



Northumberland County Council

Audit Committee

Wednesday, 27 March 2024

Review of External Inspection Reports - Adult Social Care and Children's Services

Report of Councillor(s) Guy Renner-Thompson, Cabinet Member for Inspiring Young People and Wendy Pattison, Cabinet Member for Caring for Adults.

Responsible Officer(s): Neil Bradley, Executive Director for Adults, Ageing & Wellbeing, and Audrey Kingham, Executive Director for Children, Young People & Education

1. Link to Key Priorities of the Corporate Plan

This report relates to the Tackling Inequalities priority of the 2023-2026 Corporate Plan.

2. Purpose of report

To inform Members of the activity pertaining to Adults Social Care and Children's Services regarding external inspections and associated actions. This covers the period from 1st July 2023 to 31st December 2023.

3. Key Issues

- 3.1 Northumberland's residents are protected, cared for and supported by services that external bodies judge to be good on the whole, and where they fall below that, the Council acts promptly where it is within its powers.
- 3.2 88.0% of all Northumberland-based Adults Social Care providers were rated as Good or Outstanding at the end of December 2023, a further increase from the position in the last report (86.7% at the end of June 2023). Section 5.1 describes what actions are taken when the Care Quality Commission (CQC) judges' provision as being less than Good. Northumberland is performing above the equivalent national figure where 83% of services with a rating are Good or Outstanding.
- 3.3 Adult Social Care have received notification that they will be inspected by the CQC in the next six months. The initial information request was responded to by 8th March.

- 3.4 Inspections of children's residential homes have continued and there have been 4 inspections during the period. Four of the five units are judged to be Good, with Phoenix House judged as Requires Improvement when it was inspected in the autumn. Section 5.2.1 provides further detail.
- 3.5 The Council's Youth Justice Service was inspected in April by Her Majesty's Probation Inspectorate. With an overall judgement of Good, three areas were singled out as Outstanding and there were two recommendations that required following up. Section 5.2.2 details the progress on these.

Inspections of schools have been positive overall, leading to an increase in the proportion judged Good or Outstanding which is the highest in the northeast region. 95% of Northumberland's schools are judged by Ofsted to be Good or Outstanding compared to 90% nationally. Section 5.2.4 provides further detail.

- 3.6 Inspections of early years providers continue, and the vast majority are judged to be Good or Outstanding (97%), similar to the national average. Section 5.2.5 provides further detail.
- 3.7 Preparation for the Inspections of Children's Social Care (ILACS), Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), and Northumberland Skills continues.

4. Forward plan date and reason for urgency if applicable

10 Jan 2024

5. Background

The report focuses on inspection activity undertaken by the CQC and Ofsted between July 2023 and December 2023.

5.1 Adult Social Care CQC inspection status

88.0% of all Northumberland-based Adults Social Care providers were rated as Good or Outstanding at the end of December 2023, compared to 86.7% at the end of June 2023. The equivalent figure for national ratings was 83% at the end of December 2023.

The table overleaf describes the new registration and published inspection activity that has taken place between July 2023 and January 2024. It provides the detail of what settings / services have been inspected so that Elected Members can see where the changes have taken place.

Where ratings have deteriorated from Good to Requires Improvement, the local authority is working with the management of the settings to implement the actions required. This involves Council officers working to support the provider on whatever the issues are that have led to the deterioration in rating. This can be any one of the five domains that CQC inspects although the management of the home and the assessment of whether it is 'well led' is the most common area for care homes to struggle with compliance.

There are currently no services rated "Inadequate" with the one establishment with this rating having moved to "Requires Improvement." Where a service has been rated Inadequate, the volume and complexity of issues requires more intensive and prolonged officer input. It may also require the Council to restrict new placements

into a service for safety reasons and to ensure the service can direct resources to rectifying problems.

