

SCRUTINY REVIEW PANEL - ADULT SOCIAL CARE & HEALTH
IT SYSTEMS AND DATA: FINAL REPORT

Report of the Scrutiny Review Panel

1. FOREWORD

- 1.1 Social Services is a key part of what we do here in Stockport Council. It benefits a large number of citizens but it's also a big consumer of resources when the council is under increasing financial pressure.
- 1.2 The key motive for the review were reports that the use of a newly-introduced IT system was not as smooth as it might have been. This system was introduced to Adult Social Care in 2020 during the Covid-19 lockdown with remote training being the norm. It should be noted that many other councils use the same software and there is a parallel system used by Children and Families Social Care in Stockport. The main cited reason for the unfortunate timing was a lack of support for the previously-used IT system.
- 1.3 The Scrutiny Review Panel interviewed many staff, from senior management to social work practitioners and IT support staff. Adult Social Care gave us their full support and were transparent and as helpful as possible. There was a public meeting of the committee on 1 Feb 2024, which is available through the council's webcast portal.
- 1.4 The committee looked at the recording and the use of data and looked to see if this could be improved here in Stockport. We also looked at the efficacy of system changes and the current storage and use of data for analytics, management and statutory reporting.
- 1.5 Any improvement of the IT recording and use should lead to improved efficiencies, cost reduction and hopefully improve the morale of staff.

Cllr Geoff Abell,
Chair of the review committee

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 As part of the Scrutiny Work Programme approved by the Council, the Adult Social Care & Health Scrutiny Committee decided to conduct a scrutiny review in respect of the recording system used by Adult Social Care. The aim of the review was to understand the issues in relation to recording, data quality and reporting and to seek assurances that the challenges with data and IT systems were not a barrier to practitioners undertaking assessments in their role and there was no impact on Stockport residents getting the support they required.

3. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- 3.1 At the meeting of Adult Social Care & Health Scrutiny Committee on 15 June 2023, Members of the Committee were asked to suggest Scrutiny Review Topics for inclusion in the 2023/2024 scrutiny work programme.
- 3.2 Following concerns around the narrative presented to the Committee that there were recording and data quality issues with the case management system used by Adult Social Care which was impacting on performance reporting, it was determined that the Council Meeting be recommended to include “Adult Social Care & Health IT Systems and Data” within the 2023/24 Scrutiny Work Programme. Subsequently, at the Council meeting held on 13 July 2023, it was resolved that approval be given to the Scrutiny Review Programme for 2023/24.
- 3.3 Membership of the review was requested and confirmed at the Adult Social Care & Health Scrutiny Committee meeting on 15 June 2023, the Scrutiny Review Panel membership included Councillors Geoff Abell (as Lead Member), Gary Lawson and Karl Wardlaw.
- 3.4 The review related to the use of Liquidlogic Adults System (LAS), a system used by a majority of Councils in England and most Councils in Greater Manchester. The parent company is System C which supplies healthcare IT systems to the NHS.
- 3.5 In 2017, the contracts for a number of systems used by Childrens Social Care and Social Care Finance were up for renew. At the same time OLM, the supplier of Adult Social Care’s previous case and finance management system CareFirst, announced they were discontinuing development. An aligned procurement approach commenced in 2017 and of 3 shortlisted suppliers, Liquidlogic and Oxford Computer Consultants (OCC) were awarded the contracts to supply case management and finance management systems to both Adult Social Care, Childrens Social Care and Social Care Finance.
- 3.6 The Liquidlogic Childrens System (LCS) went live in 2019. Comparatively the Liquidlogic Adults System (LAS) was implemented a year later, in April 2020, coinciding unavoidably with the Covid-19 pandemic. As a consequence, all training and support had to be undertaken remotely from the go live date and for the first 12 months of implementation. Adult Social Care practitioners had to learn a new system and recording processes whilst the health and social care system was under unprecedented pressure in supporting the pandemic response. This understandably posed some challenge to training and ongoing support, impacting end-user experience, confidence and proficiency.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The Panel met on nine occasions in the period of September 2023 to February 2024 to gather evidence and make recommendations.

