

# West Sussex Adult Social Care Services Local Account for 2024 to 2025



## Introduction

The Local Account is an annual report from West Sussex County Council's Adults' Services that explains how we've supported people over the past year. It provides an open and honest look at what we've achieved, the challenges we've faced, and how we've used resources to help adults live independently and safely in their communities.

The Local Account also brings together insight and feedback from residents, carers and partners, alongside performance, finance and assurance information, to inform our ongoing improvement work and set out our priorities for the year ahead. Its purpose is to promote accountability and continuous improvement, so we can ensure our services provide value for public money and remain financially sustainable for the future

## Our Responsibilities – Adults' Services

We deliver West Sussex County Council's duties under the **Care Act 2014**, which include:

- Providing **information and advice**
- Promoting **prevention and wellbeing**
- Carrying out **assessments and reviews**, including for carers
- **Planning care and support** tailored to individual needs
- **Safeguarding adults at risk**
- **Shaping and commissioning** a sustainable care market
- Ensuring **quality, value for money, and financial sustainability**

We work in partnership with district and borough councils, NHS, Sussex Police, voluntary and community organisations, housing and care providers, and other local partners to deliver joined-up, person-centred support across West Sussex.

## Overview of the year

The past year has brought both significant pressures and important progress for Adult Social Care in West Sussex. Demand for support continued to rise, with more people presenting with higher and more complex needs. As a result, our expenditure increased to £327.8 million in 2024/25. Despite strong efforts to manage costs, Adults' Services remained one of the council's largest financial pressures. Ensuring long-term sustainability therefore remains essential, and we have continued to focus on prevention, reablement and community-based support to help people remain independent for as long as possible.

A major priority this year was preparing for the Care Quality Commission's new assurance process. This involved substantial work across the directorate, drawing on evidence from staff, partners and residents. We were pleased that West Sussex County Council was rated Good overall, with the CQC recognising strong practice, effective partnerships and committed leadership. The assessment also highlighted areas for further improvement, including waiting times, support for unpaid carers, transitions and co-production. These findings align with our own self-assessment and are shaping our priorities for the year ahead.

Throughout 2024/25, we delivered improvements that made a real difference for residents. More people regained independence through reablement, a growing share of long-term support was delivered at home, safeguarding outcomes remained strong and our engagement with residents and communities deepened. These achievements reflect the dedication of colleagues across Adults' Services.

Looking ahead, financial and demand pressures will continue, but our commitment to safe, high-quality and person-centred care remains unchanged. By strengthening prevention, listening to residents and carers, and working closely with partners, we will continue to build a sustainable and resilient service for the future.



**Alan Sinclair**  
Executive Director of Adults'  
Services & Health

## Our County

West Sussex has around 915,037 residents. 23% are aged 65+, and life expectancy is above the England average.

We provide support to around 1.2% of the county's adult population, but the number of people we support, and their level of need, is changing. This will impact our service in the future.

There are pockets of deprivation, particularly along the coast and in Crawley, and we continue to focus on reducing inequalities.

About 16% of our residents have a disability, with 10% reporting their day-to-day activities were limited a little, and a further 6.1% said they were limited a lot. Disability increases with age and is higher in more deprived areas.

Around 15-16% of the county's population are from minority ethnicities, while around 85% are White British.

Sources: Office of National Statistics; West Sussex Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.



# Budget, pressures and forecasting demand



## Our Finances

Over 2024/25, Adults' Services net expenditure in 2024-5 was £327.8 million.

This was an increase of £31.2 million from 2023-24 (+10.5%). The main reasons for the increase was due to the council's recognition of rising demand for social care, greater complexity of needs and an average fee increase of 8% paid to providers to cover inflationary pressures, including in relation to the national living wage.

Overall, the county council ended the year with a relatively small overall overspend of £10.1m after using contingency and other funding; Adults' Services was the single largest contributing pressure within that total.

