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CQC Assurance: **Wigan's Experience and Journey to 'Outstanding'**

Panel Session

17 July 2026



Introducing Wigan

- Wigan Council is a **mission led organisation** with a deep commitment to tackling inequalities and social injustice.
- **Adult social care is a local strength and a priority.**
We understand its central role in delivering our missions. Not just because of the essential care and support it provides but also because of its potential to drive local growth and build community wealth and health.
- Wigan's position and CQC outcome follows a decade long journey of **community powered, relational public service reform** led through the work in adult social care.
- We view our duties under the Care Act as a responsibility for the whole organisation and wider partnership. Including our focus on **prevention** to reduce and delay the need for care.



Wigan in Context

- 345,000 Residents. Ninth largest metropolitan authority in England and the fastest ageing population in Greater Manchester.
- The Borough covers 77sq miles. Two-thirds green space.
- 14 proud towns. 50th anniversary of the Wigan Borough in 2024, 'Progress with Unity'.
- Rich Industrial heritage and sporting tradition.
- Reducing, but still a high proportion of people in the borough living in the 20% most deprived areas in the country. Life expectancy below the national average.
- Over 9,000 people working in adult social care across the borough. 1,200 directly employed by the Local Authority.



CQC Outcome

Rating: **“Outstanding”**

Overall Score: **95 / 100**

Theme	Quality statement	Score	Rating
Working with People	Assessing needs	4	Exceptional
	Supporting people to live healthier lives	4	Exceptional
	Equity in experience and outcomes	3	Good
Providing Support	Care provision, integration and continuity	4	Exceptional
	Partnerships and communities	4	Exceptional
Ensuring Safety	Safe pathways, systems and transitions	3	Good
	Safeguarding	4	Exceptional
Leadership	Governance, management and sustainability	4	Exceptional
	Learning, improvement and innovation	4	Exceptional



- Wigan’s report published 18 March 2026.
- Follows an on-site inspection during December 2025.
- Was 1 of 4 local authorities to be rated as overall ‘Outstanding’.
- First in the north west region and the first outside of London.

Adult Social Care in Wigan

where the journey started



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The case for change ...

- 2011/12 projected overspend of £6.9million, with rising demand for services
- Lack of leadership and direction
- A traditional service model – over focus on care management and rationing. Poor quality
- Tired, old fashioned model of adult social care - day centres and residential based support
- Dis-engaged, demotivated and risk averse staff, without permission and autonomy
- Accountability issues across adult social care



Our Response

working differently with people and communities



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- Austerity and demographic change viewed as an opportunity to do things radically differently.
- Started with exploratory work in the neighbourhood of Scholes. 160 'high intensity users' of health and social care, unhappy, isolated and disconnected from their community
- Provided a range of ethnographic insights, highlighting the need for radical change. Challenged the way we support people and work with communities.
- Led to a new approach nurtured within Adult Social Care. 'People at the Heart of Scholes' integral to our thinking
- Developed into a simple but profound five-point asset-based formula, providing a clear narrative for a way of working.

Working Differently; **OUR FORMULA**

Adult Social Care and Health

1. Having a different conversation
2. Knowing our community better
3. Attitudes and behaviours of staff
4. Co-location of teams and partner agencies in a place
5. Giving permission and freedom to redesign and innovate

