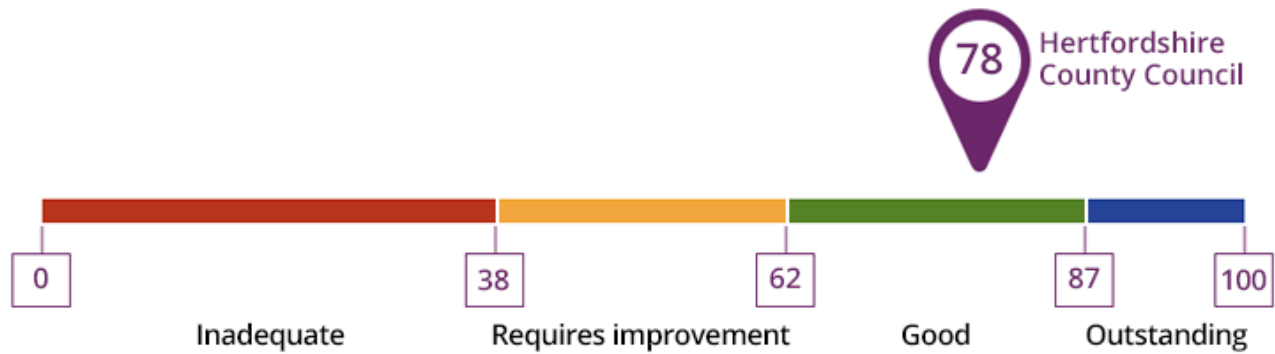


Overall summary

Local authority rating and score

Hertfordshire County Council

Good



Quality statement scores

Assessing needs

Score: 3

Supporting people to lead healthier lives

Score: 3

Equity in experience and outcomes

Score: 3

Care provision, integration and continuity

Score: 3

Partnerships and communities

Score: 4

Safe pathways, systems and transitions

Score: 3

Safeguarding

Score: 3

Governance, management and sustainability

Score: 3

Learning, improvement and innovation

Score: 3

Summary of people's experiences

Overall, we heard positive feedback from people about their experiences of contact with and receiving support from the local authority. However, we did hear that some people, including carers, had waited considerable time for assessments and that this process had not been a positive experience for them. There were a variety of ways in which information about the services available could be accessed, including talking directly with someone in the Gateway team who provided initial contact and assessment. The website included signposting people to other organisations for support which some people told us was helpful for them.

People told us that the front line staff teams listened to them, understood their needs and developed care plans which reflected these. The front line staff teams had a very good understanding of the diverse needs of the communities that they were working in and had access to interpreters and translation teams where needed. There was a separate sensory team who supported people with sensory needs.

Carers told us that their needs were assessed in their own right as a carer and that there was good support provided through Carers in Hertfordshire. Some carers had found it difficult to find out about the support available to them and found the amount of information overwhelming at times whilst others told us that they had found it really helpful.

Summary of strengths, areas for development and next steps

Hertfordshire is a local authority with a strong, stable, effective senior leadership in place. Key roles, including the Principal Social Worker are part of the senior leadership team which ensures that best practice and continuous improvement is embedded within that team.

There was a very positive culture across the organisation led from the senior leadership team and which all staff who spoke with us embraced and supported. Staff felt well supported by their managers and were positive about the risk management processes in place to ensure that their workloads were manageable whilst also ensuring that people received a service. There were good learning and development opportunities available for staff.

Connected Lives is the person-centred, values based approach to the provision of social care that is promoted by the local authority. This was clearly understood by the front line staff teams and was the framework in which they worked.

There was a real focus on preventative work to prevent or delay people needing more formal support. As a result of this the Gateway service had been introduced in the last year. This team provided initial assessment and support for people, including signposting to other organisations who may be best placed to provide preventative support. The local authority are continuing to review this aspect of the service and have commissioned an external review to identify any further improvements needed. There were waiting lists for assessment in all areas and this was linked to the 10% increase for requests for support in the last year. The local authority had plans in place to improve these and it was clear that the actions being taken were having a positive impact with further work to do.

The local authority were committed to hearing the views of people who use services and of involving them in the development of further strategies. There are 8 co-production boards, all of which are co-chaired by a person with lived experience. These feed into the overall strategic co-production board and it was clear that people's experiences and views had been incorporated in to strategies for improving service delivery.

The county of Hertfordshire is overall considered to be an affluent county but there are pockets of deprivation and communities where this has a real impact for people. The local authority, particularly the front line staff teams, had a good understanding of the needs of these communities and where people were most at risk of inequalities. There was a commitment across the organisation to reduce identified inequalities and reduce these. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion programme for culturally competent care, Shaping our Services had been introduced in 2023 and was being rolled out across the organisation and with commissioned providers.

The data available for Hertfordshire shows that they are mostly above the England average. This was particularly true for the numbers of people who received short term support who did not require ongoing support and for the number of people who remained at home after 91 days since their discharge from hospital. Where the data showed a negative result compared to the England average these were very minor and recorded as 'no statistical variation'.

A real strength of the local authority was their excellent partnership working. This was in place across the teams within the local authority and with their external partners. There were clearly long term, strong, effective relationships with the NHS Trusts and it was clear that this had led to really positive outcomes for people. The relationship with the Voluntary, Community, Faith, Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector was another strength with effective working relationships enabling the VCFSE Alliance to support smaller organisations to provide a service to people.

The local authority had clear commissioning strategies in place based on effective use of data and feedback from people about the needs within the community, including forward planning based on the demographic projections. There were very good relationships with the providers of adult social care services with them involved in discussions and planning around market shaping and the development of new services.

There were effective governance systems in place which meant that the local authority had a good understanding of areas in which they performed well but also those areas where there was a need for improvement. There was a culture of continuous improvement that was clearly understood at all levels of the organisation.