

CABINET MEMBER UPDATE		
Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Adult Social Care) – 25 th February 2025		
Councillor	Portfolio	Period of Report
Ian Moncur	Adult Social Care	December 2024 - January 2025

Care Quality Commission Assurance and Assessment

January has been a significant month for Sefton Adult Social Care (ASC), as the Care Quality Commission have been on site, assessing how well the Council delivers its duties under Part 1 of the Care Act 2014.

In the last week of January, a team of 6 assessors were on site to meet with front-line staff, partner organisations and met people who draw on care and support. CQC also met with the Leader of the Council Cllr Atkinson, myself as Portfolio holder for Adult Social Care and Cllrs Lunn Bates and Neary (as Chair and representative of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee). Across the 4 days, the Inspectors met with over a hundred front line staff as well as representatives from care providers, partner organisations, people and carers who access services. Over 500 pieces of evidence have also been submitted as part of the assessment process. In preparation for the visit the Senior Manager for Quality Assurance and Safeguarding held workshops and individual team sessions for 250 staff.

The Executive Director Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing is due to receive high level feedback mid-February, with the final report and assessment rating likely to be received in April. CQC assessors commented on how welcome they felt during their visit and commended staff on how well they presented themselves.

Occupational Therapy and First Contact Team

During the last twelve months the Occupational Therapy (OT) team has been undergoing a period of transformation to adopt an earlier intervention approach and reduce waiting times for people accessing the service. The service has been implementing a number of long-term changes including:

- Providing an Occupational Therapy first offer at the “front door” with a focus on promoting self-care and independence, the use of technology enabled care (TEC) and rapid access to equipment which can help people remain safe at home
- Workforce development – enhancing the skill mix across the OT Team, implementing more efficient ways of working and introducing a collaborative approach to case management across the team.

The introduction of the mobile clinic (which provides assessments and equipment direct to people’s homes) has significantly reduced the numbers of people waiting for low level equipment across the borough and a second clinic vehicle is due to

become operational in March 25.

An expanded occupational therapy offer is now available for people contacting Adult Social Care, with three dedicated therapists working alongside social workers as part of the First Contact team to ensure a more joined up approach, which will continue to reduce wait times and the need for onward referrals between teams. This will provide a better experience for people and carers.

Skill development across the therapy team has focused on training all therapists to undertake low level visual impairment assessments and double handed care assessments. Sefton was one of the first areas to offer Occupational Therapy apprenticeships and two apprentices are in their final year of studies at Sheffield Hallam University. There is a national shortage of Visual Impairment Rehabilitation officers, and the service has been working in collaboration with the Learning and Development team to launch a new apprenticeship programme for Visual Rehabilitation which will commence in May 2025. This approach will complement the commissioned service provided by Galloways. Whilst there is still work to be done to improve waiting times for people requiring a VI assessment, the numbers of people waiting has reduced by 32% during the last six months and currently is around 70 people. Arrangements are in place to manage any risks.

Strategic Commissioning

Adult Social Care has published its updated Market Position Statement outlining our key strategic aim which is to support more people to remain living independently in their own homes for longer. As part of the launch of the Market Position Statement, an engagement event was held in December with Providers which was well received.

More people are now being supported to live at home and the introduction of the transfer of care hubs in both NHS acute trusts (Southport & Ormskirk and Liverpool University Hospitals) has enabled more people to be discharged directly home with support rather than need to access residential care. An enhanced Home First service has also recently been launched (in the north of the borough) in collaboration with partners from Merseycare, Sefton New Directions and the wider domiciliary care market. This will provide wrap around support for people being discharged from hospital and in circumstances where hospital admission can be avoided.

Compared to other Local Authorities Sefton have historically had high rates of admission to residential & nursing care for both working age adults and over 65s. Over the past 3 years however the service has reduced those admission rates to levels much closer to Sefton's statistical neighbours. An increased length of stay for people in residential has resulted in an overall increase in numbers, however the Better at Home programme will continue to focus on diverting more people away from residential care to community-based support.

During the next 4 years, plans are in place to deliver six hundred Extra Care Supported Housing places across the borough, which will provide a further alternative to residential care, with the first site due to open in late 2026.

New Directions

Work with Sefton New Directions is continuing with a focus on the joint transformation work and how New Directions can support the delivery of the Better at Home programme, such as through their Reablement service and Chase Heys care home. Work is also ongoing with them on their budget position.

Domiciliary Care & Reablement

The availability and responsiveness of Domiciliary Care continues to perform well, enabling people to receive support quickly. As of early February, around 8 people were awaiting commencement of a package of care, with average waiting times of 2-3 days.