Area of Adult Social Care	£million
Physical support (18-64)	29.2
Sensory support (18-64)	0.9
Support with memory and cognition (18-64)	1.1
Mental health support (18-64)	11.0
Learning disability support (18-64)	96.8
Physical support (65+)	81.3
Sensory support (65+)	2.7
Support with memory and cognition (65+)	27.8
Learning disability support (65+)	14.1
Mental health support (65+)	8.1
Care assessment & safeguarding	39.5
Commissioning, strategy and admin support	8.0
Other	7.4
<b>Total Adult Social Care</b>	<b>£327.8m</b>

## How we managed financial pressures and delivered savings

The 2024/25 county council budget included £15.7m of required efficiency savings across all services, while also investing more in social care. Adults' Services delivered actions aimed at reducing future demand and containing cost growth—for example, expanding reablement (short term, independence-focused support) and improving information and advice so more people have their needs met early.

In the second half of the year, the council introduced in-year spending controls and other actions to help manage the budget. In recognition of the sector-wide pressures, Adults' Services was not set an extra savings target but was required to take action to limit its' overspend. Despite these steps, demand and price pressures outweighed the savings we were able to make during 2024/25.

In January 2025, county council leaders wrote publicly to the Minister of State for Care to raise urgent concerns about the serious and growing pressures on adult social care.

The letter warned that increasing demand, rising costs and workforce shortages are making it harder for councils and care providers to maintain services, and that without sustainable funding, the availability and quality of care will be at risk. It also highlighted the impact of recent National Living Wage and National Insurance increases, which have shifted large unfunded pressures onto local authorities and providers.

## Forecasting demand: Market Position Statements

Throughout 2024/25 we published an updated set of **Market Position Statements**. The position statements bring together the latest local data to show how people's needs are changing and what this means for the future.

They also inform our commissioning intentions — the plans we make about what kinds of care and support we will need more of in the years ahead, how we work with providers to shape those services, and where future investment should be focused. Position statements help providers and partners plan with us so the local care market can keep pace with rising demand and changing needs.



Each statement focuses on a different part of the care market and highlights the main changes we expect over the coming years.

### Lifelong Services

Demand for support for adults with lifelong disabilities continues to grow.

- Around 3,690 adults aged 18–64 in West Sussex have a moderate or severe learning disability, while around 4,290 adults aged 65+ have a learning disability.
- The number of autistic adults is increasing and the need for long-term support is expected to rise by around 1% each year.

This will increase the pressure on supported living, residential placements and community-based services.

## Mental Health Services for people of working age

Demand for support is rising, with 9,050 people on GP severe mental illness registers in 2022/23 (a 5% increase) and a 22% rise in adults in contact with secondary mental health services between February 2023 and February 2024.

Social care demand is also growing, with a 42% increase in people funded through the mental health pooled budget since 2019 (546 to 776). Increasing complexity of mental health need is placing further pressure on supported living, accommodation, crisis prevention and recovery services.



## Extra Care Housing

- The population aged 65+ is expected to grow from 23% (2022) to 28% by 2035.
- Low-dependency needs are forecast to rise by 30%, and high-dependency needs by 22%.
- Growth is highest in Arun, Horsham and Chichester.
- Around 4,300 more older people will need medium or high levels of support by 2035.

Extra Care Housing will play a bigger role in helping people remain independent and reducing demand for residential and nursing care.

## Older People's Residential and Nursing Care

- The number of people aged 65+ is forecast to grow from 205,800 (2022) to 267,200 by 2035.
- Dementia prevalence is expected to rise by 30%.
- High-dependency needs are predicted to increase by 22.4%, equivalent to around 4,300 more older people needing medium or high levels of support.

Specialist dementia and nursing care will be increasingly important, even if the total number of care home beds stays the same.

# Care Quality Commission Assurance Assessment: Our Preparation, Visit and Findings



## Preparing for the Care Quality Commission's Assurance Inspection

Throughout 2024–25, Adults' Services prioritised readiness for the Care Quality Commission's (CQC) new assurance framework for local authorities. To support this, we undertook a comprehensive refresh of our self-assessment against the CQC's nine quality statements, informed by evidence of Care Act compliance, engagement with people using our services, staff insight, complaints data, and progress against our Adult Social Care Strategy.

This process helped us identify areas of strength and those requiring further improvement across the themes of working with people, providing support, ensuring safety, and leadership.

