# Dorset CQC Action Plan July 2026

Dorset Council welcomed the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to undertake an inspection of Adult Social Care services between August and December 2025. The inspection provided valuable insight into the strengths of our services, alongside areas where further improvement is required to ensure we consistently deliver high-quality, person-centred support for adults and carers across Dorset.

The inspection identified a number of key areas for development, including:

- Reducing waiting times across assessment, review and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) services.
- Strengthening and embedding co-production throughout strategic planning, service design and service delivery.
- Improving commissioned provision for people with complex needs, including access to emergency respite services.
- Building a stronger understanding and application of equality, diversity and inclusion across the directorate.
- Ensuring the voice of the person and their carer is consistently heard and reflected in practice and service delivery.
- Fully embedding and strengthening the safeguarding model across Adult Social Care.
- Maximising the use of housing as an enabling, preventative and independence-promoting offer.
- Delivering consistent communication and greater transparency for people who use services and their carers.

As a learning organisation committed to continuous improvement, Dorset Council has also taken the opportunity to reflect on additional learning arising from the inspection process and from senior leadership review. This has enabled us to identify further opportunities to strengthen practice, improve outcomes and enhance the experience of those who draw on our services.
This Action Plan sets out the actions that will be undertaken in response to the inspection findings and our own self-assessment. These actions will be incorporated within and aligned to Directorate Service Plans to ensure improvement activity is embedded within our wider strategic priorities and business planning processes.

Strategic accountability for the delivery of this Action Plan sits within the Quality Assurance governance framework, which provides oversight, challenge and support to ensure improvements are delivered effectively and sustainably.

The Quality Assurance Governance arrangements will support delivery of the Action Plan by:

- Providing constructive challenge and support to strengthen services for adults, carers and families in Dorset, leading to improved outcomes and performance.
- Escalating and removing barriers that may impede the pace of improvement.
- Monitoring progress against agreed milestones and target dates, while ensuring emerging risks, challenges and opportunities are reflected within the plan.
- Ensuring actions are implemented robustly and at pace, resulting in sustained improvements, embedded practice change and measurable performance gains.

Delivery of the CQC Action Plan is led by nominated Key Leads from across Adult Social Care and Commissioning. These leads are accountable for implementing the required improvements and demonstrating impact. Overall progress will be monitored through the Quality Assurance Programme Lead and Quality Assurance Programme Manager.
Action Leads will provide quarterly progress updates to the Quality Assurance Operations and Commissioning Group. Progress will be reviewed alongside performance and impact reporting, including quantitative performance data, quality assurance findings and feedback from people who use services and their carers, to ensure that improvements are resulting in meaningful and lasting change.

| Ref | Action | Status | Senior Lead (Corporate Director/Senior Partner) | Action Lead and contributors | How we will know this has had an impact? | |
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| | | | | | For Adults Accessing Services | Measure |
| **CQC 1** | **CQC Area of Improvement: Improve current waiting list position and adopt a sustainable model for management of waiting times in the future** | | | | | |
| | **Implement a Directorate wide Waiting List Recovery and Sustainability Programme**<br>Maintain focus on reducing assessment, review, carers assessment, financial assessment and DoLS backlogs through targeted recovery plans and performance oversight. | In Progress | Julia Ingram | Director of Adult Social Services | Adults receive support more quickly and experience fewer delays in having their needs assessed and reviewed. | Reduction in waiting lists for:<br>Strengths & Needs Assessments<br>Reviews<br>Carers Assessments<br>Financial Assessments<br>DoLS Assessments<br><br>Median wait for assessment at or below 28 days |
| | **Embed a consistent "Waiting Well" model across all pathways**<br>Develop a standardised approach to risk stratification, welfare checks, communication and early intervention whilst individuals await assessment or review. | In Progress | Julia Ingram | Director of Adult Social Services | People feel safe, informed and supported whilst waiting for services and know who to contact if their circumstances change. | 100% of people waiting over 28 days receive welfare contact<br><br>95% of high-risk individuals reviewed within required timescale<br><br>Waiting Well audits demonstrate 90% compliance |
| | **Strengthen front door demand management and prevention**<br>Maximise opportunities to resolve needs at first contact through prevention, reablement, TEC, information and advice and community-based interventions. | In Progress | Julia Ingram | Director of Adult Social Services | More adults receive timely information, advice and preventative support without needing a full Care Act assessment. | Reduction in transfers to long-term teams<br><br>Reduction in inappropriate referrals and contacts |