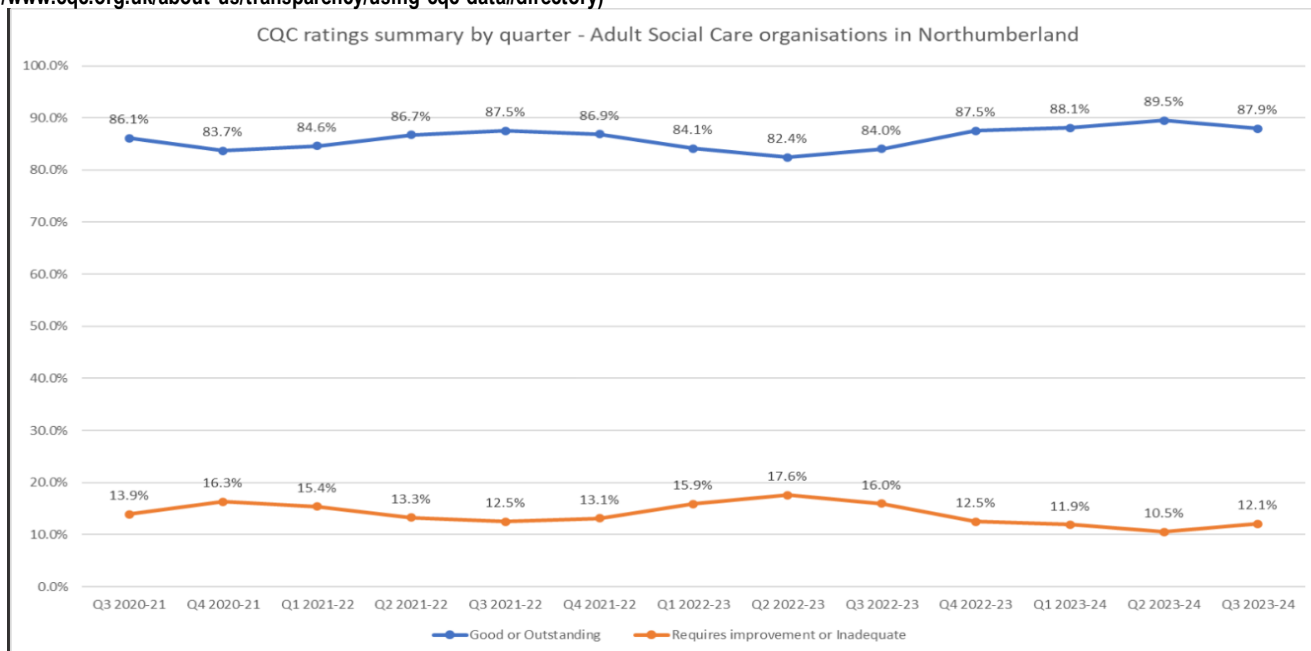
The work of Council teams and colleagues in the NHS aimed at improving overall quality is achieving positive results and we can see improvements where the work has been put in to rectify adverse ratings. Council officers continue to monitor services proactively and to provide overall support to the market to maintain positive ratings, although these are independent organisations operated and controlled by their own managers. The recruitment and retention of staff in social care services continues to cause challenges and is a significant drain on provider resources and the Council continues to support with local and national initiatives to resolve this although it remains a problem throughout the country. There have been some signs of the situation improving since April 2023 although there remain concerns that recruitment and retention problems have not been resolved at a structural level.

CQC-registered locations in Northumberland - with an inspection published or registration change in the last 6 months

Period:

