

**19 February 2024**

**Preparing for the Care Quality Commission Assurance Process of Adult Social Care**

**Ward(s):** All

**Portfolios:** Councillor Keir Pedley (Adult Social Care)

**1. Aim**

- 1.1 The aim is to outline the Care Quality Commission (CQC) Assurance process and in turn Adult Social Care's readiness preparations.

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 That the Committee acknowledge the planning undertaken to prepare for the CQC Assurance process and consider any further recommendations as required.

**3. Report detail – know**

**Context - CQC Assurance Process**

- 3.1 The Health and Care Act – April 2022, gave new powers to the CQC, which allow CQC to undertake a meaningful and independent assessment of care at local authorities in England, specifically assessing delivery of their duties under the Care Act (2014). The overarching aim of gaining an understanding on the quality of care in a local area or system and provide independent assurance to the public of the quality of care in their area.
- 3.2 CQC have developed a single assessment framework, in order to provide standardisation in approach. The single assessment framework uses quality statements, which have been developed in collaboration with people who use services and they are based on people's experiences and the standards of care they expect. The quality statements attempt to show what is needed to deliver high-quality, person-centred care and are commitments that providers, commissioners and system leaders should live up to.
- 3.3 The approach CQC have taken and the associated timelines are as follows: April 2022 – December 2023 CQC have spent time; designing and refining their approach, developing their infrastructure and piloting the approach across 5 local authorities – who were assessed as part the pilot. December 2023, following government approval, CQC published updated guidance for local authorities. This guidance is to support local authorities to understand how CQC will assess them. It includes the framework CQC will use to assess how well local authorities are

performing against their duties under Part 1 of the Care Act 2014. CQC have committed to further refining of guidance at key intervals going forward.

- 3.4 For local authorities CQC assessments will use a subset of the quality statements from the published framework which will apply to providers, local authorities and integrated care systems. This is because local authorities are being assessed against a different set of statutory duties to registered health and care providers.

### **West Midlands Association of Adult Social Directors Association Response**

- 3.5 The West Midlands Association of Directors Adult Social Services (WMADASS) have prioritised their focus and efforts during 2023 in supporting the West Midlands region in preparing for the introduction of CQC Assurance. This has included a programme of site based local authority readiness reviews. During September 2023 Walsall Adult Social participated in its readiness review, where a team from WMADASS spent a number of days on site reviewing themed areas which will form part of CQC Assurance process. Walsall have fully participated and supported the efforts being led by WMADASS.
- 3.6 Following the WMADASS readiness review receipt of feedback, Adult Social Care refined its approach to preparation for CQC Assurance, by fully integrating this into our Continuous Improvement Programme refresh and developing an action plan, which considers all areas of Care Act Duty (part 1), along with developments across our wider improvement programme – specifically linked to people; process and practice.
- 3.7 Key recognised areas of improvement identified our **co-production** – collaborating with people who use services; partners and stakeholders on the review and development of strategies and commissioned services; **supporting carers** to continue to undertake the crucial of supporting people who use services; optimising all opportunities to work across the whole of the health and care systems to improve outcomes for the people of Walsall; **contract and market management across commissioned services** – all of which feature as part of our improvement plan.

### **Adult Social Care – Our Approach**

- 3.8 Our ongoing internal assessment of compliant discharge of our Care Act duties, contained with the aforementioned action plan, are first overseen by the statutory role of Director of Adult Social Services (DASS) (a role which all local authorities with adult social care responsibilities is required to appoint). The statutory role of role of DASS is in summary in place to act as accountable officer for the delivery of local authority social care functions as detailed within the Care Act (part 1). From a deployment perspective, operational leadership for the delivery on the ground is being led by the Director of Adult Social Care and the Director of Commissioning – who will provide ongoing assurance to the DASS on Walsall's readiness for CQC assessment. We recognise that our internal assurance against Care Act duties is part of our business as usual in terms of the statutory services discharged by Adult Social Care, with conjunction with the wider council.

- 3.9 Our refreshed Continuous Improvement Programme, seeks to underpin the delivery and embedding of ongoing positive change, aligned to both national reforms and regional developments, tailored to our Walsall local demography. The programme is also the driver to deliver efficiencies as well improvements for customer and staff aligned to our wider council commitments.
- 3.10 Our Adult Social Care Continuous Improvement Programme operates within a governance framework and we continue to work with WMADASS to ensure we take ongoing learning from across region and support one another in CQC assurance preparations.
- 3.11 The CQC commenced formal local authority assessments in December 2023, with the announcement of the first wave, for the first assessments the focus has been largely in the South East area, with site based visits commencing in February 2024. Below the graphic provides an overview of the timetable CQC are operating within. At this point Walsall Adult Social Care continue preparations and improvements, whilst absorbing all guidance material and information published by CQC.

**CQC Timeline Overview**

When	What
April 2022	CQC awarded new powers as part of Health and Care Act 2022 to assess local authorities
April 2022- November 2023	CQC designing and refining their approach, developing their infrastructure; publishing iterative guidance CQC confirm 153 Local authorities with responsibility for delivering Adult Social Care will be assessed over a 2 year window commencing by end of 2023 3+2 pilot site Local authorities named who will work with CQC to go through and refine the assessment process
December 2023	Outcomes of 5 pilot site assessments are published alongside indicative outcomes and corresponding reports Central Government Approve CQC Local Authority Guidance Guidance and Information Return is published CQC confirm the roll out of assessments will be iterative with the first 3 authorities within the South East Region confirmed
January 2024	A further 2 London authorities are advised by CQC of assessment
February 2024	Onsite inspections commence Timetable of published reports to be confirmed with outcome rating



- 3.12 Our theme leads have commenced a programme of communication across internal staff; wider council and key partners and stakeholders, which will be rolled out in earnest over the coming weeks, as one strand to ensure we our supporting all colleagues; partners and stakeholders to understand the CQC assurance process and the Adult Social Care journey, including how integral their contribution is.

**4. Financial information**

- 4.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

## **5. Reducing Inequalities**

- 5.1 Care Act Duty (2014) places a requirement on Adult Social Care to demonstrate how equality in approach is embedded across all areas including practice; commissioned service; accessibility; workforce and alignment to the wider council priorities across equality, diversity and inclusion. Assurance is being sort ensure equality in approach underpins all we do and forms part of our improvement programme.

## **6. Decide**

- 6.1 Our Continuous Improvement Programme continues to demonstrate progression and embed positive change and so strengthens our ability to discharge Care Duties compliantly and in a way that continues to support the people who live in Walsall. Whilst there is no decision for scrutiny to be made around the programmes, scrutiny are asked to support the direction of travel and consider a future agenda item linked to an update on progress.

## **7. Respond**

Report is presented for feedback from scrutiny.

## **8. Review**

Not applicable

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