

Learning, improvement and innovation

Score: 3

3 - Evidence shows a good standard

The local authority commitment

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.

Key findings for this quality statement

Continuous learning, improvement and professional development

Findings from the December 2023 cultural survey were fed into council's new corporate Transformation Programme. It also suggested consideration be given to focus on staff personal growth and recognition. Staff told us there was an inclusive and positive culture of continuous learning and improvement. Local authority staff had ongoing access to learning and support so that Care Act duties were delivered safely and effectively. There were opportunities for continuous professional development and opportunities to become qualified as social workers, occupational therapists, or Approved Mental Health Professionals. Commissioning staff had the opportunity to gain advanced commissioning qualifications. All staff received Equality Act training, and had access to e-learning on equality, diversity, and inclusion. The local authority had equality allies available to support staff. These were people that staff could go to if they needed support or guidance in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion, professionally or personally. A leader told us there was an open and transparent culture within the local authority.

The Principal Social worker undertook annual training audits, to monitor uptake and effectiveness and oversaw a review of case files, supervision audits and direct observations. For example, supervision audits identified the need for reflective practice to support learning, as well as the importance of considering the supervisee's wellbeing. Home visit observations found that there needed to be a consistent approach to management oversight documented in the case file. These findings led to action plans, and progress would be reviewed by future audits. The annual training audit informed the adult social care training needs analysis. For example, the identified need for increased understanding of the Mental Capacity Act resulted in this learning being prioritised in the 2024-27 plan.

The new operating model was developed collaboratively, taking account of feedback from people because the local authority recognised it hadn't served people well as well as it could, as well as from staff.

Coproduction was embedded throughout the local authority's work, and there were numerous co-production groups such as carers, learning disabilities and autistic people and dementia. General feedback regarding the forums from people was positive. Staff told us about a co-production group whereby people with lived experience of living with dementia, or caring for someone who was, were encouraged to lead a discussion, to identify gaps and areas of development to provide better outcomes for people. One project saw the terminology of a memory clinic discharge letter being changed which had a positive outcome for people. People told us they felt listened to and felt they made a difference to people's care. One partner noted however that the local authority should enable the learning disabilities partnership board to have a co-chair with lived experience, so that it was more independent.

The local authority was actively represented on the regional Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) network and shared learning, best practice and innovation with peers and system partners to influence and improve how care and support was provided. They were not currently involved in external research and said they were looking at what works best in preventative, strengths-based support, for example the use and impact of assistive technology, or the effectiveness of intermediate care and reablement. The local authority actively participated in peer review and sector led improvement activity. They had a peer review of their Safeguarding Board and used the feedback for assurance. The local authority drew on external support to improve when necessary. For example, Bracknell Forest Council commissioned the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) to undertake a practice development project on Strengths Based Practice, which contributed to the Practice Framework now in place.

Learning from feedback

The local authority listened to feedback from people. Feedback from people's experience of assessment and care planning was shared with the principal social worker and the complaints manager.

Further development of the feedback system was taking place to ensure this captured, monitored, and was responsive to feedback received, including complaints. The 2022-23 Adult Social Care Annual report gave details of the reasons for complaints, and what had changed as a result. Because of learning from a complaint, new workers were explicitly informed about expected standards of recording for care reviews to ensure constant quality of recording. Following complaints regarding the Blue Badge application process, a new improved process was implemented which includes an online new application process and a renewal process.

There were 2 complaints made to the Local Government Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) both of which were upheld. This was below the average number of investigations for a local authority of this type. Bracknell Forest council had 100% compliance rate with the findings of the Ombudsman and had no issues with late compliance or late remedies. The local authority held monthly Quality and Performance Cell Meetings to monitor complaints, compliments and feedback which provided senior leaders with an overview of themes across ASC.

Carers in the dementia forum had asked to meet in a social setting with carers and the people they cared for together. In response, the local authority set up regular lunch meetings. They then heard that the timing didn't suit people who worked, so the local authority took this feedback on board and created evening meeting options as well.

Healthwatch had presented data about service users experience of care at home to the commissioners who used this information to resolve issues with positive results. The local authority used also feedback from carers to inform the Integrated All Age Carers Strategy and sought feedback from people about equity. Feedback forms were being amended to reflect the target community.

There were processes to ensure that learning happened when things went wrong, and examples of good practice were shared. Leaders encouraged reflection and collective problem-solving. Examples included a yearly audit programme where each month either full case audits or thematic audits identified good practice and areas for improvement. Audit findings were discussed by senior leaders at a monthly Quality Assurance Working Group, and then shared with teams for discussion and learning. Formal learning events were held twice a year to bring practitioners together, topics included learning from serious case reviews and complaints.

Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Board (BFSB) conducted a SAR in 2017 into the death of a resident at a local care home. Following a criminal prosecution BFSB reviewed their SAR to ensure that any new information which came to light during the trial had been considered. As a result, further learning was shared with local health professionals and providers, and consideration was given to what learning could be shared nationally.

The evaluation of phase one of the new operating model has included feedback from people who have used the service. In response to a series of questions, about their experience, how well listened to, supported, and involved in the decision-making process they felt, and whether they received the help they needed, of 167 respondents the average score was between 9.4-9.6 out of 10. Compliments received across adult social care had increased by 68% from 22-23 to 23-24, with a far higher volume of compliments received in Jan – March 2024.