

Learning, improvement and innovation

Indicative score:

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

The local authority embraced the idea of being a learning, improving and innovative local authority. It had actively engaged with and instigated research with universities, other local authorities, and partners in other countries such as the Birmingham-Leipzig Urban Diplomacy Exchange, to help to better understand the needs of their local communities, and how to meet them. They had looked to get a stronger user voice into research. The local authority had commissioned ethnographic research to better understand the needs of people from ethnic minority groups living in Birmingham and was commissioning research to hear from a wider range of people including the voices of seldom heard groups.

When new practices such as the 3 conversations, strengths-based approach, and family group conferencing were introduced, this was done in partnership with one of the universities in Birmingham to understand the impact on staff, the organisation and people who live in the city.

Partner organisations found that the local authority was strong on learning and development and embedding this into practice. We heard that the local authority and third sector partners developed their relationships and worked together effectively. They took on board the views of people, which was evident in the local authority strategies. Leadership and commissioning practice was consistent. Although circumstances and community needs changed frequently, investment and communication, and valuing the strengths of providers was consistent. People felt support was in place and it had a positive impact and supported good relationships. This approach was enhanced during the COVID-19 pandemic and has been carried forward.

The Care Homes Infection Prevention Control Service had been operational since December 2020 and was an innovative model, shortlisted for the Nursing Times Awards in 2022. We heard many examples from staff demonstrating a commitment to deliver for the people of Birmingham, being creative and working in partnership to keep people safe and as independent as possible. Innovation happened on a small scale as well as at system level. The local authority encouraged that creativity and innovation. Staff told us that the lack of easy, service-led fixes to individual needs led to lateral, creative thinking, which resulted in more person-centred outcomes. An example of this was the use of an app to allow a young person to become more independent, but with support as and when needed.

We heard that the local authority had used learning from the NHS England Vanguard pilots testing new models of integrated care in neighbourhoods to shape the approach to locality working. It had trialed a partnership of integrated provision across formal care and health services and a diverse range of community facilities in Birmingham across 5 locality pilot sites, which it intended to roll out across the city in Autumn 2023.

The Adult Social Care directorate used multiple methods to secure feedback and seek learning. Quarterly feedback from Healthwatch was used to identify themes and trends, which were fed back to teams and providers. The learning from Safeguarding Adult Reviews had led to increased training for staff teams and improved guidance.

Case file audits were carried out by the Principal Social Worker in peer reviews and supervision sessions with managers. Feedback from people was collated through audits and questionnaires, which were sent out to people using the services and their families. The Principal Social Worker produced an annual report reflecting on the previous year, including any achievements and lessons learnt.

To learn from complaints, the local authority had set up a Learning from Complaints Operational Group. This met monthly to review learning from 2 complaints and a compliment. A new Learning from Complaints Assurance Group had also been recently established to provide review and challenge of their improvement activity. For example, in response to concerns relating to communication, a communications forum has been set up to work on a library of template letters for frontline staff to use. In addition, a document setting out expectations in relation to communication has been produced and shared with staff.

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