
**Bath & North East
Somerset Council**

Improving People's Lives

Quality Assurance Framework for Commissioned Services

May 2026

Date of Next Review: April 2027

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Executive Summary

The Quality Assurance Framework for Commissioned Services sets out Bath and North East Somerset Council's approach to assuring, monitoring, and improving the quality of social care services it commissions. The framework aims to create a transparent, consistent, and collaborative system that promotes high-quality, person-centred care for adults, children, and families.

This framework applies to all services commissioned by the Strategic Commissioning Hub and is also offered as guidance to regulated providers operating in the area. It is designed to align with existing regulatory standards from Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC), minimising duplication and administrative burden for providers.

Quality assurance is built on principles of person-centred care, transparency, continuous improvement, co-production, and equity. The Council uses established national standards and best practice from NICE, Skills for Care, and sector regulators to underpin expectations for providers.

A clear governance structure supports delivery of quality assurance activities. The Strategic Commissioning Hub leads operational activity, supported by the Quality Assurance and Performance Board for adult services and the Service Improvement Board for children's services. Multi-agency oversight is strengthened through the B&NES Quality and Risk Oversight Group, which facilitates early identification of concerns, information sharing, and coordinated action.

Quality is monitored through a structured programme of Quality Assurance Reviews, including full and focused reviews, professional feedback, safeguarding processes, and intelligence from regulatory bodies. The Council uses a standardised Quality Assurance Toolkit to ensure a consistent and evidence-based assessment of service quality, resulting in Red, Amber or Green rating. Feedback from people who use services, their families, and professionals forms an integral part of the assessment, gathered through structured surveys and ongoing engagement.

Where services require improvement, providers are expected to develop and deliver Improvement Plans in collaboration with commissioners, stakeholders, and regulators. Progress is monitored through contract management and multi-agency forums until assurance is achieved.

The framework also outlines clear processes for suspension or revocation of commissioning activity where risks to service users are identified. Suspensions prevent new referrals until concerns are resolved, while revocation involves ending placements or contracts where individuals are at risk or providers fail to demonstrate improvement.

A Quality Risk Matrix supports risk-based planning and prioritisation of quality assurance activity, incorporating regulatory ratings, the presence of a registered manager, previous review outcomes, safeguarding activity, and sponsorship licence status.

The aim is to review this framework annually to ensure this is updated as needs change and best practice in the market develops. We hope that working with providers, this framework can be developed together to ensure we deliver good quality outcomes for those who access these services.

Overall, this framework provides a robust, transparent, and collaborative approach to ensuring high-quality care across Bath and North East Somerset. It supports providers to improve and enables the Council to protect the safety, wellbeing, and outcomes of people who use commissioned services.

1. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this Quality Assurance Framework for Commissioned Services is to ensure that social care services provided by local authorities or care providers meet the highest standards of quality and safety. This framework outlines the principles used to assess and monitor the quality of commissioned and funded social care services within Bath and North East Somerset. This framework applies to both regulated and non-regulated services.

This document will provide guidance to both the local authority and providers on the range of measures used to assess quality and safety. This transparent approach will give people who draw on care and support, their families and providers confidence that this is adopted consistently and provide a mechanism for providers to challenge and provide feedback so we can continue to develop this process.

The scope of this framework will cover services commissioned and funded by the Strategic Commissioning Hub of Bath and North East Somerset Council. In addition, we will offer this framework to providers of regulated services in Bath and North East Somerset that we do not commission, so that our support can help them improve the quality of the care they deliver.

2. Framework Development

In May 2026, we shared a draft version of this document with providers and invited them to give feedback. This feedback was then incorporated into this final version. The summary of the feedback received is below:

