

NW ADASS Annual Report





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Regional Co-Chairs' Welcome And Introduction

The Changing Landscape of Care

We are delighted to present the Annual Report for 2024-25, a year marked by national political change that could have significant implications for the future direction of adult social care in England.

As Regional Co-Chairs of North West ADASS, we are pleased to share our reflections on the year just gone. We are looking forward to working with colleagues in the year ahead to shape the future NW work programme to deliver great support to residents who draw on care and support, rooted in their neighbourhoods and communities.

The new government has pledged to create a more sustainable, equitable, and high-quality social care system that puts people at the heart of care, if this can be achieved, we would all be pleased with this outcome.

This commitment is focused on several key areas:

Immediate Investment and

Reforms: The government has announced immediate investments to improve adult social care. This includes an £86 million boost to the Disabled Facilities Grant, allowing more disabled and elderly people to make vital improvements to their homes and live independently. Additionally, the government is harnessing the power of care technology to support older people to live at home for longer and reduce hospital admissions.

Workforce Support and

Development: Recognising the critical role of social care workers, the government is implementing measures to support and develop the workforce. This includes improved career pathways, national standards for care technology, and upskilling carers to deliver health interventions at home. These initiatives aim to boost morale, retention, and outcomes for patients.

Integration of Health and Social

Care: Labour's policy emphasises the integration of health and social care services to ensure seamless support for individuals.

This includes developing a shared digital platform for up-to-date medical information, enabling better coordination between the NHS and social care providers. The goal is to provide holistic care that meets the diverse needs of individuals and reduces pressure on the NHS.

Community-Based Care and Innovation: The government is committed to promoting community-based care and encouraging innovation in service delivery. This involves investing in local authority oversight, supporting people to remain independent at home, and fostering innovation to improve care quality. By focusing on personalised and accessible care, Labour aims to create a system that serves the needs of its users.

Addressing Inequalities: The government's policy framework also addresses the inequalities that exist within the social care system. The government is taking steps to ensure that care is equitable and accessible to all, regardless of background or circumstances. This includes targeted support for marginalized communities and efforts to reduce disparities in care provision.

As Co-Regional Chairs, we are committed to aligning our efforts with the national priorities and ensuring that the benefits of these reforms are felt across our region. Key areas where we anticipate impact: Enhanced Funding and Resources: The increased investment in adult social care will provide much-needed resources to support our local authorities and care providers.

This will enable us to enhance the quality of care, reduce waiting times, and support more individuals to live independently. However, this comes at a time of significant financial challenge for local government as they try to balance the books. Workforce Development: The focus on workforce support and development aligns with our new regional priorities. We will work closely with the government to implement the new career pathways and upskilling initiatives, ensuring that our social care workers and leaders are well-equipped to meet the evolving needs.

As we reflect on the past year and look ahead to the future, we are filled with a sense of optimism and determination. We are committed to collaborating with our partners, stakeholders, and communities to realise the vision of a more sustainable, equitable, and high-quality social care system. The **Casey Review** will offer a further opportunity for us to engage with government on matters that are important to us in the region.

It has been another great year for us in the region and we want to thank all our members and partner agencies for their continued support.



Stuart Cowley

**NW ADASS Regional
Co-Chair, DASS
Wigan Council**



Sarah Smith

**NW ADASS Regional
Co-Chair, DASS
Knowsley Council**

Reflections on the Year



Helen Boyle
NW ADASS Programme
Director

It has been another significant year for the organisation with some key projects delivered by the programme office in 2024-25. These projects reflect our dedication to innovation, collaboration, and understanding excellence in service delivery:

AI and Adult Social Care Project: NW ADASS commissioned a project to explore how artificial intelligence (AI) can enhance adult social care. Conducted from June to October 2024, this project equipped councils with practical resources for their digital transformation journey in adopting AI. The initiative aimed to improve efficiency, decision-making, and outcomes for service users through the integration of AI technologies.

Hospital Discharge Collaborative Support Offer: Recognising the need for a more integrated approach to hospital discharge, NW ADASS developed a collaborative support offer focused on adult social care delivery in hospital discharge. This project involved mapping governance structures, redefining hospital social work roles, and identifying best practices from our regions as well as other regions. The goal was to identify smoother transitions from hospital to home with the goal of reducing readmission rates. A podcast series was developed, and good practice resources have been made available on our website.

Our Great Social Care Report and Strategic Communication Plan:

At our last two Annual Conferences, NW ADASS has embarked on an ambitious project to develop a strategic communication plan to change the narrative on adult social care. This initiative aimed to articulate a clear vision for the future of social care; by collaborating with Directors of Adult Social Services and Councillor Portfolio Holders, we sought to promote the value of social care and advocate for greater investment in the sector. This report is now available for all to use with key messages that we wish to promote to a wider audience.

