

Governance, management and sustainability

Indicative score:

3 - Evidence shows a good standard

The local authority commitment:

We have clear responsibilities, roles, systems of accountability and good governance to manage and deliver good quality, sustainable care, treatment and support. We act on the best information about risk, performance and outcomes, and we share this securely with others when appropriate.

Key findings for this quality statement

The local authority's corporate strategy set out priorities and guided the work programme. It was clear about aims, key areas of focus, roles, and responsibilities.

The Adult Social Care vision was clearly articulated as a strategy and action plans to deliver it. The Director of Adult Social Services (DASS) and the leadership team had the sustained confidence and support of the councillors Executive Committee, and Chief Executive Officer who agreed with the vision and plans to meet the needs of the people of Birmingham over time.

There was staunch support from the council's Administration and Opposition Councillors who supported the strategy and scrutinised the Care Act duties of the Adult Social Care directorate. They had confidence in the information provided to them in briefings, and that the DASS was both aware of, and dealing with risks in their delivery of Care Act duties.

The DASS was briefed by his senior leadership team, who used the governance frameworks that had been put in place to gather performance information – including qualitative and quantitative data.

The local authority had implemented systems and processes that supported good governance and that helped them to understand and address the issues that they had in some areas. They had programmes of audit, and governance frameworks to understand and manage the development, implementation, review, and amendment of action plans necessary to deliver the vision. These included reviewing and re-organising staff resources, to integrate and deliver on a locality level.

The DASS was a visible, respected, and well-liked leader. The leadership team had been put together to focus on priorities, such as “Everyone’s Battle, Everyone’s Business.” A senior leader told us that the leadership team came from a range of professional disciplines, which added strength to their collective experience and knowledge which shaped discussions and problem solving.

The DASS had introduced the organisational culture change programme called “Owning and Driving Performance.” Staff we spoke with understood and embraced this culture and told us about how they applied it in their everyday work to empower productivity and creativity. They also spoke of increased accountability for their performance and the opportunity and encouragement to reach out for support if they needed it. Staff were very positive about working in Birmingham, and the majority felt very supported to develop innovative, creative solutions to deliver person-centred outcomes.

Team managers told us that they were empowered to improve services, using demographics and performance information to develop services and provide a holistic approach. Staff also told us that they felt safe to seek support, or to raise concerns to keep the service, and their practice safe.

Some of the issues that affected sustainable delivery of duties under the Care Act related to challenges with recruitment. Efforts had been made to address this within the local authority, but it remained a significant, widely felt problem.

We heard from both the public and provider stakeholders that some people had experienced an inconsistent service from the local authority, which depended on the individual they dealt with.

Birmingham is the largest unitary local authority in England, and therefore the number of complaints to the Ombudsman should be considered per head of population.

Birmingham had 37 applications (in relation to adult social care), but this was only 3.2% per 100,000 residents, which was in keeping with other core city local authorities.

Similarly, applications upheld by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) in the 12 months to May 2023 relating to Adult Social care were comparable with the rates of other core cities, and proportionately few in number. These were in relation to assessment and care planning and 2 safeguarding complaints.

In the 12 months to May 2023, the local authority received 663 complaints directly about adult social care, and the majority were either partially or completely upheld. Of these, 45% were about service quality, 23% about service quality failure, approximately 16% about communication and almost 8% about staff conduct. These were all directly or indirectly in the local authority's span of control.

The local authority was aware of this and in September 2022 it had implemented a new process for senior adult social care staff to review complaint responses to ensure quality and consistency, and to learn from complaints.