**Commented [JS2]:** probably need to list all the assessment types here that we are expecting to see a reduction in waiting times for

**Commented [HT1]:** Too broad, breakdown into different areas of assessment, each with own plan

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| | **Improve workforce capacity and productivity**<br>Review workforce deployment, resource allocation and operating models to ensure capacity is aligned to demand across localities and specialist teams. | In Progress | Julia Ingram | Director of Adult Social Services | People experience more timely responses and consistent allocation of workers regardless of where they live. | Increase assessments completed per FTE<br><br>Vacancy rate maintained below target level<br><br>Caseload variance across localities reduced |
| | **Strengthen performance management and data intelligence**<br>Develop real-time waiting list dashboards, forecasting and escalation arrangements to improve oversight, prioritisation and service responsiveness. | In Progress | Julia Ingram | Director of Adult Social Services | | Monthly performance dashboard produced and reviewed<br><br>95% data accuracy rate<br><br>Quarterly demand forecasting completed |

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| | | | | | For Adults Accessing Services | Measure |
| **CQC 2** | **CQC Area of Improvement: Embed the ladder of Co-production across operational and commissioning services, ensuring appropriate activity is applied within our work** | | | | | |
| | **Develop and implement a Directorate Co-production Framework**<br>Establish clear expectations, standards and accountability for co-production across strategy, commissioning, service redesign and operational practice. | In Progress | Julia Ingram | Director of Adult Social Services | People can clearly see how their views influence service design and decision making. | Framework approved and implemented<br><br>All major programmes demonstrate co-production evidence |
| | **Strengthen governance and assurance of co-production**<br>Ensure lived experience evidence is routinely presented within decision-making, commissioning and governance forums. | In Progress | Julia Ingram | Director of Adult Social Services | Adults and carers feel their experiences are valued and acted upon. | Co-production outcomes reported quarterly to governance boards<br><br>Business cases scrutinised to ensure the voice of lived experience is heard |
| | **Expand opportunities for involvement from people and carers**<br>Increase engagement with carers, advocacy services, community groups, faith groups and seldom-heard communities. | In Progress | Julia Ingram | Director of Adult Social Services | A wider range of people and carers are involved in shaping services that affect them. | Increase participation from carers and people with lived experience<br><br>Representation from all identified protected groups |

