

# Learning, improvement and innovation

Score: 3

3 - Evidence shows a good standard

## The local authority commitment

We focus on continuous learning, innovation and improvement across our organisation and the local system. We encourage creative ways of delivering equality of experience, outcome and quality of life for people. We actively contribute to safe, effective practice and research.

## Key findings for this quality statement

Continuous learning, improvement and professional development

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There was an inclusive and positive culture of continuous learning and improvement within the local authority. Staff said they were proud to be part of working for North Tyneside due to its positive culture. We were told from staff and leaders there was good and effective communication between teams, with regular meetings and training sessions. The DASS was keen to receive feedback from staff on how processes were working, and where improvements could be made. Work had been done to find a balance between advancement and moving at a pace comfortable for staff. This was evidenced through the recent re-shaping of the Occupational Therapy team.

However, processes did not always identify learning opportunities. For example, the local authority Workforce Strategy detailed their main challenges and key priorities; however, it did not detail how they planned to achieve their priorities. Safeguarding Adults data dashboards showed the local authority had systems in place to gather data but did not provide any learning or improvement plans. Senior leaders told us they were currently unable to triangulate costs, demand and service capacity. More work was needed to embed data use amongst management teams. Staff and leaders told us there was no system for managing complaints at an informal level, and therefore they were unable to capture themes and trends and there was a lack of oversight over these complaints.

Staff and leaders told us there had been an increase in demand for adult social care services leading to the continuous development of the directorate to meet the changing needs of North Tyneside. Local authority staff had ongoing access to learning and support to ensure Care Act duties were delivered safely and effectively. Under the new leadership structure there had been an advancement of the application of new technology and workload management tools to support with staff capacity. Senior leaders told us there were some further improvements which could be made to the understanding and quality of data shared between leaders and frontline teams.

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The local authority's Workforce Strategy detailed their key priorities which included growing and developing the workforce to meet the future needs of North Tyneside. Other priorities included building and enhancing equality, diversity, and inclusion in the workforce. Staff and leaders told us they were keen to support their staff to progress in their career in North Tyneside. There was a focus on a wide range of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses, personnel training for managers, and specialist training for those who wished to specialise, such as BIA training.

Leadership within the local authority showed a commitment to ongoing improvements to training and guidance on practice. National data provided by the Adult Social Care Workforce Estimates (2024) showed 27.69% of local authority and independent provider staff had completed Mental Capacity Assessment and DoLS training. This showed a negative variation to the average for England of 37.58%. Senior leaders had responded by providing updated Mental Capacity Act 2005 training included practical workshops focused on common decisions, which had shown a positive impact on the quality of practice according to surveys of people receiving support.

Staff and leaders were positive about the support offered to staff who were newly qualified. The training programme was developed with a combination of theory and practice. This included an emphasis on anti-oppressive practice, anti-racism, and intersectionality. The Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) had been a focus for North Tyneside as part of the continuous development offer for newly qualified social workers. These programmes were evaluated and kept under review. Staff told us they were given autonomy to try new ways of working and to make decisions in the best interest of the people they were assessing.

The local Authority had developed annual 'Choose to Stay' interviews for all staff as a focused discussion with their line managers. This document was designed to understand why people were choosing to stay with North Tyneside as an employer, with the aim of understanding how to build on their strengths, rather than a one-off interview for staff who were leaving.

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Partners stated the local authority had participated positively in supporting research into the needs of people receiving services. Staff and leaders were proactive in engaging with reviews, helping to identify people to speak to, and providing access to relevant data. There were information sharing agreements in place to support this. This improved the quality and quantity of research for the people of North Tyneside. An example of how this had impacted the community was the Hospital to Home Project, which sought to understand how health and social care services provided after hospital discharge impacted on people's outcomes. Partners said the research influenced commissioning decisions around hospital discharge.

The local authority had several forums in which they encouraged collaborative working, including a steering group supported by the voluntary and community sector to seek grants for community-based support and advice activities. The local authority partnered with the voluntary and community sector to create the Inspire Adult Social Care Improvement Forum, which used lived experiences to prioritise audit findings and co-design improvements. This included enhancing public information, revising assessment frameworks, and developing strategic and operational approaches to meet people's adult social care needs.

North Tyneside had a strong sense of coproduction which could be seen through on-going practice as well as in the development of new projects and processes. Senior leaders told us they were delivering on commitments to further developing coproduction at all levels of decision-making, outlined in 'Stronger Together: Developing Coproduction in Adult Social Care', and continued to progress with the development of coproduction becoming 'business as usual' within the work plan for the new Adult Social Care strategy.

People told us a key example of the local authority's commitment to coproduction was the Autism Better Together group which was a lived experience group who also supported with the shaping of services. People with lived experience co-produced the local authority's All-age Autism strategy, leading to new residential respite services and the design and delivery of autism training in response to a rising need for competent complex service provision within North Tyneside.

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## Learning from feedback

The local authority learned from people's feedback about their experiences of care and support, and feedback from staff and partners. This informed strategy, improvement activity and decision making at all levels. There were processes to ensure learning happened when things went wrong, and from examples of good practice. Leaders encouraged reflection and collective problem-solving. For example, concerns about incomplete information being shared with family members about step-down services led to information sessions to embed new handover and discharge processes.

Staff and leaders told us opportunities for learning were taken from multiple sources, including complaints and compliments, safeguarding concerns (including SARs), and public engagement forums. The local authority also invited feedback from staff and partners and arranged cross team audits get a reflection of the quality of work being completed. These audits invited the voice of the person accessing services when being completed. For example, a coproductive review of mental health services led to identified priorities within the new Council Plan, including elements of the priority to people being cared for and supported if they became vulnerable, including if they became homeless.

There was evidence of learning from SARs such as specialist training for deaf/blind assessors. We were told SAB had sought feedback from people with lived experience of safeguarding referrals as well as feedback from partner organisations. Feedback shaped how the local authority adapted strategies moving forward. Some examples given included predatory marriage, domestic abuse, and cuckooing of people with learning disabilities.

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Partners told us North Tyneside participated in peer review and sector-led improvement activity. The local authority drew on external support to improve when necessary. Recent reviews of support available to unpaid carers, information and advice services, and homecare provision had all utilised external partners to lead on consultation, engagement and analysis of services and their impact on people's health and adults social care outcomes. The local authority used learning and feedback from regional and national forums to influence best practice and to shape service provision.

Data provided by the local authority showed there had been 35 adult social care complaints received during 2022-2023 with 40% of complaints either upheld or partially upheld. Data showed over the 3 years 2021-2024 the proportion of adult social care complaints which were not upheld had increased. However, national data from the LGSCO (2023-2024) showed 6 detailed investigations had been referred to them with 100% uphold rate, showing the local authority's decisions had been overturned. The data showed the local authority had 100% compliance in completing actions identified by the LGSCO.