

North Yorkshire Council

Care and Independence Overview and Scrutiny Committee

20th April 2026

Update on CQC Assurance Action Plan and Future Arrangements

Report of the Corporate Director Health and Adult Services

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides Members with an update on progress following the Care Quality Commission (CQC) assessment of Adult Social Care in North Yorkshire in 2025.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 This report provides an update for the Committee on the outcome of the Care Quality Commission (CQC) assessment of how the Council discharges its Adult Social Care duties under the Care Act. The Council received its final report in October 2025 and achieved a score of 81 out of a possible 100, resulting in an overall rating of “Good”.
- 2.2 At the time of publication, this score placed the Council joint 3rd nationally. As further reports have been released, with 118 out of 153 now published, the Council currently ranks joint 6th nationally, while continuing to be the highest-scoring large authority in England and within Yorkshire and Humber region. Wigan is now the highest-scoring authority nationally with a rating of 95.
- 2.3 The CQC report identified a number of strengths in the way the Council delivers Adult Social Care, alongside several specific findings requiring further improvement. Many of these development areas had already been recognised by the Council and were being addressed through transformation programmes and business-as-usual activity. All findings have now been translated into a comprehensive CQC Action Plan (see Appendix A), with progress monitored through established governance arrangements including HAS Leadership Team (HASLT), HAS 2030 Ambition Boards and the Improvement & Inspection Leadership Board (IILB).

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Care Quality Commission (CQC) undertook its assessment of the Council’s adult social care functions in 2025, as part of the national programme of assurance introduced under the Health and Care Act 2022. The assessment included a review of qualitative and quantitative data submitted by the Council, onsite inspection activity, case tracking, examination of governance and performance arrangements, and engagement with more than 170 people, including individuals with lived experience, carers, providers, partners, staff and senior leaders
- 3.2 The CQC evaluated the Council’s performance against nine Quality Statements across the four statutory themes: *Working with People*, *Providing Support*, *Ensuring Safety*, and *Leadership*. Each statement was scored on a scale from 1 to 4, generating the overall rating of Good with outstanding status being achieved in Equity in experience and outcomes and Learning, improvement and innovation. The assessment acknowledged both the strengths of the

Council's approach, including partnership working and safeguarding, and the inherent challenges of delivering adult social care across a diverse rural geography.

3.3 Within the final report, the CQC set out several specific findings identifying where the Council could strengthen its delivery, forming the basis of adult social care Areas for Development. These findings related to:

- timeliness of assessments and reviews,
- people not consistently receiving copies of their assessments,
- availability of non-statutory advocacy,
- uptake of Direct Payments,
- reablement access,
- rural and digital barriers,
- service availability in Whitby,
- mental health bed access,
- and communication delays in safeguarding processes.

3.4 Following receipt of the report, officers undertook a detailed review of each CQC finding and mapped it directly to an improvement action, ensuring:

- clear linkage between each finding and the action required to address it;
- allocation of a responsible lead officer;
- identification of the most appropriate governance route (including HASLT, Ambition Boards and the Improvement & Inspection Leadership Board); and
- alignment with existing business-as-usual activity, the Council's self-assessment, and the *HAS 2030* strategic framework.

3.5 This mapping process resulted in the development of the Council's CQC Action Plan, which consolidates all activity arising from the assessment into a single, coherent programme of work. In keeping with the Council's approach to sustainable improvement, actions have been embedded into **existing practice, performance monitoring and assurance activity**, rather than managed as a standalone CQC programme. This ensures improvements are delivered through business as usual and remain in place beyond the inspection cycle.

4.0 PROGRESS AGAINST CQC FINDINGS

Due to a number of the areas for development already being identified by the Council, progress has formed part of the directorate's improvement journey and therefore good progress is being made. A summary of progress under each domain is listed below.

4.1 Working with People

- Strengthening Waiting Well through Intermediate Care development; Occupational Therapy Assistant roles made permanent
- Improvements to carers support:
 - conducted an evaluation on carers breaks to help shape our future models.
 - Working with York and Sheffield University to develop the care confidence self – funder tool,
 - Key development with the carers online assessment is now live,
 - Received extra funding to support carers into employment through MCA trailblazer funding,
 - Developed new carers governance and overseen through HAS ambition boards and wider NY Ambitious for health board.
 - Draft Carers strategy timeline for publication sept 2026.
- Advocacy capacity strengthened through a new contract

- Work underway to ensure people routinely receive copies of their assessments
- Continued focus on improving Direct Payment uptake
- Further embedding a reablement-first approach
- Targeted inclusion work informed by HWNY ethnic minority report, GRT and Rural Health Needs Assessments; ongoing co-production with LGBTQ+ and migrant communities

4.2 **Providing Support**

Key developments include:

- Pre-planning consultation on Care and Support Hubs for Scarborough and Harrogate sites
- Progress across commissioning for home care, supported living and specialist provision
- Intermediate Care procurement underway to improve the hospital discharge process and increase access to specialist mental health/dementia beds
- Extra Care market testing underway in Whitby and Malton
- Rural home-care gaps incorporated into commissioning decisions