Use of Resources Project on Working Age Adults: This project is part of the Region's response to the 'Use of Resources' (UoR) analysis. It aims to improve our understanding of the context underlying the use of resources data and identify the main challenges faced when meeting the support needs of working age adults cost effectively, as well as areas for improvement that Councils can make to the use of their funding. We now have a set of recommendations for the region that we can focus on in 2025-26.

CHIA (Care, Health and Improvement Advisor)



Kathy Clark
Care, Health and
Improvement Adviser

The last year has brought continued challenges but also many great examples of excellent work being undertaken within individual councils and in collaboration regionally and sub-regionally. It has been a privilege to work with so many people, and to be able to work so closely with the NW ADASS team particularly.

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) Assurance and Assessment Programme has continued to be a strong focus of my work, linking councils to national support and offering help for preparation alongside the regional team. We still have several councils who are waiting to receive initial letters, but we have now begun to see reports on our North West councils being received and published.

The CQC process is demanding and still evolving, but it has been an opportunity for Directors, their leadership teams and their staff to reflect on both strengths and areas for improvement and regardless of the one-word outcomes have helped us all remember the importance of the difference we can make for people, and the power and passion of a dedicated workforce. CQC reports, together with the reflections within Councils, will help to shape future improvement plans and

whatever the CQC judgements are, it is clear there is a willingness to learn, and aspire for 'even better'.

This year we have been able to secure support for councils through the Partners in Care and Health (PCH) Programme around: leadership; financial analysis and benchmarking; strategic commissioning; safeguarding; supporting people with learning disabilities and autism; and work to underpin and improve Better Care Fund (BCF) outcomes.

The support from the programme is expected to become more segmented in the coming year, with universal access to tools, webinars and shared learning, and bespoke and targeted offers to councils needing more help to address improvement priorities. But that will not stop us working together to find the best fit for support, together with a listening ear, to continue the sector led improvement approach, which has such a strong track record in the region!

I look forward to working with you all again in the year ahead.

2024/25 Snapshot

Activity

23 NW Councils Engaged
1 NW Programme Office
7 NW ADASS Employees
1 NW Annual Conference
1 Position Statement on NHS Recovery Approaches
Regular direct communication with over **2000** peers across the sector
50 weekly bulletins
400+ Markets Quality and Insight Systems (MQIS) users
Over **100** Network Meetings
300 Website downloads

What our networks say about NW ADASS

Across **71** network members, on average they scored **9/10** for how useful the work of NW ADASS is to their area of work
8/10 for relevant and useful emails
9/10 for useful topics and discussions

“Very supportive, informative and great ideas”

Programme Achievements

Sector Led Improvement



1 Collaborative Masterclass Series
10 Masterclass learning events
Over **1800** registrations
12 Assurance Update Drop-in sessions
14 Local Authority check-ins
8 Self- Assessment and IR reviews
10 Principal Social Worker / Principal Occupational Therapist 1:1 coaching sessions
9 Lead member briefings
7 CQC Analytic Reports
5 New podcast recordings

Future Markets



8 network meetings involving strategic and operational commissioners
4 commissioner workshops including demand management, VAT contract novation and homecare innovation
2 MQIS data collections
4 MQIS bulletin
2 themed MQIS reports; on high cost placements, and out of area placements
3 new basecamp groups including operational commissioners, direct payments and CareCubed users
1 Commissioning Narrative Pilot delivered with Cheshire East Council

Future Workforce



4 in-person workshop events reviewing our Board arrangements
6 online meetings and 3 in person half day workshops supporting our NW Anti-Racism network
Coaching provided as a free pilot to 7 members of the Anti-Racism Network
1 Blended Roles in Homecare Blueprint launched

Future Models



1x Regional Housing Summit
22x council data returns for the Working Age Adults Use of Resources data analysis project
2x Working Age Adults Use of Resources Case Studies
2x Working Age Adults Use of Resources workshops
12x Co-production Regional Meetings
1x NW Remuneration Policy

TEC and Digital



3x Programme Board sessions
3x Digital Switchover webinars
1x Telecare National Action Plan regional session with DHSC
7x What Good Looks Like Lunch & Learn sessions
1x DASS Co-Pilot demonstration session
1x Cyber & Data Security Business Continuity Plan template
6x AI for ASC resources developed, including an overview report, a strategy template and guidance, maturity matrix, template risk register, example solutions document and a range of questions to ask providers
5x AI case studies
1x Digital Front Door spotlight session
12x DSPT compliance monthly update reports

How satisfied are NW ADASS key stakeholders?

