

# **Title of report: Care Quality Commission (CQC) Assurance visit preparation**

**Meeting: Health, Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee**

**Meeting date: Monday 27 January 2025**

**Report by: Head of Transformation and Improvement, Community  
Wellbeing**

## **Classification**

Open

## **Decision type**

This is not an executive decision

## **Wards affected**

(All Wards);

## **Purpose**

To scrutinise preparation for an anticipated assurance visit from the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

## **Recommendation(s)**

**That the committee:**

- a) **Comments on the actions taken to date to prepare for an anticipated CQC assurance visit and**
- b) **Recommend any further actions required.**

## **Alternative options**

1. As this report is for information only, it presents no alternative options.

## **Key considerations**

2. The Care Quality Commission (CQC) will measure how well we are performing against our statutory duties as set out in Part 1 of the Care Act 2014. The Care Act specifies the general legal duties that local authorities have towards every individual living in their local area,

regardless of whether they have needs for care and support, eligible needs, or neither. These duties apply regardless of how long individuals have been living in the local area for. As illustrated at Appendix A, these general duties include:

- promoting individual wellbeing
- preventing needs for care and support
- providing information and advice
- promoting diversity and quality in provision of services
- promoting Integration of care and support with health service
- co-operating and
- safeguarding adults at risk of abuse or neglect.

3. The CQC assessment framework for local authorities comprises of four overall themes.

Theme 1 – Working with People	Theme 2 – Providing Support	Theme 3 – Ensuring Safety	Theme 4 - Leadership
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Assessing needs</li> <li>•Supporting people to live healthier lives</li> <li>•Equity in experience and outcomes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Care provision, integration and continuity</li> <li>•Partnerships and communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Safe systems, pathways and transitions</li> <li>•Safeguarding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Governance, management and sustainability</li> <li>•Learning, improvement and innovation</li> </ul>

For each theme, the CQC has set out 'I' and 'We' quality statements, which can be found here: [Assessment framework for local authority assurance - Care Quality Commission](#)

4. To ascertain our performance across these themes, the CQC will look at four key evidence categories:

<b>People's experience</b>	<i>Gathered via direct feedback from people (e.g. from case tracking, speaking with individuals, carers and community groups) and feedback from community groups and local user groups.</i>
<b>Feedback from staff and leaders</b>	<i>Gathered from drop-in sessions, interviews with staff and leaders, opening presentation.</i>
<b>Feedback from partners</b>	<i>Gathered from interviews with partners (e.g. health and wellbeing partners, safeguarding board chairs) and care providers</i>
<b>Processes</b>	<i>Gathered from the information return and triangulated through interview.</i>

5. As of January 2025 (latest update available on CQC website), the CQC has contacted 69 local authorities to start assessment activity (including several in the West Midlands region), with 16 reports having been published to date. Copies of reports, plus learning from five pilot schemes, can be found here: [- Care Quality Commission \(cqc.org.uk\)](https://www.cqc.org.uk)
6. As illustrated in appendix A, the assurance process includes five key steps:
  - **Notice of assessment** - The CQC will inform the director of adult social care that they will be assessing the authority and requesting information
  - **Information return** – The CQC will require a range of information before their onsite visit, to be provided within three weeks.
  - **Onsite visit** – A CQC assessment team will visit for three to four days, during which they will meet a range of people including frontline practitioners, the principal social worker, people who draw on care and support and carers, providers and partnership and leaders.
  - **Draft report and rating** – the CQC team will review all the evidence they have collated against the nine quality statements and provide a draft report, with an overall rating. The council will have an opportunity to fact check the report.
  - **Report published** – The CQC will publish their report with an overall rating and a rating against each of the four themes.
7. The Community Wellbeing directorate has resource in place to support and co-ordinate preparation activity. The following paragraphs provide an overview of key preparation tasks being undertaken:
8. **Information return** – the purpose of this information is to give the CQC insight into how we are delivering against our Care Act duties. Once notice of an assurance visit is received, we will have three weeks in which to provide the CQC with a range of information, prior to the site visit. The full list is available here: [Information return guidance - Care Quality Commission \(cqc.org.uk\)](https://www.cqc.org.uk)

Information submitted will be reviewed by the CQC and will inform the key lines of enquiry. In preparation we are collating the documents required, including data, and reviewing on regular basis.
9. **Case tracker** - as part of the assurance process, we will be asked to identify a total of 50 cases, across several cohorts:
  - older people
  - young people who have transitioned to adult services
  - people who have recently come out of hospital and are receiving care (for example receiving a large package of care and/ or joint funded or reablement)
  - autistic people and people with a learning disability
  - people with mental health needs or substance misuse
  - people with physical disabilities or long-term conditions and
  - unpaid carers.

The CQC will select ten of these cases and look at 6 in detail. In preparation, we have identified 50 cases and are currently working with staff to collate all the information required, so that it is readily available when the notice is received.

10. **Self-assessment** – we are required to provide a self-assessment as part of the assurance process. This document sets the tone and direction of travel for the CQC visit and informs their lines of enquiry. We have written a self-assessment document, which proved to be a good process for identifying strengths, and areas for improvement.