Demand for Reablement services continues to increase and work is ongoing to commence a procurement exercise to commission additional provision and this is expected to be in place by Autumn 2025. In the meantime, additional support and capacity is being provided by the domiciliary care market. The number of people still at home after 91 days (following a period of reablement) is now over 90%, which puts Sefton in the top quartile nationally.

Provider Quality

Currently:

- 86% of Community Services Providers in Sefton are rated as good or outstanding.
- 70% of Care Home beds are in homes rated as good or outstanding. Sefton currently has 1 care home rated CQC "Inadequate"

The service continues however to work in close partnership with Sefton Place NHS colleagues to adopt a robust monitoring and quality improvement approach, where concerns are raised. An example of this is for a Southport care home where new admissions have been suspended due to safeguarding concerns.

The Quality Assurance Team are continuing to conduct compliance visits to care homes utilising the PAMMS system, working jointly with the Safeguarding Team and meeting with wider partners such as the Care Quality Commission (CQC), through the Care Quality & Risk meetings where intelligence on care homes is shared. The Quality Assurance Team are also working with Commissioners to visit Providers to look at service models and elements such as Staffing ratios. This includes planning joint reviews with Social Work Teams on care home placements where additional 1:1 care and support is in place.

Healthwatch colleagues are also supporting with visits across the care market as part of the “Enter and View” programme and work continues between Safeguarding and Quality Assurance teams to develop the Organisational Safeguarding model for concerns which relate to overall management / delivery of services as opposed to specific safeguarding concerns relating to individuals.

2025/26 Fee Setting

Fee proposals have been formulated, and it is anticipated that consultation with Providers will commence by mid-February, with a report then being submitted to April Cabinet on final fee proposals.

Adult Social Care Budget

Current forecasts to the end of December are that the Adults Social Care ASC budget will overspend by **£6.4m** during 2024/25. Previous forecasts have assumed that there will be full achievement of the approved savings. However, this is no longer the case (see below).

There are a number of significant assumptions and uncertainties that could impact on this position before the year-end. ASC had committed to a number of efficiencies and savings that amount to £4.8m. As at the end of December, £2.4m of the £4.8m of savings have been delivered. The achievement of these savings has been carefully monitored throughout the year. The current position now reflects the delivery of £0.5m of the remaining savings rather than being achieved in full. Therefore, there will be a shortfall of £1.9m in the savings approved in the year.

Like all councils, ASC is experiencing growth pressure with demand for services and are seeking to meet the cost of this within the resources available. As would be expected with a budget of this size and volatility, this remains a key risk during the current year, with the added uncertainty of whether additional winter pressures or other grant funding would be received in year. Work will continue to be undertaken throughout the year to understand the pressures arising and refine forecasts. As an adverse forecast outturn position is currently forecast, work has continued to be undertaken to explore options to ensure that any potential overspend is mitigated. Initial work identified potential mitigations of £0.7m which were reflected in the previous reported forecast overspend. However, it is uncertain as to whether these mitigations will now be achieved before the end of the financial year, so the forecast overspend reported above no longer assumes this saving will be achieved.

Adult Social Care Complaints, Compliments and MP Enquiries

During December 2024 and January 2025, ASC received twenty-three complaints and twelve Elected Member enquiries. Thirteen compliments were also received for the same period.

At the time of writing the report, nine of the complaints received have been responded to within timescale and thirteen were in actively being investigated. All Elected Member enquiries were responded to within the expected ten-day timescale.

In respect of the complaints received, the following themes were identified: decision making – following an assessment / recommended level of support (eight), queries relating to fees and charges (three), Information and Advice (four), the quality-of-service Provision (five) and staff behaviour (one). Two are currently in the process of being classified. Direct contact is made with complainants to try and resolved concerns and complaints as quickly as possible.

During this period five complaints were upheld; two complaints were not upheld; three were resolved upon receipt and thirteen remain under investigation. Those complaints which were upheld included a complaint about delays in allocation of a social worker, a delay in ordering additional parts required for equipment, and complaints about poor communication. Full apologies were provided to the complainants and appropriate action taken to redress the concerns raised.

All complaints are reviewed by the senior leadership team within Adult Social Care on a weekly basis to ensure oversight of investigations. The ASC Quality, Safety and Practice Group meets monthly and has oversight of all learning from complaints and Member enquiries. Learning is shared with practitioners and teams across a number of forums within ASC including supervision and practice forums. Learning is also, wherever required, shared with providers. Regular updates regarding learning from complaints and the action(s) which have been taken are provided to me as Cabinet Member.