

Cheshire West and Chester Council

Future of Adult Social Care Commission

July 2022



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Cheshire West
and Chester

Future of Adult Social Care Commission

A commission is a group of people who have been asked to do something official

What was the Commission asked to do?

To shape adult social care so that residents can be helped to achieve their aims for a good life – a healthy, happy life in a place they call home, playing a part in their family and community as much as they wish.

‘What does a good life look like for you and your family and how can we work together to achieve it?’

What is Social Care?

Social care is the practical help and support offered to people with eligible support needs. It is a general term for a range of non-medical services provided by local authorities and others, including the voluntary sector, to support the social needs of individuals to improve their quality of life.

What do we mean by disabled people?

Within this paper, we use the words ‘disabled people’ to mean people facing disabling societal barriers due to their impairments or conditions (regardless of their age). This includes physical impairments, mental ill health, hearing impairments (including Deaf people with British Sign Language as first language), visual impairments, learning difficulties, neurodiverse people, and those with chronic illness or fatigue.

How did the Commission Work?

The Commission brought together eight commissioners to hear from local people who draw on social care and other experts to understand the issues and opportunities facing social care and make recommendations for the future. The commissioners were made up of six elected councillors along with a leader from both the NHS and from the community and voluntary sector

Recommendation Themes

The recommendations of the Commission can be summarised under six themes

1. Take a human rights approach to disability
2. Make 'nothing about us without us' real
3. Keep it simple
4. Think local
5. Support a fairer future
6. Strong leadership, strong workforce and good use of data

A human rights approach to disability means understanding that it is the way that things are organised that can stop people with a disability from being able to live an ordinary life.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is a world-wide agreement about the rights that disabled people have.

Foreword

A good life is something that all of us want.

What 'a good life' means will vary from person to person. Different individuals and families will also have different opportunities and challenges to achieving it.

The purpose of this commission has been to bring together elected representatives, health and voluntary sector colleagues to ask how we can best enable people to live the lives they want. As well as their own lived experiences of care, the Commissioners have been keen to hear from those who draw on care and those who provide care. Understanding everyone's perspective is key to creating the kind of sustainable and responsive support and care that we would want for ourselves, our families, friends and neighbours. These are services that could touch all of us at various points in our lives.

I want to thank all of those who gave up their time for the Commission and particularly to those who shared their lived experience. There are significant changes happening in care, both locally, with the integration of health and care through the newly created Cheshire and Merseyside Health and Care Partnership, and nationally, through the implementation of the national adult social care reforms from 2023.

The challenge from this Commission is that our recommendations and these changes must all contribute to a borough where health and care services, families, friends and communities all play their part to support and enable people to live a good life.

Councillor Val Armstrong



Chair of the Future of Adult Social Care Commission
Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health
Councillor for Lache

1. Take a human rights approach to disability

The Commission heard about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities which sets out an international agreement on the rights of disabled people. The Social Model of Disability is a recognition that it is the way that society is organised that disables people, rather than any impairment they have.

Current Position: Around 61,000 people living in the borough are disabled. The United Kingdom has signed up to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities but the Council has not formally committed to its principles or embedded the social model of disability across services. The Council has Disability Confident Leader status and the consideration of disabled people and their needs is a key element in the Council's equalities analysis framework.

Strategic Recommendations:

- That the Council formally adopt the social model of disability
- That the Council formally commit to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities
- Challenge all Council departments and partners to consider and respond to the findings of this Commission
- Take a commissioning approach that focuses on peoples' strengths (including personal strengths and social and community networks) and not on their deficits.
- Think more widely than just Adult Social Care

Operational Recommendations:

- Provide disability, equality and inclusion training to all staff. Develop the training in coproduction with people with lived experience so that it promotes understanding of and commitment to the social model of disability and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities
- Promote the use and publication of equalities analyses to consider the potential impact of decisions and proposals and any required mitigation against identified impacts

- Promote adaptability and accessibility in new build homes through the review of the Local Plan and of Neighbourhood plans
- Scrutiny to consider undertaking a review of disabled facilities grants and other work to make people's homes adaptable and accessible for changing needs and lifestyles

The UK Government's first report to explain how the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities is being put into use is [available here](#).