Status	Location Name	Location Primary Inspection Category	Rating July 23	Rating January 24	Publication Date
Changed	Beachville West End	Residential social care	Requires improvement	Good	15/07/2023
Changed	Time to Care Specialist Support Services Limited	Community based adult social care services	Requires improvement	Good	03/08/2023
Changed	Havendene Residential Home	Residential social care	Requires improvement	Good	12/08/2023
Changed	Oaklands	Residential social care	Requires improvement	Good	12/07/2023
Changed	Alexandra Park	Community based adult social care services	Inadequate	Requires improvement	05/10/2023
Changed	Wentworth Grange	Residential social care	Good	Requires improvement	06/12/2023
Changed	Bentnck Crescent	Residential social care	Good	Requires improvement	23/11/2023
Changed	Ridley Park	Residential social care	Outstanding	Good	31/08/2023
Newly registered	Deneholme Care Centre	Residential social care	#N/A		
Reregistered	Cramlington House	Residential social care	#N/A	Good	26/03/2019
Reregistered	Holywell House Care Centre	Residential social care	#N/A	Good	11/06/2022
Reregistered	Bluebell Manor	Residential social care	#N/A	Requires improvement	24/06/2023
Reregistered	Blythgate Manor	Residential social care	#N/A	Requires improvement	09/06/2023
Unchanged	Bell View Help at Home Ltd	Community based adult social care services	Good	Good	21/07/2023
Unchanged	Bluebird Care (Northumberland South)	Community based adult social care services	Good	Good	11/08/2023
Unchanged	No 11&12 Third Row	Residential social care	Good	Good	04/01/2024
Unchanged	Keele Drive	Community based adult social care services	Good	Good	09/12/2023
Unchanged	Flexible Support Options Limited (Pengarth)	Residential social care	Good	Good	12/07/2023
Unchanged	Mountview	Residential social care	Good	Good	27/07/2023
Unchanged	West STSS (Short Term Support Service) Hexham	Community based adult social care services	Outstanding	Outstanding	05/09/2023
Unchanged	North STSS (Short Term Support Service) Berwick	Community based adult social care services	Outstanding	Outstanding	06/09/2023
Unchanged	Wilkinson Park	Residential social care	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	24/10/2023
Unchanged	Shared Lives Northumberland	Community based adult social care services	Good	Good	05/01/2024
Unchanged	Livability Hallgate	Community based adult social care services	Good	Good	14/12/2023
Unchanged	The Oaks Care Home	Residential social care	Requires improvement	Requires improvement	24/08/2023
Unchanged	Livability Beaumont Court	Community based adult social care services	Good	Good	09/12/2023
Unchanged	YourLife(Ponteland)	Community based adult social care services	Good	Good	08/07/2023
Unchanged	Forget me not homecare services ltd	Community based adult social care services	Good	Good	09/12/2023

Source: CQC Active Locations register dated 05 January 2024/ 03 July 2023
(available at <https://www.cqc.org.uk/about-us/transparency/using-cqc-data#directory>)



5.1.1 Local Authority Managed Inspected Services

5.1 SERVICE	5.2 DATE LAST INSPECTED	5.3 INSPECTION OUTCOME
Hatfield Chase	15.6.22	Requires Improvement
Sea Lodge	14.11.18 31.8.22 (targeted inspection for safe and well led)	Good Inspected but not rated. No areas for concern identified
Shared Lives	23.10.23 (Targeted Inspection)	Overall Good Targeted inspection looking at Safe and Well Led, (both domains received a rating of good), however the Caring domain was also inspected and received outstanding (previous rating was good)
Tynedale House	4.12.19 9.12.20 (Focused Visit)	Overall Outstanding Good practice in Infection, prevention & Control
STSS (Short Term Support Service) - Alnwick	24.11.23 (Targeted inspection)	Overall Outstanding at previous inspection in February 2018. The formal inspection report and rating from November 2023 inspection is still awaited
STSS - Berwick	19.7.23 (Targeted Inspection)	Overall Outstanding Targeted inspection looking at Safe and Well Led, (both domains received a rating of good)
STSS – South / Central	22.11.23 (Targeted Inspection)	Overall Outstanding Targeted inspection looking at Safe and Well Led, (Safe was rated as good and Well Led was rated as outstanding)

STSS - West	31.7.23 (Targeted Inspection)	Overall Outstanding Targeted inspection looking at Safe and Well Led, (both domains received a rating of good)
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During the last quarter a further 3 of our Registered services received a targeted assessment from the CQC around the domains Safe and Well Led – Shared Lives on 23rd October 2023 who received Good overall but also had the Caring domain assessed which moved from Good to Outstanding. Southeast STSS were assessed on 22nd November and retained their Outstanding status whilst Alnwick STSS were assessed on 24th November – the report is still awaited.

