

Self-assessment for LGA Peer Challenge Review
January 2023

Introduction - Adult Social Care and Health in context

Demography

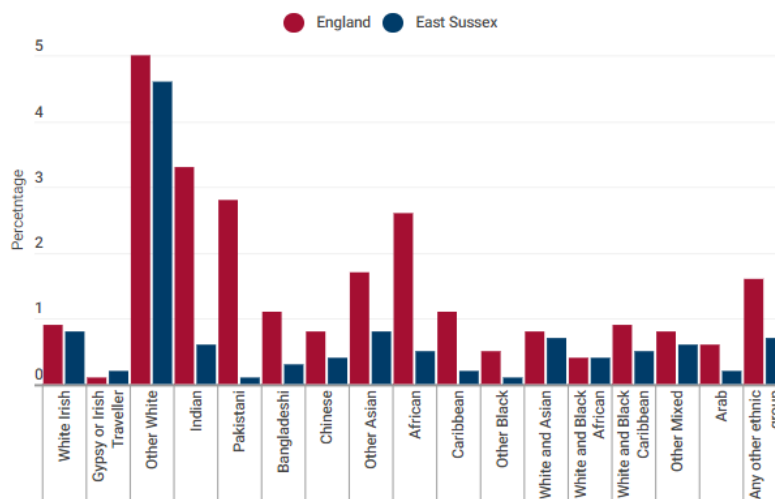
East Sussex has a population of approximately 546,000 people. Proportionately we have high numbers of people over 65 and particularly over 85. In 2021, Rother district had the second highest proportion (4.8%) of people aged over 85 in the country. Nearly 8% of our households are people aged 66 years and over and are living alone (this compares to 5% nationally).

There are pockets of significant deprivation in the county with geographically isolated Hastings being in the top 10% of most deprived areas nationally.

East Sussex has a higher percentage (approximately 88%) of White British and Northern Irish people compared to England and Wales (approximately 74%).

There are an estimated 69,241 unpaid carers in East Sussex.

Our population make up creates significant pressures on adult social care services and data indicates that demand is continuing to grow.



East Sussex County Council

The [East Sussex Council Plan 23/24](#) provides further information on the Council’s achievements and plans for our four priority areas:

- Driving sustainable economic growth
- Keeping vulnerable people safe
- Helping people help themselves
- Making best use of resources now and for the future

External evaluation

In 2023 East Sussex invited the LGA to undertake a corporate peer challenge. The [ESCC Corporate Peer Challenge Position Statement 2023](#) provides an overview of ESCC: the place, priorities, governance, leadership and financial planning. Headlines from the Peer Challenge Review were:

‘...a well run council’ which strives to be an ‘inclusive organisation’

‘financially prudent’

‘an evidence based organisation with robust governance arrangements’

The LGA Peer Review recommended that East Sussex do further work with partners to create a ‘compelling narrative’ for the East Sussex ‘place’ and develop a multi-year plan to address the financial challenges and issues faced in the medium term. Please see Theme 4 for further information.

East Sussex Adult Social Care and Health (ASCH) - Key statistics 31st March 2023

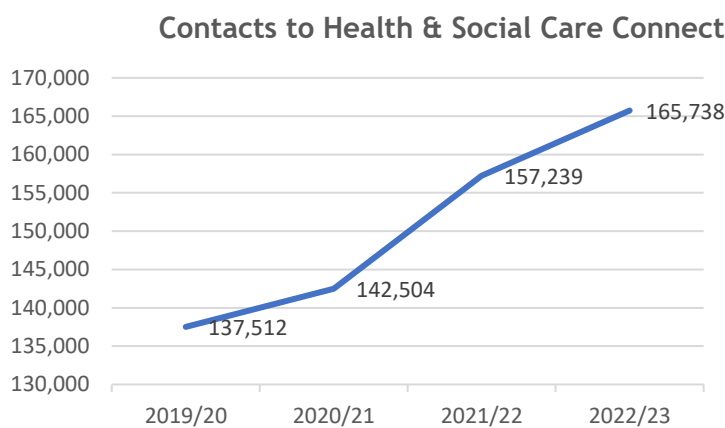
£338 million The gross budget in 2023-24 for ASCH.	2,581 people supported by ASCH in a bedded setting (not including D2A beds). 4,964 people supported by ASCH in the community	ASCH is in the upper or upper-middle quartile for 24 (92%) of the 26 Adult Social Care Outcome Measures (ASCOF) for 2021-22
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ASCH Structure¹

ASCH employs c.1,500 people. Care Act duties are primarily delivered by three sub-directorates: Operations, Strategy Commissioning and Supply Management; Planning Performance; and Engagement. (see structure charts included with information return).

Growing Demand

Whilst the pandemic temporarily reduced demand in some areas, the overall trend across ASCH is a growth in demand, activity and complexity. There were over 28,000 more contacts to ASCH in 2022/23 than there had been in 2019/20, a 20% increase:



Data from across South East authorities show we have the highest number of contacts² relative to our adult population by a significant margin:

Measure	East Sussex performance	South-East Median	Status	Rank
Total number of new contacts as a rate per 100,000 of 18+ population	1783.20	1002.51	High Outlier	1 st of 13

ASCH saw a 10% increase in assessment activity in 2022/23 compared to the previous year and we believe that this trend will continue in 2023/24.

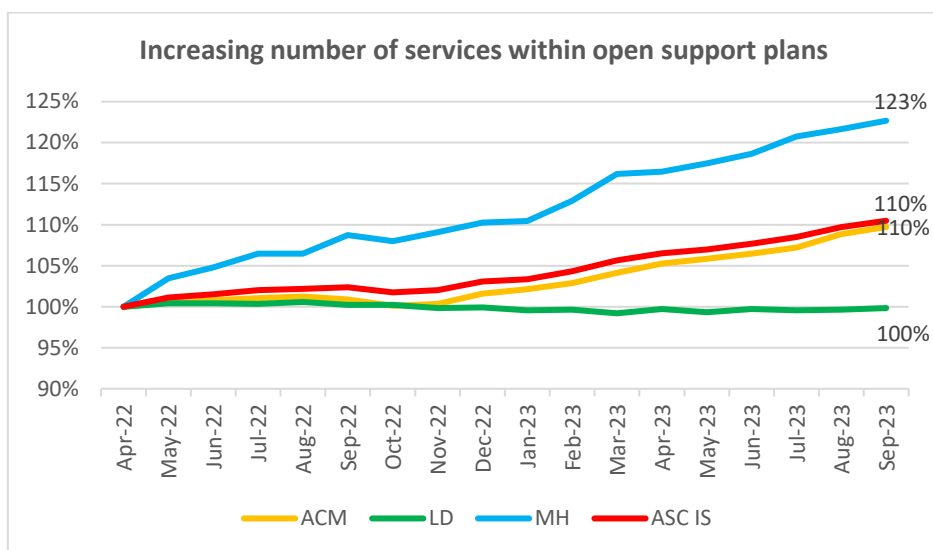
	Care Act Assessment	Carers Assessment	OT Assessment	Mental Capacity Assessment	TOTAL
2019/20	5165	1653	1174	1943	9,935
2020/21	4791	1425	701	1654	8,571
2021/22	4987	1380	691	2043	9,101
2022/23	5355	1433	746	2514	10,048

¹ ASCH also includes Community Safety and Public Health – many functions of which are referenced throughout this document, but which are not the focus of our Care Act Duties.

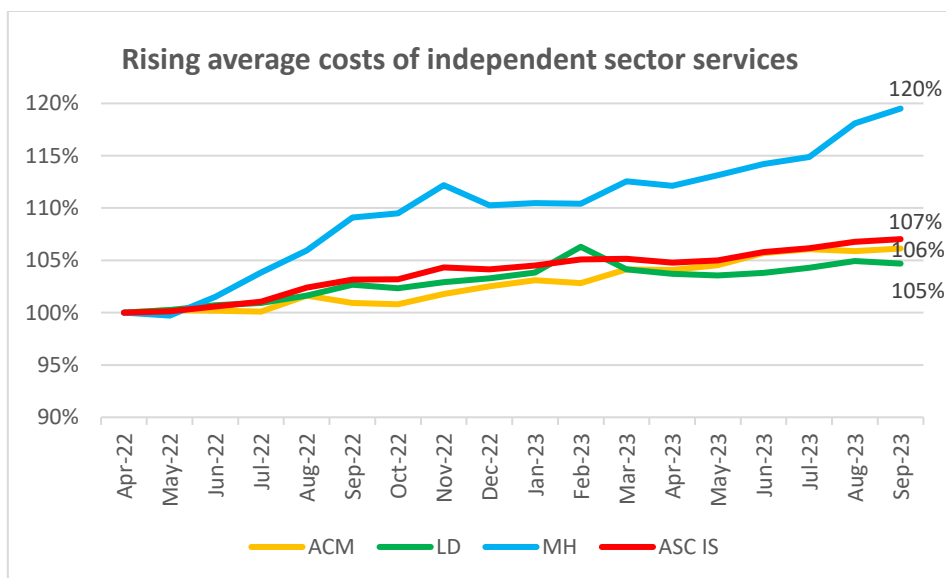
² This KPI counts contacts related to social care services and excludes contacts related to NHS services.

Complexity

A growth in the complexity and needs of people drawing on services is being reported across ASCH. Whilst complexity can be difficult to measure in a meaningful way, in the 18 months between April 2022 and September 2023 the number of services being provided within support plans grew in all areas except learning disability:



The overall cost of support plans has increased by 7% in real terms since April 2022 (i.e. 7% in addition to the 10% fee uplift that ASCH awarded across all services in 2022/23).



ASCH Culture, Values and Approach

Central to our approach is designing and delivering ASCH services based on the needs and aspirations of local people. ASCH is proud of its enduring commitment to listening to, working with, and responding to the people we serve. In recent years, this has developed into taking a 'co-production' approach to many of our key areas of work including developing an overarching strategy for the department.

ASC Strategy

['What Matters To You' is our adult social care strategy](#) for adults across East Sussex. Almost 700 people, many of whom draw on services, got involved in creating the strategy. This included focused work to reach 'Seldom Heard' communities. Six priorities were identified:

1. Right support, right place, right time
2. Information and communication about care and support
3. Cost of living and cost of care, now and in the future

4. A suitable home
5. Personal connections with others
6. Group activities, hobbies and volunteering

To ensure we meet these aspirations we have developed 15 'We will' statements which are published on our website. We are committed to working with local people to deliver against these statements and will report on our progress.

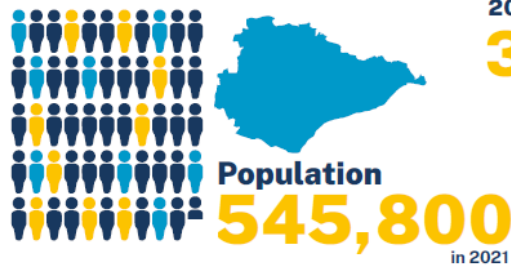
We undertake a twice-yearly survey of adults and carers '(Listening to You)', facilitate numerous forums with experts by experience (e.g. the Disability Rights Reference Group) and regularly disseminate key learning across the organisation e.g. from Safeguarding Adult Reviews and complaints. Please see Theme 2 for more detail.

Our Approach to Performance and Improvement

ASCH has a mature and comprehensive framework for monitoring and managing performance. This includes monthly reports on key metrics disseminated to operational managers, a regular Performance Board chaired by the DASS and self-service reporting tools for managers. We undertake regular benchmarking exercises using national and regional data e.g. ASCOF returns and the South East Regional Finance and Resources Group to understand our performance relative to our peers.

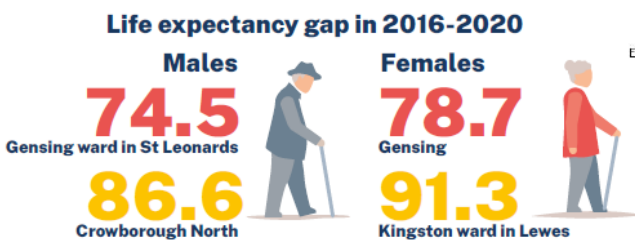
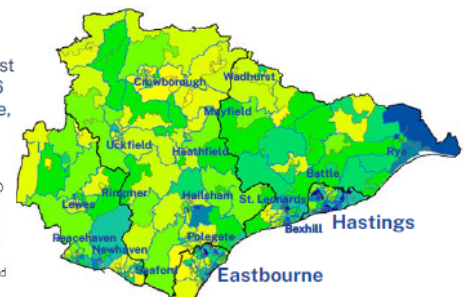
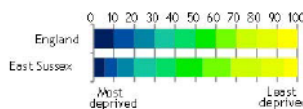
Further information about performance, governance, strategic partnerships and delivery can be found under Themes 2 and 4.

Key facts and figures



Deprivation:

Of 329 LSOAs, 22 in the most deprived 10% nationally. 16 in Hastings, 4 in Eastbourne, and 2 in Rother (2019).



Theme 1 - Working with people

Our Strengths

- Single point of contact for social care and community health information, advice and referrals
- Joint Community Reablement including hospital in-reach
- Occupational Therapy Clinics

Priorities for improvement

- Waiting times for assessments
- Transitions Service
- Practice Quality Assurance Framework

Key Statistics

Activity	Working well	Priority for improvement
8,615 Assessments of adults in 2022/23	Proportion of people who use services who have control over their daily life (ASCOF measure): 83.1% Ranked 7 th nationally	Assessments completed in 28 days: Target: 90% Forecast for 2023/24: 63.2%
1,433 Assessments of carers in 2022/23	Proportion of people who use services who find it easy to find information about services (ASCOF measure): 74.5% Ranked 7 th nationally	% of clients receiving long term support for more than 12 months at the year-end that had a review: Target: 66.6% Outturn 22.23: 60.7% Forecast for 2023/24: 62.5%

Information and Advice

In 2021/22, East Sussex was in the top quartile for the ASCOF measures on the proportion of clients and carers who found it easy to find information. In our latest 'Listening to You' survey 66% of clients and 77% of carers responded positively to questions about access to information and advice³.

ASCH host a single point of contact for social care and community health services called Health and Social Care Connect (HSCC). HSCC is a positive, tangible example of our effective joint work with local NHS organisations. HSCC can be contacted 24/7/365 by a range of ways including 'phone and on-line. Referrers can access multiple health and care pathways, with qualified nursing staff triaging referrals when required. HSCC provides access to out-of-hours urgent response services from ASCH and community health. HSCC triage contacts and:

- Provide/signpost to information and advice
- Send the contact as a referral to the most appropriate service(s), including ASCH services and community health services

The average call answer time for HSCC in 2022/23 was 3:35 minutes. The average across 2023/24 is similar, although the in-year trend is for reduced response times. In October the average was 2:21 minutes and in November it was 1:08 minutes.

