

TITLE OF REPORT: ASC CQC Assurance Update

REPORT OF: Dale Owens Strategic Director Adult Social Care

Purpose of Report

This report provides an update on the preparation being undertaken for the new Adult Social Care (ASC) CQC Assurance Framework which was announced in September 2021 and is due to be implemented from April 2023.

Background and Update:

1. The Northern regions of Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) and the Local Government Association (LGA) developed a 'Top Tips' for preparation for CQC Assurance. These are suggested areas Local Authorities should have completed to support their preparation in this initial stage.
2. This detail below provides an update on the activity which has taken place so far aligned to these recommended areas.

Appoint an ASC Lead for Assurance / Inspection

3. Steph Downey, Service Director for Adult Social Care is the nominated ASC Lead for our assurance preparation. Steph is supported in this by three other officers:
 - Melony Bramwell, Service Manager Safeguards and Practice Assurance
 - Gary Lewis, Service Manager Quality Assurance
 - Karen Buckham, Development and Improvement Manager
4. All four officers are also involved in the regional activity which is being undertaken and led by North - East ADASS to ensure we are fully sighted on developments and expectations.
5. We are also in the process of preparing a self-assessment to participate in an annual conversation review which is being arranged regionally and will support us to have external challenge on our perceived strengths and areas for improvement.

Political Briefings

6. Several briefings have taken place to date to update MPs and Cabinet Members of the announced approach to assurance and what the expectations are likely to be based on the information we have available to us via CQC updates and our involvement in the regional NE ADASS work.

7. We now have in place a CQC focused Members Group which is scheduled to meet every 6 weeks. Steph will use this as a key mechanism to ensure Members are fully sighted on our progress in preparation and developments from CQC.
8. A sub-group of the Health and Wellbeing Board was also proposed on 5th September by Councillor Caffery in order to ensure there is a forum for wider partners to be sighted and kept informed of development and expectations.

Secure Corporate Support and Buy In

9. We know that responding to this new Assurance framework and the preparation required will need support from the whole Council.
10. Briefings and updates have been delivered to CMT, Leadership, GMT, SMT, SAB as well as ASC Service Briefings.
11. We have reached out to other Service areas where we know specific support will be needed including Digital, Comms and Financial Assessments.

Strengthen your Council's ASC Business Intelligence Capacity and Capability

12. Data and performance is key to our Service but we know CQC Assurance will have new expectations and bring new duties and additional burdens across the whole of the service, with a particular impact on the Performance and Quality Assurance function. They will want to look at how we currently gather activity and performance data, the quality and accuracy of reports as well looking at our financial, workforce and complaints reporting.
13. We currently have a small performance team dedicated to ASC however capacity is already stretched, and we expect additional resource will be needed to ensure we are fully prepared and able to respond to requirements.

Integrated Services Leadership

14. Work has already started to update our integrated services of the challenges and requirements of the Assurance framework, and how they will need to provide performance, financial, and activity data for this purpose and be jointly accountable for the overall performance and quality of their services, their strategic direction and improvement ambitions.
15. Steph has attended the Gateshead Cares System Board and Safeguarding Adults Board to update them on CQC Assurance. It will be added as an item on future agendas to ensure they continue to be sighted. The new H&WBB subgroup will also support with this.

Learn from our Director of Children's Services (DCS)

16. Although at present we are unsure how closely the CQC Assurance Framework will be to the current OFSTED inspection process our Children's colleagues are well versed in preparing for inspection and we know that we can learn from them in terms

of process but also the resources, focus and efforts that will be required across the whole council.

17. We have already undertaken some learning with our colleagues in Children's which included a session with the previous DASS/DCS Caroline O'Neill and previous Quality Assurance Service Manager Jon Gaines, and we are also working with some of their colleagues to develop some training for our workforce focusing how to prepare and be ready for inspection based on their learning. There is also a regional session for DASS's and DCS's scheduled to take place soon.

Get Insight from Partners and Providers

18. It is likely that our partners including health, VCSE and private sector providers will be asked for their views on our performance. We need to engage with them now to draw upon their insight around where we perform well and where we can improve.
19. We have recently set up an organisation group 'People at the Heart of Care' with representation of many of our VCSE leaders to co-produce our approach to ASC reform, Whilst the group is new it is based on many years of partnership working, and the willingness and appetite from partners to attend is very encouraging and gives us a forum to start getting a collective insight. Commissioning colleagues chair a number of Provider Forums, where we have very good engagement with the leaders in our provider organisations, and we will use these forums to engage and understand their thinking.

Organisation self-awareness

20. As previously mentioned, we are taking place in a regional approach to challenge completing a self-assessment in preparation for an annual conversation with a colleague, Carol Tozer, who has been commissioned on behalf of the region. This conversation will provide external challenge on our perceived areas of strength and improvement ahead of the assurance framework being implemented.

Next Steps:

21. We will continue in our preparation for CQC Assurance and the regional approach to challenge in undertaking the annual conversation review.
22. We propose that we provide regular briefings to CMT every 6 weeks with progress, key highlights and issues so colleagues are fully sighted on the progress and areas where support may be needed.
23. In addition, regular updates will be given the Gateshead Health and Care System as well as those groups mentioned earlier - the newly established Members Group and the proposed Health and Wellbeing Sub - Group.

Recommendations

24. Care, Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to give its views on the work carried out to date.

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