By autumn 2024, the service had assembled a significant evidence base to support the CQC's assessment. This included over 270 documents across 38 categories, as well as 75 detailed case studies, 50 of which were submitted to the Commission. This work took place alongside ongoing operational delivery and reflects the dedication and commitment of staff across the directorate.

## The CQC Visit

The CQC's onsite assessment took place in early 2025. Inspectors met with more than 200 people, including staff, elected members, partners, people receiving support and family and friend carers.

They evaluated how well the council fulfils its responsibilities under the Care Act 2014, including prevention, independence, personalisation, safeguarding and partnership working.

## Assessment Findings

The CQC published its findings in August 2025, rating West Sussex County Council **Good** overall for meeting its adult social care duties.

The assessment recognised significant progress since the start of our two-year improvement programme in 2023.

## What CQC said we do well

- Person-centred, strength-based assessments
- Effective prevention and technology-enabled support
- Strong understanding of local inequalities and seldom-heard groups
- Effective partnership working and community networks
- Safe pathways, especially post-hospital discharge
- Committed leadership and a culture of learning

## Where CQC said we must improve

- Reduce assessment waiting times
- Improve the experience of unpaid carers
- Ensure equitable access and further embed preventative approaches
- Improve transitions from Children's to Adults' Services
- Strengthen coproduction and engagement

These themes directly shaped our priorities for 2025/26.



# Adults' Services in 2024-25: how we used our budget, what we achieved, and where we're improving



## What our performance shows about quality and outcomes in 2024/25

### Improving practice and managing demand safely

During 2024–25, we strengthened our commitment to delivering strengths-based, person-centred support, while better managing continuing high levels of demand.

An external Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) Practice Review in July 2024 looked at a sample of our assessment and care records and confirmed that our approach was strengths-based and focused on people's outcomes. This provided independent assurance that our improvement work was supporting and embedding this way of working.

Over the year, we improved how we manage high demand by strengthening our processes for actively prioritising people based on the level and urgency of their needs and providing people with clearer information. This helped ensure that those with the highest needs were supported first, while keeping our approach safe, fair and transparent.

We also enhanced our quality-assurance work and continued to support staff through training and reflective practice, helping to maintain a consistent strengths-based approach, even during periods of very high demand.

This approach has also enabled savings to be made, as more people were supported to draw on their own abilities, community activities and resources and their wider support networks to meet their needs, reducing the requirement for formal services where appropriate.

## **Helping people earlier so fewer need a full social care assessment**

Throughout the year, between 13–16% of people making initial contact with us went on to need a full Care Act assessment (our aim is for no more than 25%). This shows that clear and timely information and advice and short-term support are meeting more people's needs without them needing formal services.

## **Helping more people regain independence**

Reablement is short-term support to help people get back to living independently after illness or injury. Using the updated national method of reporting, 86.0% of people who received reablement in 2024/25 did not need ongoing long-term support afterwards. This is an improvement on previous years and shows how early, practical support can reduce long-term needs.

## **Choice and control through direct payments**

By the end of the year, 21% of adults purchased their support via direct payments. This was below our aim for 27.4%. While this mirrors regional and national trends, we are taking action to support increased use of direct payments. We refreshed our Direct Payments policy in December 2024 to make the process clearer and easier to use, and we are continuing our work to improve our approach to direct payments and our public information and advice.

## **Keeping care plans up to date**

By the end of the year, 64% of people using services (including carers) had received an assessment or a review within the last 12 months, exceeding our 60% target and improving over the course of the year.

## **Living well at home and staying connected to community life**

Throughout the year, more people receiving long-term support were able to live in their own home or with family. This rose from 52% at the start of 2024-5 to 63%.

Supporting people to live where they feel most at home is a key part of helping people stay independent and connected to their communities. 46.3% of people who responded to the social care user survey said they had as much social contact as they would like (England 45.4%).

## **Work, volunteering and activity**

We began to improve how we record employment and activity for working age adults who receive long term support. By the end of 2024-5, 7% of people were in paid or unpaid work, including volunteering and work experience - up from 3.5% earlier in the year. This was a baseline year for the new measure, and we expect further improvement as recording and support pathways continue to strengthen.