Accessible information and advice is available [online](#) covering all aspects of ASCH services including preventative and wellbeing services. ASCH provides on-line directories to help people (and practitioners) access local help and support e.g.:

- [1Space online directory](#) brings together groups that offer care, support and wellbeing services and has a dedicated section for [Information and Advice](#).
- [ESCIS](#) (East Sussex Community Information Service) is a broader directory and includes community information and events.

³ Healthwatch note that feedback provided to them indicates this may not be as true for people unfamiliar with social care and approaching services for the first time.

Assessment, Support Planning and Review Strengths-Based Practice model

ASCH has a well embedded strengths-based practice (SBP) model with a strong emphasis on wellbeing, choice and self-direction. SBP training was launched in East Sussex in 2019 with an 18-month training schedule covering: Strengths-Based Approaches, Support Planning and Positive Risk Enablement. SBP is now a fundamental element of all Care Act related training and a core part of our on-going professional support offer. Resources for staff are available on our intranet, including: a comprehensive range of professional development materials, operating frameworks and operational guidance.

The external facilitator at a staff forum held in September 2023, noted that: *‘Person-centred, strengths-based assessment was clearly understood. However, needs-based approaches remain strongly embedded in communities and care settings and there was discussion around the contradictions that come with this. Despite this it was clear that those present knew what a strength-based approach was and were able to provide examples from recent experience.’* (see information return for Final Report Staff Forums September 2023).

What our staff say Strengths-Based Practice means to them:

- ‘Support people to achieve their strengths, skills and knowledge’.
- ‘Clients being listened to’.
- ‘Client’s voice being the priority’.
- ‘Good working relationships with colleagues, including physio and occupational therapists, nurses, etc. Work well as a team to provide good outcomes for the clients’.
- ‘The supervision process is good at ESCC - supervisions are regular and a positive supervision is important for staff self-confidence’.

Assuring Assessments and Support Plans

Once an assessment has been completed and a draft support plan created most teams⁴ operate a quality assurance arrangement known as Quality Assurance and Resource Panels⁵. The role of the panels, chaired by the relevant Operations Manager, is to ensure assessments are robust and strengths based and that support plans have considered prevention, wellbeing, choice and risk as well as being cost effective.⁶

Our ‘Listening to You’ survey showed that 77% of clients and 83% of carers either strongly agreed or agreed that ‘My assessment or review focussed on me, looking at my daily life and my strengths and my support needs and what might need to change’. 77% of clients and 75% of carers either strongly agreed or agreed that ‘The care and support set out in my support plan is about what matters most to me’. In 2021/22, East Sussex was in the top quartile of performance for the national ASCOF indicator on the proportion of people who used services who reported they had control over their daily life.

Assessment Waiting Times

Waiting times for assessment are a critical issue for us and are regularly monitored at Performance Board and by our Operational Management Team (OMT). Reducing waiting times and optimising the experience of clients and carers on waiting lists is a priority for ASCH. The table below sets out the time between contact and start of assessment for assessments completed between April and November 2023⁷.

Within 2 days	3-14 days	15-30 days	31-60 days	61-90 days	Over 90 days
689	718	500	461	285	487
21.9%	22.9%	15.9%	14.7%	9.1%	15.5%

In 2023 we undertook assurance work to ensure that robust arrangements were in place to manage risks associated with waiting lists. This work highlighted that every team had appropriate arrangements for managing waiting lists but that there were differences in how different services managed this.

Project to Improve Waiting Times

A project has been initiated to:

- Reduce waiting times for assessments and improve performance on reviews.

⁴ Where the nature of the team’s business is extremely time sensitive e.g. hospital discharge panels will not operate but managers will provide the same function ad hoc.

⁵ See Information Return for guidance document for operation of Quality and Resource Panels

⁶ ASC uses the Imosphere RAS to generate an indicative Personal Budget amount.

⁷ See also data on waiting times in Information Return

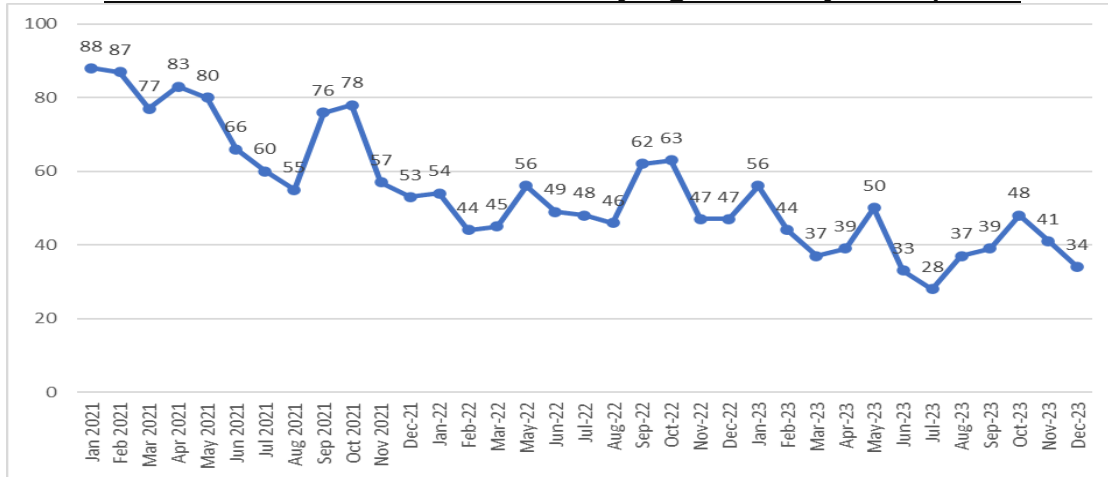
- Agree a standard, optimised model for managing waiting lists across all relevant ASCH services and embed this model into teams.
- Improve client and carer experience whilst on a waiting list.
- Make strategic recommendations for longer-term improvements. For example, enhanced use of digital tools and helping people to help themselves.

Given the pressures on ASCH we are aware that improving waiting times will be challenging. However, we also recognise it as being a key measure in responding to the ‘Right support...right time’ and ‘Information and communication about care support’ messages in the ASC strategy.

Completing Assessments

We monitor the number of assessments started and completed within 60 days. Over the last 3 years we have seen a positive trend in reducing the length of time it takes to complete an assessment.

Number of assessments started 60 days ago and not yet completed



We have made good progress on waiting times for Occupational Therapy services:

OT clinics - Right support, right place, right time

In 2017, in response to growing waiting lists our Occupational Therapy (OT) service set up OT Clinics across the county. Rather than be visited at home, adults could visit a clinic and get a rapid assessment, information, advice and support. This approach enabled a far larger number of people, with relatively straightforward needs, to be seen by OT staff within the same time period. The approach was very successful in reducing waiting and received positive feedback from attendees. The pandemic forced a pause on this approach and by late 2021 the OT waiting list was back up to 1,300 people. OT Clinics resumed in 2022 and the waiting list at May 2023 had reduced to 200 people.

‘I have just finished speaking with a lovely lady who was seen in clinic and had some galvanised handrails arranged by an OTA. She was very keen to express her thanks to all involved in arranging the rails and for checking up on the fitment. She couldn’t have been more grateful and said that they will make the world of difference for her.’

Joint Community Reablement and Rehabilitation (JCR)

JCR is made up of two complementary services: ASCH provides the Joint Community Reablement teams which provide specialist domiciliary reablement care, free for up to 6-weeks; East Sussex Health Trust provide the Joint Community Rehabilitation service which provide Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy. The two parts of the service work in tandem or independently depending on the client’s/patient’s needs.

JCR was originally commissioned to maintain people independently in the community. Increasingly JCR also supports hospital discharges with just under 50% of referrals coming from acute wards. Around 5% of referrals are from gateway wards that support admission avoidance. JCR will work with c.1,800 people in 2023/24 with a trajectory to return to pre-pandemic levels of 2,000 people in 2024/25. A key indicator for the service is that at the end of the intervention the client no longer requires a package of care. In 2023/24, 68% of clients did not require on-going care. All the ASCH JCR teams are rated by the CQC as ‘Good’.

Hospital Discharge

The overall picture for hospital discharge in Sussex is challenging.

Percentage of beds occupied by patients who no longer meet the criteria to reside - comparator data

Source: NHS Oversight Framework

Sussex ICB	Latest	Trend						
	Dec-23	Last 6 periods	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23	Dec-23
Sussex ICB	19.1		19.6	18.4	19.8	20.0	20.5	19.1
National Rank	36/42		39	36	38	37	38	36
National	14.0		13.3	13.6	13.9	14.0	14.0	14.0
Upper National	10.5		9.8	10.1	10.4	10.4	10.2	10.5
Region	17.1		16.5	16.4	17.4	17.3	18.3	17.1
Peer Group	15.6		14.4	14.6	16.0	16.2	16.4	15.6

However, within the NHS Sussex area ESCC performs relatively well. Between January and December 2023, the average number of days between being recorded as ready for discharge and actual discharge in East Sussex, compared to the whole of Sussex (i.e. including Brighton and Hove and West Sussex) were⁸:

Discharge Pathway	Sussex average	East Sussex average
Pathway 1	7.4	6.9
Pathway 2	9.25	6.9
Pathway 3	15.8	19.1

In May 2023, the DHSC and NHS England visited Sussex in light of our comparative national performance. There were no specific actions identified for ASCH although we have continued to adapt our practice to dovetail with acute and community health pathways. For example, as ESHT Urgent Community Response (UCR) staff have undertaken the initial work on a greater number of 'Discharge to Assess' (D2A) community discharges, we have revised our processes so that we start the ASCH assessment and put in on-going services (if required) in a timely manner. Typically, it takes a maximum of 4 days for the ASCH Hospital Teams to triage, assess and secure home care provision so that the person can be discharged from the UCR service.

We have a dedicated Hospital Discharge Team which, at the request of our NHS partners, has returned to undertaking assessments in acute settings and in the community. Specialist mental health discharges are undertaken by our ASCH Mental Health Teams. ASCH commissions D2A beds for the East Sussex place (c.80 beds) and uses a combination of approved home care providers, block hours and the Joint Community Reablement Team to ensure timely discharges. We have worked closely with providers and colleagues in acute to ensure good occupancy in D2A beds and to reduce the average length of stay (which had increased during the pandemic and over winter 2022) from 60 days in March 2023 to 31 days in October 2023, for block commissioned beds. The ASCH Hospital Discharge Team have also co-designed and delivered health, social care and housing training to over 400 ESHT staff in the last 12 months.

Case Study - Joint Community Reablement in-reach service improves hospital discharges

In order to improve the timeliness and accuracy of hospital discharges into the Joint Community Reablement (JCR) service the team offers an in-reach service to hospitals.

The team join Board Rounds and undertake initial assessment of patients in the hospital when required. The team can immediately establish if the person is suitable for a JCR discharge, if consent can be obtained and a separate referral by acute staff is then no longer required. This has reduced the length of stay for a person discharged with JCR services by over 2 days.

Future Plans

We are aware that increased reablement capacity to interim beds could be beneficial but in previous years there has been insufficient funding to achieve this. Our joint commissioning team are at an early stage of planning to use Hospital Discharge funding in 2024/25 to increase ASCH OT provision to interim beds. Consideration is also being given to funding physiotherapy interventions.

⁸ Data provide by NHS Sussex

Reviews

In East Sussex we have a County-Wide Reviewing Team which undertakes reviews for people who have relatively settled packages of care and who would originally have been assessed by an NST. NST's will maintain case responsibility for cases that are more complex or volatile. Mental Health and Learning Disability Teams maintain case responsibility and undertake reviews as part of this.

Reviews - performance

ASCH completed 8,940 reviews in the year to November 2023. ASCH set a target of 66.6% of annual reviews in 2023/24. The 2022/23 outturn was 60.7% and the forecast for 2022/23 is 62.5%. Performance on annual reviews is a priority for ASCH and performance, including benchmarking data, is reviewed monthly by DMT.

Benchmarking across south east authorities indicates that our performance is below average but not a significant outlier. Nationally the number of reviews overdue by more than 12 months increased by 30% between November 2021 and the most recent national figures in October 2022. In East Sussex we saw a 62% decrease in overdue reviews in the same period. The position has recently become more challenged but at Oct 2023 we are still showing a 40% decrease in outstanding reviews since November 2021. Nonetheless we are committed to improving performance in this area and reviews are included in the waiting times project referenced above.

Performance on reviews in 23/24 year to date

Type of review	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct
Adult Support Plan reviews overdue by up to 6 months	1,263	1,200	1,201	1,286	1,348	1,309	1,278
Adult Support Plan reviews overdue by 6 months to 1 year	697	661	606	599	614	586	573
Adult Support Plan reviews overdue by more than 1 year	421	473	503	517	524	589	611
Carer Support Plan reviews overdue by up to 6 months	399	367	441	594	596	579	484
Carer Support Plan reviews overdue by 6 months to 1 year	85	103	112	106	119	151	176
Carer Support Plan reviews overdue by more than 1 year	138	133	133	137	140	152	164

Carers

We estimate there are over 69,000 unpaid carers in East Sussex. 21% of East Sussex respondents to the GP Patient Survey 2023 identified as carers. Carer's assessments are undertaken by ASCH staff to explore how caring impacts on the person's wellbeing. This may result in provision of advice, guidance and information or delivery of services. Eligible carers can receive a personal budget as a Direct Payment enabling them to use it flexibly across the year.

Subsequent reviews are undertaken by ASCH staff or our VCSE strategic partner Care for the Carers. The benefit of this approach is that Care for the Carers can introduce themselves, the services they offer and engage on a holistic basis with individual carers. Feedback regarding Care for the Carers reviews has been very positive.

ASCH has a Carer's Breaks and Engagement Team who specialise in providing post-diagnostic support to people with dementia living in their own homes and their carers. In 2022/23 a total of 1,433 carers assessments were completed and 1,815 carers reviews. Over 2,827 people were receiving support at the end of the year 2022 to 2023

ASCH offer a CRESS Plan service where carers can plan ahead for emergencies. The CRESS plan is registered with HSCC who send the carer a card with the 24-hour, 7 days a week telephone number. If a carer experiences an emergency, they (or someone on their behalf) can contact HSCC who will alert the carer's nominated contact (or contacts) and inform them their support is needed.