What the Commission learnt about a human rights approach to disability:

- Disability as a concept ignores the fact that it is society that creates the barriers that disable people.
- Understanding and overcoming these barriers requires a central role for those with lived experience
- Need for investment in training to support the culture change required to move the workforce to a social model understanding of disability
- Many of the disabling barriers faced by people – whether attitudinal, physical or communications based - are common across all ages
- Reframe social care around the right to an independent life, recognising that some people will need support to live independently
- Need to refocus on what matters to individuals rather than a conveyor belt of assessment and care package
- Need greater emphasis on prevention and keeping well - how to help people remain independent by making light-touch services available at the moment of need to prevent crisis and the need to draw on more significant services
- Need to consider the impact of all agencies decisions on those who draw on social care, their families and on other services
- How do we influence future developments to be more adaptable and sustainable for people's changing lives and needs?
- How do we ensure an appropriate amount of homes have disabled access?
- The social model of disability highlights that it is the way that many buildings, infrastructure and processes are arranged that disable people.
- Recognise that culture change requires support at all levels and across all partners and communities

2. Make 'nothing about us without us' real

The Commission heard that Disabled People's Organisations in England consider co-production of social care to be the benchmark of good practice for local authorities and call for people with lived experience to be equal partners in decision making

Current Position: The Council has been strengthening its approach to engagement for some time, through groups such as the Carer's Forum, Poverty Truth Advisory Board and tools such as the Participate Now online consultation hub. The voice of those who draw on care was recognised as being fundamental to this Commission but the criticism has been that no Commissioners were appointed explicitly as they draw on care. Co-production is highlighted in the local Compact and is one of the agreed principles of the Cheshire West Place Executive.

Strategic Recommendations:

- That the Council works with local groups and communities to develop and agree a definition of co-production and a strategic approach to co-production
- Increase the number of people in receipt of direct payments and taking control of their care
- Support the design and development of a wider range of care options to promote choice

Operational Recommendations:

- Establish a stakeholder group, including disabled people and other local groups and communities, to co-design the Council-wide approach to coproduction.
- That coproduction, with a broad and representative set of voices, is embedded in the Council's working practices

What the Commission learnt about making 'nothing about us without us' real:

- Key message of 'Nothing about disabled people without disabled people'
- Whilst it is useful to consider different client groups to ensure that different perspectives are considered fundamentally the Commission is about people with care and support needs
- Promoting direct payments promotes independence and active choice
- Need to have a healthy and diverse market of providers to enable that active choice
- The employment of personal assistants (PAs) can empower people and bring significant benefits to those who draw on social care but there are challenges around pay rates, bureaucracy, and lack of available personal assistants
- The Council's Community Led Support project is a huge opportunity to progress this work
- The work of [Empower You](#) highlights ways that existing services can be made more accessible and welcoming to disabled people – with providers seeing an average 1200% increase in disabled people participating
- Need to consider how we support those with support and care needs to be involved in public life

3. Keep it simple

The Commission was told about the difficulty people have in understanding, accessing and navigating the social care system. The importance of the commission's evidence, discussions and final report being accessible were highlighted early on.

Current position: The Livewell Cheshire website seeks to signpost all services available within the borough but needs work to become more user friendly. The Council has a corporate writing style and plain English guide in place. A Community Led Support pilot within the borough, supported by the National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi) is helping develop new approaches to assessment and care.

Strategic Recommendations

- Support and enable people to access local services
- Recognise the role of the community sector in supporting people through the system

Operational recommendations:

- Improve the information, advice and guidance on what support and services are available (both for professionals and those who draw on care) and how to apply for services
- Review the Livewell Cheshire West website to make it more user-friendly
- Review the customer journey so that less support is needed by individuals and families to navigate a system that can be overwhelming and a challenge for people
- Review communications around social care reviews
- Consider how to use existing information to pre-populate forms as much as possible
- Ensure information can be available in hard copies.