94% of key stakeholders surveyed agreed that NW ADASS support is 'useful', 'easy to access' and is 'value for money'.

Over 80% are satisfied or very satisfied with NW ADASS Peer Challenge offer

Over 80% satisfied or very satisfied with branch organisation

100% satisfied or very satisfied with network support

90% satisfied or very satisfied with assurance support



"I really enjoy working with the Programme Office. They are helpful and knowledgeable and always looking for ways to enable me to make useful connections."

"One of the main assets of the programme office is the staff. They are all approachable, knowledgeable and helpful and I really appreciate their support"

"The content and work programme is responsive to emerging demands and issues".



Delivering Great Social Care in the North West Report

During 2024/25, NW ADASS with NW Employers, published our “Delivering Great Social Care in the North West”.

We created this report because Directors of Adult Social Care and Elected Members with responsibility for Adult Social Care in the North West wanted to create a single, shared vision for adult social care.

At our 2023 NW ADASS Annual Conference, leaders said they would like to improve their ability to communicate about adult social care and identified this as the one priority area for the regional programme to support.

The report “Delivering Great Social Care in the North West” presents examples of adult social care in the region and sets out a vision that holds immense potential to inspire local impact and national reform.

Our report provides an overview of adult social care in the region, highlighting both its vital role and the significant challenges it faces.

The report outlines a shared vision for the future of social care, focused on enabling **“gloriously ordinary” lives**, building thriving communities, and growing local economies. It showcases innovative and forward-looking practices already underway across the region in pursuit of this vision.



**We all want to live
in the place we
call home, with the
people and things
that we love, in
communities where
we look out for
one another, doing
the things that
matter to us.**

Social Care Futures



These transformations include co-producing solutions with people, building the local workforce, taking a strengths-based approach, early action and prevention, using technology, working across health and care, creating caring places, and enabling people to live well with dementia.

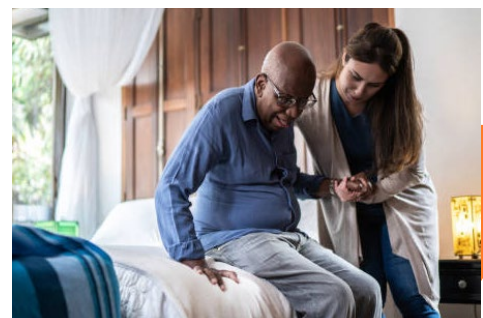


The report emphasises several key messages about social care:

- Good social care enables people to live good lives, with choice and control
- Social care is about solutions, not just services, helping people find the right support at the right time
- Social care is about people and the places they live in, contributing significantly to local economies and communities. It contributes £7.8 billion in value to the North West economy annually and employs over 200,000 people
- Social care is for all of us, with many people in the North West either receiving care (around 90,000 adults) or providing unpaid care (over half a million people).

The report identifies key challenges in the North West, requiring action at local, regional, and national levels.

The report concludes by highlighting the opportunities that delivering great social care will bring to the people, communities, and economies of the North West and encourages collaborative efforts to achieve this vision.



Future Markets Programme

The Future Markets Board vision is to create a diverse and high-quality market for social care which is ethical, builds community wealth and offers greater choice.

- The Board's priority has been the continued development and launch of our Markets Quality and Insight System (MQIS). MQIS launched in December 2022 involving regional data collection and online dashboards presenting data about care markets.
- We now have over 400 users with the Programme Office is producing bespoke reports and regular bulletins.
- We launched our Directors Dashboards; published High Cost, and Out of Area Placements Reports; and carried out a review of the system in partnership with our provider, creating a more focused and streamlined structure.

- MQIS has also been used to pull together groups of councils who wish to collaborate around fees; or who have concerns about provider quality.
- We delivered our initial pilot of narrative training for commissioners with Cheshire East Council, with a second storytelling pilot scheduled with Cheshire West and Chester.
- During this year the Future Markets Board has also overseen additional workshops focusing upon VAT Contract Novation and a programme of homecare events.

Two networks are crucial to the work of the Future Markets Board, our Strategic Commissioners and Operational Commissioners, each meeting four times a year.

We continue to innovate within MQIS, including this example data visualisation comparing high Care Home fees with council's homecare costs.



Future Workforce Programme

Our vision is to develop a high-quality and caring workforce so that people will be supported and cared for in the right way by brilliant and caring people.