The CQC published the findings from the 5 pilot sites of the local authority assessments undertaken:

- Birmingham City Council – indicative rating of Good
- Lincolnshire County Council – indicative rating of Good
- North Lincolnshire Council – indicative rating of Good
- Nottingham City Council – indicative rating of Requires Improvement
- Suffolk County Council – indicative rating of Good

They identified four key themes across all 5 local authorities. These are:

- Outcomes for people were better where there was good partnership working, including with voluntary and community partners as well as health partners.
- Integrated working around discharging people from hospital was working and had improved the flow out of hospitals.
- Staff tended to stay with a local authority when they felt valued, had learning and development opportunities, and where there was a positive culture.
- There were different practices across the 5 local authorities in how they worked with young people who are transitioning from children's services to adult services, so young people's experiences were varied.

The assessment process for all Local Authorities was expected to begin from December 2023 and all 153 Local Authorities will be assessed by March 2025. Northumberland County Council Adult Services have received their 'Information Request' on Monday 19th February. We are required to provide specific information covering 38 areas / topics which includes:

- service user / carer / staff feedback (including compliments and complaints)
- performance information; financial / direct payments information
- care planning / assessment / reviews (including provision of information for informed choice; waiting lists)
- provision of aids and equipment to promote independence.
- inclusion and accessibility

- reducing inequalities strategy (including people being at risk of having unmet needs or poor outcomes because of their protected characteristics)
- out of area placements
- commissioning strategies
- demand and capacity and market sustainability (including social care workforce) in commissioned services for home care, residential and nursing care homes, supported living and how we monitor quality across them.
- use of the Better Care Fund
- Market Position Statement
- partnership working and the pathways in place when people move between services.
- support for unpaid carers
- contingency planning
- safeguarding
- governance arrangements including strategic plan, risk registers, organisational structures and frameworks, learning and improvement plans, workforce development.
- co-production.

We had 3 weeks to gather the evidence and return it to the CQC by Friday 8th March 2024. We are also required to provide details of our voluntary sector partners, providers, and stakeholders, and prior to our on-site visit they will contact these organisations to gain feedback on how well we engage and work in partnership with them. We have been informed that we can expect an on-site visit within the next 6 months and that we will receive approximately 6 – 8 weeks' notice of the formal assessment. The CQC are anticipating that all assessments carried out will include 2 days on site, but this is dependent on size and complexity of organisations. We will be given a rating of either Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement or Inadequate.

5.2 Children's Services

This report features several types of inspection activity in Children's services: notably the Council's residential homes for children; the inspection of the Youth Justice Service; schools and early years provision.

5.2.1 Children's residential homes

During this reporting period 4 of our 5 local authority children's residential homes have been inspected by their regulatory body, Ofsted. This figure of 80% is just higher than the national average of 79%. At the time of writing this summary Barndale still requires their annual inspection for 2023/2024. This will take place before 31st March 2024.

Home	Judgement	Comments
Kyloe	Good (Prev Outstanding)	The inspection for Kyloe house remained positive with an acknowledgement of a high standard of care. However, they were unable to maintain their Outstanding rating due to their education provision being identified as Required improvement.

Barndale	Good (Prev Outstanding)	Have yet to be inspected for the 2023-24 reviewing schedule.
Coanwood	Good (Prev Good)	Retention and recruitment of staff has remained difficult within the service. This has continued to have an impact on the quality of care across the whole service. The ability for 2 homes to remain Good is a significant achievement. However, it did impact upon the rating for Phoenix House.
Phoenix	Requires Improvement (Prev Good)	
Thorndale	Good (Prev Good)	

Ofsted stated that at Kylloe House, managers and staff prioritise children's safety. They have a comprehensive understanding of each child's needs, the risks to their safety and their vulnerabilities. Managers and staff recognise how children's experiences and past traumas may impact on their behaviour.