What the Commission learnt about keeping it simple:

- Need to move away from the form filling culture towards informed conversations, think about 'unnecessary' reviews and the need to support people to maintain their independence
- Powerful that the only version of the Hammersmith and Fulham Disabled People's Commission final report was the fully accessible report
- Need to change the language to change the culture
- Communities are already asking for one conversation – there are lots of pilots and projects starting at the moment
- Need a clear and simple mission for social care – talked about the right to an independent life and the support to help people live a long and happy life. Need a clear and aligned common purpose
- The support that individuals and families need to navigate a system that can be a real surprise and challenge for people - the more convoluted a system is the more costly it is to navigate both in human terms and financially when considering advocates time.
- Anxiety cripples the ability to engage and needs to be better considered.
- Difficulty of complex forms that are not user friendly, particularly for those such as individuals living with dementia
- Commissioners liked the 'simple but profound' messaging used by Wigan Council
- Parents, carers and family members 'move mountains' to get support for their children
- Key challenges for people are around accessing care, finding appropriate care providers and sourcing funding
- Significant time is spent by community organisations in helping people navigate what can appear to be a complex system that many people disengage from due to either cost or complexity
- Across health and social care we currently speak with too many voices to the same population

4. Think local

The Commission heard about the local services that help people remain in their communities, keep communities sustainable, support and build on new and existing relationships and networks, and help to reduce the carbon emissions and lost time associated with travelling.

Current Position: The Council's vision is of building greener, stronger and fairer communities.

The local response to the pandemic has shown the potential for a new way of working and key partners have signed a new Compact agreeing how the public and community and voluntary sectors will work together. This Compact includes the [Keep It Local](#) principles and a Community Led Support programme is currently being piloted in Ellesmere Port before being rolled out across the borough over the next three years

Strategic Recommendations:

- Strengthen the overall provision of services to support people to live in their communities
- Deliver on the Compact by consolidating and building on existing work to enable greater community sector participation in commissioning activities and shaping future models of support

Operational Recommendations:

- Promote engagement with the Community Led Support programme across partners and Council departments
- Update the Council's Market Position Statement to set out the Council's intentions to commission differently and for different business models, keeping members informed of progress
- Identify commissions in the pipeline which may suit community sector providers and/or an alternative commissioning and procurement method
- Commit to developing a micro-provider programme and, in line with the coproduction commitment, create a hyper-local support network as part of work to redesign how we support people at home
- Include and consider rural communities in the design and roll-out of services

What the Commission learnt about thinking local:

- Need to invest in communities and also harness and support the energy of those already working at this - invest where the energy is
- Significant opportunities and challenges arise from integration of services with the development of the Cheshire and Merseyside integrated care system
- Huge potential for technology to allow people to remain independent for longer
- Potential for care communities to be used as building blocks for a 'know your communities' approach
- Need to remember that not all communities are geographic but can be people brought together around common interests, experiences or needs – may need other approaches alongside the care communities
- Potential to fund 'micro-providers' hyper-local services from smaller organisations – examples given from Community Catalysts and the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham's 'meals and a chat on wheels' service
- Interest in Wigan's 'know your community' approach and how this could be linked to the West Cheshire Care Communities
- Clear learning from Wigan – commission from organisations who share our values – concept of growing our own care sector with people who live and work locally
- The Council's Community Led Support project is a huge opportunity for progress
- The need for community organisations to ensure their services have a clear local impact and that they can demonstrate it
- Consideration of the 'Rurality penalty' and the additional difficulty of accessing services for people living in rural areas where often no choices are available
- Supporting sustainable volunteering – need to consider rural communities who can have fewer local statutory services, face higher costs, but community capacity
- Need a diverse local market to provide people with real local choice in the services they can draw upon – this also becomes a local economic generation scheme.
- There is no 'one size fits all' approach and there are a range of care and support needs that must be catered for
- Investing in local providers is not just about money, but partnership, time and support to develop skills and capacity
- Commissioning needs to be innovative and absolutely think local (or community), the community organisations have a key role here, to monitor and ensure value for money across the Place, as well as identifying gaps and working with commissioners to close them.

- The London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham's invested in improving negotiating skills to maximise the payments they receive from local developers
- The London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham jointly funded reablement to create award winning services.

5. Support a fairer future

The Commission heard that the numbers of local people living in poverty has been highlighted and made worse by the pandemic. The current increases in the 'cost of living' impact hardest on those on fixed and low incomes meaning that 'a good life' is not necessarily affordable for all.

Current Position: The Council declared a poverty emergency in October 2020 and have developed a partnership tackling poverty strategy, working through the Poverty Truth Advisory Board which is made up of individuals with lived experience of poverty. Cheshire West is also a [Marmot Community](#), working to improve health outcomes and reduce health inequalities. It has reviewed its Corporate Debt Policy including a Vulnerability Policy ensuring that vulnerable customers issues are considered on a case-by-case basis.