The Future Workforce Programme focused upon a review of the Future Workforce Board (FWB) following the publication of the national Adult Social Care Workforce Strategy led by Skills for Care. We found that the Board and the workforce support provided by NW ADASS is highly valued. At the same time, there is a good level of consensus that there is an opportunity for it to evolve, adopting a stronger role in agreeing a set of shared North West adult social care workforce priorities and using its collective voice, reputation and influence to galvanise change and innovation across the sector.

The new approach will focus upon supporting a wider network of participants within our NW Workforce Collective, to explore innovation, plus test and learn together. We propose that the Future Workforce Board sits at the heart of a new North West Collective, a networked community of people in the North West with a role in influencing workforce change across adult social care. The NW Workforce Collective will enable stronger relationships to develop across the sector maximising impact around a shared set of priorities and creating dynamic, flexible spaces that enable:

- Shared learning from each other and external evidence through learning circles
- Imagineering Labs that enable exploration, innovation and idea development on specific topics aligned with shared North West priorities.
- Time-limited projects that enable a test and learn approach, building evidence and learning for the region.
- Communities of Practice (CoP) that facilitate access to peer support, sharing of resources, joint working, access to subject experts and key contacts, for example, Career Academies, workforce planning.
- Developing access to coaching and mentoring support with key partner agencies to set up a NW Coaching Collaborative.

The proposals were launched at the February 2025 Board meeting, ready to begin in 2025/26.

The Board's achievements also included:

- Our Equality Diversity Inclusion (EDI) Anti-Racism Network has gone from strength to strength, including presenting at our annual conference and a series of in-person meetings, attended by network members, Principal Social Workers, Directors and a Chief Executive.
- We delivered and evaluated our coaching offer, which received excellent feedback, and we will be looking to extend as part of the 2025/26 programme.
- We continue to support three sub-regional international recruitment programmes through regularly networking and learning events.



Future Models Programme

The focus of the 2024/2025 Future Models Programme has been twofold:

- A significant data analysis and research project looking at regional **Use of Resources (UoR) for working age adults**. This project followed several years of the region being the highest spending for this cohort of adults in the country and was the first step in our work to address this. The project used public data, supplemented with a small amount of additional data provided by 22 of the 23 councils, interviews with commissioners and practitioners and two case studies. The findings were tested through an initial workshop and further described in a second workshop – attended by over 60 colleagues – that also launched a range of recommendations for local authorities and the region, informing our 2025/26 work programme.
- Initial research and input to shape and develop a **housing** support offer to the region. This started in April 2024, when NW ADASS and several individual councils shaped and co-delivered a regional **‘Housing Summit’** with our NHS England (NHSE) colleagues. Our Extra Care Housing Network was supported to continue its programme of online and in-person sessions sharing learning and practice in extra care commissioning and delivery, and the Learning Disability & Autism Network delivered a focused network session on what people with a learning disability and/or autism have to say about their needs and ambitions for their homes. We have also been learning about the North East ADASS approach to housing, and utilising this and further partnership working with our NHS England

partners to identify practical opportunities for adult social care to contribute to improved housing options, contributing to the development of the 2025/26 programme.

Co-Production

NW ADASS remains dedicated to helping NW Local Authorities improve their co-production efforts and foster more positive relationships with all stakeholders. Co-production goes beyond mere engagement and consultation; it involves collaborating from the outset to shape and enhance adult social care services together. While supporting NW local authorities in integrating co-production into their operations, it has been pivotal in several regional programmes, including an AI project that explored the use of AI in adult social care in the NW, along with its challenges and opportunities.

The NW co-production network, developed in December 2023, has gone from strength to strength and has played a crucial role in guiding councils on their **co-production journey** through peer support and shared learning.

Key activities include over the past 12 months include:

- Co-production mapping activity across NW councils.
- Analysis of CQC Assurance reports and how co-production is embedded nationally.
- Development of a NW reciprocity policy and practices.
- Ongoing capture of good practices to build a comprehensive portfolio of co-production in the NW.
- NW Benchmarking tool, learnings and insights from Greater Manchester.
- Sponsor of NW Training and Development Conference in partnership with Pathways.

The network is committed to developing a wider community of practice in which they can work together in the development of regional improvement work and support for councils – it is currently re-shaping the way it works to ensure representation from both council Adult Social Care (ASC) leads and people with lived experience.

Principles of Reciprocity: NW ADASS Co-production

1

We will **ask people** how they would like to be thanked

2

People who use services, carers and citizens **should not be left out of pocket** or be put at risk of being financially worse off as a result of participation in co-production activities – we will discuss what is best for those giving up their time.

3

From the start of any engagement or co-production, we will be **clear about what we are trying to achieve** and how we will give feedback throughout the Process. This communication will be ongoing.