Be Positive

...take pride in all that you do

Be Accountable

...be responsible for making things better

Be Courageous

...be open to doing things differently

Be Kind

...be helpful, generous and thoughtful towards others

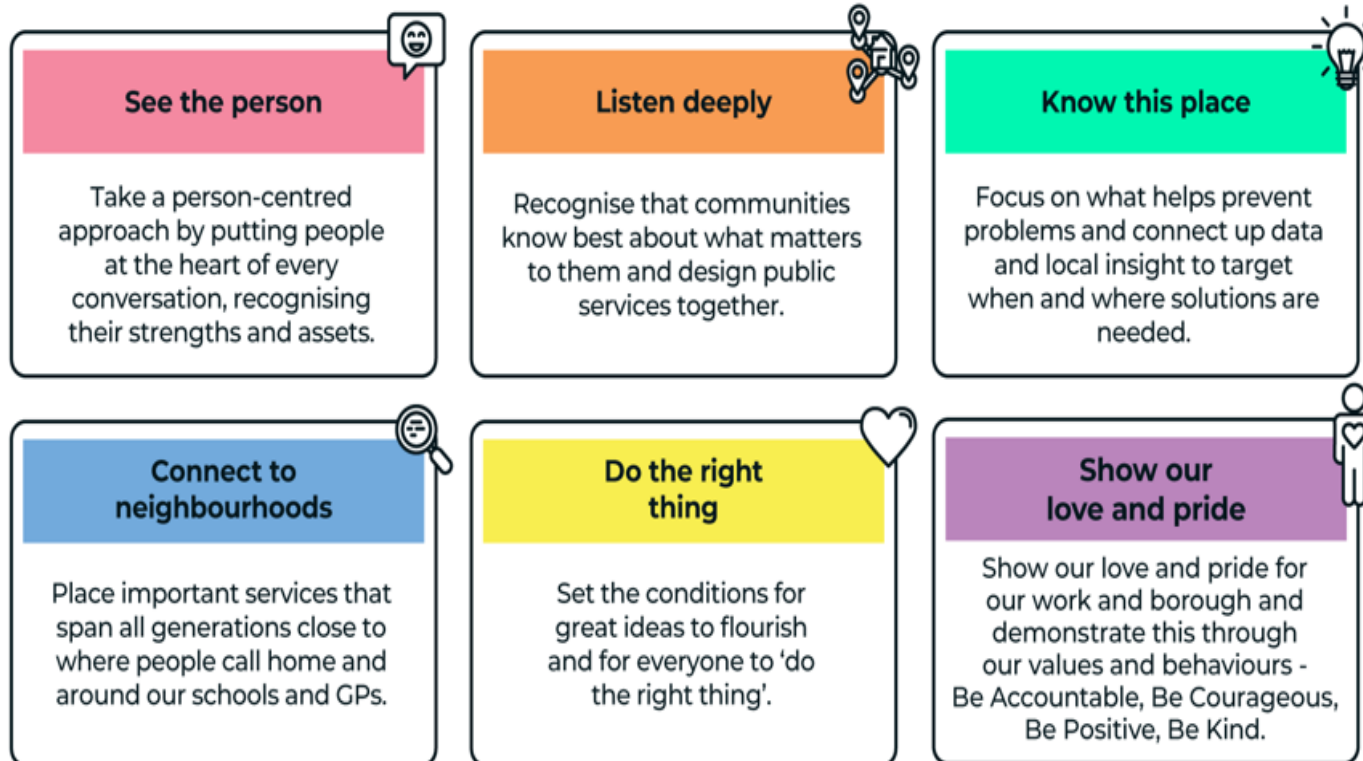
Our Asset Based Formula

SIX ways of working through Progress with Unity



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We are stronger together when we



- Asset based formula developed and nurtured in adult social care evolved into our six ways of working, adopted across the place.
- Underpins everything we do. Including our approach to assessment, quality improvement and commissioning
- A way of working that recognises, celebrates and builds from the assets of people and communities.

Sustained Investment in Community Capacity, Connection and Prevention



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Community Investment Fund first launched in 2014. **Over £14m** invested in community capacity and sustained through realignment of existing spend. Additional to building transfers, recognising them as assets belonging to communities. Enabling community-led support at the heart of neighbourhoods, with a focus on prevention, connection and wellbeing.



We have over 1,500 VCFSE organisations delivering vital support. Building social capital and generating local wealth. Helping people connect, develop friendships, share interest, prevent isolation and loneliness.