- Most responses described this document as clear, well-structured and easy to understand.
- It was described as a useful tool for oversight and improvement as it would standardise quality assurance, provide consistent expectations and identify gaps early.
- There was a strong emphasis on co-production and user voice as person-centre care and co-production were key principles for providers. There was commitment from providers to ensure there is greater involvement of service users in assessing quality and quality should be shaped by service user experience and not just compliance evidence.
- Most responses stated this aligned well with expectations of the regulator and was consistent with the existing frameworks.
- Some providers, who this framework would apply to, do not provide regulated services so there was a request for more detail around the standards required along with explicit examples of the evidence required. There was a question about whether this framework would apply to them. We have updated the purpose and scope to show this framework applies to both regulated and non-regulated services.
- Providers stated that they expect this framework to improve consistency and structure, enhance monitoring and compliance, support early identification of issues and strengthen governance and oversight.
- There was caution noted regarding the additional workload required around evidence gathering, preparing for reviews and coordinating site visits.
- The risks noted were whether this framework would be too bureaucratic or resource-intensive with specific concerns around duplication of existing processes and requests for information that be excessive or impractical, particularly for smaller providers and services with limited staffing. We acknowledge this concern and will work with providers to ensure that quality assurance requirements are proportionate to the service commissioned.
- There was a request for more detail on the Quality Assurance Toolkit to see what information would be required before and during reviews and how this process would align to other audits, performance returns and safeguarding reviews. We will make available the toolkit to providers alongside this framework and work with providers on keeping this toolkit reviewed and updated.
- Overall, the framework was viewed as a positive step forward and shows the commitment of B&NES Council to improve quality and work collaboratively, building on existing approaches rather than trying to introduce something entirely new.

3. Core Principles

The core principle around developing this framework is to support providers to meet and maintain a high quality of support to individuals. The assessment of quality will draw upon several factors, which will be used to support the provider to improve. We will seek to work alongside existing systems rather than replace them to reduce the burden on providers to repeat work or develop new systems specifically for B&NES Council.

We will work with the Care Quality Commission, Ofsted and the Care Inspectorate of Wales to share information meaning that B&NES Council will not seek to replicate the work of the regulators.

We will also work with authorities across the South West to operate a Cross Boundary Quality Assurance Policy, which will see local authorities cooperate and share information, reducing work for both local authorities and providers in working to demonstrate their quality and improvement plans.

The approach to assessing and managing quality will be determined by the type of service being delivered and we will work with providers to establish how we can support them most effectively. However, we will be looking for providers to consider the below.

- Person-Centred Care to ensure services are tailored to the needs, preferences and rights of individuals.
- Co-production by working with individuals that they support and their families in shaping services and making decisions about care is delivered.
- Transparency and accountability by providing clear information and advice on what individuals can expect, celebrate achievements and be honest about incidences where care falls below expected standards.
- Continuous Improvement by committing to ongoing learning and development as individual organisations and the sector based on feedback and evidence.
- Equity and Inclusion to ensure fair access to their services and be respectful of different cultures and beliefs.

4. Quality Standards

There are established standards for regulated services provided by [Ofsted](#) and the [Care Quality Commission](#), which can be accessed by the provided links. This framework seeks to align to the existing standards set for regulated services without duplicating the work of the regulators.

We will use best practice from the National Institute of Care Excellence and work with Skills for Care to incorporate recommendations put forward in our assessment and feedback to providers.

In addition to the above and for services not regulated, the specific frameworks and contracts will set standards for quality that we would expect to be delivered. The assessment of these standards will be considered as part of this framework with sub-standard performance being addressed through contract management.

5. Governance Structure

Quality Assurance is a shared responsibility between officers and teams within the Council. These will work cohesively to provide support and oversight over the work around assessing, monitoring and improving the quality of services that are commissioned and operate within B&NES as well as working with the hosting authorities of those services commissioned outside of B&NES.

Strategic Commissioning Hub

This is the operational department responsible for the strategic commissioning, contract management, quality assurance and brokerage for B&NES Council. The scope of Strategic Commissioning Hub is Children's Services (including Early Help and SEN), Adult Services and Interim Care on behalf of the BSW ICB.

Quality Assurance and Performance Board

The Quality Assurance and Performance Board is led by the Director of Adult Services and will hold strategic oversight on the quality assurance processes undertaken by the Strategic Commissioning Hub in relation to services commissioned for adults. The board will also have oversight of the impact this is delivering for the people of B&NES.

Children's Directorate Management Team (Business Partners)

The Children's Directorate Management Team is led by the Director of Children's Services and Education and will hold the strategic oversight on the quality assurance processes undertaken by the Strategic Commissioning Hub in relation to services commissioned for children and young people.

B&NES Quality and Risk Oversight Group

This is a multi-agency group with representatives from the Strategic Commissioning Hub, Safeguarding Team, BSW ICB Quality Team and CQC. This group will focus on the adult social care services within B&NES regulated by the CQC and be used to share information and influence priorities around quality assurance.