Our self-assessment document will be shared with key stakeholders and will remain a live document up to and once CQC have completed their assurance visit. This will help us to measure impact, outcomes and progress against our improvement objectives.

11. **Leadership presentation** - prior to the onsite visit, we will be asked to deliver a presentation to the CQC assurance team. This is our opportunity to:

- celebrate our strengths and achievements
- describe our organisational culture, how we work, our structures, processes and pathways
- describe the environment in which we work – our strategic objectives, transformation and improvement plans and progress against these
- describe our challenges, the plans in place and progress that we are making.

In preparation, we have drafted a presentation and are currently working, as a leadership group, to practice, review regularly and be comfortable with the content.

12. **Learning from others** – we regularly attend the West Midlands Directors of Adult Social Services (WMADASS) regional CQC assurance group and take part in all WMADASS support offers available. We are reaching out and meeting with colleagues across the region who have already been through the CQC assurance process and taking the opportunity to learn from their experience.

13. **Supporting staff to prepare** – the CQC assurance framework and assessment process is new to our workforce, and it is important that we support staff to have a clear understanding and to be supported in preparing.



We have developed the branding above and have introduced a range of actions to support staff:

- **Teams channel for all directorate staff** – this provides staff with a single place to find the most recent information e.g. access to booking mock interview sessions, Care Act refresher training, tips on how to prepare, weekly posts and updates, links to CQC reports and best practice.

- **Staff booklet** – this booklet, located at appendix B, is designed to provide staff with the information needed to understand the CQC assessment process, tips on how to prepare and where to find further information.
  - **Mock interviews** – designed to provide the opportunity of having a ‘practice run’, staff can book a 1:1 mock interview session, or to take part in a small group session. We have an ongoing programme in place and have been able, following discussion with regional peers, to develop a range of tailored questions that CQC assurance teams have asked in other areas. To date, 58 members of staff across the Community Wellbeing directorate have taken part in either a one to one or group mock interview.
  - **Whole directorate briefings** – in February 2024 the community wellbeing staff conference was dedicated to our CQC assurance preparations and included a range of briefings and workshops with staff. An update was then provided during our winter 2024 directorate conference.
  - **Tailored service and team briefings** – we have a rolling programme of briefings and CQC discussions at both service and team level.
14. **Supporting key stakeholders to prepare** – a range of stakeholder briefings and/or one to one preparation sessions have been delivered, including:
- Leader and Cabinet member (regular)
  - All member briefing – July 2024
  - Herefordshire Adult Safeguarding Board, Chair
  - Making It Real Board, Chair
  - Autism Board, Chair
  - Learning Disability Partnership Board, Chair
  - Herefordshire’s care providers
  - Health partners

## Community impact

15. As this report is for information only, it contains no assessment of community impact. However any recommendation made by the committee, if agreed by Cabinet or a portfolio holder, may have an impact on preparation for the CQC assurance visit. In this case, Cabinet or a portfolio holder will have to consider these potential impacts when deciding whether to accept the recommendation.

## Environmental Impact

16. Herefordshire Council provides and purchases a wide range of services for the people of Herefordshire. Together with partner organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors we share a strong commitment to improving our environmental sustainability, achieving carbon neutrality and to protect and enhance Herefordshire’s outstanding natural environment.
17. Whilst this is an update on back-office functions and will have minimal environmental impacts, consideration has been made to minimise waste and resource use in line with the council’s

environmental policy. For example, staff and stakeholder briefings are provided electronically to reduce paper usage.

### **Equality duty**

18. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the council to consider how it can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations and demonstrate that it is paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services.
19. The mandatory equality impact screening checklist has been completed for this activity and it has been found to have no impact for equality.

### **Resource implications**

20. As this report provides information only, it has no resource implications. However any recommendation made by the committee, if agreed by Cabinet or a portfolio holder, may create a resource implication. In this case, Cabinet or a portfolio holder will have to consider that resource implication when deciding whether to accept the recommendation.

### **Legal implications**

21. The remit of the scrutiny committee is set out in part 3 section 4 of the constitution and the role of the scrutiny committee is set out in part 2 article 6 of the constitution.
22. The Local Government Act 2000 requires the council to delivery the scrutiny function.

### **Risk management**

23. As this report is for information only, it contains no risk assessment. However any recommendation made by the committee, if agreed by Cabinet or a portfolio holder, may create a risk to the council. In this case, Cabinet or a portfolio holder will have to evaluate that risk when deciding whether to accept the recommendation.

### **Consultees**

24. No consultations were carried out in the process of producing this report.

### **Appendices**

Appendix A – CQC assurance visit preparation – overview

Appendix B – CQC preparation – staff booklet

### **Background papers**

None.

## Report Reviewers Used for appraising this report:

**Please note this section must be completed before the report can be published**

Governance	Danial Webb	14/01/2025
Finance	Karen Morris	13/01/2025
Legal	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.
Communications	Luenne Featherstone	14/01/2025
Equality Duty	Harriet Yellin	13/01/2025
Procurement	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.
Risk	Jessica Karia	15/01/2025

Approved by Hilary Hall Date 14/01/2025

**Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.**