**Somerset Adult Social Care – LGA Peer Challenge**

**Initial briefing for staff and partners**

**LGA Assurance Peer Challenge**

Somerset Council has commissioned a Local Government Association (LGA) Assurance Peer Challenge[[1]](#footnote-2) to take place from 5th to 7th March 2024 as part of our wider work to assess how well the Council is working with its partners and providers to deliver on its duties relating to Adult Social Care.

This will be an opportunity for us to showcase our best practice and reflect with openness and honesty about areas of strength and areas of challenge.

The LGA will use the same framework[[2]](#footnote-3) and approach as the Care Quality Commission will do when they assess us under their new regulatory powers and be a ‘rehearsal’ for any future CQC visit.

LGA Peer Challenges have been a key improvement and learning tool that local government has been using for many years as part of its commitment to sector-led Improvement.

**Why now?**

A new Care Quality Commission (CQC) Assurance Framework of local authority Care Act 2014 duties (which include those relating to promoting wellbeing, providing information and advice, prevention, assessing for and meeting needs, and market sufficiency) was enabled by the Health and Care Act 2022 and commenced on 1 April this year.

All local authorities that deliver adult social care will be assessed, inspected, and a rating published by the CQC as to how well they are delivering those duties.

Local authorities across the country are preparing for the new CQC Assurance Framework, with many, like Somerset, inviting an LGA Peer Challenge to be ‘inspection ready’. Peer Challenges are enormously helpful in providing contemporary experience of an inspection process by independent and experienced senior leaders from adult social care. A Peer Challenge also demonstrates an open and accountable organisational culture.

The additional benefit of undertaking a Peer Challenge now is that it will act as a barometer for our preparedness for CQC Assurance and offer learning to support our ongoing readiness for inspection.

**Focus of the Peer Challenge**

Our Peer Challenge will focus on the four themes of the CQC Assurance Framework:

* **Working with People**
	+ Assessing needs
	+ Supporting people to live healthier lives
	+ Equity in experience and outcomes
* **Providing support**
	+ Care provision, integration and continuity
	+ Partnerships and communities
* **Ensuring safety**
	+ Safe systems, pathways, and transitions
	+ Safeguarding
* **Leadership**
	+ Governance, management and sustainability
	+ Learning, improvement, and innovation

**The Peer Challenge Approach**

We will share information in advance with the Peer Challenge team about how we think we are performing across these themes, providing them with self-assessment and supporting documentary evidence.

The Peer Challenge will be undertaken by a team of 7-8, including a Director of Adult Social Care, an Elected Member, and Senior Operational and Commissioning leads.

Two of the peers will be joining us to audit up to twenty-four cases to assess the quality of our practice before the main visit, supported by our own Principal Social Worker.

We are developing a timetable across the three days to provide Peers with opportunities to talk to staff at all levels across Adult Social Care and the wider Council, from our system partner and provider organisations, and also, most importantly, people and their families/carers who receive adult social care services.

The Peers will also be talking to our Council Executive and political leaders. We want the Peers get a true sense of our performance, strengths and areas for development.

Once the Peer Challenge has concluded, we will receive a presentation on initial findings followed by a final report which will be shared with us in the weeks following.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation and support with this process.

For further information or any support, please contact our Policy, Performance and Assurance team via: ascinspectionsupport@somerset.gov.uk

1. [Principles of peer challenge | Local Government Association](https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/council-assurance-and-peer-support/principles-peer-challenge) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. [Assessment framework for local authority assurance - Care Quality Commission (cqc.org.uk)](https://www.cqc.org.uk/local-systems/local-authorities/assessment-framework) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)