## **Experience and quality of life**

In West Sussex, 60.9% of people responding to the social care user survey who were receiving long-term support told us they were satisfied with their care (England 65.7%), and our adjusted quality-of-life score was 0.406 (England 0.419). Our overall quality-of-life score (out of 24) was 19.0, in line with the England average (19.0).

## **Choice and control; access to information**

78.7% of respondents to the social care user survey reported control over their daily life (England 77.3%). People's experience of finding information and advice was lower than previous annual surveys, with 64.4% reporting it was easy (England 67.8%). This is a priority for improvement alongside our digital and community outreach offers.

## **Feeling safe using services**

The proportion of people responding to the social care user survey who use services and said they feel safe was 69.8%, which is very close to the England figure of 70.1%.

## Supporting people affected by domestic and sexual violence

In 2024/25, the Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse service received 2,656 referrals, and 83% of people ended their support in a planned way. On exit, an annual average of 90% said they felt safe, rising to 95% in the final three months.

The health-based domestic abuse support project, which places specialist advisors in local hospitals, supported 300 referrals during the year, with 86% of people taking up and participating in the support offered.

## Keeping people safe from abuse and neglect (2024/25)

West Sussex County Council leads adult safeguarding and triages concerns through the Safeguarding Adults Hub. Overall practice is overseen by the West Sussex Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB)—a statutory partnership of the County Council, NHS Sussex and Sussex Police—which sets strategy, publishes an annual report and commissions Safeguarding Adults Reviews (SARs) when there is learning to improve practice.

## Safeguarding performance in 2024/25

- 2,285 safeguarding concerns were raised, with 1,654 meeting the threshold for a statutory Section 42 enquiry. This is where the council must investigate the concern about an adult with care needs and decide what action is needed and by whom.
- Across the year, the share of Section 42 enquiries where the risk was still present at case closure stayed at around 10–12%. By year end, 88.5% of completed enquiries had resulted in the risk being reduced or removed.
- Abuse most often occurred in people's own homes (831 adults) or in residential/nursing settings (518).
- Safeguarding action made a difference: risk was reduced for 783 adults and removed for 370.
- For a full analysis of safeguarding performance in 2024/5 see the **West Sussex Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report** [Annual Reports](#) | [Statutory publications](#) | [Safeguarding Adults Board](#).

## Supporting family and friend carers

From 1 April 2024 we renewed our countywide carers service contract with Carers Support West Sussex (CSWS). The service provides a helpline, local hubs and groups, carers' assessments, benefits advice and hospital-based support—so carers can get help early, in a way that suits them.

At the end of 2024/25 CSWS had 32,593 registered carers in West Sussex (with 4,066 new registrations in 2024/25), alongside 210,000 contacts and 76,089 individual contacts with carers during the year.

CSWS publishes a comprehensive impact report which gives detail on how it performed in 2024/5. You can access that here: [Impact Report 2025 | Carers Support](#)

## Financial advice, money and practical help

Around 60% of people living in residential care in West Sussex pay their own care costs, usually through pensions, benefits, investments, and other income. This is 10 points above than the national average of 48.9%. To help people make informed and confident decisions about paying for long-term care, we work with expert partners: Age UK West Sussex, Brighton & Hove, and West Sussex Partners in Care.

Carewise offers access to accredited care fees specialists who are SOLLA-accredited (Society of Later Life Advisers), DBS-checked and trained in safeguarding adults.

In 2024–25:

- 308 people were referred to Carewise care fees specialists
- Age UK West Sussex, Brighton & Hove delivered its free Money Advice Service as part of the scheme, helping people secure £3,636,323 in additional welfare benefits
- Carers Support West Sussex also provides dedicated financial and practical help to unpaid carers.
- In 2024–25 they supported carers to access:
  - £1,415,332 in additional annual income through welfare benefits advice (supporting 840 carers)
  - £648,481 in grants, funding, and essential equipment (supporting 723 carers)

## **Our care market**

West Sussex has around 8,450 older people's residential and nursing beds across around 230 homes, operating at around 90% occupancy. We used this capacity more flexibly, for example through short-term recovery and respite beds. We continued our long-term partnership with Shaw Healthcare, which guarantees 590 council beds and helps us manage capacity, work efficiently, control costs and ensure a reliable supply of beds, while working with providers to increase dementia nursing places where they're most needed.

