarding Personal outcomes.	Progress Service transformation themes linking with corporate priorities.

- 25 CQC have advised that following completion of all baseline assessments they will be reviewing how the Assurance Framework continues, this will be done with a variety of stakeholders including hearing from LAs about their

experience. Options could include changing the themes/topics and quality statements, the frequency of assessments, and scoring methodology.

Consultation and Engagement

- 26 As part of the LA Assurance process CQC contact a range of people including those who access support services, their carers and families, also staff, providers and partners such as Health to gain feedback of their experience of CEC either through social care processes or as an employee. This was completed as part of the CQC LA Assurance framework timescales as detailed in the report.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 27 To scrutinise the rating and feedback of the CQC LA Assurance Assessment.

Other Options Considered

- 28 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.

Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer/Legal/Governance

- 29 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 failing to discharge any of its adult social care functions to an acceptable standard.

Section 151 Officer/Finance

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

Human Resources

- 31 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

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

Impact on other Committees

- 33 N/A

Policy

- 34 CQC local authority assurance relates to “A Council which empowers and cares about people” and “Improving Health and Well Being” and relates to both Cheshire East residents and staff.

Commitment 1: Unlocking prosperity for all	Commitment 2: Improving health and wellbeing	Commitment 3: An effective and enabling council
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Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 35 Equality, Diversity and inclusion are central themes that run through the CQC local authority assurance process. An Equality Impact Assessment is not appropriate.

Other Implications

- 36 Rural Communities - 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.
- 37 Children and Young People including Cared for Children, care leavers and Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) - The CQC assurance process includes a review of the transition of young people between Children's and Adult Social Care Services, particularly in respect of Preparing for Adulthood.
- 38 Public Health - 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 were actively involved in the preparation for the CQC assurance process. It is anticipated that there will be a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of Cheshire East residents.

Consultation

Name of Consultee	Post held	Date sent	Date returned
<i>Statutory Officer (or deputy) :</i>			
Adele Taylor	S151 Officer	Click or tap to enter a date	Click or tap to enter a date
Janet Witkowski	Acting Monitoring Officer	Click or tap to enter a date	Click or tap to enter a date
<i>Legal and Finance</i>			
Roisin Beressi	Principal Lawyer	13/06/25	13/06/25
Nikki Wood-Hill	Finance Manager	13/06/25	13/06/25
<i>Other Consultees:</i>			
<i>Executive Directors/Directors</i>			
Helen Charlesworth-May	Executive Director of Adults, Health and Integration	13/06/25	13/06/25

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Sheila Wood. Head of Improvement and Assurance Adult Social Care Operations sheila.wood@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	N/A
Background Papers:	Local authority assessments - Care Quality Commission (cqc.org.uk) Link to Cheshire East Report: https://www.cqc.org.uk/care-services/local-authority-assessment-reports/cheshireeast-0525