4.2 Details of the meetings were as follows:-

Stage	Key activity	Attendees	Meeting dates
Scoping	Informal meeting with the Members of the Scrutiny Review Panel to discuss the scope of the review and establish the lines of enquiry	Director of Adult Services Service Manager Strategic Service Development	29 September 2023
Evidence Gathering	System demonstration	LAS Systems Lead Senior Systems Officer Service Manager Strategic Service Development	13 November 2023
	Understanding the expectations around practice – discussion	Assistant Director of Adult Social Care Operations Principal Social Worker Head of Transformation - Adult Social Care Service Manager Strategic Service Development.	30 November 2023
	Feedback from practitioners – discussion	LD Social Worker Neighbourhood Social Worker Safeguarding Social Worker DoLS Best Interest Assessor	Four meetings held week commencing 4 December 2023
	Understanding how data input converts to data output in the context of portfolio performance – discussion	Business Intelligence Analytics Service Manager Business Intelligence Manager for Adult Social Care Senior Analysts Service Manager Strategic Service Development.	26 January 2024
Reporting	Scrutiny Review outcomes meeting to establish the proposed content and recommendations of the final report	Service Manager Strategic Service Development Senior Democratic Services Officer	1 February 2024
	Draft final report (with recommendations) considered and signed off by the Scrutiny Review Panel	Service Manager Strategic Service Development Senior Democratic Services Officer	16 February 2024

5. DETAILED FINDINGS

5.1 Adult Social Care has commenced a systematic programme of system development, with the aim of improving end-user experience, maximising service efficiency and driving up data quality. This is supported by Systems and Business Intelligence Teams and sits within a wider ASC Transformation Programme. The Scrutiny Review Panel found that a number of changes within the wider transformation programme have already addressed, or will address, some of the findings of this review.

5.2 The Adult Social Care Transformation Programme includes a number of different projects with scope to review processes and forms in the IT system. A summary with timelines is in the table below.

Area of system	Detail	Timescales
Safeguarding	Includes the streamlining of process, an overall reduction in process steps and forms required for completion, reduced content in forms and reduced duplication. Copy forward functionality maximised. Practitioners involved in design and testing.	Changes live since 12 February 2024.
DoLS	Includes the streamlining of process and embedding forms in the IT system compared with off-system template alternatives which are resource heavy to complete and upload. Copy forward functionality to be maximised. Practitioners involved in design and testing. Phase 2 includes development of a digital referral form submitted via a web browser allowing data to flow from online referrals directly into the DoLS area of the system.	Go live April 2024 for internal DoLS forms. Portal development post-April 2024.
Core assessment and support planning	Redesign of the Care Act assessment and Care and Support Plan to streamline, reduce duplication and simplify language. Maximised use of copy forward functionality. Practitioners involved in design and testing.	User acceptance testing during February. Go live end of February.
Brokerage	Includes the streamlining of process and forms to request service set-up. Forms outside of the process will be embedded into the process for greater efficiency. Phase two will include the development of a new e-brokerage module improving efficiencies when setting up services. Practitioners and brokers involved in design and testing.	Design phase March onwards following developments to Core assessment and support planning forms.
Carer assessment and Carer Plan	A local carer organisation is working with local carers and Adult Social Care to review the carers assessment and plan documentation. This includes streamlining and simplification of language. Carers, along with practitioners will be involved in design and testing.	Design phase Feb-Mar. Go live April.

Quality Assurance Delivery Group	An existing forum to submit, approve and monitor system, process and data change requests has existed since Liquidlogic was implemented however this is a new forum which has been relaunched to include frontline practitioners.	Launched 5 February 2024
Mobile working	Testing and deployment of IT kit and LAS module to enable mobile system recording to support more efficient processes, reduce practitioner time and to support self-assessment by the public where this is their preferred method of assessment.	End of March for pilot testing with practitioners.

- 5.3 Other areas of the system have also been identified for review. To protect functionality and data flow within the system, these will be developed iteratively and scheduled upon completion of projects listed in 5.2 above.
- 5.4 To measure the impact of upcoming changes, Adult Social Care surveyed frontline practitioners in January 2024 to establish a baseline for time spent in direct contact with people and carers compared with time spent writing up paperwork in the IT system. Findings show that on average 20-30% of practitioner time is spent in direct contact with people and carers, where the average time spent writing up paperwork is 12-15 hours a week. Writing up core assessments, requesting services, and safeguarding processes were found to take the most time. These have been prioritised for development first, as can be seen in 5.2 above.
- 5.5 Adult Social Care plan to re-run of this survey in July 2024 to understand whether the changes made have been successful in decreasing practitioner time spent on IT systems so that there is more of their time available to spend with people and carers.
- 5.6 Alongside improvements to the system, Adult Social Care have worked in partnership with Systems and Business Intelligence Teams to take steps to improve data recording, data quality, data literacy and analytical insight. A series of tools and resources have been developed including: an executive dashboard, operational dashboards, data quality reports, a new SharePoint site hosting data tools and resources including national and regional benchmarking reports, performance data training sessions, monthly newsletters (Systems and Business Intelligence) and a regular network of performance meetings to review and sign off data submissions.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 During the course of the review, the Scrutiny Review Panel engaged with officers across the council, gathered direct feedback from practitioners representing a range of service areas, and considered information and demonstrations regarding different aspects of the system. The panel concluded that the IT system was an effective tool and enforced more vigorously good record keeping in relation to statutory recording. Practitioners could still undertake assessments in their role and there was no impact on Stockport residents getting the support they required. The panel is also pleased with the progress of the transformation work in

addressing concerns related to the system but would like to offer the following recommendations for further improvement.

6.2 In relation to **system training and ongoing support** the following recommendations are made:-

- Peer mentoring to be explored in teams or across the service where more senior practitioners are available to mentor junior or newer practitioners. To the role of system champions should be considered.
- Amend future versions of the LAS Systems Newsletter should include a section titled 'Did you know' with short summaries of existing LAS functionality and features which support good recording practice.

6.3 In relation to **duplication and efficiency** the following recommendations are made:-

- Whilst it is noted that copy forward functionality is already utilised and further considered in upcoming system review projects, it is recommended that a wider review of copy forward usage is undertaken to ensure this is being maximised where relevant and appropriate, avoiding duplication of effort for practitioners.
- The maximum file size limit for single document uploads should be reviewed and consideration be given an increase to enable larger court reports to be saved.

6.4 In relation to **data recording and reporting** the following recommendations are made:-

- Where system reviews take place, opportunity should be taken to review the data that is collected to ensure that it remains a statutory requirement and that it is necessary, relevant and proportionate.
- To ensure that the produced data reports and dashboards are utilised, the Business Intelligence Team should run periodic audits of usage and take decisions to discontinue or cease development of under or non-utilised reports and dashboards in agreement with Adult Social Care.

6.5 A number of recommendations are made but it is acknowledged that these have been addressed by already implemented transformation projects or will be addressed in upcoming scheduled projects as detailed in table 5.2 above:

- Where off-system templates are used in DoLS, these forms should be embedded in Liquidlogic to support more efficient flow through the system.
- All core processes in relation to: Care Act Assessments & Plans, Brokerage forms and processes, Carer Assessments & Plans, Safeguarding and DoLS processes should be reviewed with the view to streamline and shorten both the process and form content(s) and reduce duplication wherever appropriate and feasible.
- Practitioners should be included in developing and testing changes to DoLS processes and forms.
- Opportunity should be provided for practitioners and managers to submit system change suggestions or initiatives.

- 6.6 The review also found that some suggestions by practitioners related to functionality already deployed, either from implementation or at a later upgrade date, suggesting some gaps in knowledge of existing system configuration. It was noted that Liquidlogic is a case management system designed to support a wide range of teams and processes and as individual end users do not routinely use all areas of the system all of the time, some functionality will become less familiar over time. A recommendation is therefore that core system functionality is re-circulated to end users via the ASC Systems Newsletter and becomes a regular feature to support ongoing knowledge development and awareness.
- 6.7 The Scrutiny Review Panel welcome the service plans relating to the wider transformation programme in particular the mobile working app and commitment to re-run the practitioner survey in July 2024, and requested that an update be submitted to the Adult Social Care & Health Scrutiny Committee within a 6 to 9 month period.
- 6.8 The Scrutiny Review Panel would like to thank the officers who gave up their time to provide feedback, prepare information for and present to this scrutiny review. Members would also like to thank everyone who will be involved in implementing the recommendations that have been made.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are none

Anyone wishing to inspect the above background papers or requiring further information should contact Georgia Latham on 0161 474 3229 or by email:

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