

**Preparing to Shine  
Getting CQC ready**

## **Community Wellbeing Staff Booklet**

Your guide to the Care Quality Commission  
(CQC) assessment of adult social care  
process

# Introduction

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) assessment of adult social care is looking to see how the council is meeting its duties under Part 1 of the [Care Act \(2014\)](#).

When the CQC come to Herefordshire, first and foremost we want you to be proud of the work you do every day to meet the needs of local people.

It will be an opportunity for you to tell them

- what you're really good at;
- what you are proud of;
- where you are making a difference; and
- where we are striving to do better.

This short booklet aims to give you the information you need to understand the CQC assessment process for local authority adult social care, and what you can do to prepare.

It is also important to remember that CQC inspectors and members of the Assessment team are people who want to help make services better and help the council improve. They will help us see with 'fresh eyes' where we are doing really well in meeting our duties and where we need to continue to make improvements.

# What is the CQC's approach?

Assessing how Local Authorities meet duties under Part 1 of the Care Act 2014 is a new responsibility for the Care Quality Commission (CQC), which started in 2023. The intention is to assess each relevant council at least once in the first two years, using the learning to develop and refine the approach.

The assessment framework used to assess how well we are meeting our duties was co-developed with partners, agencies and people with direct experience of using care and support services. The framework, located here, [Assessment framework for local authority assurance - Care Quality Commission \(cqc.org.uk\)](https://www.cqc.org.uk/assessment-framework), uses nine quality statements drawn from the CQC's overall single assessment framework, mapped to four themes.

Each quality statement is expressed as a “we” statement describing what is needed to deliver high-quality, person-centred care, and “I” statements describing what people should expect based on Think Local Act Personal's “Making it Real” framework.

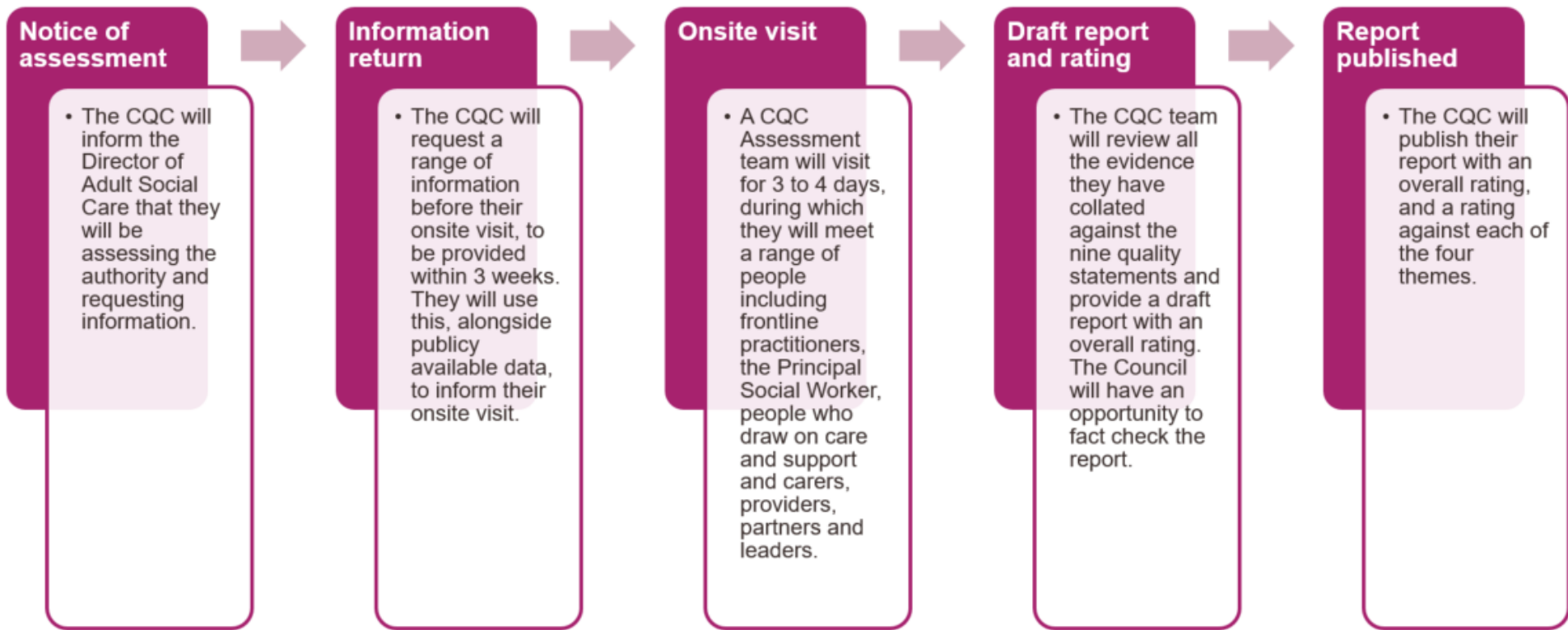
During the assessment, the CQC will look at evidence that relates to the 12 months preceding the start of the assessment (although it may look at evidence outside the 12-month period if necessary e.g. organisational strategies and policies). They will be four evidence categories:

1. People's experience, including unpaid carers
2. Feedback from staff and leaders
3. Feedback from partners
4. Processes

Evidence will be gathered via three routes

- **What is nationally available** – evidence from national data collections and other insights
- **What is requested** – information provided by the authority
- **What is actively collected** – for example case tracking, focus groups, conversations that is not available through other means

The assessment starts when the CQC sends a notice of assessment and request for information – the “information return” (which is the same for all councils) and ends when they publish the report.