Strategic Partnership with Care for the Carers

ASCH works closely with our strategic partner Care for the Carers. This includes commissioning Care for the Carers to provide a wide range of services, including: Carers Centres, one to one and peer support, counselling, carers breaks, companionship support, and cover for healthcare appointments. ASCH provides a fund for small grants, administered by Care for the Carers, which supports a range of carer focussed community projects across East Sussex with a value of up to £15,000 per year, per grant.

Carers Centres in East Sussex offer:

- 4 local bases across the county.
- Information and advice.
- Emotional support including counselling.
- Targeted support for mental health carers.
- Carer identification and support in primary care and hospital.
- Peer support and one to one regular phone calls.
- Commissioning of the small grants programme and volunteer respite service.
- Carers Voices Network.
- Healthcare appointments respite funding.

Care for the Carers provided information, advice and support to 9,717 carers in 2022/23. This included 2,448 carers not previously known to the organisation. This figure is forecast to rise by up to 24% in 2023/24 (based on first 2 quarters data). During 2022/23, there were 4,354 direct carer contacts, this figure is forecast to increase by 12% in 2023/24.

Care for the Carers Mental Health Project offers:

- Specialist interventions with this often hidden carer cohort including carers clinics, groups and skills and information sessions.
- Online and face-to-face support groups and activities including walks and cinema.
- A carer education programme to include understanding of mental health services and systems.
- One to one support.
- Targeted engagement work with our Mental Health service partners to stimulate increased carer identification and referral.
- A whole family approach to ensure the needs of all family members are supported.
- Mental Health specialists within the Carers Centre, upskilling and providing peer support to the wider team.
- Promotes understanding of the experiences of carers and enhance their voices within mental health and social care systems.

The project worked with 355 carers in 2022/23 and 219 people have been supported in first 6 months of 2023/24.

What Carers Say

ESCC is in the Upper quartile of ASCOF measures for carers on being consulted and carers' reported quality of life and social contact. The Survey of Adult Carers in England show that ESCC figures are slightly higher than national averages - 37.6% of carers are very or extremely satisfied with social services against a national average of 36.3%.

Carers give positive feedback through our 'Listening To You' (L2U) survey (83% positive for experience of assessment and reviews, 73% positive for their overall rating of the service). However, it is noted that across several years carers have reported a lower level of satisfaction in the L2U survey than clients have.

Plans for Carers

Responding to L2U and the priorities identified in the ASC Strategy, ASCH has begun work on an East Sussex Carers Partnership Plan. Please see Theme 2 for further information.

Prevention

Prevention is an intrinsic component of our strengths-based practice model where there is a focus on creating non-dependency creating solutions. ASCH commissions a range of preventative services (see Theme 2) including provision of 'Telecare only' services to c.4,500 people. There are a range of Public Health preventative services in place, including the Warm Homes Grant, One You East Sussex - our integrated health and wellbeing service - and our Debt Advice service. We also undertake targeted communications activities to support prevention. Our winter mailing is sent to all clients and carers and recently has provided information on vaccinations, access to financial help and staying warm.

CASE STUDY: Befriending Scheme to Support Older Adults Mental Health and Wellbeing and Tackle Chronic Loneliness

Loneliness is known to be a significant contributing factor to people presenting at services. ESCC Public Health identified a need to develop a befriending scheme to support older adults' mental health and wellbeing to help tackle chronic loneliness.

The VCSE Alliance executive group and Public Health took a collaborative approach to scope the requirements for the Befriending Scheme. This co-design approach ensured that the user voice was central to service design and professional service-modelling expertise was embedded. The proposal was taken to the wider VCSE Alliance membership to invite interested parties to put themselves forward to deliver the intervention.

Occupational Therapy

A key component of our preventative offer is the Occupational Therapy (OT) Service. OT assessment services can be accessed directly via HSCC or from internal referrals for existing ASCH clients and to support hospital discharges where an on-going package of care is put in place.

OT clinics are offered to people with relatively straightforward needs, requiring a preventative service, so they can be seen more quickly. Simple equipment is prescribed immediately, and minor adaptations are done via photographs and measurements brought to the clinic or a follow up visit. This timely and proportionate approach helps to ensure that needs do not escalate.

ASCH has a Principal Occupational Therapist role which complements the Principal Social Worker role in developing practice, quality and professional development in the county.

Joint Work with District and Borough Housing Authorities

ASCH OTs have been seconded into District and Borough Councils since 2019. This has allowed for integrated working with housing related services, including larger housing adaptations. Assessments are undertaken regardless of whether the person lives in public or private sector housing. Individuals who are identified as self-funding are offered information and advice, including on major adaptations, to ensure their needs are appropriately met.

The team access the full suite of Adult Social Care support by completing Care Act Assessments and are trained in assessing equipment, adaptations, telecare, carers assessments, mental capacity, and Safeguarding. They provide equipment and minor adaptations via the local Integrated Community Equipment service.

Housing Occupational Therapy feedback

'... so lucky to receive such support to help mum manage in her own home'

'Your support and advice is of great comfort during a period which for us is often one of dark foreboding, but is nevertheless lightened by your empathy and kindness, and is very much appreciated'

'I want to thank you for the many ways in which you have assisted us and made our lives more comfortable and easier'

The partnership between ASCH OTs and District and Borough housing teams won Disabled Facilities Grants Team of the year in the National Healthy Housing Awards 2022.

Direct Payments

ASCH believes that Direct Payments can be one of the best ways for clients and carers to exercise choice and control over the care and support they need. ASCH is committed to promoting and supporting Direct Payments as an attractive option for the greatest possible number of clients.

ASCH is in the top quartile of the national ASCOF benchmarking for the percentage of clients in receipt of Direct Payments. However, there is a downward trend in performance. A survey of Direct Payment recipients and stakeholders in 2022 found that most people would recommend Direct Payments to their friends and family. However, only 20% of people said they faced no challenges with their Direct Payments and people felt that Direct Payments processes could be made less complex.

A Direct Payments Action Plan⁹ has been developed and we are recruiting a dedicated Direct Payments Service Development Manager in 2024. The action plan is divided into two main phases:

- **Phase 1** - aims to improve the current position and processes based on the feedback and knowledge we already have.
- **Phase 2** - seek more information from citizens and Direct Payment users as to how Direct Payments could be made a more attractive option for more people. This information will be used to co-produce new Direct Payment service options and to streamline processes.

⁹ See Information Return

Financial Services

Following a review in early 2022 a number of risks areas were identified in Financial Services including a significant backlog of financial assessments. A project was initiated to improve the position and significant progress was made during 2023. The Online Financial Calculator has been established as the preferred method for financial assessments¹⁰ and includes key questions at the beginning which quickly identify whether a full assessment is required. This prevents people having to use the calculator unnecessarily and supply large amounts of sensitive information. We have improved joint working and information sharing between Financial Services and social work teams.

This has led to a 33% reduction in outstanding financial assessments between May and July 2023 and a reduction in average waiting times from 29 weeks to 5 weeks.

Transitions Service

In 2023 we identified that there could be a lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities across Children's Disability Teams and the ASCH Transitions Team. In response we have agreed a joint 'Preparing for Adulthood' approach to case work that sees Children's Services delivering statutory duties and the ASCH Transitions Team leading on work in preparation for the transition to ASCH services. This joint working approach will be used for young people aged between 14 and 17 who are known to the Children with Disability Service. We are now working to put this approach in place for all appropriate young people.

The next stage of the work will be concerned with other young people who have been known to other parts of Children's Services i.e. young people who have been 'Looked After', had a 'Child Protection Plan' or a 'Child in Need Plan'. We will review current pathways, practice and protocols to ensure there are no gaps in provision, develop new/enhanced pathways where necessary and ensure that these are understood across ASCH and Children's Services. Our work within the Multi-disciplinary Transitions Pathway 'task and finish' group will be a key vehicle for delivering this.

Autistic People

ASCH host the Autism Partnership Board, which meets at least three times a year and works to support autistic people and their carers to lead fulfilling and rewarding lives. The board includes autistic people, family and friend carers, local VCSE representatives, the NHS, Sussex police and ESCC. In response to 'The national strategy for autistic children, young people and adults: 2021 to 2026', ASCH and Children's Services initiated a cross-sector project to co-produce a partnership action plan to implement the strategy in East Sussex. Key development and delivery partners are the Autism Partnership Board, the NHS, the DWP and the Police.

The Oliver McGowan draft code of practice will set out the statutory training requirements for autism and learning disability which all CQC registered providers should adhere to. Our training offer has been reviewed to ensure it meets the 4 standards set out in the consultation and will be developed to ensure it meets the final standards and will be signed off by the Autism Partnership Board.

Advocacy

ASCH commission the VCSE charity [POhWER](#) to provide advocacy services for people who use our services. This ensures that people who lack capacity or have significant difficulty in engaging with social with care and health services can access the assistance they need. In 2022/23 our advocacy providers supported people in 2,577 instances.

Quality and performance

Practice assurance

Our Quality Assurance Framework for Adult Social Care¹¹ sets standards, competencies, supervision and audit requirements for the department.

Supervision

All staff are expected to have supervision at 4-6 weekly intervals depending on their role. A refreshed supervision policy was launched in November 2023 across three staff engagement events.

Having noticed that in some areas supervisions were not happening on a regular basis the ASCH Operational Management Team now monitor supervision compliance at every quarterly away day.

¹⁰ Noting that we are aware that some people are digitally excluded and we must continue to ensure that people who want or need to use other means of supplying information are not disadvantaged.

¹¹ See Information Return

Case File Audits (CFA)

Each practitioner is required to have two cases audited by a manager every year. In 2021/22, 72.7% of criteria reviewed were rated 'outstanding' or 'good' overall and 5% were reported as needing some or significant improvement¹².

140 CFAs were completed in the first 6 months of 2023/24. Of the 2,160 criteria rated across these cases:

- 801 were rated 'Outstanding' (37.1%).
- 1,239 were rated 'Good' (57.4%).
- 115 were rated 'Some improvement required' (5.3%).
- 5 were rated 'Requires significant improvement/remedial action' (0.2%).

As well as being actioned at a practitioner/team level, the themes and findings from case file audits are aggregated and reported to the Principal Social Worker (PSW) and Operational Management Team. This enables overarching themes to be identified and addressed at ASCH level where appropriate. The ASCH CFA framework was first launched in 2019 with an interim refresh in 2023. We are aware that the framework requires further development; and we are also aware the requisite number of audits are not being completed/submitted. The ASCH Improvement Board has agreed a priority project, led by the PSW, to refresh and re-launch the CFA Framework in order to provide further assurance as to the standard of practice across ASCH.

Professional Development Offer and Resources for Staff

ASCH works with Research in Practice which provides multiple Strengths-Based Assessment resources.

These resources are promoted to teams by the PSW at regular meetings with Operations Managers, Practice Managers and Senior Practitioners. We have strong links with universities, particularly Brighton University, who we work with to provide Post Graduate Diplomas for Approved Mental Health Professionals and Best Interest Assessor Credits alongside certified refresher training.

The South Coast Regional Centre for Social Work Education (an innovative teaching partnership between ESCC, Brighton and Hove City Council, Brighton University and Sussex University) provides a defined career pathway for social work practitioners. It offers staff the opportunity to deliver training at local universities via our Practitioners Who Teach programme; and it enables practitioners to be supported by academics while doing action research. The majority of our recruitment of newly qualified social workers comes from this teaching partnership.

Our social work education team has two Professional Education Consultants, one who runs Student Learning Hubs and one who is the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) coordinator. We provide a strong programme of support for new members of staff. This includes practicing social workers delivering sessions to trainees and academics basing themselves within social work teams. Please see also the Workforce section in Theme 2.

ASCH Training Offer

ASCH has an in-house team that delivers free [adult social care training](#) for council staff and staff in a broad range of independent sector settings. This ensures the services provided in East Sussex, across all sectors, are done so by a skilled workforce.

The comprehensive training offer includes: Care Act duties, Health and Safety, Mental Health Training, Learning on Specific Conditions, Healthcare, Moving and Handling, Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion, Leadership, Management and Supervision and Safeguarding Adults.

Training requirements are identified in supervisions and team events and the in-house team design and deliver bespoke training on request. We have a post dedicated to ensuring that the Personal Assistant workforce receives appropriate training. ESCC is due to implement a new training portal in 2024 which will enable us to record training received by all ASCH staff.

Using Information From Citizens and People with Lived Experience to Learn and Improve

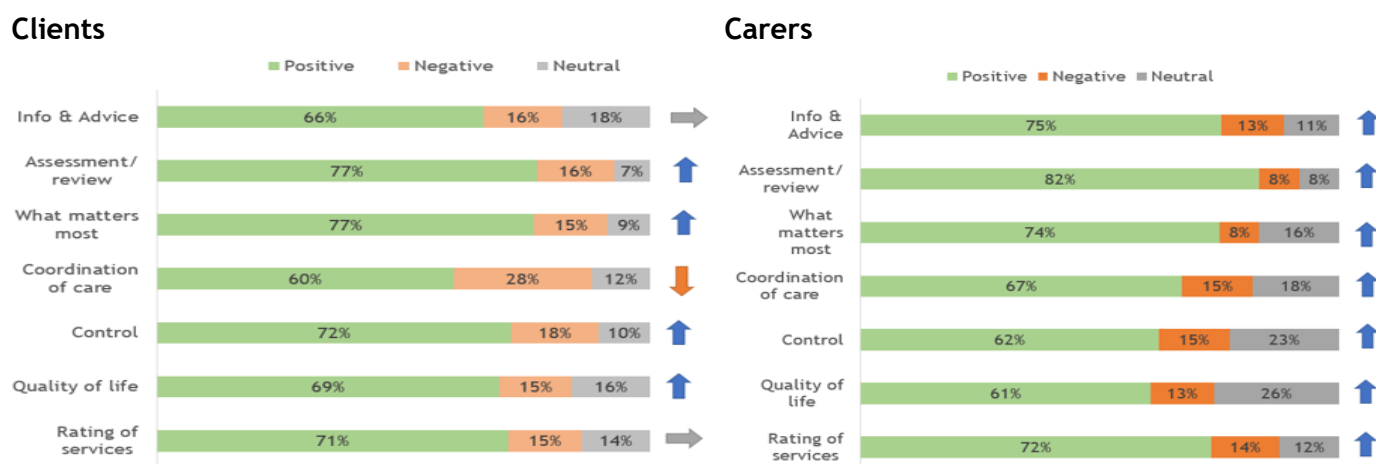
ASCH has a long-standing commitment to engaging with the people we serve, including seldom heard groups, of listening to key messages from local people and of learning and adapting as a result. Recently we have undertaken extensive co-production work to create the ASC Strategy (see introduction). Other key examples are listed below.

