

# Assessing needs

## Indicative score:

**3 - Evidence shows a good standard**

## What people expect:

"I have care and support that is co-ordinated, and everyone works well together and with me.

"I have care and support that enables me to live as I want to, seeing me as a unique person with skills, strengths and goals."

## The local authority commitment:

"We maximise the effectiveness of people's care and treatment by assessing and reviewing their health, care, wellbeing and communication needs with them."

## Key findings for this quality statement

The implementation of the strengths-based approach to assessment to ascertain people's abilities, needs and wishes had been rolled out across the local authority following work with an external organisation that supported this process. The principal social worker now leads on this work to ensure that it is fully embedded as well as leading on the quality assurance of this approach. Frontline teams were positive about this approach and gave examples of how this had improved outcomes for people, as well as increasing the staff satisfaction with the way they were working.

The local authority worked with partners in a collaborative way. Where these organisations were involved in the assessment and review of people's needs, they had also received the strengths-based approach training so that there was a consistent way in which people have conversations with staff about their abilities and needs. This includes the partner organisation that provide the Customer Service Centre and health staff who worked in the integrated teams.

The local authority's data shows that waiting lists were low, with currently nobody waiting for an assessment from the social work teams that support people with a learning disability or a mental health need. The waiting list for people waiting for an initial assessment through the other teams was less than 100 and a risk-based approach was taken so that any urgent situations received contact within 24 hours. Staff told us that all assessments took place within the planned 28 days and that they had the staffing resource to do this.

National data shows that the local authority achieved a higher than national average completion of reviews, both planned and unplanned, for those receiving long-term support. An internal survey, the 'Needs Assessment Pathway' survey, had recently been carried out and from the 102 respondents there was an overall satisfaction level of 7.83 (highest score being 10). The key themes identified were that people felt there was a positive impact for them from the support they were receiving, they were satisfied with their support and that the staff were helpful and informative. The areas for improvement were that some people felt that it had taken too long for their support to start following their assessment.

People we spoke with were mostly positive about the process for obtaining an initial assessment from the local authority. We received positive feedback about the communication with the frontline teams and people confirmed that they were kept informed about the plans for their support. The involvement of someone from the carers team in the Customer Service Centre meant that people were able to be referred quickly to that team when the contact staff identified that someone was an unpaid carer.

Carers had mixed views about whether annual reviews of their needs took place, with some saying the social workers initiated the review and others saying that they had to chase the team to have a review. The carers team are currently working with the primary care networks regarding the provision of information about the definition of an unpaid carer and the support available to them. This was one of the ways of trying to reach unpaid carers, as the local authority knows there are high numbers of unpaid carers who do not have contact with them.

There was a much higher than national average take-up of direct payments. The financial assessments were carried out by a partner organisation and the local authority has identified that there have been some issues with delays in assessment as well as delays in the direct payments being paid. There was a clear plan in place to address this. We received positive feedback from people who have direct payments about the flexibility that enables them to have more choice about where and how they access support. There was an independent organisation available to support people with issues such as recruitment and paying staff.

The local authority was one of the first in the country to implement the Trusted Assessor process, which enabled people other than social workers to receive training before carrying out assessments of people's needs. They are currently running a pilot with a small number of homecare providers carrying out the initial assessments of people's needs as part of plans to prevent delays in people receiving a service. This is yet to be fully evaluated.