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| | **Build workforce confidence and capability in co-production**<br>Deliver training and practical guidance to support meaningful engagement and co-production approaches. | In Progress | Julia Ingram | Director of Adult Social Services | Staff actively seek and use feedback when designing and improving services. | All staff will complete co-production training<br><br>Staff survey demonstrates increased confidence |
| | **Strengthen feedback loops**<br>Ensure participants understand how their views have influenced decisions, service design and improvement activity. | In Progress | Julia Ingram | Director of Adult Social Services | People receive meaningful feedback about how their contribution has influenced change. | 100% engagement exercises result in "You Said, We Did" feedback |
| | **Embed co-production within procurement and commissioning**<br>Ensure people with lived experience and carers actively shape commissioning, procurement and service development decisions. | In Progress | Julia Ingram | Director of Adult Social Services | | Lived experience involved in 100% of major procurement exercises<br><br>Service specifications evidence co-design principles |
| **Ref** | **Action** | **Status** | **Senior Lead** | **Action Lead and contributors** | **How we will know this has had an impact?** | |
| | | | | | **For Adults Accessing Services** | **Measure** |
| **CQC 3** | **CQC Area of Improvement: Address gaps in service delivery for people with complex and specialist needs** | | | | | |
| | **Develop a Complex Needs Commissioning Strategy for Working Age Adults**<br>Address gaps in provision for autism, dementia, mental health, learning disability, forensic support, end-of-life care and dual diagnosis presentations. | In Progress | Alice Deacon | All Age Commissioning Corporate Director | Adults have greater access to services locally that meet their needs. | Strategy approved and implemented<br><br>Annual market position update produced |
| | **Improve Oversight of Quality and Risk Management**<br>Develop an integrated provider oversight approach that combines contract monitoring, quality assurance, safeguarding intelligence, brokerage information, provider feedback and capacity data to identify risks, support improvement and inform commissioning decisions. | In Progress | Alice Deacon | All Age Commissioning Corporate Director | | Data system in place with regular reporting through Quality Assurance governance and risk management forums |
| | **Increase respite and crisis support provision**<br>Expand planned and emergency respite options for adults and unpaid carers, including overnight and out-of-hours provision. | To Start | Alice Deacon | All Age Commissioning Corporate Director | Carers and families experience fewer crises and have access to support when they need it. | Increase emergency respite capacity<br><br>Reduce hospital admissions linked to carer breakdown |

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| | **Strengthen provider market capability**<br>Develop a sustainable market capable of meeting the needs of people with complex and specialist needs through local, high-quality support options. | In Progress | Alice Deacon | All Age Commissioning Corporate Director | Adults with complex needs experience fewer placement breakdowns and more stable support arrangements. | Increase number of providers able to support complex needs |
| | **Expand community-based alternatives to admission**<br>Develop step-up, preventative and transitional services that support independence and reduce hospital admissions. | In Progress | Alice Deacon | All Age Commissioning Corporate Director | More people remain independent in their communities and avoid unnecessary hospital admissions. | Increase uptake of community-based alternatives<br><br>Reduction in avoidable residential admissions |
| | **Strengthen integrated commissioning with Health**<br>Improve pathway coordination, shared planning and joint decision-making for individuals with complex needs. | In Progress | Alice Deacon | All Age Commissioning Corporate Director | People experience more joined-up care and fewer delays between organisations. | Number of jointly commissioned pathways increases<br><br>Reduction in delayed decisions for complex cases |
| **Ref** | **Action** | **Status** | **Senior Lead** | **Action Lead and contributors** | **How we will know this has had an impact?** | |
| | | | | | **For Adults Accessing Services** | **Measure** |
| **CQC 4** | **CQC Area of Improvement: Embed a consistent and robust approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion both internally and externally** | | | | | |
| | **Develop and implement an Adult Social Care EDI Improvement Programme**<br>Embed EDI considerations within service delivery, commissioning, workforce development and governance arrangements. | In Progress | Julia Ingram | Director of Adult Social Services | People feel respected and valued regardless of their background, identity or circumstances. | EDI programme delivered against agreed milestones<br><br>Annual EDI impact review completed |
| | **Improve understanding of Dorset's diverse communities**<br>Strengthen engagement with minoritised ethnic groups, faith communities and other underrepresented populations. | In Progress | Julia Ingram | Director of Adult Social Services | Services better reflect the needs of Dorset's diverse communities | Engagement activity undertaken with all identified underserved groups<br><br>Increase in community engagement participation |
| | **Enhance workforce cultural competence**<br>Deliver targeted learning and development focused on cultural awareness, anti-discriminatory practice and inclusive service delivery. | To Start | Julia Ingram | Director of Adult Social Services | Adults report staff understand and respond appropriately to their cultural, religious and communication needs. | Protected characteristic recording exceeds 95% completeness<br><br>Quarterly inequality analysis completed |