Strategic Recommendations:

- Undertake a review of adult social care charging, including the basis for charges
- Take an approach to debt recovery that is responsible and responds to the financial and social vulnerability of residents
- Ensure that the implementation of the national charging reforms consider the impact on disabled people, a disproportionate number of whom live in poverty

Operational Recommendations:

- Review the discretionary element of the Minimum Income Guarantee and the Personal Expenses Allowance
- Co-produce Disability Related Expenditure guidance for distribution to every person in the borough with care and support needs who are charged for care and support
- Promote supported employment opportunities and supported volunteering opportunities

What the Commission learnt about supporting a fairer future:

- The fact that a good life is not necessarily affordable to disabled people without additional financial support from family
- The London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham were able to abolish charges for disabled people living in the community, in part by investing in expert negotiation training for council officers, enabling the council's subsequent record of receiving higher funds from developers than elsewhere
- Abolishing charges lead to a significant increase in demand – revealing the level of unmet need
- Currently nearly all council spending on adult social care is raised locally through council tax and non-domestic rates – we could and should be radical
- some people decline care altogether as they feel they can't afford it and don't want to go through the financial assessment process
- Need to consider the unmet need, under-met need and wrongly met need in our communities
- An individual's financial contribution to care can be the difference between surviving and thriving
- The importance of assisted employment opportunities

6. Strong leadership, a strong workforce and good use of data

The Commission were told that strong, consistent leadership is key to driving change and supporting staff, partners, communities and individuals to take risks and develop new approaches. The recruitment and retention of staff is currently a significant challenge. Clear and robust data supports informed conversations and evidence-based decisions.

Current Position: New governance arrangements for supporting and overseeing the integration of Health and Care services in Cheshire West will be in place from July, supported by 12 partnership principles. The Place Director for the borough is a shared post between the NHS and the Council and the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health will be the lead member on the Partnership Committee. The Council has a robust and open approach to the collection, analysis and sharing of data.

Strategic Recommendations:

- Agree a bold, ambitious long term, shared vision and strategy for health and care through the Place Plan, with the next review of the Place Plan to be informed by the work of this Commission
- Promote pooled resources and budgets across health and social care partners
- Invest in a thriving community sector
- Lobby Government to fund Adult Social Care adequately so that staff can be fairly rewarded and a training and career structure developed so it becomes a career of choice
- Strengthen and promote a positive approach to risk

Operational recommendations:

- Provide information to Members on Adult Social Care spending within Cheshire West and Chester in comparison to regional and national benchmarks
- Ensure Health and Social Care partners are sighted on the Commission and its recommendations and challenged to take appropriate action
- Explore the potential to develop an innovation or invest-to-save fund

What the Commission learnt about leadership, workforce and data:

- Need to maintain a focus on people and outcomes, rather than processes
- Need to move towards an enabling approach rather public sector bodies simply commissioning and providing services
- Leadership is needed to maintain focus and deliver system change over a number of years rather than being derailed by short term pressures
- Desire for a different way of working can be clearly demonstrated by leaders and individuals but organisational behaviour does not necessarily change
- Siloed budgets reduce flexibility and encourage repetition of previous approaches
- Need to ensure that sufficient resources are available to drive change and transformation forward – innovation funds
- Invest where the energy is “Community wealth building is Community Health Building”
- Need to understand and be comfortable with the rationale for any areas where spending may not be in line with national averages
- Need a culture of taking reasonable risks that lead to improved outcomes – fail often, fail cheap and fall forward
- Learning is invaluable, leadership is critical
- Leaders need to support their staff, but also need to be supported themselves.
- Whole system culture change is needed - across the council, health, community and voluntary sector, businesses and communities
- The need for community organisations to ensure their services have a clear impact and that they can demonstrate that
- The need for councils, health and community sector partners to have good relationships and recognise that they are not experts in every area
- Need the Place Executive to start as it means to go on, with a positive approach to risk and culture change and a focus on early intervention and prevention
- Not just about guidance for staff but freedom – need to empower them
- Social care is facing a recruitment and retention crisis. Regional bodies, the Council and local provides are all developing and exploring ways to recruit, retain and train staff.

Meetings and Contributors

Who are the Commissioners?