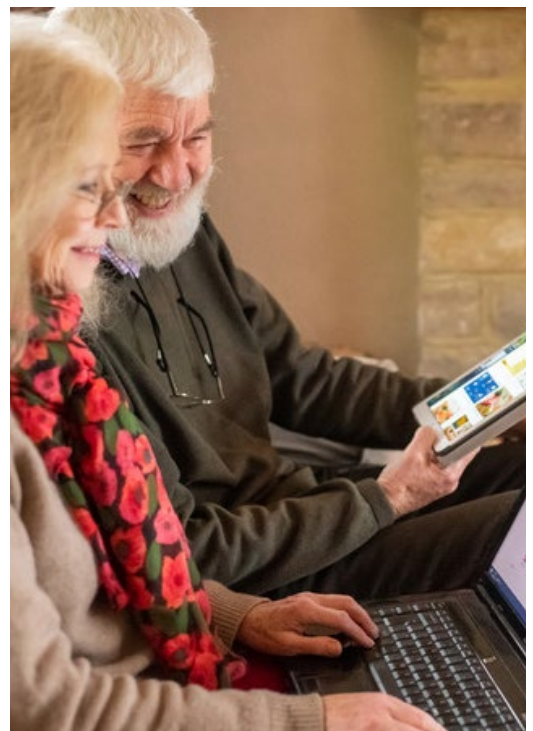
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Together with people with lived experience we will discuss **and agree on the terms of participation in co-production** activities before any commitment is made.

TEC & Digital Programme

The TEC & Digital Programme has delivered a significant range of activity and products throughout 2024/25 including:

- **AI:** An AI and ASC report on its use, barriers and opportunities for future development, a good practice resources site including a maturity matrix for local authorities to test themselves against, case studies, a risk register template, a list of existing AI solutions for ASC and much more and an ASC and AI Strategy guide and template
- **Cyber Security:** Ongoing support for the Better Security and Better Care (BSBC) Programme, linking local authorities to the support organisations and sharing data on Data Security and Protection Toolkit (DSPT) compliance in providers across the region, and a business continuity template for ASC.
- **Digital Switchover:** Communications and event facilitation to support digital switchover, and the launch of the Telecare National Action Plan, connecting telecare leads across the region to the plan and Department of Health & Social Care (DHSC) sponsored readiness survey.
- **What Good Looks Like:** Supporting the use of the self-assessment framework across the region and utilising the results to identify sector Tec & Digital priorities for the 2025/26 programme, such as the digital front door and digital skills.





Sector Led Improvement (SLI) Programme

NW ADASS is of the belief that it is our responsibility to ensure that the services we provide and the approaches we take are rooted in ensuring that “every day is the best it can be” for adults across the region.

The SLI Programme aims to achieve this through delivery against the following priority objectives:

- Taking collective responsibility for the performance of the sector as a whole.
- Defining what good looks like across adult social care provision in the region.
- Providing support and challenge to drive improvement across the region.
- Providing assurance to the NW ADASS Executive Board and to central government for the performance of the collective regional sector.

Building on our strengths and successes to date, our SLI Programme emphasises clear and consistent communications through a range of channels to engage and keep informed staff across our member organisations, identifying and sharing good practice, and facilitating peer learning.

This year, much of our focus has continued to be in response to the Care Quality Commission (CQC) Assurance and Assessment Framework for Local Authorities. Consistent with the NW approach of offering a regional challenge to all councils on a two-year cycle, with a ‘Challenge Check-in’ in between, all councils have been offered this opportunity.

All areas are undertaking some of either the national Local Government Association (LGA), regional, or regional check-in activity within the period.

This offer has been further developed following the announcement of CQC notification of assessment and councils are also offered a ‘notification review meeting and bespoke support planning which includes staff engagement sessions, one to one Principal Social Worker (PSW) / Principal Occupational Therapist (POT) support, Lead Councillor member workshops, CQC report analysis and shared learning events.

Delivered activity includes:

- 12 Assurance Drop-in sessions
- 1 Peer Challenge
- 14 Local Authority check-ins
- 8 Self- Assessment and International Recruitment (IR) reviews
- 10 PSW/POT 1:1 coaching sessions
- 9 Lead member briefings
- 7 Analysis Reports

Sector Led Improvement (SLI) Programme

Our newly established Strategic Performance Network has been instrumental in co-ordinating our sector response to data challenges, and we have been utilising these approaches in the development of tackling waiting lists, commissioning narrative workshop offer and a hospital discharge support offer; as well as reviewing client level data (CLD) to understand how we need to improve services into the future.