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| | **Improve collection and use of diversity data**<br>Strengthen recording and analysis of protected characteristics to identify and address inequalities. | In Progress | Julia Ingram | Director of Adult Social Services | Services are more responsive and targeted to groups experiencing poorer outcomes. | 95% completion of EDI training<br><br>Improvement in staff confidence measures |
| | **Review accessibility of information and services**<br>Ensure consistent use of easy read, interpretation, accessible formats and communication support across all service areas. | To Start | Julia Ingram | Director of Adult Social Services | People can access information in formats they understand and can use. | 100% priority documents available in accessible formats<br><br>Increased use of Easy Read and translated materials |
| | **Strengthen community partnerships**<br>Build stronger relationships with community leaders, EDI networks, GP practices and VCSE organisations to improve reach and engagement. | In Progress | Julia Ingram | Director of Adult Social Services | Underrepresented groups have increased confidence to engage with Adult Social Care services. | Increase number of active EDI partnerships<br><br>Annual partner satisfaction survey improvement |
| **Ref** | **Action** | **Status** | **Senior Lead (Corporate Director/Senior Partner)** | **Action Lead and contributors** | **How we will know this has had an impact?** | |
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| **CQC 5** | **CQC Area of Improvement: Hearing the voice of the person and un-paid carers throughout service delivery** | | | | | |
| | **Strengthen person-centred and strengths-based practice**<br>Ensure assessments, reviews and support planning consistently reflect what matters to the individual and their desired outcomes. | In Progress | Julia Ingram | Director of Adult Social Services | People feel listened to and their goals, strengths and wishes are reflected in assessments and support plans. | Audit compliance exceeds 90%<br><br>Improved quality assurance scores |
| | **Improve the quality and consistency of recording**<br>Review assessment and care planning documentation to ensure the person's voice is clearly evidenced and not obscured by template-driven recording. | In Progress | Julia Ingram | Director of Adult Social Services | Care plans accurately describe what matters to the individual. | All assessments demonstrate clear evidence of the person's voice<br><br>Reduction in recording-related audit findings |
| | **Enhance support for carers**<br>Strengthen recognition, involvement and assessment of unpaid carers throughout the care journey. | In Progress | Julia Ingram | Director of Adult Social Services | Carers feel recognised, involved and supported in their caring role. | Reduction in carers waiting list<br><br>Increase in carers assessments completed within target |

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| | **Improve access to advocacy**<br>Promote consistent consideration and use of advocacy services to support participation and engagement. | To Start | Julia Ingram | Director of Adult Social Services | People are better able to express their wishes and participate in decisions about their care and support. | Increase the use of advocacy<br><br>All eligible individuals offered advocacy |
| | **Introduce systematic feedback mechanisms**<br>Capture and act upon feedback from people and carers at key stages of the customer journey. | In Progress | Julia Ingram | Director of Adult Social Services | Adults and carers report that sharing feedback leads to improvements. | Feedback collected from all key pathway stages<br><br>Response rates increase year-on-year |
| | **Develop workforce capability**<br>Deliver targeted development on person-centred conversations, communication, strengths-based practice and recording. | In Progress | Julia Ingram | Director of Adult Social Services | People experience more consistent strengths-based conversations and planning. | 95% completion of assessment and recording training<br><br>Improvement in audit outcomes |
| **Ref** | **Action** | **Status** | **Senior Lead (Corporate Director/Senior Partner)** | **Action Lead and contributors** | **How we will know this has had an impact?** | |
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| **CQC 6** | **CQC Area of Improvement: Fully embedded and strengthened Safeguarding model ensuring understanding and robust practice across the service and with partners** | | | | | |
| | **Fully embed the safeguarding hub and spoke model**<br>Ensure consistent understanding, application and oversight of safeguarding responsibilities across all operational teams. | In Progress | Julia Ingram | Director of Adult Social Services | Adults at risk receive quicker and more consistent safeguarding responses. | All safeguarding concerns triaged within 24 hours<br><br>Reduction in safeguarding allocation delays |
| | **Strengthen safeguarding practice assurance**<br>Expand audit activity, thematic reviews and supervision focused on safeguarding quality and Making Safeguarding Personal. | In Progress | Julia Ingram | Director of Adult Social Services | People experience safeguarding processes that are person-centred and focused on desired outcomes (MSP). | Quarterly thematic audits completed<br><br>90% audit compliance against safeguarding standards |
| | **Increase safeguarding awareness across partners and communities**<br>Develop a coordinated communication and engagement programme to improve understanding of safeguarding. | In Progress | Julia Ingram | Director of Adult Social Services | Adults and carers feel more confident recognising and reporting abuse and neglect. | Increase safeguarding awareness campaign reach<br><br>Increase appropriate safeguarding referrals |
| | **Improve multi-agency safeguarding arrangements**<br>Strengthen collaboration with providers, health partners, VCSE organisations and community services. | In Progress | Julia Ingram | Director of Adult Social Services | People experience better coordinated responses to safeguarding concerns. | Multi-agency attendance rates exceed 90%<br><br>Increase partner satisfaction with safeguarding arrangements |