- Scaled up investment in early intervention. Including our 'Outstanding' reablement service and therapy led front door model.
- Reformed menu of tech enabled care.
- Building community wealth via our ethical framework and neighbourhood homecare.
- Housing with care - new purpose built, specialist accommodation and extra care.
- Teams co-located in neighbourhoods. Shared resources, oxygen, milk and skills



Supporting staff to work differently

a new approach to public service



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- Cultural permission and practice innovation. Express permission for staff to be courageous, work differently and to “do the right thing”.
- Our Team Wigan Experience – immersive experience reinforcing our values, behaviours and asset-based approach.
- Ethnographic, asset-based conversation training.
- Co-location and alignment of teams in neighbourhoods – working in and accountable to communities.
- Creation of new roles supporting market shaping and quality improvement, working to our asset-based formula.
- Workforce redesign and innovative use of AI and technology, empowering staff with more time for relational working in neighbourhoods.

Be Courageous

“ Be open to doing things differently and working collaboratively with others. ”

Be Accountable

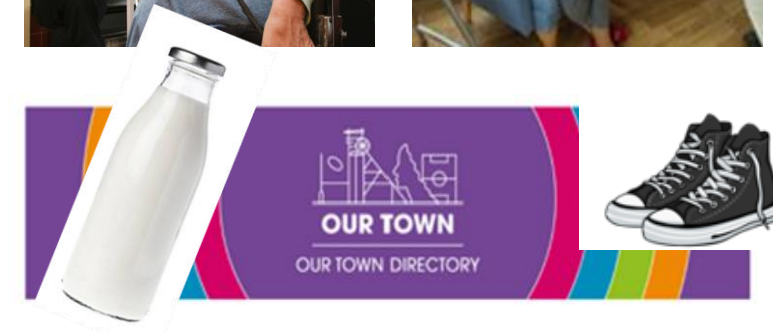
“ Be responsible for making things better, enabling change and supporting improvement. ”

Be Positive

“ Take pride in all that you do and support and develop yourself and others. ”

Be Kind

“ Be helpful, generous and thoughtful towards yourself and others. ”



The Impact

Enabling better lives and less cost



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- CQC rated '**Outstanding**' adult social care. Including in 'leadership' and 'supporting people to live healthier lives'.
- The proportion of young adults with a learning disability supported in their own homes or with family **(97%) is highest in England.**
- One of the **lowest spenders on long-term care** relative to population in the North West.
- Positive impact on hospital demand. **1,500 hospital admissions avoided** in the last 12 months. Discharge delays reduced by 2 days.
- 95% of care home and community based provision CQC rated 'Good or Outstanding'. **Highest of 23 north west councils.**
- **100%** of council and commissioned staff paid the **real living wage** as a minimum. 93% of care homes.
- **7% staff turnover rate** across social care in Wigan, including commissioned care. Compares to 25% nationally
- **9% less people in long-term care** than a population like Wigan would expect.

Our CQC Experience & Reflections



- Real sense of pride in the CQC outcome, which goes beyond adult social care and the local authority.
- Most importantly, it is an endorsement of the approach and a way of working. Relational, strength-based public services with people, place and partnerships at their heart.
- Reflects the significance of stable, ambitious leaderships and the depth of cultural change achieved over a number of years as a critical enabler.
- Staff were motivated to talk about their work, their pride and their permission to innovate and “do the right thing”.
- CQC’s exploration and celebration of innovation welcomed. Inspectorate’s have an important role in enabling, not stifling, creativity and innovation.



Where Next



- We recognise that outstanding doesn't mean perfect. We are committed to listening deeply, learning and continuously improving in response to the challenges that we, our communities and partners face.
- Our Progress with Unity place missions give us a strong mandate for positive change built on collaboration and partnership.
- Ongoing emphases on outward accountability to the people we support, the community and our partners.
- Support for an eco-system of sector led improvement, working together with DHSC and CQC. Informed by the insights and learning from the baseline inspections.

Progress with Unity

A community powered, mission Led movement for change – underpinned by a whole place commitment to prevention and tackling deep rooted inequalities in health and wealth.





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Thank you for
listening