'Listening to You' (L2U) Survey

ASCH undertakes two L2U surveys each year. There are a number of standard questions included to support year-on-year comparison as well as new and follow-up questions depending on findings from the

¹² 22% of criteria were rated N/A

previous survey. The findings from L2U are disseminated widely across ASCH including at Performance Board and team meetings at all levels. As noted above, L2U results for carers (relative to clients) was the catalyst to develop an East Sussex Carers Action Plan. Headlines from the Spring 2023 L2U survey:



Learning From Complaints

ASCH received 430 complaints in 2022/23 and received 1,855 compliments in the same period. 51% of complaints were upheld/partially upheld in 2022/23 (44% were upheld in 2021/22). The average time to respond to complaint in 2022/23 was 34 days - an improvement of 3 days on the 2021/22 timescales. There was a 26% decrease in the total number of complaints about ASCH made to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). Of the 28 referred, 9 (32%) went into investigation, which represents 2% of the complaints we received at the local resolution stage. There was 100% compliance with their recommendations, improving services for people who use them in the future.

We treat information from complaints as a valuable resource and seek to learn and change what we do in response to the issues raised. Our Complaints Team provide quarterly reporting on complaints activity and a detailed annual report¹³ so that themes can be identified and custom and practice changed/improved where appropriate.

Examples of Learning and Actions from Complaints in 2022/23

- In collaboration with NHS Sussex, we undertook a range of actions to ensure the top-up payments for section 117 aftercare payments were in line with statutory guidance. We reimbursed people who had been charged incorrectly.
- The Direct Payments process was reviewed and we improved the information provided - making sure it was provided earlier in the process and was more accessible.
- A service commissioned by Adult Social Care to provide a care-alarm system recruited additional staff to ensure a more responsive service.
- Financial Services reviewed its internal processes and procedures to improve timescales for financial assessments to be completed. A new letter was also introduced to improve the information provided

Engagement Forums

ASCH has a range of groups and forums¹⁴ which play a vital role in shaping the work of ASCH. This includes the People Bank and Citizen Panel incorporating people who draw on ASCH services and residents of East Sussex, the Disability Rights Reference Group, the Inclusion Advisory Group, the Ukrainian Guest Advisory Panel, the Experts by Experience Group (run jointly with Children’s Services) and the East Sussex Seniors Association.

Seldom Heard Communities

ASCH has worked hard to improve our engagement with and to better understand the needs of and barriers for people from seldom heard communities who may experience health and social care inequalities. Work on the ASCH Strategy highlighted that we were not always reaching Seldom Heard people. A focused piece of work was undertaken in 2022/23 and the findings were reported to the Peoples Scrutiny Committee as well as being included in the ASC Strategy.

¹³ See Information Return

¹⁴ See Information Return

A range of actions have been agreed to improve engagement with these communities which are set out in the Equality and Inclusion Strategy Action Plan 2023-2024¹⁵ and will continue in subsequent Action Plans.

Understanding and Removing Inequalities in Care and Support

The LGA Corporate Peer Challenge noted that: *‘ESCC strives to be an inclusive organisation with some frontline staff praising...the genuine commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.’* We are proud of this description but recognise we can do more in this area.

Equalities training is mandatory for all new staff and equalities training is offered on an ongoing basis. For example, the training programme ‘Eggshells to Allyship’ was developed to address a lack of confidence to discuss race with colleagues and clients. The Equality and Inclusion team also deliver bespoke sessions according to need. In response to a complaint where a member of staff misgendered a client, a training session on gender identity and trans inclusion was delivered. ESCC works to Accessible Information Standards and provides interpretation and translation services on demand and East Sussex hold and manage the contract for these services across the Integrated Care System.

ASCH Workforce Programme

The ‘Building and enhancing social justice in the workforce’ group sits within our Workforce Programme.

Key developments and achievements in the last year include:

- Recruited project manager to lead on reducing violence, harassment and discrimination against staff.
- Successful bid to be an Improving Adult Care Together (IMPACT) demonstrator site to work with national experts to reduce violence and discrimination experienced by social care staff.
- Delivered two pilot workshops with JCR managers and teams to explore inclusive communication. This has resulted in a guide which is being drafted.
- Promoting the training offer from the Equality and Inclusion team and delivering sessions to staff
- Hosting Equality Allies meetings.
- Updating the Working Inclusively self-assessment and guide.

A key area for improvement is our use of data to guide ED&I work effectively. There is an ESCC lead officer for the NHS Sussex ‘Ensuring Everyone Counts’ project which is looking at improving the recording of equalities information across ESCC and NHS providers. Our performance team identify any gaps in recording equality data, and training sessions are offered to teams about the importance of collecting this data and how to frame questions with clients and carers.

There are a range of projects aimed at reducing health inequalities¹⁶ in East Sussex including:

- Havens Carers Project (delivered by Care for the Carers) supports carers in areas of high deprivation.
- Alcohol Care Teams in areas of high deprivation in Hastings and Eastbourne.
- LGBTQ+ inclusion award for services in East Sussex.

Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA)

EqIAs are undertaken as part of our standard change processes. We use surveys, demographic information and feedback from stakeholder forums to undertake a rigorous assessment of impact and avoid unintended, unequal consequences of change. For example we used findings from L2U to support the Home Care tender EqIA and Household Support Fund EqIA. The Inclusion Advisory Group and Disability Rights Reference Group are regularly consulted as part of the EqIA process. EqIAs are quality assured and signed off by an assistant director. The EqIAs include an action plan with target dates.

Using data to manage performance

Please see Theme 4 - Leadership, for information on our performance management framework and how we routinely use intelligence from a range of sources to understand and improve performance.

¹⁵ See Information Return

¹⁶ With funding from the ICB’s Health Inequalities Allocation fund

CQC Theme 2: Providing Support

Our Strengths

- Our positive relationships with providers and with the CQC supporting quality and capacity
- Partnership work with VCSE
- Co-production and engaging with people

Priorities for Improvement and Development

- **Prevention Strategy** - using population need data to develop a comprehensive prevention offer, across partners, in East Sussex
- **Carers' Strategy** - understanding current strengths; identifying gaps and co-producing an overarching strategy.
- **Workforce** - recruitment and retention in various roles within ASCH and in the independent sector

Key Information

Activity	Working well	Area for improvement
Number of clients supported in bedded settings as of 31/03/2023: 2,581	Care Homes good or outstanding October 2023: East Sussex 81.7% Average for English County Councils 79.1%	ASCOF measure: Proportion of adults with learning disabilities who live in their own home or with their family:71.2% Lower quartile
2022/23: ASCH supported 3,943 clients in long term community services including commissioning 1,390,821 hours of homecare	Community based locations 'good' or 'outstanding' October 2023 East Sussex 74.8% Average for English County Councils 67.9%	Provision for people leaving long-stay inpatient units with extremely complex needs

Understanding the Health and Care Needs of Our Population - Data

We make extensive use of data to understand the health and care needs of our community. This includes the [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment](#) site which contains a very wide range of information, briefings, reports and data; and [East Sussex in Figures](#) a local information system that provides the latest statistics on the social, economic and demographic character of East Sussex.

Engagement with Citizens and People Who Draw on Services

As set out in Theme 1, we have an extensive range of engagement forums across the county including citizens who use our services, groups that represent people with different protected characteristics, and reference groups for people with health or sensory issues.

Co-production

ASCH is committed to co-production of services with experts by experience, recognising the improved quality, relevance and efficacy of services where the voice of users has been central to the design and commissioning process. Putting the co-produced ASC Strategy at the heart of our business has been covered earlier in this document. Other examples of where co-production is working well are set out below.

Learning Disability

The [Involvement Matters Team \(IMT\)](#) is facilitated by ASCH and is made up of adults with learning disabilities who draw on ASCH services. Members of the IMT sit on the [Learning Disabilities Partnership Board](#) which is co-chaired by a member of the IMT. The board is the overarching reference group for adults with learning disabilities in East Sussex. The IMT are heavily involved in co-production and service development across East Sussex, including:

- Creating specific questions and KPIs for tenders and sitting on tender panels.
- Delivering parts of ASCH training.
- Supporting peers to use digital tools safely.
- Production of numerous 'easy read' documents.
- Part of recruitment panels for ASCH jobs.

A list of key achievements by the IMT can be found here in the IMT involvement, contributions and impact 2022-2023 the plan for 2023-2025 can be found in The Involvement Matters Team Plan 2023 - 2025.¹⁷

Mental Health

The joint (ESCC/NHS Sussex) Mental Health Commissioning Team are retendering the majority of our community Mental Health Support Services as current contracts end in March 2024. The Commissioning Team take a co-production approach across all elements of service development and have worked hard to develop excellent 'open door' relationships with people who draw on services. There are two main mental health Experts by Experience groups in East Sussex, both of which are members of the East Sussex Mental Health Action Group:

- A dedicated participation service delivered by our CVSE partners Possability People.
- Experts by Experience Programme - runs workshops to help people develop their skills and confidence to get more involved in co-production opportunities; and runs focus groups for the Experts by Experience to feed their knowledge and views into.

There is a standing invitation for two Experts by Experience to attend the Commissioning Steering Group, so that at least one person will always be in attendance; a member of Possability People provides support if helpful. People with lived experience are members of the subgroups which review individual service specifications and evaluate services. For example, reviewing the specification for the Wellbeing Centre service and an Expert by Experience evaluating the Complex Emotional Needs service.

Older People

There are seven Seniors' Forums across the County. ESCC works closely with these groups local to help design, plan and deliver improved services for older people. Every year we work with East Sussex Seniors' Association (ESSA) to organise a festival of events across the county, celebrating Older People's Day. Older People's Day is on 1 October, but in East Sussex there is a two-month long programme of activities throughout September and October. The programme of events focuses on keeping physically, emotionally and socially active. [Full of Life festival 2023 | East Sussex County Council](#)

Services in East Sussex

Fee uplifts and cost

ASCH hugely values the East Sussex provider market. We are committed to working in partnership with providers to maintain a strong, high quality, resilient care market in East Sussex. Historically, ASCH has been proud of its ability to maintain good relationships and a strong local market whilst also adhering to payment at 'published rates'. This has been critical to ensuring the financial sustainability of ASCH. In 2022/23 East Sussex used 100% of the Fair Cost of Care grant on fee uplifts, providing a 10% fee uplift across all services. Even so, post-pandemic and with the 'Cost of living crisis' impacting the sector, it is increasingly difficult to maintain 'published rates'.

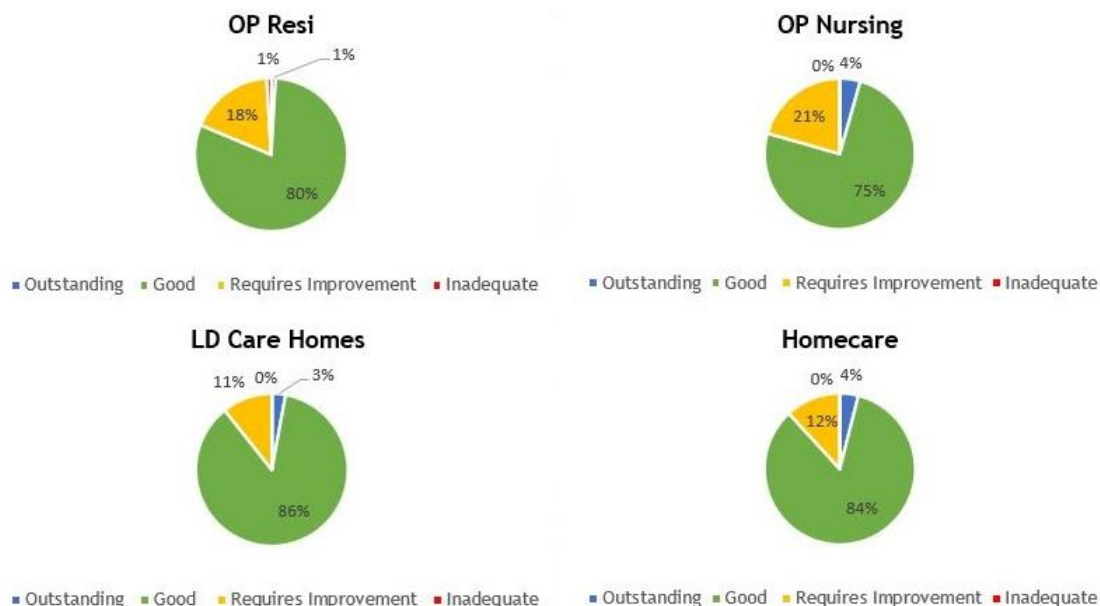
Choice and Independence

Our social care practice supports choice and control using the indicative personal budget model to ensure fairness and underpin conversations about how a person might choose to meet their eligible needs. Commissioning processes reflect choice, for example the recent re-tender of the Home Care contract emphasised choice both by having two main providers for each geographical area but also by building an expectation of client choice into the specification. For bedded care, the Supply Management Team routinely offer a choice of placements, with choice being limited in exceptional circumstances only.

CQC Ratings for Providers in East Sussex

At the end of October 2023 there were no bedded or community services in East Sussex rated as inadequate. We believe our approach to market support (see below) is one of the critical success factors in this. CQC ratings for services in East Sussex, as at October 2023:

¹⁷ Both documents supplied as part of the Information Return



Bedded Care

There are 123 providers of older peoples bedded care in East Sussex with 168 services. There are 53 providers with 111 establishments for Specialist Bedded care. In 2022/23, ASCH supported 3,300 clients to access long-term support in bedded care.

Homecare

Over recent years the local authority home care market has been under some pressure - notably around the ability to recruit and retain staff. 2023-2024 has been unusual in that there have been periods where capacity has exceeded demand. Currently there is market capacity and no waits for home care provision.

Our homecare contract has recently been re-let and reflects our commitment to working with providers to ensure capacity, quality of provision and to offer clients choice. We now operate a model with two lead providers for each area which supports supply resilience and choice. The new contract is paid against rostered hours rather than actual care delivered. This change was made, in discussion with providers, to more accurately reflect their costs. The payment model is conditional on the additional monies for rostered care being passed on to frontline care workers. The Home Care contract has been issued on a 10 year (6+4) basis to give security and assurance to the market to encourage investment and development.

Extra Care

We commission one Extra Care provider to run six schemes with 295 units. We have a single allocation agreement (jointly agreed with District and Borough Councils) and recruited a specialist Extra Care Coordinator to ensure occupancy rates (a high void rate having been an issue in 2018). During 2019 this resulted in a reduction in voids from 42 to 7 and an increase in delivered care from 275 hours per week to 362 hours per week; this level of performance is now being maintained.

Supported Living

There are 38 providers of Supported Living accommodation in East Sussex, delivering 128 services with 699 beds/units. In 2022/23 ASCH supported 735 people to access these services.

ASCH is below the national, the South East and our comparator authorities for the ASCOF indicator 1G: 'Proportion of adults with learning disabilities who live in their own home or with their family'.

The council is committed to increasing supported living provision for adults with a learning disability in East Sussex. £6.4million capital is being invested to reconfigure three bungalows from residential care to supported living. We are also remodelling another Council site to create seven, self-contained flats with access to appropriate support services for tenants. These projects are due to complete in 2025.

Mental Health

ASCH provide a [range of Community mental health support services](#) which are free and available to any adults living in East Sussex who are living with mental health challenges. These services include:

- 7 Wellbeing centres providing community-based support.
- Peer Support Service.

- Staying Well Space - out of hours support in the evening at a 'Crisis Café'.
- Thinking well - service for adults with Complex Emotional Needs.
- Community Connectors - social prescribing.
- Screen and intervene (Severe Mental Illness Physical Health Checks).
- Mental Health Support Coordinator Service - early intervention services accessed via GPs.
- Individual Placement Employment Support.
- Drop in Hubs - For seldom heard clients with complex needs.
- Service User Engagement and Involvement Service.

Other Commissioned Services

ASCH commission a wide range of other services for people who have eligible needs under the Care Act and/or on a preventative basis. Many of which are described in Theme 1, other notable services include:

Joint Integrated Community Equipment Service (ICES)

7,609 clients were receiving equipment or telecare as a part of their package of care as at 31st March 2023. This includes: community equipment, minor adaptations and sensory support equipment provided by [East Sussex Hearing Resource Centre](#) and East Sussex Vision Care.

Technology Enabled Care Services (TECS)

Offers a range of assistive technology such as sensors, detectors, Lifeline alarms, key safes, medicine reminders and wellbeing checks provided by NRS Healthcare. TECS equipment is monitored 24-7-365. TECS are often provided as part of a larger package of care but we also have over 4,000 people in receipt of TECS only, as a preventative measure.

Day Services

East Sussex has [many day services](#) run by independent and VCSE providers covering a wide range of activities and cohorts. For ASCH supported clients, to support choice, these services are spot purchased (or purchased using Direct Payments). In April 2023, 370 clients were accessing independent sector day opportunities.

ASCH Provided Services - Older People¹⁸

Milton Grange - Milton Grange provides short term residential beds for adults 65+ with physical and mental health needs. It provides specialist intermediate care including for people with dementia and the provision of nursing care where required. Milton Grange is rated as 'good' by the CQC. Approximately 75% of people are enabled to return home after their stay at Milton Grange.

Milton Grange also provides an Outreach Mental Health service. The service offers assessment and rehabilitation to people in the community to prevent admission to hospital or to facilitate hospital discharge. The service also supports independent care homes to continue to care for people when their needs increase, thus preventing the person having to move. The Outreach Service comprises a multi-disciplinary team of Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists, Therapy Assistants and Specialist Mental Health Nurses.

Day Services - The Phoenix Centre provides activities to support adults living with dementia, Stroke and other age-related health conditions. The facility offers up to 25 places a day. We also run a day service from Milton Grange which offers 45 places daily during the week and 25 places on Saturday.

ASCH Provided Services - Learning Disability

Respite - East Sussex run [two residential](#) respite services for people with learning disabilities: Grangemead (12 rooms) and Greenwood (14 rooms). Both are rated as 'good' by the CQC. Activities include outdoor games, arts and crafts, beauty/manicure sessions, TVs with DVD players in every room, themed nights and cookery and living skills.

Day opportunities - East Sussex run four [Day Support Services](#) for adults with a learning disability. Sessions take place in centres or in the community and include twilight sessions such as supper clubs, movie nights and disco nights.

East Sussex Community Support Service - The service supports people with a learning disability in their own home or in supported living. The service aims to improve quality of life and to enhance skills so that people can live as independently as possible. The service is rated 'good' by the CQC.

¹⁸ Carers breaks team and Joint Community Reablement services are covered in Theme 1

Shared Lives and Supported Accommodation Team - The Shared Lives scheme matches adults who need support or care with a Shared Lives provider who agrees to share their home and their family/community with them. This can be long term, short term or respite. Shared Lives is rated 'good' by the CQC. Supported accommodation is a service that aims to enable adults to live more independently in the community. The Supported Accommodation Team (SAT) supports providers and assists tenants referred by Adult Social Care services.

Steps to Work - Is a supported employment service that helps people with a learning disability and/or autism into work. We currently offer community-based projects including a café and car cleaning service, as well as routes into employment via work placements with local employers.

Provision for People with Multiple and Complex Needs

ASCH and the ICB are committed to finding appropriate community-based settings for people with learning disabilities and mental health issues leaving long-stay hospital care. Currently there is a gap in provision in the county for people with particularly complex and challenging needs. We have had a number of requests for single-person, bespoke accommodation and highly specialised packages of care. Although this relates to a small number of people, demand is increasing and the lack of suitable provision presents a significant issue across ASCH and Health partners, especially when placements breakdown.

East Sussex ASCH have well established and positive relationships with the small number of providers who are able to support these individuals in very specialised placements. Increasingly, however, we are only able to find appropriate accommodation out of the county. To try to address the demand for highly specialist placements within Sussex, ASCH, in partnership with system colleagues - including the ICB, Mental Health Foundation Trust and District and Borough colleagues - has initiated a pan-Sussex strategic approach to look at how we can collectively respond to this challenge.

Culturally Appropriate Services

We seek to provide services appropriate to cultural needs, for example we are part of the community of practice¹⁹ '[Circle](#)'. The project aims to address the concerns of LGBTQ+ people 'about future care in care homes or in the home'. We are also working with the University Teaching Partnership around engaging with adults from a Black, Asian, and minority ethnic background. Equalities and Human rights duties are built into all ESCC contracts and form part of ASCH standard terms and conditions.

Strategic commissioning

Our commissioning approach is driven by local priorities - including those set out in plans with partners. The [East Sussex County Council Adult Social Care Portfolio](#) plan sets out the aims of Adult Social Care services and aligns with the Health and Wellbeing Board Strategy: [Healthy Lives, healthy people](#). We are also signed up to the five-year Sussex Integrated Care Strategy 'Improving Lives Together' [Our strategy - Sussex Health & Care \(ics.nhs.uk\)](#). Please see Theme 4 for further information.

Our [Market Position Statement](#) provides further information on the current market and 'state of care' in East Sussex. Specific areas are augmented as necessary, for example carers and developing our overarching East Sussex Prevention Strategy.

East Sussex Carers Partnership Plan

East Sussex recognises the vital role that carers play. We believe we have a good offer for carers but messages from carers (notably in L2U survey and the ASC Strategy) imply the offer could be improved. We are developing a Partnership Plan, co-produced with carers, the NHS and other partners, which will set out a more strategic, joined-up, approach to carers and inform future commissioning. Work on the Carer's Partnership Plan commenced in November 2023 with a target of the plan being agreed and implemented during 2024/25.

We are working with Sussex ICB on developing a Sussex-wide Carers Strategy. Our intention is that the East Sussex Carers Partnership Plan will be our placed-based element of this, ensuring an integrated approach across the system.

Prevention Strategy

ASCH has a preventative approach embedded in practice and there are a range of services and options that support people to prevent, reduce or delay the need for long-term support. This reflects the plans set out in the ASCH portfolio plan, particularly under the corporate priority of 'Helping People Help Themselves'. Informed by the ASC Strategy, our ambition is to further develop our prevention offer in

¹⁹ Led by the [Applied Research Collaboration Kent, Surrey and Sussex](#)

East Sussex by creating a Prevention Strategy with key partners and stakeholders, for example citizens, Public Health, the NHS, Primary Care, VCSE and the private sector. The starting point is interrogating data on current and future population need. We will build upon this, taking a co-produced approach to understand needs and aspirations and where necessary improve practice or develop services. Work is underway with a view to publishing the strategy in 2024/25.

Joint Commissioning

Joint Commissioning teams have been in place for many years and our partnership approach to commissioning has resulted in strong outcomes across the system. ASCH host the Adult Social Care and Health Joint Commissioning Team and the Mental Health Joint Commissioning Team. Staff are drawn from ESCC and the NHS. Jointly commissioned services are available to people whether their support needs are being met by the NHS or by ASCH which avoids unnecessary hand-offs and silo working.

The Safer Communities Partnership works closely with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to ensure a strategic approach to tackling domestic and sexual violence and abuse. There are jointly owned needs assessments, strategies and action plans and joint governance mechanisms at the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board and its sub-groups. Key services are jointly commissioned e.g. specialist domestic and sexual violence services, refuge and support services for victims of domestic abuse and addiction/substance misuse services.

What People Say

In the most recent L2U survey 60% of clients were positive about coordination of care, 28% were neutral and 12% were negative. 67% of carers were positive about coordination of care, 15% were neutral and 18% were negative. The LGA Healthcheck, which measures staff views on the way services work and operate, showed that 78% of registered social workers and 81% of occupational therapists rated our strategic relationships as 'good'.

Partnership with Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE)

The local authority recognises the unique contribution of the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector in the provision of care and support and actively works with the sector as an equal partner. ESCC hosts PartnershipPlus, a forum for senior officers from the VCSE and public sector, including the ESCC Chief Executive and the ASCH DASS. PartnershipPlus leads on cross sector activities including a collaborative commissioning programme and a loneliness stewardship group. ESCC invests in the Three Voluntary Actions in East Sussex: [3VA](#), [HVA](#) and [RVA](#).

Our East Sussex Commissioning Excellence Programme aims to develop East Sussex as a centre of excellence for Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) commissioning. We are doing this by improving communication and dialogue between statutory commissioners and VCSE organisations; building trusting relationships as peers; sharing skills and expertise from different perspectives; working in collaboration with NHS Sussex and ESCC public engagement teams to drive service provision from the perspective of the people drawing on services, not the commissioner or provider; and addressing the culture shift necessary to achieve sustained change. At the first workshop in July 2023, it was agreed we would work towards 'transparent bravery' in commissioning and procurement and in the latest workshop in October 2023 it was acknowledged that ESCC has listened to feedback from the VCSE Alliance, and through collaborative working and honest discussions, we are now seeing recognition of the need to have appropriate terms to sustain the VCSE market. Our recent mental health procurement process benefited from this approach. The VCSE Alliance and wider VCSE networks were consulted on the procurement model that would best serve East Sussex and stakeholders confirmed a lead provider who would be a strategic partner for future mental health development. Additionally members of the VCSE Alliance were part of the working group.

In 2023, ASCH created a dedicated partnership team reflecting our commitment to working with VCSE partners. Programmes of work underway include:

- **Migrant Support** - VCSE partners have contributed to the needs assessment for refugees and asylum seekers and provide a range of support services including help to access health services, social networking and social prescribing services.
- **Community Networks** - building on Community Hubs that were developed during the pandemic.
- **Financial Inclusion Programme** - ASCH is a system leader working across sectors including the VCSE, District and Borough authorities, the Department for Work and Pensions and NHS Sussex.

Partnership Working with the VCSE on Financial Inclusion.

Our Financial Inclusion Programme is directed by a multi-agency steering group with partners from the VCSE, the NHS, District and Borough Councils and ESCC.

The 'Additional Measures' grant supports an increased demand for money information and advice delivered by 11 VCSE providers including Citizens Advice, Age UK, Age Concern, Amaze, Possability People and BHT Sussex. In the first two quarters of 2023/24, 2,350 cases were worked on with a net financial improved position of £1,077,800 for the households supported.

The Financial Inclusion Programme commissions the Low Income Families Tracker which enables District and Borough authorities to identify households where there is a shortfall in benefit take up and promote local income maximisation campaigns. In Eastbourne, 42 residents have already benefited, generating an additional £150,000 in income.

ESCC also works with the VCSE to administer a proportion of the DWP Household Support Fund. In 2023/24 the VCSE will administer £1.4million. This enables community groups that work with hard-to-reach members of the community to access vital support. In Q1 and Q2 of 2023/24, £700,000 of the fund was used to help 4,785 households in East Sussex.

Housing

ASCH have a positive relationship with District and Borough housing authorities. Public Health host a jointly funded role which formally coordinates work across partners including the development of an East Sussex Housing Strategy. The multi-agency East Sussex Housing Partnership Board is the main forum for this with sub-groups managing operational issues.

Supported Accommodation and Floating Support are commissioned by ASCH and operate across Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Health and District and Borough councils. See also Theme 1 re: ASCH Occupational Therapists seconded into District and Borough authorities.

Working with Providers

We value our relationships with providers across sectors. ASCH formally meets with the local Registered Care Association (RCA) on a regular basis and directly supports RCA engagement activity, including funding of £25,000 for 2023/24. ASCH provides a range of support to providers including:

- Market Support Service - which purposefully adopts a supportive and collaborative approach (see below).
- Employing three dedicated staff to attract new staff into the care sector, through promotion at: careers fairs, colleges and universities and work with the DWP, the Armed Forces Network, Restless over 50s project, Princes Trust, Refugees and Reed in Partnership. Candidates are supported with free training, interview preparation and coaching.
- Grant funding towards the costs of recruitment, settlement and integration of overseas workers. In 2023/24 we offered Lead Providers grants of between £1,850 and £3,750 - between 25% and 50% of their overseas recruitment costs.
- The ASCH Training Team facilitates the East Sussex Registered Managers Network in partnership with Skills for Care Local networks for managers (skillsforcare.org.uk).
- Weekly newsletters to providers and hosting regular 'Care Home Huddles' - online meetings to discuss and address areas of concern with a range of partners, for example NHS infection control experts.
- Free comprehensive training open to all East Sussex care providers. This includes all mandatory training, leadership and management, staff wellbeing, specialist and bespoke training.