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| | **Improve communication and feedback relating to safeguarding concerns**<br>Ensure providers, referrers and partners receive timely information on safeguarding processes, outcomes and learning. | In Progress | Julia Ingram | Director of Adult Social Services | Adults and providers are kept informed throughout safeguarding enquiries. | 90% provider satisfaction regarding safeguarding communication<br><br>Safeguarding outcomes shared within agreed timescales |
| | **Deliver a Mental Capacity Act and DoLS improvement programme**<br>Improve compliance, workforce capability and timeliness of responses to protect people's rights. | In Progress | Julia Ingram | Director of Adult Social Services | People feel their rights, choices and independence are respected and protected. | Reduction in DoLS backlog by agreed percentage<br><br>Increase in proportion of priority cases completed within timescale |
| **Ref** | **Action** | **Status** | **Senior Lead (Corporate Director/Senior Partner)** | **Action Lead and contributors** | **How we will know this has had an impact?** | |
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| **CQC 7** | **CQC Area of Improvement: Enhance housing offer to ensure there is sufficient capacity to meet future demand** | | | | | |
| | **Develop a joint Housing, Commissioning and Adult Social Care Strategic Delivery Plan**<br>Align housing growth, accommodation pathways and support services to future care and support demand. | To Start | Julia Ingram/Alice Deacon | Adults, Commissioning and Housing Directors | Adults can access accommodation that supports their independence and wellbeing. | Delivery plan approved and monitored quarterly |
| | **Accelerate delivery of extra care and supported housing schemes**<br>Increase capacity to support independence and reduce reliance on residential care. | In Progress | Julia Ingram/Alice Deacon | Adults, Commissioning and Housing Directors | More people are able to remain living independently in their local communities. | Number of new extra care units delivered<br><br>Progress against Extra Care Housing Strategy targets |
| | **Strengthen housing pathway planning**<br>Improve pathways for people with autism, learning disabilities, mental health needs, dementia and younger adults transitioning into adulthood. | In Progress | Julia Ingram/Alice Deacon | Adults, Commissioning and Housing Directors | People experience fewer delays in accessing appropriate accommodation and support. | Reduction in housing-related delayed discharges<br><br>Increase in specialist accommodation pathways |
| | **Promote housing as a preventative intervention**<br>Increase use of housing solutions, adaptations, TEC and independent living approaches to delay or prevent care needs. | In Progress | Julia Ingram/Alice Deacon | Adults, Commissioning and Housing Directors | Adults can remain safely at home for longer and avoid unnecessary escalation of needs. | Increase use of TEC and adaptations<br><br>Reduction in care escalation linked to housing issues |