Commercial and Quality Support Officers

The Commercial and Quality Support Officer's role is primarily responsible for assessing service quality and working with providers to support any necessary improvements. The role will also work with health and social care practitioners and stakeholders to address issues around the quality of services.

Commercial and Quality Support Managers

The Commercial and Quality Support Managers are responsible for managing the contracts and contractual relationship with providers. This includes oversight of the work around quality assurance undertaken by the Commercial and Quality Support Officers.

6. Monitoring and Evaluation Tools

B&NES Council will use a range of methods to assess and monitor the quality of services delivered.

Quality Assurance Reviews

The Commercial and Quality Assurance Team will undertake Quality Assurance Reviews on services commissioned and funded by B&NES Council. For those commissioned services outside of B&NES, the team will request and review the reports produced by hosting authorities. Where the hosting authority has no commissioning relationship with that service, the team will consider completing a review depending on risk. The locally set target is to complete a Quality Assurance Review on every commissioned service at least every two years.

B&NES Council have developed a Quality Assurance Toolkit that will be used to record and evidence what has been reviewed as part of the review. The toolkit has been developed to ensure a consistent review of services and will provide the service with a Red, Amber or Green rating.

The completed toolkit is then used to produce the Quality Assurance Report, which is shared with the provider and the regulator. The report can also be shared with other commissioners with the provider's agreement.

The review will be completed as follows:

- The Commercial and Quality Support Officer will start by requesting information from the provider. This may include copies of policies and procedures, training logs, insurance and regulation certificates, support plans and risk assessments. This can then be reviewed ahead of a site visit. The officer will also review any feedback received from individuals being supported, their families, professionals, complaints, safeguarding concerns or information shared by the regulator. The officer will also seek evidence of any co-production activity undertaken by the provider with individuals that they support and their families in shaping services and making decisions about how care is delivered.
- The officer will then visit the service. This will be planned with the provider but in the event of major concerns, the officer may not arrange the date of the visit and instead attend unannounced. During the visit, the officer will speak to the manager, staff, people being supported and their families; review files and records and review the physical environment. The officer may also send a survey to individuals who were unavailable during the visit as they may have views to share regarding the service. The officer will seek evidence that providers are showing evidence they are delivering or working towards the core principles stated in this document.
- Once the above stages have been completed, the officer will then complete the Quality Assurance Toolkit and produce the draft Quality Assurance Report

and send this to the provider for comment. Once comments have been received, the toolkit will be updated the final report will be produced and sent to the provider and regulator. The provider will be asked to share a summary of this report with those that they support so they are aware of what B&NES Council reviewed and can be assured of the quality of care being delivered.

- The report may identify actions required and the provider will be expected to produce an Improvement Plan, which will then be monitored by the team to ensure sufficient progress is made to reach quality standards required.

Focused Quality Assurance Reviews

The team will also undertake focused reviews that will have a limited scope. These may be used to follow-up on previous reviews where a full review isn't required or in response to specific issue.

These may or may not include all the areas listed under a review, but a report will be generated and shared in draft with the provider before this is agreed.

Professional Feedback

B&NES Council will also seek feedback on services through annual reviews conducted by social care practitioners who are then encouraged to complete a Professional Feedback Form. These forms are then reviewed and appropriate action is taken. This may be from acknowledging the form and celebrating achievement to undertaking a specific action with the provider to address any concerns.

Safeguarding Reviews

Safeguarding are responsible for reviewing and responding to safeguarding concerns that are submitted to B&NES Council. Safeguarding may decide that the concern raised does not meet the remit for a Safeguarding Enquiry and will forward the information to the team. The team may be asked to support safeguarding reviews with a full review or focused review. Safeguarding may also decide to either hold a Safeguarding Meeting or undertake a Safeguarding Enquiry and the team may be invited to participate.

More information can be found regarding Safeguarding in B&NES from the [Bath and North East Somerset Community Safety and Safeguarding Partnership](#).

Regulatory Concerns

B&NES Council meet monthly with the CQC to share information regarding services delivering care in B&NES. The CQC may also share concerns raised through their portal with the team and Safeguarding when received. In addition, the CQC will conduct inspections on services, and the results of these inspections are used to risk assess services for quality assurance and contract management purposes.