Other Achievements with our SLI Programme include:

Hospital Discharge Support Tools & Resource

The development of a range of resources to support NW hospital discharge improvement, focussing on the role of the social worker.

This included a four-part NW ADASS Podcast Series, a two hour masterclass produced with health and social care partners, a bespoke webpage and a new dashboard to promote regional understanding of hospital discharge and support local conversations.



NW Collaborative Masterclass Series

Working with key partners, we successfully delivered 11 x 2.5-hour Masterclass learning events aimed at leaders across health and social care.

Topics included, 'Making Care Closer to Home a reality', 'AI and the Public Sector' and 'Collaboration in healthcare systems'. The series engaged more than 660 people, with post event resources and event recordings shared more broadly.



Data & Intelligence

The aims of NW ADASS in terms of data and intelligence are to:

- Highlight areas of best practice and risk.
- Support the branch in its Care 2030 vision and ambitions.
- Work collaboratively with Local Authorities and wider partners.

To achieve this, the Programme Office develops:

- CQC Monthly Report.
- Quarterly Performance Report and Safeguarding Benchmarking Reports.

Work is also underway to develop regular reports focusing on hospital discharge and waiting times.

Ad hoc reports include analysis of:

- Adult Social Care Survey 2023/24.
- Adult Social Care Finance Survey.
- ADASS Autumn Survey.
- Market Quality Insight System (MQIS).



At the end of 2022, NW ADASS launched MQIS, which is an online platform that enables local authorities to aggregate, analyse and visualise data submitted by the 23 councils bi-annually, primarily about the region's expenditure for care services.

MQIS incorporates supplementary data sources to inform commissioning strategies, market oversight, risk profiling, quality improvement and provider engagement with over 200 system users.

In 2024, the whole system was reviewed and has since been refined and streamlined to improve user experience. The Director's Dashboard was also launched.

Analysis Reports are produced throughout the year using data available in MQIS. The Out of Area (OOA) placement reports were reproduced using up to date data in 2024 and will continue to be an annual exercise. A report looking at high-cost placements was also developed and shared with commissioners in the region.



NW Networks

Safeguarding: A proactive and well attended Network. The Safeguarding Leads have continued to develop resources such as a refreshed Persons in a Position of Trust (PPoT) guidance document, Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) referral form and Safeguarding Quality Assurance Benchmarking Toolkit. Meeting regularly under the leadership of Jamaila Hussain, DASS of St Helens, and Simon Garner, AD of Wirral, they also review regional performance and have developed a SAR, Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) and Coronial Process Conference which took place in April 2025.

Learning Disability and Autism (LD&A): This Network sees practice and commissioning leads meet regularly with Pathways representatives to focus and discuss a range of regional priorities such as housing, employment, advocacy and belonging.

Carers: A long-standing NW ADASS network. The Carers Network is a well-attended and proactive group that has developed some excellent resources to support local authorities and carers locally. Chaired by Katherine White, the group maintains strong links with national carers groups and organizations such as Carers Trust. This year, the Carers Network finalised a co-produced information and advice framework, which was endorsed by the NWADASS executive and rolled out across the region

Principal Social Worker (PSW): The NW ADASS PSW Network is co-chaired by Becky Squires of West Morland & Furness, and Kim Scott of Oldham Council.

Assurance preparation has very much continued to be the focus for the group over the past 12 months, with PSWs being identified as key contributors to on-site CQC Assessment. The Network has been able to provide invaluable insights and learnings from both regional and national colleagues to help our PSWs prepare for assessment.

Principal Occupational Therapist (POT): The POT Network formed in early 2022 and has gone from strength to strength. Chaired by Nadia Van der Wath, the group meets every 6 weeks and not only acts as a peer support group but delivers on key regional priorities and improvement activity. The network has recently set up a new Task & Finish group to develop a NW Preceptorship framework that will be taken to the NW executive board for endorsement early next year.

Mental Health (MH): A longstanding Network for Mental Health social work practitioners and Approved Mental Health Practitioners (AMHPs), providing an opportunity for collaboration and sharing on topics such as S117 and Right Person Right Care.

The Network also links with partner professionals from organisations such as the North West Ambulance Service (NWAS) to discuss shared challenges.

Solicitors: A well-attended Special Interest Group for ASC solicitors to discuss and share challenges and opportunities, such as Continuing Health Care (CHC) and joint funding and Court of Protection delays, new ways of working, and case law. The group have been collaborating to organise an in-person conference for 2025/26 and have secured an impressive roll of speakers including national experts and a Judge.

Deprivation of Liberty (DoLS)/ Mental Capacity Act (MCA): A popular peer Network for MCA and DoLS Leads who, in the absence of new legislation, share good practice and develop new approaches to the delivery of a DoLS system that is no longer fit for purpose. Sharing case law and bringing in national expert speakers to the sessions to inform improved processes, they are also developing a range of improved forms and processes, including the revised Form 1, Form 2, and prioritisation toolkit endorsed by the NW ADASS Executive Board.

Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) Chairs: Though a long-established Network, the Independent SAB Chairs have recently relaunched with the support of NW ADASS and have established a proactive work programme including a review of assurance themes and SAB risks.

Continuing Health Care (CHC): Part of a range of activities to support growing regional challenges around CHC and joint funding, the CHC Leads Network was relaunched with a well-attended session focused on data and work programme planning. The Network is looking forward to a busy work programme under the leadership of Nichola Thompson, DASS for Rochdale.

Strategic Commissioners: Our Strategic Commissioners meet quarterly to provide network and peer support, and to explore the strategic challenges faced by commissioners.

Operational Commissioners: Our Operational Commissioner network meets bi-monthly to share updates on activity and risk and collaborate on regional projects. This includes our Information Sharing Protocol, and in 2024/25, focusing on homecare innovation. The network regularly receives updates from partners looking to engage providers through commissioning relationships.

Transformation Leads: We constituted a new network in 2024/25 to engage colleagues with a role in modernisation, organisational development and business improvement. We felt there was an opportunity for a group of people to collaborate who have a passion for innovation, change, and policy.

“It’s my favourite meeting of the month, productive & enlightening to know what others are doing”

“The service provided has been very well organised and well led”

“We are really well supported”

Quotes from colleagues

Networks In Focus

Strategic Performance Network

The network is chaired by Adrian Crook (Bury DASS) and was set up in response to the rapidly developing data landscape in adult social care. The network brings together Directors of Adult Social Services, Assistant Directors, Commissioners, Performance Leads, Finance Leads and PSWs with an interest in data to work towards embedding data in strategic decision making and improvement. This year the network has:

- Directed the improvement of our North West data reports.
- Progressed the development of a regional performance management framework.
- Provided a forum to learn about national developments in key areas such as Client Level Data.
- Linked local authorities to good practice in other regions, for example the East Midlands ADASS Waiting Well Project.
- A priority for 2025/26 is to develop data and analysis skills training for leaders in adult social care.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Anti-Racism Network

The EDI anti-racism network is chaired by Sue Lightup (ADASS Associate) and was set up to recognise that the adult social care workforce and the communities we serve have different experiences within their careers of accessing care and support. These experiences can often reflect inequalities within UK society and can, and should, be improved. The network is currently composed of approximately 50 staff from Black, Asian and other ethnic minority backgrounds and 18 local authority EDI leads.

The network has gone from strength to strength, with some key achievements including:

- Development of a Reverse Mentoring Guide which has been taken up and implemented by several North West local authorities.
- Successful roll out of a coaching and mentoring offer exclusively to members of the network. Evaluation of the offer demonstrated a profound impact on the confidence and empowerment of those who went through the process and consequently positively impacted their organisations.
- Encouraged North West Local Authorities to take part in the Workforce Race Equality Standard, with 13 initially signing up. The network is working with Skills for Care to support local authorities to develop their action plans.

This year also saw the launch of an in-person workshop series, taking place bi-monthly and hosted by different local authorities. Through these workshops we have been able to spend time reflecting on important themes relating to anti-racism such as career progression and bias, better engage senior leaders on these issues, and reach more members of the workforce from Black, Asian and ethnic minority backgrounds.



Business Plan 2025-26

New ways of working for NW ADASS

In March 2025, the NW ADASS Executive Board had an away day to celebrate the achievements over the last 5 years aligned to our Care 2030 vision and look ahead to future opportunities over the next five years as an organisation. We agreed we need better alignment with the sub-regional arrangements and infrastructure, less duplication, more shared learning in region and with other regions. There was an agreement to streamline our governance structures and become more agile in our ways of working. We will test out our new ideas this year and focus our attention on all aspects of work around **neighbourhoods and prevention**.

The following proposals are subject to confirmation of programme resources and prioritisation exercises:

Future Markets Programme

- Ongoing MQIS reporting and development of system.
- Information Sharing Protocol Review and incorporating within MQIS
- Finalise out of area notifications process.
- Commissioner learning and development programme to be developed.
- Commissioner workshops, on:
 - o Contribution to neighbourhood working
 - o Exploring commissioner learning and development requirements
 - o Commissioning for digital
 - o Market risk
 - o Learning exchange of buying a 'care home'
 - o Out of Area Placements; Co-commissioning specialist support (OOA); Understanding 'natural' markets (OOA); Understanding sub regional approaches
 - o Exploring What Good Looks Like from CQC assurance
- Home care learning exchange including AI Platform monthly check-ins.
- Out of area notifications process operational.
- Understanding 'natural' markets.
- Understanding sub regional approaches to commissioning.
- What Good Looks Like (WGLL) from CQC assurance.