4.3 **Ensuring Safety**

- Improved safeguarding feedback loops with partners, through coordinated safeguarding meetings that strengthen communication, address delays, and support timely and confident case closure.
- System-wide safeguarding understanding strengthened through ongoing training and awareness-raising that clarifies safeguarding processes, decision-making, and when and why it is not always appropriate to share outcomes.
- Practice Quality Assurance Tool (PQAT) roll-out scheduled from April; safeguarding diagnostic planned for May
- Preparing for Adulthood team established; Veritau audit underway

4.4 **Leadership**

- ASC Review Phase Two launched to strengthen accountability and consistency
- Community teams supported with workload pressures
- Staff survey actions underway, including engagement workshops and wellbeing initiatives
- Speak-Up Grants launched (42 applications; 14 awards)
- Strategic Co-production Board launching Q1 26/27

5.0 **GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS**

5.1 The Council uses established governance arrangements across Adult Social Care and Public Health to oversee delivery of Care Act duties, improvement activity and assurance. These arrangements support decision-making, performance oversight and inspection readiness, and ensure clear accountability for delivery of actions arising from the CQC assessment.

5.3 These arrangements ensure a **single, coherent system** for delivery, improvement, and assurance.

6.0 **PREPARING FOR FUTURE ASSURANCE**

6.1 The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and CQC have not yet confirmed the timetable, scope or methodology for future rounds of local authority assurance. Councils

are therefore required to maintain strong internal assurance arrangements pending further guidance.

6.2 The Council is taking the following steps to strengthen readiness for future assurance:

- **Strengthening practice and evidence**
 - Improved case recording
 - Ongoing practice expectation sessions
 - Rollout of the Practice Quality Assurance Tool (PQAT)
 - In depth Diagnostic days to review case recording and learn from best practice
- **Strengthening performance and planning**
 - Embedding CQC expectations into Service Plans, Deep Dives and MTFS
 - Strengthened performance dashboards and data insight
- **Protecting organisational memory**
 - Development of a CQC Handbook documenting roles, processes and evidence requirements
 - Shared responsibilities across Business Support, Involvement & Governance, Strategy & Performance, Principal Occupational Therapist and Principal Social Worker
- **Strengthening professional leadership**
 - Development of the Practice Lead role (PSW)
 - Establishment of an OT Practice Lead role to support professional consistency and assurance
- **Clear governance alignment**
 - Future assurance work overseen through HASLT, Ambition Boards and IILB

6.3 In parallel with longer-term assurance arrangements, the Council is undertaking specific activity to prepare for future inspection. This includes targeted internal readiness work, the use of PQAT diagnostics to test case recording and evidence and learning from audits and Safeguarding Adult Reviews to strengthen practice. The Improvement & Inspection Leadership Board will be used as the forum to review inspection readiness and agree further actions once national arrangements are confirmed.

7.0 FUTURE CQC ARRANGEMENTS AND THE COUNCIL'S CONTRIBUTION

7.1 Although national arrangements have not yet been confirmed by CQC, the Council has contributed to shaping future developments through:

- Active participation in the regional response to CQC's consultation on draft rating characteristics, identifying inconsistencies, subjectivity, rural bias and gaps in the proposed descriptors
- Advocating for measurable, Care Act-aligned descriptors and improved inter-rater reliability
- Highlighting implications for rural authorities, unpaid carers, transitions and equality duties
- Working through regional and national networks to inform the design of future assurance models

7.2 The Council remains well-placed for future assurance due to strengthened governance, performance insight, practice quality arrangements and a clear internal readiness programme.

8.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 No additional financial implications arise from this report. Actions continue to be delivered within existing budgets.

9.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 All actions align with the Council's responsibilities under the Care Act 2014 and national assurance expectations.

10.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The action plan includes targeted activity to improve equity of access and outcomes, particularly for under-served and rural communities.

11.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

11.1 No direct climate impacts identified. Digital approaches will continue to be balanced with work to address digital exclusion.

12.0 PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS

12.1 Performance will continue to be monitored through HASLT, Ambition Boards, Continuous and Consistent Practice Board (CCPB) and IILB, with regular reporting to this Committee.

13.0 CONCLUSIONS

13.1 The Council has made strong progress in addressing all areas identified by CQC. Improvement activity is integrated into everyday practice and aligned with HAS 2030 and the three Ambitions. Governance arrangements ensure clear oversight and accountability, and the Council is well-positioned for future assurance once national arrangements are confirmed.

14.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee:

- i) Note the progress made against the CQC Action Plan.
- ii) Support the integration of CQC actions into existing governance and improvement work.
- iii) Endorse the Directorate's approach to preparing for future CQC assurance.
- iv) Receive further updates during 2026/27, including national developments.

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

CQC assessment report for North Yorkshire: [North Yorkshire Council: local authority assessment - Care Quality Commission](#)

APPENDICES:

Appendix A: Action plan to address CQC Assurance findings

Note: Members are invited to contact the author in advance of the meeting with any detailed queries or questions.