

Governance, management and sustainability

Score: 3

3 - Evidence shows a good standard

The local authority commitment

We have clear responsibilities, roles, systems of accountability and good governance to manage and deliver good quality, sustainable care, treatment and support. We act on the best information about risk, performance and outcomes, and we share this securely with others when appropriate.

Key findings for this quality statement

Governance, accountability and risk management

There were effective governance, management and accountability arrangements at the local authority. There had been recent improvements to data which had improved leaders' visibility of Care Act duties. However, new IT and data reporting systems had been in place for 10 months and there were areas, such as timeliness of safeguarding responses or waiting times for reviews, which were not yet routinely visible in data sets. Staff and leaders said there was a good understanding of these areas of performance at team-level and senior leaders received regular reports and updates on these areas of performance.

Staff and leaders described how the new systems had been an improvement on the previous system. Leaders and teams now had greater visibility of different areas of work and told us they felt more confident in the data the new system produced. Staff described an environment where performance expectations were understood and there was professional constructive challenge from leaders and peers. Staff consistently praised the open nature of the work environment and how they were able to learn from colleagues or receive feedback on their work.

The local authority had developed a Performance Management Framework which included expectations around auditing, quality checks, learning and supervision. There was also a Service Director Assurance Statement which set out corporate expectations in areas such as governance, reporting, training or performance. Each section sat alongside evidence for how leaders were assured each area was being met for the year.

There was an established leadership team and staff spoke consistently positively about how visible and approachable senior leaders were within the local authority. The director of adult social services (DASS) was new in post but had been an operational director in their previous role, while the Chief Executive Officer held the DASS position before them. This meant there had been a consistency in leadership and vision and staff had got to know their leaders well.

There were processes in place for elected members to be briefed on issues to enable them to understand and effectively challenge where needed. Learning and development sessions were in place to ensure that these processes were fully understood by the members.

Staff spoke positively about multiple forums and workshops that provided regular opportunities for meetings with senior leaders, where things they said had been acted upon. Staff feedback reflected a senior leadership team that was visible, capable and compassionate. For example, staff said leaders took an interest in them and would remember details about work they had going on as well as their professional or personal lives. There were routine formal forums for senior leaders to engage with staff, such as regular 'director connect and collaborate' meetings as well as workshops which were taking place as part of the NDTi transformation work. There were also regular surveys and a 'you said, we did' style of response to staff feedback. Staff told us they felt confident that feedback they gave would be responded to and acted upon where appropriate.

There were clear risk management and escalation arrangements. These included escalation internally and externally as required. The local authority monitored data to identify any issues or risks and the new IT system provided increased visibility of areas such as waiting lists or equality impacts. We saw evidence of analysis of data which was reported to leaders where there were potential issues or concerns. For example, there was recent work to analyse volumes of safeguarding concerns and enquiries, so leaders could understand any potential risks related to changes in volumes.

The local authority's senior leadership team were well informed about the potential risks facing adult social care. These were reflected in the corporate risk register and taken into account in decisions across the wider council. The corporate risk register covered all areas of the local authority's Care Act functions, with risk assessments in place for a variety of potential risks to the local authority's functions, including plans on how to mitigate them or contingency planning in the event of service failure.

Risks were routinely highlighted and plans were put in place to respond to them. For example, there had been recent work to respond to risks around vacancies and staff sickness. We saw evidence of detailed work to plan and map resources flexible to respond to areas of the service where they experienced reduced capacity. We also heard about longer-term plans to improve staff recruitment and retention to respond to this risk, as part of the local authority's workforce strategies.

Strategic planning

The local authority used information about risks, performance, inequalities and outcomes to inform its adult social care strategy and plans, allocate resources and deliver actions needed to improve outcomes for people and local communities. The current adult social care integrated strategy and the local authority's corporate Thrive agenda were driven by data and directly linked to public health priorities around health inequalities.

Examples of work we saw was tethered to the local authority's strategic priorities. For example, commissioning work and allocation of funding to preventative services correlated to the local authority's strategic priorities and public health findings around falls prevention or loneliness. The allocation of resource to create a new safeguarding team was driven by an identified need to improve performance in safeguarding and data evidenced that this had led to improvements in how this part of the service functioned. There was a coherence of strategy between the local authority and its partners.

Leaders told us how the introduction of the new IT system was key to improving performance and better understanding people's experiences. The new system had already improved leaders' oversight of performance and bettered the local authority's understanding of people's experiences of accessing services. There were areas where the new system had yet to embed and evolve, which leaders were aware of and were working to improve.

There was strategic work underway around workforce development, to respond to risks around recruitment, retention and sickness absence. There had been work around career pathways and staff wellbeing to develop a workforce for the future. This had led to the introduction of new apprenticeship schemes staff spoke positively about and there was work to look at further opportunities to develop staff as part of succession planning. There was a principal social worker in post and they were part of the senior leadership team and we heard how they had oversight of frontline social work and had used this to inform strategic priorities. The local authority were in the process of recruiting a principal occupational therapist to improve the representation of OT at a strategic level.

Information security

The local authority had arrangements to maintain the security, availability, integrity and confidentiality of data, records and data management systems. There were arrangements and protocols in place around the sharing of data with partners.

Information security and governance were areas of corporate risk which were monitored as part of ongoing auditing and governance arrangements. Staff received training in how to handle information safely.