This reinforces that the children living in Kylloe House continue to receive a high standard of care. However, due to the education provision requiring improvements they were unable to maintain their Outstanding rating. A comprehensive improvement plan is currently being implemented to enhance the experience and outcomes within our education provision.

5.2.2. **Youth Justice Service**

The Council's Youth Justice Service was inspected in April by His Majesty's Probation Inspectorate. With an overall judgement of Good, three areas were singled out in July's report as "Outstanding", one of these being the ambition, commitment and young person-centred approach of our staff, partners and leaders. There were two actions arising from the inspection:

- a. Ensure that the voice of children and their parents and carers is more robustly heard and utilised at strategic decision-making level - this is still work in progress and an area of development for the new participation lead worker. Participation is a standard agenda item at the Youth Justice management board.
- b. Forensically analyse and segment out-of-court (OOC) data, use findings to identify what works well, and utilise this to influence strategic and operational practice - updates provided at Youth Justice management board in October 2023 where a detailed OOC report was provided. It is also scheduled for the next meeting agenda for any feedback or views.

Progress on these actions will be monitored through the multi-agency Youth Justice Management Board.

5.2.3 **Future Children's Social Care Inspection activity**

It is anticipated that the next activity under the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services framework (ILACS) will be in the form of a full inspection of the Council's Children's Services which will involve 5 day's preparation following notification and then 5 days of fieldwork. Prior to this, Children's Social Care participated in the Annual Engagement Meeting with Ofsted on 5th March and the formal feedback is awaited.

5.2.4 SCHOOL INSPECTIONS

Between 1st July and 31st December 2023, 31 inspections took place. Schools that have no previous grade have academised since their last inspection.

	Previous Grade	Current Grade
Berwick St Marys C of E First School	Good	Good
Felton C of E Primary School	Good	Good
Meadowdale Academy	Good	Good
Richard Coates C of E Primary School	Good	Good
St Mary's Catholic First School	-	Good
Wylam First School	-	Good
St Matthew's Catholic Primary School	Good	Good
Bedlington Station Primary School	Good	Good
Ovingham Church of England First School	-	Good
Ss Peter and Paul's Catholic Primary Academy	Requires Improvement	Good
Bothal Primary School	Good	Outstanding
Central Primary School	Requires Improvement	Good
St Bede's Catholic Primary School	-	Requires Improvement
Hipsburn Primary School	Outstanding	Good
Ponteland Community Primary School	-	Good
Darras Hall Primary School	-	Outstanding
St Wilfrid's Catholic Primary School	-	Requires Improvement
Allendale Primary School	Good	Good
Lowick C of E Primary School	Good	Good
Holy Island C of E Primary School	Outstanding	Good
Broomhaugh C of E First School	Outstanding	Good
Harbottle C of E First School	-	Good
Holy Trinity C of E Aided First School	Good	Good
Bedlington Whitley Memorial C of E Primary School	Good	Requires Improvement
Swansfield Park Primary School	Outstanding	Good
Belsay Primary School	-	Good
Cambo First School	Outstanding	Good

The overall figure for the percentage of first/primary schools judged by Ofsted as Good or Outstanding was 95.9% at the end of December 2023, which is above the national average of 91%. This equates to 118 / 123 schools. Three of the First / Primary schools inspected in the period were judged to be less than Good, two are Catholic academies, the other a maintained school.

Secondary/High schools:

	Previous Grade	Current Grade
Seaton Sluice Middle School	Good	Good
St Joseph's Catholic Middle School	-	Good
Prudhoe Community High School	-	Good

The overall figure for the percentage of secondary schools judged by Ofsted as Good or Outstanding was 86.7% at the end of December 2023, which is above the national average of 83%. This equates to 26 / 30 schools.