Feedback from Providers on ASCH Market Support Offer

'We had CQC visit, final report came today all GOOD. I thought I should let you know, you supported us lots'

'I just wanted to thank you for your support. Our CQC rating has improved and we are over all good'

'I have been talking to....CQC today who was singing your praises from the roof tops. She said every service in ESCC that she is in contact with gives you 100% positive feedback and how your knowledge and support is such a huge and invaluable asset'

Market Support, Quality and Resilience

The ASCH Supply Management Team maintain an excellent knowledge of the provider market and risks through a number of different information sources including: CQC ratings, weekly meetings with local

CQC inspectors, weekly meetings with Care Home providers, meetings with the ICB and Healthwatch and through the multi-agency Market Oversight Panel.

Market Oversight Panel

The Market Oversight Panel (MOP) is a two-weekly forum, chaired by ASCH, that shares information about the independent care sector in order to:

- Identify potential risks to clients.
- Understand risks and impacts on the wider market.
- Provide and coordinate support to the market.

The MOP is a multi-agency meeting with members drawn from our Market Support Team, Supply Development Managers, the Safeguarding Development Team, Operational Teams and the ICS Clinical Quality Nurses.

The MOP can make recommendations to suspend a service, which will then be ratified by Departmental Management Team. Other decisions such as the provider agreeing to a voluntary embargo are also considered by the MOP.

Support to Providers in Crisis

ASCH have contingency measures in place to support providers in exceptional circumstances. We have supported services in business continuity situations including: illness, fire, flood and reduced staffing. We initially focus on providing expert advice and helping to develop an action plan. In exceptional cases, where the issue cannot be resolved and continuity of care and safety of residents must be ensured, time-limited additional help can be provided. Examples have included emergency provision of meals, cleaning and hygiene services and support to access temporary care staff.

Workforce

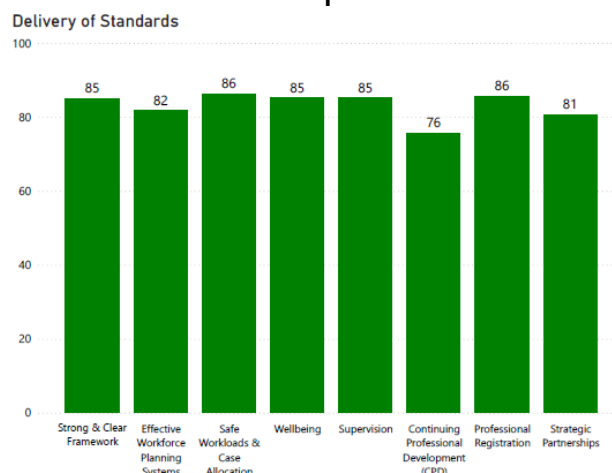
LGA Health Check Results

The health check is an annual survey carried out by the Local Government Association with the purpose of better understanding the experiences of social workers, occupational therapists, and other social care professionals. 258 ASCH staff took part in the most recent survey²⁰ (December '22 - January '23). ASCH performed well overall but there were some specific areas which will be addressed by our PSW and the ASCH Workforce Programme. Headlines from the most recent survey results for ASCH were:

Delivery of employer standards for registered social workers

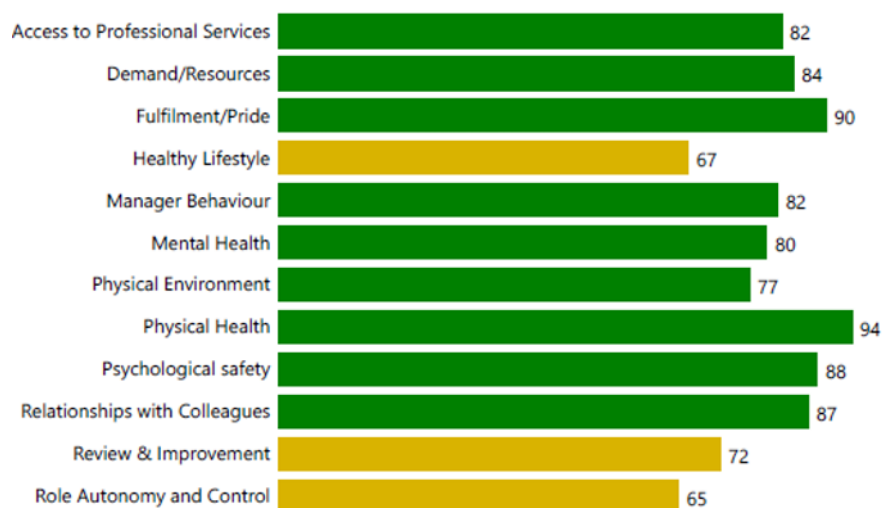


Delivery of employer standards for Occupational Therapists



²⁰ See Information Return

Response from non-registered social care professionals



ASCH Workforce Programme (see also Theme 1)

ASCH have been undertaking extensive work on workforce issues across a number of years. Our current programme runs from March 2022 until March 2025. The purpose of the programme is to bring stakeholders together to co-ordinate a coherent and positive response to workforce challenges in ASCH. The programme is overseen by the Assistant Director Operations and is focussed around the following workstreams:

- Recruitment.
- Enhancing the wellbeing of the workforce.
- Retention.
- Building and enhancing social justice in the workforce.
- Leadership and management.
- Strategic workforce.

Key achievements of the current programme:

Social work apprenticeships - 4 people start the social work apprenticeship course every year. Eight staff have already completed this degree level apprenticeship and are working in the service as social workers.

Recruitment of qualified staff - 16 newly qualified social workers started their careers with us in September 2023. Each has a supervisor/assessor within their team and support from the Social Work Educational Team Professional Educators. Ten social work degree students started their final placement with us in October 2023.

Internal careers event - Staff told us that career progression and development opportunities are important to them. In response we piloted an internal careers event with over 100 staff attending.

'Refer a friend' scheme - launched in 2022, the scheme operates in provider services. When a member of staff successfully refers a friend they are both entitled to a £250 payment.

Proportionate application process - We have reviewed our application processes to ensure they are proportionate and designed around the requirements of the role. E.g.: our Joint Community Rehabilitation service has piloted using short questions around values rather than asking applicants to fill out a lengthy personal statement.

Partnership working

ASCH is an active member of the multi-agency East Sussex Strategic Workforce Group, which has a particular focus on identifying opportunities for collaboration, and the East Sussex Organisational Development Network. The East Sussex Virtual Careers and Recruitment Hub was a collaborative project aimed at growing the workforce across health and social care.

Our Strengths

- Safeguarding work is undertaken by staff across ASCH
- Dedicated Safeguarding Development Team
- A strong multi-partner Safeguarding Adults Board

Our Challenges

- Increasing the level of engagement with and feedback we receive from people who have had experience of Safeguarding
- Understanding high conversion rate between concerns and enquiries, compared to other authorities
- Strengthening learning and embedding practice improvements from Safeguarding Adult Thematic reviews

Key statistics

Activity	Making Safeguarding Personal	Outcomes
May 22 - April 2023 Safeguarding Concerns received: 5,008	Proportion of people subject to Safeguarding who were asked what outcomes they wanted. 93%	Upper quartile for ASCOF measure: Proportion of people who use services who feel safe. 74.2%
Conversation rate of concerns to enquiries: 53.7% (national average 34%)	Proportion of people who lacked capacity subject to Safeguarding who had a formal or informal advocate: 98.4%	Upper middle quartile for ASCOF measure: Proportion of people who say those services have made them feel safe and secure: 87.1%

Safeguarding

Safeguarding process overview

Health and Social Care Connect (HSCC) receive and triage Safeguarding referrals. Within HSCC there is a dedicated team, the Safeguarding Hub, which considers the three key tests. Where there is insufficient information, or where the three key tests are met, the case will be referred to the appropriate assessment team for further work. Safeguarding concerns can be raised by phone or via an online form. Information and advice is given at all touch points. The Emergency Duty Team is in place to address urgent issues outside of normal office hours to ensure 24-hour, 365-day coverage.

As enquiries are undertaken by all care and assessment teams there is a resilience of resourcing across ASCH and Safeguarding is ‘everybody’s business’. This means that Safeguarding considerations are central to our practice creating a clear link between needs assessment outcomes and Safeguarding outcomes. There is also a continuity of practitioner/team and local knowledge brought to Safeguarding cases. To support case allocation, a tool has been developed by the Safeguarding Development Team which assesses the complexity of a case and identifies the requisite level of experience of the practitioner who will undertake the enquiry.

Safeguarding Development Team

The dedicated Safeguarding Development Team (SDT) lead on strategic development and improvement to Safeguarding in East Sussex. The team includes the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for adults and a Safeguarding Board manager to support the Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB). The team undertake and report on Safeguarding audits and provide support to operational teams on all areas related to Safeguarding, including:

- creating and maintaining guidance and policy documentation
- developing bespoke presentations, briefings and podcasts
- lead for ASCH at Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC);
- independently chairing complex Safeguarding cases
- working with partners and coordinating the agreed ASCH activity
- undertaking staff checks for new ASCH employees.

The LADO will be involved in the most complex and serious cases, involving people in a position of trust.

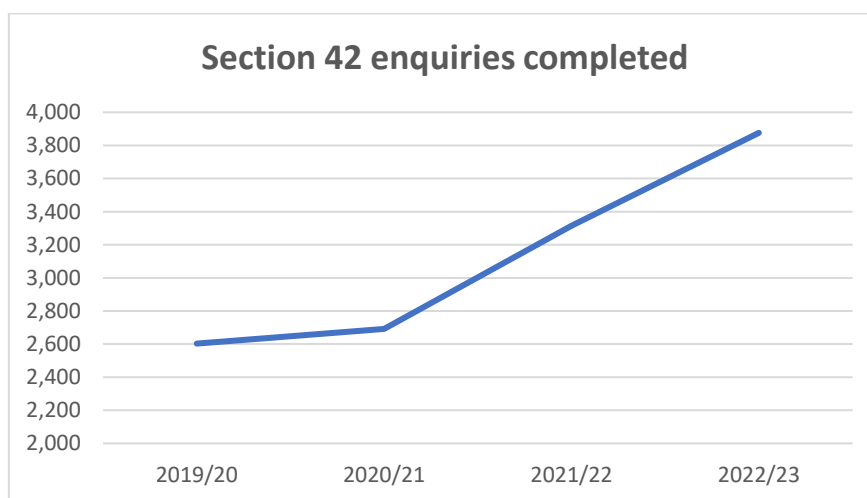
There is a close relationship between the SDT, the Community Safety Partnership, and the Children’s Safeguarding Partnership, including: joint thematic learning across Domestic Homicide Reviews; Drug and Alcohol Related Deaths; Local Children’s Safeguarding Practice Reviews and Safeguarding Adults reviews. ASCH are also joining the police led Multi Agency Tasking and Co-ordination (MATAC) meeting, which will coordinate responses to the highest risk domestic abuse perpetrators.

Members of the Safer Communities team chair the PREVENT board and the LADO chairs CHANNEL meetings. The team is also closely involved with contextual Safeguarding and ASCH jointly fund a post with Children’s Services and work with the Children’s Safeguarding Partnership specifically in relation to contextual Safeguarding.

There is a [Sussex Information Sharing Guide and Protocol](#) which sets out how information between partner agencies of the Sussex SABs should be shared for the purposes of Safeguarding adults.

Demand and Activity

The service received 12% more concerns in 2022/23 than in 2021/22; 5,835 against 5,150. The number of Safeguarding enquires has increased by 48% from 2,603 in 2019/20 to 3,876 in 2022/23. Benchmarking against other councils shows East Sussex has a higher proportion of individuals aged 18-64 involved in a Safeguarding enquiry but broadly comparable numbers across other age groups.



In the context of increasing demand, timescales for completing enquiries have increased over the last year. At the end of May 2023, 656 cases were open across all teams. Approximately half of these cases had been open for longer than 30 days.

Conversion rate - Safeguarding Concerns That Become Safeguarding Enquiries

The current conversion rate of Safeguarding concerns that become a Section 42 enquiry is 40% against a national average of 31%. Other enquiries, where a decision is made to undertake an enquiry although the threshold for a Section 42 enquiry has not been met, means the overall conversion rate is 53.7% against a national average of 34%. We believe this relatively high conversion rate is, to some extent, evidence of ASCH’s commitment to the wellbeing and safety of its citizens. However, we need to understand if there are instances where the same outcomes could be achieved outside of the statutory Section 42 process. The Safeguarding Development Team are scheduled to undertake a threshold audit at the start of 2024/25 to better understand the reasons for our high conversion rate and identify whether any changes to current practice are indicated.

Safeguarding Information and Awareness

There is comprehensive information about what Safeguarding is and how to make a referral on the East Sussex website and the Safeguarding Adults Board website. Social media is used to highlight and promote awareness about Safeguarding especially during Safeguarding week. The Safeguarding Community Network chaired by Healthwatch is a subgroup of the Safeguarding Adults Board, the aim of which is to have presence, insight and impact in the community.

Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB)

The multi-agency East Sussex SAB is led by an independent chair and supported by a SAB Development Manager and Co-ordinator. The SAB is made up of the representatives from ESCC, District and Borough Councils, the NHS, care providers, the police, prison and probation service, VCSE organisations and other

stakeholders. [The Sussex Safeguarding Adults Policy and Procedures edition 4](#) (currently under review) sets out how partners work together.

The SAB has formal links with a number of other strategic partnerships in East Sussex, including: the East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership, Safer Communities Partnership, Children and Young People's Trust, the East Sussex Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Management Oversight Group and the Health and Wellbeing Board. The SAB works closely with the neighbouring Brighton and Hove and West Sussex SABs and many of our policies and procedures are operated on a pan-Sussex basis.

The work of the SAB and its priorities are set out in the [East Sussex Safeguarding Adults Board Strategic Plan 2021 - 2024](#). The plan sets out the vision of the board and the outcomes sought for the people of East Sussex; the aims and objectives for the next 3 years; and how the Board will work towards these. The SAB produces an [Annual Report](#) which sets out the work that has taken place in the previous year, details of Safeguarding Adults Reviews and the performance of member agencies. The Board meets four times a year and is supported by a range of subgroups. Each subgroup has a work plan that details the areas of focus for the year and is regularly updated with specific actions and timescales.

Learning from Safeguarding Adults Reviews (SARs)

Disseminating regular multi-agency learning from Safeguarding Adults Reviews, by multiple channels, is a core function of the SAB. Learning Briefings are created and training delivered to practitioners. In addition to promoting the learning from individual SARs, the learning and agreed actions are aggregated annually in the Safeguarding Adults Reviews Action Plan.²¹

Eight recommendations from SARs Charlie and Donna have been completed since October 2023 and will be shared with the SAB in April for sign off. (SAR Charlie Recommendations 1,15, 4,16 SAR Donna Recommendations 3,7,9 and Thematic SAR Recommendation 5). Twenty-seven recommendations remain in progress with a number nearing conclusion. Recent additions to the plan include recommendations from SAR Gwen and Ian, Hannah and Finley and will progress through 2024.

Learning from Safeguarding Adults Reviews

East Sussex Multi-Agency Transition to Adult Protocol

The protocol was developed in response to recommendations in the ESSAB Thematic Safeguarding Adult Review 2022, SAR Charlie, Local Children's Safeguarding Practice Review (LCSPR) for Child AA and the LCSPR Thematic Review 2022. A multi-agency working group drew up a new protocol to be adopted by multiagency partners involved in ESSAB and ESSCP. The protocol:

- Sets out a shared vision on how East Sussex agencies will support young people in their transition to adulthood.
- Describes the agreed vision for what 'a good transition' looks like and 6 principles which underpin work to achieve a good transition.
- Is an agreement on how agencies will work.

It is a strategic priority of the Safeguarding Adults Board to ensure learning from reviews is effectively embedded into practice and to facilitate organisational change across agencies. In December 2023 the SAB held a development day with all partners to plan actions to further improve and embed practice in this area. Within ASCH, the SDT are developing their approach to support the way learning from SARs and audits is shared with operational teams. The SDT have a nominated link worker for each operational team, who delivers presentations and reflective practice sessions on learning from SARs.

Quality

Making Safeguarding Personal

When Making Safeguarding Personal (MSP) was introduced it was mandatory for ASCH staff to attend training. MSP is now embedded in all relevant training and there are [substantial MSP resources](#) on the SAB website. Adult Social Care provide training to our own staff, and staff working for provider organisations, on safety and Safeguarding. Between Jan 2023 and June 2023 more than 800 places were offered on courses for both ASCH and independent sector staff and more than 70 places offered on ASCH only courses, for example 'Making Safeguarding Enquiries' aimed at Lead Enquiry Officers.

Safeguarding audits

Each year, the SDT undertake audits of Safeguarding enquiries carried out by operational teams. Two cases are selected by the team allowing them to focus on areas they would like feedback on, and two

²¹ See Information Return

are selected at random. There is a focus on Making Safeguarding Personal and the empowerment of the individual. In the six months to March 2023, 30 audits were undertaken. Of those, 6 were 'outstanding', 19 were 'good', 4 'required improvement' and 1 'required significant improvement'. Outcomes are shared with teams and the Operational Management Team to highlight areas for development at team and organisational level. Changes identified are included in the 'Safeguarding Action Plan' so that progress on implementation can be tracked.

Feedback from People with Lived Experience

Lead enquiry officers are encouraged to request feedback from adults who have been the subject of a Safeguarding enquiry (or their representative) and professionals who have been involved in the case. Where a person agrees to provide feedback, this is managed by the Safeguarding Development Team (SDT) and a range of methods to give feedback are offered in order to facilitate open, honest feedback. Historically the level of feedback received has been low, but the SDT are working with operational teams to increase this. In the last eight months there has been a significant increase in the feedback received:

- Between April 2020 to March 2021 33 requests were made with nine responses received.
- Between January 2023 and August 2023 144 requests were made and 33 responses received.

Overall, the feedback received has been positive. Most recipients of Safeguarding said they would feel confident to report concerns again in the future.

The Safeguarding Adults Return 22/23²² shows that 94% of people were asked what outcomes they wanted but of those 13% did not express an opinion. Of the people who did express an opinion 77% felt their outcome was fully or partially achieved, and 4% of people felt it was not achieved.

Corporate ESCC Audit

The ESCC Corporate Audit team undertook an independent review of ASCH Safeguarding in 2022/23. The review gave Reasonable Assurance. The findings were that:

- There are clear governance and scrutiny arrangements in place.
- There is a comprehensive Adults Safeguarding policy and procedures are in place for adults Safeguarding.
- Quality checks are undertaken by the Safeguarding Development Team and learning shared.
- Critical onboarding checks for DBS and registration of Social Workers are undertaken.
- Safeguarding is a key risk on the departmental risk register (but the team should consider whether a more detailed local risk register is maintained).

Areas for improvement:

- A number of key documents were out of date e.g. the pan-Sussex policy and procedures.
- Lessons learnt from quality checks and statistical information are reported separately, which may not assist in identifying patterns, trends or training needs.
- There is no central mechanism for monitoring training, and this is left to the person/manager so it is possible key training may be missed or out of date.

These recommendations were accepted, and an action plan put in place. A pan-Sussex group is working on bringing all Safeguarding procedural documents up to date. Where necessary ESCC versions of documents have been created to ensure staff are accessing up to date information. The central mechanism for monitoring training will be addressed by the rollout of the new training portal in 2024.

Data

Safeguarding work is supported by the provision of data to support case working and resources, and to provide trend data on activity levels and a thematic overview of the details of cases. Reports are produced as interactive dashboards which help to identify issues and trends. A weekly Safeguarding Tracker of current open safeguarding activity is circulated to managers and reported to the Operational Management Team. This provides information about the number of open contacts and enquiries and provides information on the number of cases held by individual teams.

A monthly Safeguarding Dashboard is sent to managers to show longer-term levels of activity and performance and contains thematic data about the type of abuse, location of abuse, alleged perpetrator and demographic information of alleged victims. A quarterly report is presented to the Performance Board in relation to the annual Safeguarding Adults Collection and Heads of Service regularly review

²² See Information Return

Organisational Safeguarding instances which are overdue for closure.

Safe Systems - What people say

ASCOF Measure	Performance	Position nationally
4a The proportion of people who use services who feel safe	74.2	15 th
4b The proportion of people who use services who say that those services have made them feel safe and secure	87.1	61 st

Management of Safety and Enabling Risk

Within our approach to Strengths-Based Practice risk is considered an enabling process. Within practice risks are identified and discussed with the client and alternative ways to achieve outcomes are agreed if appropriate. Our case management system has prompts to help practitioners identify specific risks ranging from falls, to smoking, to feeling safe. When risks are identified the system contains a specific risk assessment tool to support practitioners to work with people to document risk and to identify mitigations. Contingency Plans are created where there is particular risk regarding support, for example, where a person employs their own Personal Assistants. The Quality Assurance and Resource Panel process quality assures the proposed support plan and any attendant risks. A risk assessment is a mandatory first step when undertaking a Safeguarding enquiry.

Community Safety and Working with Partners

The Safer Communities team convenes and supports the Safer Communities Partnership Board, which brings together agencies to oversee plans to tackle crime, disorder, anti-social behaviour and reoffending. This includes Domestic Abuse Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) which address the needs of high-risk victims of domestic abuse. Referrals to MARAC can be made by any agency and MARAC cases can also result in Safeguarding concerns being referred back to ASCH teams.

The Safer Communities Team deliver statutory duties regarding substance misuse, modern slavery and serious violence. The Safer Communities Partnership Board is responsible for undertaking [Domestic Homicide Reviews](#) and sharing the learning from those reviews to improve multiagency responses. We are also working with partners across Sussex, as one of 15 areas, trialling the Changing Futures initiative. The programme seeks to improve outcomes for adults experiencing multiple disadvantage - including combinations of homelessness, substance misuse, mental health issues, domestic abuse and contact with the criminal justice system.

We are part of two multi-agency, case-focused, professionals' meetings which look at specific individuals at risk of Cuckooing in Hastings and Eastbourne. The meetings are convened by Sussex Police and include ASCH, the NHS, District and Borough Councils, the National Probation Service, and a variety of provider services.

ASCH work with the police, Public Protection Unit the local Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangement (MAPPA) to manage people who may be a risk to themselves in the community. Where risks or concerns remain, despite available options such as Safeguarding, MAPPA or MARAC having been adopted, ASCH convenes a Multi-Agency Risk Management (MARM) group to support practitioners. MARM is chaired by the ASCH Head of Service for Assessment and Care Management and referrals can be made by any agency.

The pan-Sussex Voices of Lived Experience Board is facilitated by the East Sussex Community Safety Team. The Board has members with lived experience of domestic abuse and has been highlighted as an example of good practice by the National Domestic Abuse Commissioners Office.

Business Continuity and Management of Organisational Risk

All operational teams have Business Impact Assessments which incorporate business continuity plans. There is a corporate business continuity plan which is led by the Chief Digital Information Officer. The ASCH lead is the Assistant Director for Planning, Performance and Engagement. Clear processes are in place to manage a council wide incident; there is a volunteer list of Major Emergency Team (MET) responders who have volunteered to support in emergencies.

Theme 4 - Leadership

Our strengths

- Relationships between officers and all elected members are strong and productive
- Robust and fiscally responsible financial management
- Strong leadership within ICS

Key challenges

- Continue work to better understand where ED&I issues are impacting across ASCH
- Develop more integrated locality working in East Sussex
- Empower the Health and Wellbeing Board to create a vision for care and Health in East Sussex

Key statistics

Activity	ESCC context	Challenges
c.23,000 Adults and carers with open cases	ASCH net budget 2023-24 £233.244million Almost third of ESCC budget	ESCC predicts £40million budget deficit in 2025/26 and £54million in 2026/27
430 complaints in 2022/23 1,855 compliments in 2022/23	ASCH employs 1,500 people. ESCC employs over 4,800 (Exc. Schools)	Continuing workforce pressures across all sectors. Example - ASCH JCR average a 20% vacancy rate

Democratic Governance Arrangements

The Council operates a Leader/Executive form of governance with a Cabinet and a Lead Member for ASCH. Each year at the annual meeting of the County Council, the Leader sets out the areas of responsibility that fall within each executive portfolio and that are to be the responsibility of the relevant Lead Member. Decisions may be taken by individual cabinet members within their portfolio.

The Council has a well-established system of scrutiny which works alongside the Cabinet to help make sure the Council is delivering services efficiently and effectively and that the Council is responsive to the needs and opinions of the County’s residents and organisations. This includes the People Scrutiny Committee which typically reviews work related to ASCH. The ESCC [Scheme of Delegation to Officers](#) and [Annual Governance Statement](#) are published on the Council’s website.

Officer -Member Relationships

East Sussex enjoys long-standing, positive relationships between officers and all Members as noted in the [LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Review findings](#). In 2023 the political make-up of ESCC shifted significantly with a change to no overall control of the council after many years of Conservative majority. The excellent officer-Member relationships across all political parties has meant the council continues to operate in an effective and constructive way for local citizens.

The DASS meets monthly with the Lead Member and with the Opposition Spokespeople as well as regular meetings with the Scrutiny Chair.

Managing Resources

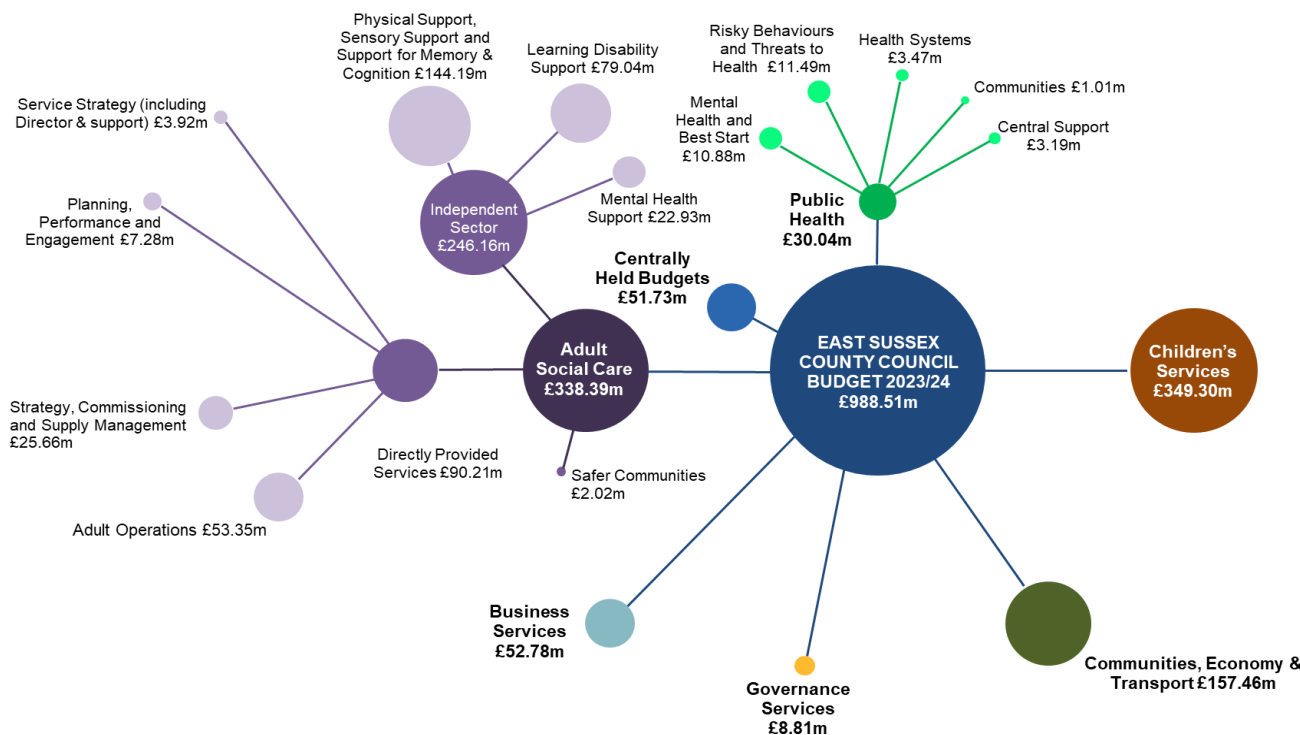
As noted at the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Review in 2023, East Sussex is fiscally prudent with a robust and well established mechanism for planning and managing budgets - the ‘Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources’ (RPP&R) cycle.

The ‘State of the County’ report each summer marks the start of the new RPP&R cycle. It provides an opportunity to take stock of our priorities and financial outlook for the next period in light of the current context, which includes demographic data, the national and local policy context and outcome data. Through the autumn detailed work is undertaken to develop and refine service and financial plans through scrutiny work, assessment of equality impacts, Cabinet consideration of updates on the



planning context and initial proposals, and factoring in information received through the autumn Budget Statement and provisional finance settlement. Towards the end of the winter there is a focus on wider stakeholder engagement. Final proposals are considered by Cabinet in late January, which makes recommendations to full Council, which ultimately sets the budget and Council Plan together in February. ESCC applies the maximum 2% adult social care precept to council tax bills.