83.7% of residential adult social care providers in West Sussex were rated Good or Outstanding by the CQC (England 80.0%). The workforce leaving rate was 25.3%, comparable to the Southeast region (25.2%) but above the England average (23.7%). This underlines the importance of our continued focus on market stability, recruitment and retention.

## **Quality, assurance and funding**

We strengthened quality support and contract oversight of care providers in the county and prepared for CQC's local authority assurance through a whole system self-assessment.

We also used the national Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund to help sustain fee rates, boost workforce capacity/retention and reduce waiting times—linking funding to practical improvements people feel day to day.



# Involving our customers, carers and partners



## **Across our involvement groups** *(forums that bring residents, carers and partners together)*

Throughout 2024/5, our longstanding groups, boards and forums provided a space to share lived experience, test ideas and shape priorities—strengthening collaboration, accountability and understanding of diverse experiences across West Sussex.

### **Customer and Carer Group** *(a lived-experience group of people with adult social care needs and carers)*

Provided insight to improve service design and communications, including digital development, information resources, trauma-informed practice, and feedback on financial assessments and direct payments. Members also supported research, scrutiny and senior recruitment.

### **Minorities Health and Social Care Group** *(a network group of local organisations and VCSE focused on Global Majority communities and inclusion)*

Highlighted barriers and advised on more culturally responsive practice, strengthening relationships with communities and supporting more equitable approaches to service development and partnership work.

### **Autism Partnership Board** *(comprising autistic people/people with autism, families/carers and organisations)*

Brought insight on the real-world impact of decisions and co-produced the draft West Sussex All-Ages Autism Strategy through workshops, surveys, drop-ins and a public conference.

### **Learning Disability Partnership Board** *(a board of self-advocates, providers and carer groups, co-chaired with a self-advocate and Cabinet Member)*

Promoted inclusion and highlighted gaps across accessible information, health facilitation, transport, community safety and access to work across public services.

### **Voluntary, Community, Social Enterprise Collaboration (VCSE) Board** *(a strategic partnership with VCSE organisations)*

Brought sector expertise to guide our work, including support to our Improvement Programme and shaping the Early Support Charter Principles and commissioning strategy.

### **Adult Social Care Market Provider Forum** *(a forum for care providers to engage with the council on market priorities)*

Strengthened collaboration and problem-solving on workforce, quality assurance, contract management and commissioning intentions, using data and provider insight to inform action.

# Our priorities for 2025/6



## WSSC Adults' Services – Priorities for 2025/26

### **Improving access to support**

We need to keep improving how people find and access information, advice and support. This includes continuing to simplify assessment and financial processes.

### **Supporting independence**

We will continue strengthening prevention, reablement and community-based support so more people can stay independent. Our strengths-based approach remains central to this.

### **Keeping people safe**

We need to further improve safeguarding practice so risks are recognised and managed consistently. Strong partnership working will remain essential.

### **Improving the quality of care**

We will continue strengthening how we support and oversee care providers to ensure services are safe and sustainable. Ongoing market pressures mean this remains a key focus.

### **Listening to people**

We need to build on recent co-production and improve how people's feedback shapes change. Expanding involvement from residents and carers will support this.

### **Supporting unpaid carers**

We will keep improving information, advice and support for family and friend carers.

### **Developing our workforce**

We need to continue strengthening training, supervision and practice support. This will help staff deliver consistent, high-quality, strengths-based practice.

### **Using data and assurance effectively**

We will keep improving how we use data and oversight to drive learning and performance. Monitoring key processes will help us target further improvements.

### **Managing resources sustainably**

We need to maintain strong financial oversight and management of our budget. This will support a fair, compliant and sustainable approach to adult social care.

### **Refreshing our Adult Social Care Strategy**

We will refresh our long-term strategy to set clear priorities for the years ahead. This will be shaped with residents, carers, staff and partners.