- Cllr Val Armstrong (Chair), Councillor for Lache, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health
- Gary Cliffe, Chief Executive, West Cheshire Voluntary Action
- Cllr Gillian Edwards, Councillor for Weaver and Cuddington
- Alison Lee*, Managing Director, Cheshire West Integrated Care Partnership
- Cllr Gina Lewis, Councillor for Winsford Over and Verdin
- Cllr Keith Millar, Councillor for Neston
- Cllr Lynn Riley, Councillor for Frodsham, Shadow Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health
- Cllr Neil Sullivan, Councillor for Handbridge Park, Shadow Cabinet Member for Legal and Finance

*Alison Lee stepped down from the Commission in March 2022 when she was appointed as the Place Director (Knowsley) for the Cheshire and Merseyside Health and Care Partnership

A video recording of each meeting, along with copies of all presentations, the notes of each session, and evidence that has been contributed to the Commission are all available online at www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/futuresocialcare or by clicking on the meeting specific hyperlinks below.

[Meeting 1: A vision for Social Care](#) (16 November 2021)

Local experiences of Adult Social Care

Lyn Turnbull and Helen Rowland, Cheshire Disabled Peoples Panel

Rick Burgess, Greater Manchester Disabled Peoples Panel

Care 2030 Vision and the Wigan Deal for Adult Social Care

Stuart Cowley, North West Association of Directors of Social Services and Wigan Borough Council

Councillor Keith Cunliffe, Wigan Council

Cheshire West and Chester Council Plan

Morgan Jones, Cheshire West and Chester Council

A Vision for Social Care in West Cheshire

Charlotte Walton, Cheshire West and Chester Council

[Meeting 2: Funding and Paying for Care](#) (13 December 2021)

Local experiences of Adult Social Care

Lyn Turnbull, Cheshire Disabled Peoples Panel

Dale Maskell, Age UK Cheshire

Richard Lewis, local resident with experience of financial assessment

The Key Financial Issues for Adult Social Care

John Jackson, Local Government Association

The Hammersmith and Fulham Approach

Councillor Ben Coleman, Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care,

Lisa Redfern, Strategic Director of Social Care

[Meeting 3a: Engaging with those who draw on social care](#) (14 February 2022)

Coproduction at the strategic level

Video presentation by Tara Flood and Kevin Caulfield, Strategic Coproduction Leads at the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham

Community Led Support

Lee Calvert, Head of Operations, Cheshire West and Chester Council

Amanda Nally, Community Development Support Lead, National Development Team for Inclusion

[Meeting 3b: The role of communities](#) (22 February 2022)

Local experiences of adult social care

Jo Bush, local mother and carer

Karen McGuinness (West Cheshire Autism Hub),

Overview of the local Voluntary and Community Sector

Gary Cliffe (Cheshire West Community and Voluntary Action)

Experience of harnessing community support

Cathy Boyd (Snow Angels)

[Meeting 4: Workforce and Technology](#) (29 March 2022)

Local experiences of adult social care

Lynne Turnbull, (Disability Positive)

Recruiting and retaining appropriate staff

Andrew Burridge (North West Association of Directors of Adult Social Services)

Dan Master (ICare)

Jane Marshall and Gavin Butler (Cheshire West and Chester)

Harnessing the opportunity of technology

Fiona O'Reilly and Kath McEvoy – North West Association of Directors of Adult Social Services

Transformation Programme

Lee Calvert – (Cheshire West and Chester)

[Meeting 5: Commissioning high quality, ethical care](#) (26 April 2022)

Local experiences of adult social care

Ann Brown, a local residents with a learning disability, supported by Joanne Carr

Different approaches to providing services

Pip Cannons (Community Catalysts)

Ben Andrews (Empower You)

The Council's approach to commissioning
Charlotte Walton (Cheshire West and Chester)

[Evidence submitted to the Commission](#)

The Future of Adult Social Care Commission asked for local people, partners and care providers to share any evidence that the Commission should consider. All evidence received is available at the commissions webpage at [Evidence submitted to the Commission \(cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk\)](https://cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk)

Accessing Cheshire West and Chester Council information and services

Council information is also available in audio, Braille, large print or other formats. If you would like information in another format or language, including British Sign Language, please email us at:

equalities@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

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如欲索取以另一語文印製或另一格式製作的資料，請與我們聯絡。

Türkçe bilgi almak istiyorsanız, bize başvurabilirsiniz.

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Tel: 0300 123 8 123 **Textphone:** 18001 01606 275757

email: equalities@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

web: www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk