

Somerset Adult Social Care Preparation for Assurance Peer Challenge

Peer Challenge Team Feedback

7th March 2024

Peer Challenge explanation

- Sector Led Improvement Peer Challenge process
- Invited in as 'critical friends' with 'no surprises'
- Non-attributable information collection
- People have been open and honest
- Recommendations based on the triangulation of what we've read, heard, and seen
- Intensive but not comprehensive process.
- Feedback offered in good faith and designed to help you drive your own improvement and further assurance.

The Four CQC Themes

Care Quality Commission Adult Social Care Assessment

Working with People

- Assessing needs
- Supporting people to live healthier lives
- Equity in experience and outcomes

Providing Support

- Care provision, integration and continuity
- Partnerships and communities

Ensuring Safety

- Safe systems, pathways and transitions
- Safeguarding

Leadership

- Governance, management and sustainability
- Learning, improvement and innovation

Key Messages

- There is **considerable ambition** in the service; this would benefit from further clarification in terms of performance, outcomes, and the impact of any developments. **Can everyone in the Council answer the “so what?” question and describe what good looks like and their part in this journey?**
- The ambition and **vision of the new unitary council needs time to be fully realised** (for instance around community engagement and capacity, or integration of wider service offers). Maintaining momentum and energy for this will be a challenge given the present financial situation, and consideration should be given to this impact.
- You have **passionate, experienced, and committed staff and senior leadership**. This represents a huge asset, but also a potential risk. You would benefit from finding ways to systematise key knowledge, experience, or expertise, across a wider pool of staff, or in more formal processes.
- There are **strong partnerships with your provider market, VCS, and with the NHS, which you can build on** to support the above. In particular market shaping development and links with the transformation plan will be important in light of financial pressures.
- Similarly, **further work in the new unitary to develop corporate partnerships will support ASC and the wider work of the Council** (e.g. the development of a shared housing strategy).

Key Messages

- You have **strong performance in key areas of ASC and commitment culture and values to support your work in these** (for instance in take up and approach to Direct Payments). Finding ways to develop greater consistency across these areas of delivery can support improvement in those areas of performance that may be less strong.
- The peer challenge **did not find any areas of immediate concern**, but this is always a limited process, and you will continue to benefit from ongoing quality and practice assurance work to further assure and mitigate risks associated with waiting lists, and consistency in practice.
- The peer team found **examples of considerable strengths in your service and strong and innovative practice**. All the people with whom we met were enthusiastic to talk about their work, and open honest and frank about areas that are challenging or where they would like to see improvement or change. This is a strong foundation for your ongoing improvement journey.
- You have a **good foundation for coproduction**, and whilst there is work to do in this area, there is commitment and energy to push forwards on this journey.

CQC Theme 1: How local authorities work with people.

Strengths

- There is strong evidence that you are supporting people to live independent lives.
- There is well-established use of direct payments.
- The OT strategy is reducing waiting lists and supporting choice.
- MCAs are strong with a good assumption of capacity.
- The development of specialist teams is supporting a personalised approach for people with complex needs and developing expertise within your staff teams.

CQC Theme 1: How local authorities work with people.

Areas for consideration

- There are different and multiple approaches to triage which could be standardised across the service.
- There are reduced levels of people waiting for care but assessment and review delays which need to be further investigated and managed.
- There is a need to review support to carers in an emergency, particularly your respite offer.
- Your prevention offer is strong but is fragmented and communication with the public could be clearer.
- The Council website is described as being difficult to navigate and self-serve.
- Further work on the Eclipse system will support practice, e.g. links with the finance system.

Theme 2: How local authorities provide support

Strengths

- Key focus on prevention, early help, neighbourhoods and communities aligns with strategy and supports demand management and enables choice. E.g. the micro-provider market is thriving.
- There is evidence of partnerships and collaboration, for example improvements in working across operations and commissioning, and collaboration with partners including the ICB and VCS.
- There are opportunities for people to feedback and a sense of taking account of what was said, and some areas of coproduction.
- Teams are passionate about, and focussed on, providing good outcomes for individuals.
- There is a strong approach to provider quality, including use of PAMMS and a quality assurance framework to triangulate sources of intelligence.

Theme 2: How local authorities provide support

Areas for consideration

- The prevention agenda is well developed, but the financial context puts this at risk. Evidencing the impact and outcomes is key, and there could be opportunities to look at ROI or cost benefit analysis to support this.
- There are some risks in the market around reliance on micro-providers, the sustainability of more formal care provision and dynamics between markets (for instance homecare and micro-providers).
- Ambitions are high, but there is a need for a clear market shaping approach and focused priorities that are achievable and realistic and can be clearly communicated to partners and the market.
- There is a lot of data, but this might be better used. For instance there are plans to publish your refreshed Market Position Statement which should support an understanding of priorities.
- A clear approach to accommodation with support as part of a wider housing strategy will support your ambition and opportunities in this area.

Theme 3: How local authorities ensure safety within the system

Strengths

- There are established and supportive relationships with key partners to review concerns and manage coordinated plans to address risks with individuals and services.
- Centrally coordinated safeguarding processes maintain a focus on Making Safeguarding Personal, has oversight of timescales, and reviews quality in caused out enquiries.
- There are established training programmes and offers which support a flexible approach to both delivery of training and regular sessions with professional practice leads.
- You review risks and share learning from review processes to inform and agree actions to address areas of concern (for example informing your learning and development offer).
- Specialist teams have been developed within the council and this has improved practice and the ability to work together to provide continuity in supporting people with complex needs, especially where there is dual diagnosis.

Theme 3: How local authorities ensure safety within the system

Areas for consideration

- You would benefit from reviewing risk from first contact through to allocation, and how processes are effectively undertaken to manage this, especially in light of capacity and demand challenges.
- You should consider how practice risk is consistently assessed managed and recorded throughout ASC.
- Consider how workforce pressures may be affecting staff supervision, and training attendance, which may have a negative impact on their ability to engage in critically reflective practice and consolidation of learning.
- It was not clear during the Peer Challenge that the electronic system (Eclipse) fully covers needs within the service.
- There is a lack of lived experience feedback gathered to inform safeguarding and risk management processes.

Theme 4: Leadership

Strengths

- There is a positive culture of challenge and support between executive Councillors and senior officers.
- There is political and officer leadership support for equality diversity and inclusion – “like we've never had before”.
- There are positive relationships with partners, including the ICB and VCS, which should be built upon.
- There is an engaged workforce, and there is a positive focus on outcomes and practice quality improvements.
- The transformation programme is currently on track to deliver, and there will be learnings that can be applied to other parts of adult social care.

Theme 4: Leadership

Areas for consideration

- There are opportunities around housing and it would be helpful for the Council to clarify the ambitions, timescale, ownership and roadmap in a Housing Strategy.
- It would be beneficial for ASC to set out the next phase of transformation and improvement, focusing on a small number of priority big ticket items, as part of an overall plan.
- There is opportunity to deepen the work on EDI, using the voice of lived experience, and to make it more visible and embedded as business as usual.
- Progress on ASC change activities also depends on access to corporate support services and capability, which could be destabilised by the current VR process.
- All Councillors need to understand the pressures, drivers, and change priorities for ASC, using a range of formal and informal engagement mechanisms.

Your reflections and questions