

# Equity in experience and outcomes

Score: 3

3 - Evidence shows a good standard

## What people expect

I have care and support that enables me to live as I want to, seeing me as a unique person with skills, strengths and goals.

## The local authority commitment

We actively seek out and listen to information about people who are most likely to experience inequality in experience or outcomes. We tailor the care, support and treatment in response to this.

## Key findings for this quality statement

Understanding and reducing barriers to care and support and reducing inequalities

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North Tyneside understood its local population profile and demographics. It analysed equality data on adult social care users and used it to identify and reduce inequalities in people's care and support experiences and outcomes. The local authority's Equality and Diversity policy described the corporate vision for North Tyneside as a place where "people feel safe, and no one experiences discrimination or avoidable disadvantage because of their protected characteristics, background or personal circumstances."

Senior leaders told us they were working to make equality and diversity "everyone's business." This was led by the Corporate Strategy and Customer Service Directorate and supported by Cabinet Members, the senior leadership team, the Corporate Equality Group, and the Staff Networks (local authority employees with lived experiences of inequalities).

Staff and leaders involved in carrying out Care Act duties had a good understanding of cultural diversity within the area and told us they engaged with the people and groups where inequalities had been identified, to understand and address the specific risks and issues experienced by them.

The local authority commissioned the voluntary and community sector to carry out a 'community mapping' exercise to identify people with protected characteristics, seldom heard groups, and people with needs for care and support which were not being met. These key documents were used to develop North Tyneside's Health and Wellbeing Board's joint strategy, 'Equally Well: A healthier, fairer future for North Tyneside' (2021-25). Community Hubs were based in areas of most need, and voluntary and community organisations were commissioned to work closely with local communities.

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The local authority was undertaking continuous, robust mapping of community groups in North Tyneside, to promote an understanding of the needs of all communities. Strong knowledge of community assets supported local engagement at ward level, and groups supporting seldom-heard and hard-to-reach groups. For example, engagement with community groups included organisations supporting seldom heard ethnic groups, for example the Bangladeshi, Jewish, and Islamic communities. This included support from the local authority's Ethnic Diversity Task Force, groups supporting the local authority's 'Live Well' focus, sports clubs, places of worship, and those offering support for people struggling with food poverty. Other community projects supporting social isolation included environmental and heritage groups as well as multiple faith groups representing Christian, Sikh, and Islamic communities offering safe spaces for people over 65 to interact with other people from their local communities.

There was a strong focus on the impact of deprivation on mental health and especially for those people with multiple complex needs such as homelessness and drug/alcohol abuse. Joint initiatives were in place to support communities who traditionally struggled to access adult social care support. For example, community initiatives were in place to support young and working-aged people who faced mental health challenges, suicidal crisis, and experiences of abuse. Other community-based groups included multiple organisations supporting people's mental and physical wellbeing, unpaid carers, autistic people, and veterans. This work supported engagement on the Adult Social Care Strategy, with the PSW using existing community networks to reach out to seldom-heard groups, offering face-to-face discussions in cultural centres and places of worship.

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North Tyneside had low ethnic diversity and so the impact of support offered around deprivation was seen more evidently in the high percentile white British communities. However, the borough was becoming more diverse, with immigration from Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa, and an increased number of refugees and asylum seekers. The local authority commissioned voluntary and community sector organisations to support people migrating into North Tyneside, including personalised support, food and clothing support, and drop-in services. This enabled people migrating to North Tyneside to integrate into the local community, access adult social care services and to support the sector by taking up roles within health and social care.

The local authority reported people from minority ethnic backgrounds were overall more likely to live in poverty, and experience poorer mental and physical health. The local authority recognised many older people in deprived areas were facing significant hardships, with around 35% living in poverty compared to just 3.9% in more affluent neighbourhoods. Disabled people were particularly affected by deprivation inequalities, with approximately 25% of people living with a disability residing in struggling communities, while only 14% of those in wealthier areas face similar challenges.

Local authority had regard to its Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010) in the way it delivered its Care Act functions. There were equality objectives and a coproduced and adequately resourced strategy to reduce inequalities and to improve the experiences and outcomes for people who were more likely to have poor care. Senior leaders told us the Embedding Equalities Programme was an integral part of the Council Plan (2021-2025), deriving from the 'A Caring North Tyneside' priority.

Staff and leaders told us the local authority's focus on inequalities was not restricted to ethnicity. Trans, non-binary and gender diverse awareness guidance and e-learning was available to support awareness of trans, non-binary and gender diverse people. A new employment 'Transitions Toolkit' provided guidance on supporting colleagues who transitioned whilst working for the local authority. Trans and non-binary services in North Tyneside offered one-to-one support around gender identity, sexual orientation, hate crime, and access to group support.

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Partners told us they were working with the local authority and people with lived experiences of inequalities to develop engagement leads within all local authority services to ensure consistency in engagement activities across the Council. These engagement processes supported the development of training for colleagues and service providers, Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs), and a new 'Engagement' website.

People and partners told us there was also a focus on people with complex needs and equality characteristics. For example, people experiencing trauma often led to drug and alcohol addiction, self-harm, and homelessness. These people were supported by the GAP team, and tended to be young adults whose life experience had led to exclusion.

## Inclusion and accessibility arrangements

People told us The North Tyneside and My Care North Tyneside websites were designed to be accessible for users with different needs. They were compatible with basic screen magnifiers, speech recognition software, and speech packages. For those who could struggle to access the websites, the local authority had processes in place to adapt information fact sheets and standard care management documents into various formats, ensuring everyone could access the information they needed.

There were appropriate inclusion and accessibility arrangements in place in North Tyneside so people could engage with the local authority in ways which worked for them, for example BSL videos explaining adult social care information, and access to translation and interpreter services. Senior leaders told us the local authority had invested in accessible environments, including facilities in all town centres and parks across the borough. 42 accessibility audits had taken place and been published, instigated by the local authority's staff networks, in conjunction with people with lived experiences, giving disabled people confidence in accessing building across North Tyneside.

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Partners told us there were services available to support people with dual sensory loss. The local authority strengthened its links with deaf community groups through the work of the Equality Engagement Advisor. Bookable face-to-face interpreter services were available, whilst Sign Video enhanced access through instant online BSL interpreting. Translation arrangements included commissioned services to providing translation services, with an additional framework for document translation. The local authority also completed sensory and dual sensory assessments. Data provided by North Tyneside showed 109 sensory assessments were completed in 2023-2024.

Information about local services and activities was made accessible, with practical support and training to develop skills for independent living at home and in the community, and specialised training on mobility, both indoors and outdoors. Equipment could also be provided to help people manage their lives more independently.