Special Schools:

	Previous Grade	Current Grade	Monitoring Visit
Emily Wilding Davison School	Inadequate	Inadequate	Taking Effective Action

The overall figure for the percentage of special schools judged by Ofsted as Good or Outstanding was 80% at the end of December 2023, which is below the national average of 90%. This equates to 8 / 10 schools (including the Pupil Referral Unit).

A School Improvement Board was instigated at Emily Wilding Davison School. LA (Local Authority) staff, governors and the school leadership team meet monthly to drive improvements forward. The school is clearly much improved, as noted by Ofsted who visited it in November 2023.

5.2.5 EARLY YEARS EDUCATION & CHILDCARE

23 graded Ofsted inspections of early years and childcare providers in Northumberland were carried out between 1st July and 31st December 2023. Of these:

- 12 were inspections of childminder settings:
 - 10 Good
 - 1 Compliant
 - 1 Non-Compliant
- 11 private, voluntary or independent (PVI) group settings were inspected:
 - 8 Good
 - 2 Requires Improvement
 - 1 Inadequate

All providers receiving a less than Good judgement have been supported by the Early Years Team to address highlighted issues.

To date 97% of the total number of early years and childcare providers in Northumberland are judged as being Good or better. This is the same as the all-England figure of 97%. This figure equates to 177 out of 183 providers.

5.2.6 SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities)

The new Area-wide inspection framework was released by Ofsted in November 2022. It has been shaped by the pilot that Northumberland participated in back in March 2022. It is a graded inspection that focuses on the lived experience of children and young people with SEND, and their families. Three areas within the northeast region have been inspected under this framework, namely Hartlepool, Gateshead and Middlesborough. Preparation of the documents required for the inspection is underway and overseen through the SEND Partnership Board.

5.2.7 NORTHUMBERLAND SKILLS

Northumberland Skills is expecting its Further Education and Skills inspection for those aged 16+. It will be a graded inspection that will judge Overall effectiveness, as well as 8 sub domains, namely: quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; leadership and management; education programmes for young people; adult learning programmes; apprenticeships; and provision for learners with high needs. The grading at the previous inspection in 2018 was Good.

Options open to the Council and reasons for the recommendations

The Committee is recommended:

To assess the effectiveness of the actions the Council takes in response to external inspections and confirm an assurance that the Council is taking appropriate action in respect of any issues.

Implications

Policy	Raising standards in social care and education are Council priorities.
Finance and value for money	None
Legal	<p>The committee's terms of reference state that it has a function to consider the Council's framework of assurance and ensure that it adequately addresses the risks and priorities of the Council. The results of external inspections are an independent view on an aspect of the County Council's framework of governance and the external inspections referenced in this report are included in the Annual Governance Statement which this committee reviewed in January.</p> <p>Inspections are carried out under the legislative framework set out in:</p>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. For educational provisions section 5 of the Education Act 2005, section 125 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, and Childcare Act 2006. 2. For Adult Social Care under the Care Quality Commission regulatory framework. <p>For Children's Social Care under the Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) regulatory framework.</p>
Procurement	None
Human resources	Regulatory inspections assess compliance with HR (Human Resources) policies.
Property	None
The Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?	No - no equalities issues identified No groups could be disadvantaged as a result of this report.
Risk assessment	Audit Committee reviewing a schedule of incoming inspection reports mitigates the risk of the Council not taking appropriate action in respect of such issues.
Crime and disorder	None
Customer considerations	Ensuring that external inspections are properly followed up provides assurance that service weaknesses are being addressed. Northumberland's residents are protected, cared for and supported by services that external bodies judge to be Good on the whole, and where they fall below that, the Council acts promptly where it is within its powers.
Carbon reduction	More meetings are taking place virtually and hence the need to travel is less.
Health and wellbeing	Inspections take health and wellbeing into account when making judgements about their findings.
Wards	All Wards

Background papers

Care Quality Commission Active Locations Register
 NCC (Northumberland County Council) list of school inspections

Links to other key reports already published

Not applicable

Author and Contact Details

Alan Hartwell, Senior Manager - Performance and Systems Support,
Email: alan.hartwell@northumberland.gov.uk