

Bath and North East Somerset Comprehensive Assessment

Cllr Alison Born

**Suzanne Westhead,
Director Adult Social Care**

**Bath & North East
Somerset Council**

Improving People's Lives





Political Context

B&NES ASC services had been delivered by a private sector provider since 2017.

We took the decision to take them back in house in 2022 and they transferred back in April 2024.

Our primary focus had been on a seamless and orderly transition which we achieved.

We received notification that we were one of the first authorities to be inspected by the CQC 2 weeks after the transfer took place.

As we had not been running the services ourselves, we were less familiar with the issues and the detail than we are 2 years on.

Process

Our experience of the process was that it was very one sided and there was very little space for dialogue or points of clarification. We felt done to and powerless!

Our report was poorly written and contained many factual inaccuracies, many of which were corrected but the score only changed marginally.

We were frustrated by the lack of triangulation of evidence eg our report stated that we did not work well with our local hospital but monitoring data showed that we consistently had only a very small proportion of their delays, despite 50% of patients in the hospital being B&NES residents. It was difficult to understand how this was not recognised and there was no opportunity to discuss.



Judgement

We were disappointed to be assessed as requires improvement and the inaccuracies and poor quality of the report made it more difficult for us to accept the verdict.

As a Cabinet lead I was concerned that we had taken a risk on bringing services back in house and this would not reflect well on the council, also that staff would be demoralised by our rating and that it would impact on recruitment and retention which would make it more difficult to improve the services.

As an administration we were concerned that our residents were not getting the quality of service they needed and the extent of the challenges had not been clear to us.

However, we were confident that our senior managers were a strong team who had done a fantastic job bringing the services back in house (which was a political decision). We did not feel that they were responsible for shortcomings in the service and were well placed to turn it around.



Actions

We decided to embrace the support being offered through PCH (and have found their input invaluable)

The administration had accepted that bringing the services back in house would cost more. Our focus had been on a safe transition but following the CQC inspection, we also recognised that our residents would not get the services they needed if we didn't invest in service improvement. Cabinet agreed an additional £2.2m short term funding to support a transformation programme for ASC

2024 CQC Assessment

- First CQC Assessment – received notification on 10th April 2024 with the site visit in September 2024
- We received Requires Improvement - score of 53%, while RI was expected we did not expect such a low score and we only received a good for partners
- During the first round of inspection B&NES were one of the first 10 local authorities to be inspected
- Lack of knowledge on both the council and CQC
- No flexibility or meaningful conversations during the first inspection e.g. no 'KIT' meeting and inspectors apart from 1 inspector kept their camera off during our presentation session prior to the site visit
- We did not recognise the published inspection report for Bath and North East Somerset, nor the council or Adult Social Care
- **But, it was a free assessment of our performance even if we did not agree with all the findings in the inspection report and we used it as a basis to begin our improvement journey with an investment of £2.2m funded from our reserve**

Extra Support and Guidance to ASC

- Department Health & Social Care
- Partners in Care
- SW Regional ADASS
- Our Cabinet and Lead Member
- Corporate Management Team

Year 1 Improvement Plan (2025-26)

Theme & Reference		Priority Areas of improvement
Theme 1: How the Local Authority Works with People	1.1	Improve public access to information, advice, guidance, and enhance our prevention services.
	1.2	Reduce waiting times for all services areas ensuring that people are prioritised according to risk
	1.3	Enhance the quality offered to Social Care staff by implementing a new practice model. Establish a Practice Development Group focused on legal compliance, outcome-oriented practice, and enhanced recording and data output.
Theme 2: Providing Support	2.1	Work collaboratively with practitioners and partners to ensure we commission services that meet the needs of our population to ensure diversity and sufficiency in the local market
	2.2	Introduce innovative ways of supporting people, staff & stakeholders, through the use technology and digital solutions
	2.3	Giving residents a bigger say in local services and develop how we gather feedback on people's experience of Adult Social Care
Theme 3: How the Local Authority Ensures Safety Within the System	3.1	Ensure our governance and risk management processes are used consistently to ensure safeguarding procedures are followed in accordance with making safeguarding personal principles
	3.2	Refresh and implement a new Preparing for Adulthood Pathway
Theme 4: Leadership	4.1	Improve the quality of our data to ensure better oversight of individuals journeys through the use of performance BI dashboard

We took the opportunity to have themed independent peer reviews as an important part of our improvement journey on:

1. **Co production** – Social Care Institute for Excellence
2. **Safeguarding** - Partners in Care & Health
3. **Deprivation of Liberty** – Partners in Care & Health

Updated Self Assessment

- ASC updated our annual Self Assessment report in line with CQC assessment guidance and included in the report an overview of our improvement journey from last inspection to May 2026
- Outlines the progress we have made to deliver improvements against our improvement priorities, key achievements and the impact this is having on the people we serve
- Link to the updated Self Assessment Report below:
<https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Adult-Social-Care-Self-Assessment-September-2024-May-2026-accessible.pdf>

Now

- Received notification of comprehensive assessment in May 2026
- CQC inspectors will be on site from the Monday 27th – Thursday 30th July
- Assessment covers gathering people's feedback and experience, understanding people's feedback and experience and sampling people's feedback and experience
- So far, we have submitted over 200 pieces of evidence both data and documents, and our self assessment forms part of the evidence submitted
- 50 cases sent to CQC they have chosen to sample 15 people
- 30 carers - 15 with carers assessment and 15 without
- Chosen and submitted coproduction leaders
- CQC inspectors have been talking to partners such as Carers Centre, Voluntary Alliance and Advocacy and more that we are not aware of prior to site visit

Now

- Working on case sampling
- Timetable and logistics planning
- CQC have identified two themes -Access and Safeguarding and there will be two other themed areas which maybe sensory and transitions, which includes hospital discharges and moving from children to adults

Some of our challenges

- Going first in a new assessment framework
- Very little information about the CQC team of inspectors e.g. requested bios of individual inspectors to share with people of experience, carers and staff
- We found the portal clunky (same experience as in first inspection)
- Clarity about which data sources CQC use
- Some information is embedded into notification letter and some of the assessment guidance was changed on the CQC website shortly before we commenced preparing for inspection following our notification on 21st May

CQC – ‘Relational Approach’

- The CQC team are really engaged with us in planning the assessment - good leadership from the Deputy Director and Assessment Manager
- Real focus on outcomes for people of experience and carers
- 1 of the inspectors was involved in our last inspection
- The new assessment process is faster (May to September) as last time April to November with report published in January
- The way CQC is working with is clearly a relationship approach

Contact details

If you wish to hear more about the Bath and North East Somerset Experience of the CQC Comprehensive Assessment, please do not hesitate to contact us after the 30th July

alison_born@bathnes.gov.uk

suzanne_westhead@bathnes.gov.uk