Business Plan 2025-26

Future Workforce Programme

- Programme of design and engagement to launch the NW Workforce Collective, including testing Imagineering Labs and Testing and Learning Groups.
- Set up a Community of Practice for Strategic Workforce Leads.
- Set up a Community of Practice for Health and Care Career Academies.
- Develop a NW Coaching Collaborative.
- Continue to support EDI Network and its development.
- Continue Blueprint programme of activities and selection a second Blueprint for development and delivery.
- Improve 'Digital' skills with our workforce and focus on neighbourhood models programmes in phase 1.
- Improve our understanding of 'Analytical' skills for ASC professionals with the Strategic Performance Network.
- Collaborative with Commissioners on a learning and development programme and link with Future Markets Programme.

Future Models Programme

- On behalf of the Executive the Models Programme will lead on the development of the NW ADASS approach to Neighbourhood Working, by offering definitions and capturing the models that are already in place or being developed across the region. We'll look to agree a set of neighbourhood working principles that we test in the North West for national application, and agree how we articulate our unique role as local authorities and social care in the North West in leading, shaping and driving delivery of a neighbourhood approach.
- Aligned to this, we'll also be building the foundations of further work on housing, such as guidance and case study examples of adult social care activities that can support the achievement of our strategic housing objectives.
- In addition, we'll be progressing our Working Age Adults Use of Resources activity from 2024/25 to reimagine Reviews, explore the effective use of early intervention and prevention activity and how to better prepare young people for adulthood and improve transitions between children's and adult social care services.

Digital & Technology

Building on the last year's Programme, and with a view to supporting the Neighbourhood Working agenda while also taking our lead from where our councils tell us they feel least confident through the What Good Looks Like self-assessment framework, our 2025-26 priorities will be:

- Empowering People – digital front door and self service
- Support the Workforce – identifying good practice and opportunities for development when it comes to building digital skills across our workforce, and exploring the use of AI to support our teams
- Improve Care – ongoing support to our local authorities around digital switchover and the Telecare National Action Plan
- Safe Practice – continuing support for the Better Security Better Care national programme, and strengthening local cyber security responses
- Health Populations – supporting our councils to embrace research opportunities to accelerate digital adoption in social care

Sector Led Improvement

First and foremost, we will continue to deliver on the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) contracted sector led improvement programme, identifying regional priorities through self-assessments and co-ordinating regional support to all 23 local authorities. We will continue to work across regions to ensure work programmes, learning and best practice are shared.

In addition to this, support and preparation for on-site assessment will continue to dominate the first half of the year with a bespoke support offer delivered to our remaining 10 NW councils.

A revised support offer will be offered to all councils post assessment and be shaped in response to their CQC ratings.

Themed Peer Challenges will be offered to meet improvement priorities

Annual Check-ins and self-assessment reviews will continue.

In support of the regional Neighbourhood focus the SLI Programme will aim to produce the following resource:

- Podcast Series
- Masterclass
- Webinar series
- Data insights

Co-production

The NW ADASS network wants to lead by example and commit to developing a wider community of practice in which they can work with people with lived experience on a regional footprint, and develop regional improvement work to enhance adult social care services together and support local councils.

Activity will include:

- Mapping co-production activity across the region
- Developing a NW Recipe for co-production (co-production charter)
- Deliver a series of themed on-line sessions that anyone with an interest in Adult Social Care can attend to discuss and navigate regional priorities.

Data & Intelligence Approach

- We plan to continue development of our Market Quality Insight System to ensure it remains a useful and engaging tool for Commissioners and Directors. As part of this we will repeat production of the annual Out of Area placement analysis reports.
- As many NW local authorities are currently undertaking the Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES), we intend to use the data from the exercise to understand emerging themes for the region and support local authorities with their action plans. We also aim to engage with LAs who have received an Outstanding score from CQC to understand how our local authorities can most effectively use their equalities data.
- Within our Sector Led Improvement Programme, we plan to undertake analysis of the Adult Social Care Users Survey and the Carers Survey. We will also continue to explore how Client Level Data (CLD) can be utilised to drive improvements across the region.
- We will explore what data is available around Neighbourhood Working to support our in-depth focus on the topic for 2025-26.