The range of information required by the CQC, prior to the site visit, is listed here: [Information return guidance - Care Quality Commission \(cqc.org.uk\)](https://www.cqc.org.uk/information-return-guidance)

The CQC Assessment team will include executive reviewers and specialist advisors who will work alongside CQC inspectors. Executive reviewers will be substantively or previously employed within a local authority and will provide an expert peer perspective to inform findings and judgements relating to leadership and governance. Specialist advisors will be managers and leaders currently working within a local authority or other relevant organisations able to provide specialist advice in relation to how a local authority is delivering its Care Act duties.

Case tracking will also be used to help understand the lived experience of people using social care arranged through the local authority. This follows the pathway of an individual to gather evidence of their experience from when they first approached the local authority.



Ratings will be determined by reviewing evidence against each quality statement and applying a score to each of the evidence categories which are then combined to give an overall score and rating.

# The Care Act 2014

The Care Act 2014 is widely recognised as the most significant piece of legislation for adult social care since the establishment of the welfare state.

It sets out how care and support in England should be provided to adults with care needs, including older people, and how it is paid for. It supports the personalisation of care services, putting the person at the centre of the process.

As illustrated here, there are six key principles:



The Care Act also recognises the equal importance of supporting carers with those they care for, giving them entitlements to care and support in their own right.

If you want a quick reminder of the Care Act, the Social Care Institute for Excellence produced a short video which gives an overview of the key aspects: [Care Act: Video introduction - SCIE](#)

There is also a Care Act Refresher presentation on the Community Wellbeing Directorate Teams channel.

# The four CQC themes that will be used to assess our performance

The CQC assessment framework for local authorities comprises of nine quality statements mapped across four 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>

The summary below sets out the quality statements and the areas that are being covered within each theme.

<b>Theme 1: Working with People</b>	
<p><b>Assessing Need</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>We maximise the effectiveness of people's care and treatment by assessing and reviewing their health, care, wellbeing and communication needs with them.</i></li> </ul>	<p>Scope:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• assessing needs</li> <li>• planning and reviewing</li> <li>• arrangements for direct payments and charging</li> <li>• supporting people to live healthier lives</li> <li>• prevention</li> <li>• wellbeing</li> <li>• information and advice</li> <li>• understanding and removing inequalities in care and support</li> <li>• people's experiences and outcomes from care.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Supporting people to live <i>healthier lives</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>We support people to manage their health and wellbeing so they can maximise their independence, choice and control. We support them to live healthier lives and where possible, reduce future needs for care and support.</i></li> </ul>	
<p><b>Equity in experiences and outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>We actively seek out and listen to information about people who are most likely to experience inequality in experience or outcomes. We tailor the care, support and treatment in response to this.</i></li> </ul>	

<b>Theme 2: Providing Support</b>	
<p><b>Care provision, integration and continuity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>We understand the diverse health and care needs of people and our local communities, so care is joined-up, flexible and supports choice and continuity</i></li> </ul>	<p>Scope:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• market shaping</li> <li>• commissioning</li> <li>• workforce capacity and capability</li> <li>• integration</li> <li>• partnership working.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Partnerships and Communities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>We understand our duty to collaborate and work in partnership, so our services work seamlessly for people. We share information and learning with partners and collaborate for improvement.</i></li> </ul>	

<b>Theme 3: Safety within the System</b>	
<p><b>Safe systems, pathways and transitions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>We work with people and our partners to establish and maintain safe systems of care, in which safety is managed, monitored and assured. We ensure continuity of care, including when people move between different services.</i></li> </ul>	<p>Scope:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Section 42 safeguarding enquiries</li> <li>• reviews</li> <li>• safe systems</li> <li>• continuity of care.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Safeguarding</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>We work with people to understand what being safe means to them as well as with our partners on the best way to achieve this. We concentrate on improving people's lives while protecting their right to live in safety, free from bullying, harassment, abuse, discrimination, avoidable harm and neglect. We make sure we share concerns quickly and appropriately.</i></li> </ul>	
<p><b>Safe systems, pathways and transitions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>We work with people and our partners to establish and maintain safe systems of care, in which safety is managed, monitored and assured. We ensure continuity of care, including when people move between different services.</i></li> </ul>	