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| | **Strengthen commissioning and market development**<br>Work with housing providers and partners to expand specialist and community-based housing options. | In Progress | Julia Ingram/Alice Deacon | Adults, Commissioning and Housing Directors | More people can access specialist housing close to family, friends and support networks. | Increase specialist housing provision available<br><br>Reduction in out-of-area placements |
| | **Improve integrated planning between ASC, Housing and Health**<br>Develop joint forecasting, demand modelling and strategic commissioning arrangements. | To Start | Julia Ingram/Alice Deacon | Adults, Commissioning and Housing Directors | Adults experience seamless support between housing, health and social care services. | Joint planning arrangements implemented<br><br>Quarterly demand and capacity reviews completed |
| **Ref** | **Action** | **Status** | **Senior Lead (Corporate Director/Senior Partner)** | **Action Lead and contributors** | **How we will know this has had an impact?** | |
| | | | | | **For Adults Accessing Services** | **Measure** |
| **CQC 8** | **CQC Area of Improvement: Improve consistency, accuracy and quality of communication with individuals and providers** | | | | | |
| | **Develop an Adult Social Care Communication Improvement Programme**<br>Review all communication channels, products and customer-facing information through a person-centred lens. | To Start | Julia Ingram | Director of Adult Social Services | People report that Adult Social Care is easier to understand and access. | Programme delivery against milestones<br><br>Annual communication quality review completed |
| | **Improve quality and consistency of assessment documentation**<br>Ensure assessments, support plans and correspondence are clear, accurate, meaningful and focused on outcomes. | In Progress | Julia Ingram | Director of Adult Social Services | Assessments, letters and support plans are clear, meaningful and personalised. | 90%+ documentation quality audit score<br><br>Reduction in documentation-related complaints |
| | **Improve communication during waiting periods**<br>Establish routine contact standards and clear expectations for individuals, carers and providers. | In Progress | Julia Ingram | Director of Adult Social Services | People feel informed about what is happening and what support is available. | 95% compliance with communication standards<br><br>Reduction in complaints regarding waiting times |
| | **Increase accessibility of information**<br>Expand Easy Read, accessible formats, interpretation and digital self-service options. | To Start | Julia Ingram | Director of Adult Social Services | Adults receive information in a format that meets their communication needs. | Increase use of Easy Read and alternative formats<br><br>Website accessibility compliance achieved |
| | **Strengthen communication with providers and partners**<br>Improve information sharing, role clarity, pathway understanding and feedback mechanisms. | To Start | Julia Ingram | Director of Adult Social Services | People experience less repetition and fewer delays caused by poor communication between services. | Partner communication satisfaction score improves annually<br><br>Reduction in communication-related escalations |

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| | **Promote clear, empowering and strengths-based language**<br>Reduce jargon, increase consistency and ensure communications are understandable and meaningful to people and carers. | In Progress | Julia Ingram | Director of Adult Social Services | Adults feel respected, empowered and actively involved in decisions affecting their lives. | Audit evidence demonstrates 90% compliance<br><br>Improvement in service-user experience survey responses |

| Corporate 'Golden Measures' to be reported quarterly to DASS and Chief Exec. | | | |
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| **Measure** | **Data Set/Evidence Base** | **RAG Rating** | **Action Required** |
| **Overall Care Act Assessment Waiting List** | Dashboards & Flow Data | | |
| **Overall Review Waiting List** | Dashboards & Flow Data | | |
| **Carers Assessment Waiting List** | Dashboards & Flow Data | | |
| **DoLS Backlog** | Dashboards & Flow Data | | |
| **% of People Reporting They Feel Listened To** | ASCOF | | |
| **% Audits Demonstrating Person's Voice** | Audit | | |
| **% Safeguarding Timeliness** | Dashboards & Flow Data | | |
| **Co-production Evidence in Strategic Decisions %** | Co-Production Audit Data | | |
| **No. of Out-of-Area Placements Due to Lack of Provision in Area** | Commissioning Data | | |
| **Staff Confidence Across 8 Improvement Areas** | Bi-Annual Survey | | |