The Council’s Gross Revenue Budget including a breakdown of ASCH budgets for 2023/24



Financial Sustainability

Despite our track record in financial management, ESCC estimates significant budget deficits in the medium-term: £40million budget gap 2025/26 and £54million gap 2026/27. ESCC will continue to lobby regarding future funding settlements but may also have to re-visit the ASCH offer in future years. As part of work to improve waiting times, ASCH will look at transformative ways of managing demand.

ASCH Planning

The [ASCH Portfolio plan](#) sits under the Council Plan (see Introduction) and is published annually. It sets out the context for delivery and the priorities for the next 12 months.

There is a golden thread linking the strategic ambitions in the Council Plan, through the ASCH Portfolio Plan, to team plans and individual staff objectives. We are aware that during the pandemic we gave less emphasis to this area of work and one of our priorities for 2024/25 is to refresh team planning and the associated use of risk registers, where appropriate, across ASCH.

Strategic Risk Management

The Council has a Risk Management Framework which sets out the Council’s policy on risk management and its strategy for effective identification, assessment and management of risks. The strategic risk register is reviewed and updated by CMT prior to being reported to Cabinet and the Audit Committee. In ASCH, risks are captured on the Departmental Risk Register and on divisional and project risk registers as appropriate. ASCH DMT regularly reviews the Departmental Risk Register and where appropriate de-escalate or add/escalate risks. The Internal Audit Strategy and Annual Audit Plan is updated annually and is based on a number of factors but particularly management’s assessment of risk. This allows internal audit to prioritise those areas to be included within the audit plan on the basis of risk.

Managing Performance in ASCH

We believe that our use of data to manage quality and outcomes is a key strength, as summarised in our Performance Framework for Adult Social Care²³. We use data at all levels to manage performance effectively. For example, operational managers receive the comprehensive Management Information

²³ See Information Return

Pack monthly with key data for their service areas. Staff are also able to ‘self-serve’ using tools such as ‘Infoview’ or ‘Tableau’ in order to drill down into performance in their area. The ASC Performance Board meets monthly to consider performance across a range of areas including qualitative data. Where appropriate we use data thematically to build a picture of performance, for example structuring our benchmarking report under key areas rather than looking at measures in isolation.

Where performance falls below the desired level the required remedial actions are identified and assigned to the appropriate managers. Data on key areas of performance such as finance and Safeguarding are presented to the Operational Management Team on a monthly basis.

We are members of the South East Benchmarking Group and use local and national data to understand performance relative to our peers and act where necessary as referenced throughout this document. We work closely with ADASS and use the LGA comparator tools.

Developing our Framework for Continuous Improvement

In keeping with our organisational culture, ASCH have used the prospect of external assessment as an opportunity to challenge ourselves and improve. In the short term we have implemented an Improvement and Assurance Board which has reviewed the key findings from the self-assessment process and has agreed and resourced priority projects. It has also been a catalyst for us developing a more cohesive and structured approach to continuous improvement.

At the start of 2024/25 we will be implementing a framework to enhance our approach to assurance and improvement. This will merge the current functions of the Performance Board and the Improvement and Assurance Board into a single Performance and Improvement Board. Beneath the Performance and Improvement Board, regular management information reports will be produced and acted on at team/sub-directorate level; similar to how the monthly Management Information Pack is used now. The new Board will consider performance exceptions only i.e. where performance is persistently not meeting the required standards despite local remedial actions. The Board will have a schedule of information feeds for example: performance against the ASC Strategy key outcomes, benchmarking, feedback from the L2U survey and complaints. This information will be used to prioritise improvement projects and oversee the programme of work to deliver this. By bringing core intelligence together in one place, with feedback from citizens and those with lived experience at the heart of this, we believe that we can become an even more focused and responsive organisation that delivers on the priorities of local people.

Leadership Within ASCH

Within ASCH there are quarterly on-line staff engagement events that all staff are invited to (with special arrangements made for staff who would find these difficult to access given their specific role). The Department Management Team (DMT) set out the key priorities and issues for ASCH and there are opportunities for staff to ask questions and contribute via on-line polls etc. The Director also hosts a regular webchat where questions can be posed anonymously if preferred. ASCH Leadership Forums for managers resumed in 2023, following the pandemic, with speakers including the DASS, Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive.

The PSW hosts and supports a range of forums for operational managers where professional development materials and opportunities are promoted and practice issues can be discussed. Key messages from these forums are fed back into the Operational Management Team Away Days. We run staff forums aimed primarily at non-managerial staff so their views and concerns can be heard by the organisation.

ASCH Staff Forums, September 2023 - What are you proudest of?

- *‘We know our local communities well’*
- *‘Making positive changes in people’s lives, people with complex needs’*
- *‘Helping people to find their strength’*
- *‘Staff have good values, they are kind towards each other, the clients and their families, there is good communication, with everyone feeling involved and both staff and clients feel listened to’*

At the staff forums in September, staff also noted that whilst the ASCH staff wellbeing offer is good the underlying causes of stress, for example increased demand and complexity of work, remain. This finding appears to be reflected in the LGA Staff Healthcheck results too and will be considered within the Workforce Programme.

ASCH has a standing ‘Employee Reference Group’, incorporating staff from across ASCH. These staff are the standing consultative committee for ASCH and are routinely asked for views on a range of topics.

We are part of the Social Care Futures network ensuring that transformative thinking is fed into policy and practice development.

East Sussex - Statutory System Make-up

Other councils

East Sussex is part of a two-tier local government area with two Borough Councils covering Eastbourne and Hastings and three District Councils: Lewes, Rother and Wealden covering the more rural areas of the county. As summarised elsewhere in this document, our constructive relationships with District and Borough authorities have supported a range of joint initiatives particularly related to housing. Since late 2019 we have had a closer relationship with West Sussex County Council and continue to share a Chief Executive across the two councils²⁴.

Health

East Sussex County Council is a key partner in the two statutory bodies that make up the Sussex Integrated Care System:

- The NHS Sussex [Integrated Care Board](#) (ICB) - the Council is represented by the Director of ASCH who also represents all three Local Authority DASSs in Sussex.
- The Integrated Care Partnership (the [Sussex Health and Care Assembly](#)) - a joint committee formed by NHS Sussex ICB with East Sussex County Council, Brighton & Hove City Council and West Sussex County Council and involving wider partners from the education, housing and VCSE sector. The Council is represented by the Chair of the East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB).

Acute health services for the county's population are provided by four hospital trusts, three outside of the county boundary²⁵ and one, East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust (ESHT), located in area. ESHT is an integrated provider of community and acute health services. ESHT provides the majority of community health services in East Sussex. Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust (SCFT) provide many community services in the High Weald Lewes and Havens area. Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (SPFT) provides mental health services across Sussex, and the South East Coast Ambulance Services NHS Foundation Trust (SECamb) provides ambulance services across Kent, Surrey, West Sussex and East Sussex, and parts of north-eastern Hampshire.

Strategic Work with Partners - NHS

ASCH has long-standing positive relationships with local NHS organisations which began well ahead of the nationally directed shift to Integrated Care Systems. The five-year [Sussex Integrated Care Strategy](#) 'Improving Lives Together' was approved by the Sussex Assembly in December 2022. The Strategy sets out our shared ambition for a healthier future for everyone in Sussex over the next five years, and three overarching strategic priorities of developing a new joined-up community approach through the development of Integrated Community Teams (see below); growing and supporting our Sussex health and care workforce; and improving the use of digital technology. In line with the NHS England Joint Forward Plan guidance, the supporting [Sussex Shared Delivery Plan](#) (SDP) was developed and agreed by all system partners in July 2023, and covers areas for immediate, continuous and long term improvement, as well as shared priorities specific to each of the three Health and Wellbeing Boards and their populations in Sussex. Joint work takes place with the NHS on a pan-Sussex and Place (East Sussex) level which contributes to a range of service improvement objectives for the benefit of the East Sussex population.

Both the Strategy and the SDP build on our understanding of population health needs in East Sussex, and the refreshed [East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#) 'Healthy Lives, Healthy People (2022 - 2027)'. Delivery plans reflect our shared HWB priority transformation programmes covering children and young people, mental health, community (and integrated community teams) and improving health outcomes.

A core principle for this joint work is that the primary building blocks in Sussex are the three 'Places' (East Sussex, West Sussex and Brighton and Hove). East Sussex is clear that 'Place' is key to strategic leadership, local commissioning and delivery in order to achieve the best health, care and wellbeing outcome for our population. At East Sussex 'Place' level, the Director of ASCH, ESHT Chief Executive and

²⁴ WSCC has started the recruitment process for a dedicated Chief Executive

²⁵ People living close to the border areas of the county access acute healthcare services located in neighbouring Brighton and Kent; University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust; Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust, and East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust

NHS Sussex East Sussex Executive Managing Director (EMD) share facilitation and leadership of the East Sussex Health and Care Partnership. The Partnership brings together local NHS partners with the County Council, Borough and District Councils, the VCSE Alliance and Healthwatch. The Partnership is accountable to the HWB and is the forum for local strategic management of integration and delivery of the SDP. There is a joint Executive Delivery Group that oversees system pressures, specific transformation programmes and the Better Care Fund (BCF), and a wider strategic Partnership Board. ASCH invests in integration work through a shared programme director role, which reports jointly to the Director of ASCH and NHS Sussex EMD.

ASCH is engaged in pan-Sussex ICS governance to ensure strong system leadership and partnership working across health, social care and public health. There is a System Oversight Board which brings together NHS Chief Executives and Local Authority Chief Officers in Sussex to oversee ICS system challenges and architecture, and a number of the pan-Sussex Delivery Boards for the SDP, including hospital discharge and the national Discharge Frontrunner programme (the Director of ASCH chairs the Mental Health Discharge sub group), integrated community teams development and the mental health, learning disability and autism delivery board. The Chief Executive of NHS Sussex has noted that ESCC has been 'key to system leadership within the Sussex Health and Care All Age Neurodevelopmental Programme' and has worked with partners across all elements of the programme.

East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board

We are strengthening the way the Council strategically aligns partnership working around the statutory Health and Wellbeing Board and population JSNA, to better support our shared Council (including District and Boroughs) and NHS priorities for delivering improved health and integrated care. This will be informed by the previous agreements to work across the three upper tier 'Places' within our Sussex ICS, and feedback from our recent LGA Peer Review on the need to provide strategic leadership to get the best value out of collective resources available for our population. Expected changes within NHS Sussex as a result of the national NHS Running Cost Allowance savings will also be considered. Proposals are being developed for the HWB to phase in during 2024/25.

Integrated Community Teams

A key strategic priority is the development of Integrated Community Teams (ICTs). This will involve integrated working across primary care, community, mental health, local authority partners, voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations and other local partners. Professionals will work together as a 'team of teams' across different organisations with local communities, individuals, and their carers. Agreed milestones for 2023/24 are:

- A clear model for ICTs, informed by JSNAs, Health and Wellbeing Strategies, and local population data and insights from local people and communities.
- A 'proof of concept' exercise building on:
 - Universal Healthcare and other projects in Hastings
 - Progress with integrated health and social care integration

In East Sussex this work will be led by the Community Oversight Board (COB) Chaired by the Director of Adult Social Care. The COB includes representatives from Primary Care Networks, the VCSE, District and Borough Councils as well as NHS Sussex and NHS providers. The proposed footprints have been agreed at District and Borough level. We have strong foundations in place, for example integrated arrangements in Health and Social Care Connect and the Joint Community Rehabilitation Teams.

Joint Financial Arrangements

The Better Care Fund (BCF) is a critical element of delivering the East Sussex placed-based plans as it provides the joint funding to support schemes which deliver local priorities. The governance for the Better Care Fund reports through local ASC/Health monthly meetings and into the HWB. The [Better Care Fund Narrative Plan](#) sets out agreed intentions for the use of the fund including hospital discharge.

There is a long-standing Section 75 agreement in place for the Integrated Community Equipment Service (ICES) which facilitates a fully pooled budget for community equipment and minor adaptations in East Sussex. We have joint funding agreements in place for S117 aftercare with the ICB and a section 75 agreement with SPFT, which funds posts in the ASCH Forensic team. Our focus on collaborative working has helped support rapid utilisation of one-off funding streams. For example, utilising, at pace, NHS winter and hospital discharge funding.

We have embedded shared and aligned decision-making to support whole system funding and operational issues at joint weekly OPEX meetings.

Voluntary, Community, Social Enterprise Sectors - Please see Theme 2

Data and Information Sharing

Currently, ESCC uses 'Singleview' across both Adult Social Care and Children's Services as well as schools, GPs, Probation, Police, Voluntary Organisations, and Community Nurses. It is a web-based module that supports multi-agency information sharing by pulling and displaying data from Adult Social Care and Children's Services case-management systems as well as data feeds from key partner organisations such as education and community health.

Shared Care Record: There is an ICS led locally built solution for the shared care and health record called Plexus. ASCH has signed data protection agreements and are now live with feeding data into Plexus (with Children's Services social care following in the coming months). ASCH Mental Health are piloting access to Plexus and feedback on usage/relevance has been positive.

Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (See also Theme 1)

The [ASCH Equality and Inclusion Strategy 2021 - 2024](#) sits within the Council's overarching commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, and sets out how we will:

- Tackle equality issues.
- Aim to eliminate discrimination.
- Create good relationships between communities.
- Ensure those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities.

There are five priority areas identified in the strategy:

- Priority 1** Knowing our communities.
- Priority 2** Inclusivity at the heart of service development and strengthening engagement with communities.
- Priority 3** Creating a safe, fair and inclusive work environment.
- Priority 4** Robust data collection from clients and use of data for equality analysis.
- Priority 5** Strengthening ASCH staff practice and knowledge on all aspects of equality and human rights as they connect with ASCH work.

There is an action plan for each of the years that the strategy covers²⁶.

We are proud of the work delivered to date including:

- Extensive work to engage with 'seldom heard' citizens and ensure key messages were included in the ASC Strategy.
- Delivering the 'Eggshells to allyship' training across ASCH.
- Initiating a project to protect staff (across sectors) from violence, discrimination and harassment.

We also recognise that there is further work to do notably:

- Improving our engagement with older people across the county.
- Our ability to collect the data required to direct our efforts most effectively.
- Recruiting more people with lived experience, from diverse backgrounds, onto the Citizen's Panel

The development and delivery of the Equality and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plans is overseen by the department's senior management team DMT, a visible sign of our commitment to equalities, diversity and inclusion.

²⁶ See Information Return