## Theme 4: Leadership

### **Governance, management and sustainability**

- *We have clear responsibilities, roles, systems of accountability and good governance. We use these 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.*

### **Learning, improvement and innovation**

- *We focus on continuous learning, innovation and improvement across our organisation and the local system. We encourage creative ways of delivering equality of experience, outcome and quality of life for people. We actively contribute to safe, effective practice and research.*

### Scope

- strategic planning
- learning
- improvement
- innovation
- governance
  
- Management
- sustainability

# Simple things we can all do to prepare



## As individuals...

- Attend briefings, mock interview sessions and keep up to date with the information in the teams channel;
- Get familiar with the themes within the CQC Assurance framework and how it translates to areas of your work;
- Take time to reflect on what you are really proud of in your work and how it is making a difference. Think about what you would most like to be seen in a report about your area or service and remember it will only be written about if you tell somebody;
- Take time to reflect on what you are doing to make things even better and how you can show that improvements have already been made;
- If asked to help with providing information for the CQC before the visit, please prioritise this;
- Know how you would raise a concern e.g. safeguarding;
- Know how to find our key policies and procedures and be aware of the content of those that are relevant to your role;
- Have a clear understanding of the community wellbeing directorate's strategy, mission and transformation priorities.
- Feedback any problems or concerns as soon as you notice them, leaving things until the CQC arrive means that we miss the opportunity to improve.



## As teams...

- Regularly discuss your team's strengths and less strong points, and know what is being done;
- Know how lessons are shared and learned in your team.

# What to do when the CQC are here

The CQC Assessment team may not visit individual services or teams, but will invite colleagues to meet with them to hear directly about how the council is working to meet its duties under the Care Act.

There are some simple things we ask of you if you meet with the CQC.

## If a CQC inspector does visit my team

- Welcome them, introduce yourself and ask to see their identification badge. If in any doubt, contact [CQCAssurance@herefordshire.gov.uk](mailto:CQCAssurance@herefordshire.gov.uk)

## How to engage with CQC inspectors

- Be helpful - answer any questions to the best of your ability
- Be proud and positive - you should be proud of the excellent work that you do
- Be ready and able - familiarise yourself with the areas that CQC might be interested in, so you can demonstrate the good work that you do.
- If you don't understand a question, or don't know the answer, ask for clarification or state where you will go for the information.

## What if the inspectors ask a question about an issue of concern

- Use this as an opportunity for learning and feed back to your manager to ensure that actions are taken promptly.

# Things to think about if you are a manager or leader

<p><b>Vision and Values</b></p>	<p>Does my service/ area of responsibility have a clear understanding of our Directorate's vision, mission and transformation and improvement priorities?</p> <p>Are these discussed and used to help develop my team and how we work?</p>
<p><b>Evidence</b></p>	<p>Does everyone understand how they should be recording their work?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the standard of record keeping reviewed regularly?</li> <li>• Can we evidence a person centred, strengths based approach?</li> <li>• Can we evidence a commitment to co-production, equality, inclusion and diversity?</li> <li>• Are risks and issues identified and mitigated?</li> </ul> <p>What data do we collect to monitor performance?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do we have regular opportunities to review performance?</li> <li>• Do we share our good practice and innovation?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Feedback from people who draw on support and their carers</b></p>	<p>Do we regularly receive feedback and how do we use this?</p> <p>Do we share information about incidents, complaints and compliments to ensure themes and lessons can be learnt?</p> <p>Can we provide examples of where changes have been made from feedback?</p> <p>Can we evidence how we ensure we are accessible and responsive to all our communities?</p>
<p><b>Staffing</b></p>	<p>Do I know my vacancy rates, sickness levels and turnover?</p> <p>Are colleagues able to access and participate in continuing professional development – how do I know?</p> <p>How do I assure myself that all staff have appropriate training and induction before they start working in my service?</p>
<p><b>Safeguarding</b></p>	<p>Do my team know how to raise a safeguarding concern?</p> <p>Do my team know how to access information and support in relation to safeguarding procedures?</p>

# Want to find out more?

If you want to find out more about the CQC approach to assessment of local authority adult social care, there are lots of different resources that are available to you.

All Community Wellbeing staff members have access to our dedicated **Microsoft teams channel**. Here you will find a range of updates, briefings, best practice examples and all things CQC!

Please take the time to read through the documents, interact with the posts, provide us with feedback and share items with colleagues.

## Key websites include:

- Partners in Care and Health, which is a collaboration between the Local Government Association and the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services, has developed a range of resources available at [CQC's new assurance framework | Local Government Association](#).
- You can also find information on the CQC website [Local authority assessments - Care Quality Commission \(cqc.org.uk\)](#)

**If you have any questions, or would like any further information, please let us know by emailing [CQCAssurance@herefordshire.gov.uk](mailto:CQCAssurance@herefordshire.gov.uk)**