Quality and Risk Dashboard

The team manage the Quality and Risk Dashboard, which contains a list of all commissioned and funded services. This dashboard is regularly updated with information from children social care and adult social care case management systems, the CQC and Ofsted. The dashboard is used to record contact information on the services, record dates and outcomes of Quality Assurance Reviews and calculate a risk rating. The risk rating is calculated using the Quality Risk Matrix (Appendix A).

The team will consider the risk rating when determining the prioritisation of reviews or if other contract management activity is needed.

7. Quality Improvement Cycle

B&NES Council implement a Quality Improvement Cycle for quality assurance, which includes:

- **Assess:** Collect information from reviews, feedback from people being supported and their families, professionals and stakeholders, safeguarding concerns and external providers.
- **Analyse:** Identify good practice and positive outcomes delivered as well as quality concerns or areas for improvement.
- **Act:** Develop and implement Improvement Plans.
- **Review:** Evaluate the work by providers to improve quality and adjust our approach for future quality assurance work.

Improvement Plans

If a service is rated Amber or Red from a review or Requires Improvement or Inadequate from the CQC, the provider will be asked to develop an Improvement Plan. If the provider is working on multiple improvements, they will be asked to merge these into one Improvement Plan that can be shared with all stakeholders.

The Improvement Plan will be “owned” by the provider and will include SMART objectives to deliver the necessary changes. This plan should also include how evidence of improvements will be measured. The provider will be asked to consult with commissioners, people being supported and their families, and other stakeholders on the development of this plan. The provider will be asked to identify an individual within the organisation to be responsible for delivering the Improvement Plan.

It is common for either the hosting authority or regulator to lead on working with the provider to oversee the delivery of the Improvement Plan and will involve other commissioning authorities within this process. This will include regular meetings and may include site visits and stakeholder feedback as part of evidencing and providing assurance over improvements.

This process will continue until the Improvement Plan has been completed to the satisfaction of both commissioners and regulator.

Professional Feedback Forms

Professional feedback is collected via the Professional Feedback Forms submitted and acted upon when received. In addition, the professional feedback will be shared with providers (where suitable) during Contract Meetings so that providers can learn and improve from the feedback collected by professionals through care management.

Stakeholder Feedback

As part of the review process, the team will send out a survey to individuals being supported, their families and other professionals. This feedback will be incorporated into the report to inform the quality rating and will be shared during Contract

Meetings with providers in a suitable format depending on consent to share being given, so that providers can learn and improve.

Providers are also encouraged to undertake their own surveys with individuals being supported and their families so they can develop their own systems for continuous learning and improvement.

B&NES Quality and Risk Oversight Group

The B&NES Quality and Risk Oversight Group has been designed for stakeholders to share information regarding providers and services to enable collaboration in the quality assurance and oversight of quality within services. This will include sharing reports, early feedback from CQC Inspections and information obtained from safeguarding referrals. This will ensure timely response to concerns or update on improvements that have been made.

8. Suspension and Revocation

B&NES Council reserve the right to suspend or revoke work with services or providers, if deemed necessary. This is to ensure the standards set by the regulator and contained within the specific agreement or contract are met and to safeguard vulnerable people.

Suspension

Suspension is the process of holding the service from receiving new referrals from B&NES Council. This will not impact contracts already in place or prevent the service from adding to or changing current packages of care or placements.

Suspension may occur when concerns arise, and action is needed by the provider to assure B&NES Council that they can deliver the quality of care and support required. Examples of this are provided below but this is not an exhaustive list:

- The regulator has rated the service as Requires Improvement or Inadequate and assurance hasn't been provided to B&NES Council that individuals are supported sufficiently.
- B&NES Council or a hosting authority has completed a review and concerns were identified, and assurance hasn't been provided to B&NES Council that individuals are supported sufficiently.
- B&NES Council or a hosting authority has instigated an Organisational Safeguarding Enquiry following concerns identified by the Safeguarding Team.
- The provider has a Sponsorship Licence with the UKVI and this has been Suspended or recently Revoked by the Home Office.
- B&NES Council has received or is aware of a complaint that has raised serious concerns that have yet to be resolved.

If a service has been suspended, the Commercial and Quality Support Manager will put this in writing to the provider, explaining the reasons for the suspension and actions required to end the suspension. The suspension will remain in effect until the concerns have been addressed, and B&NES Council has written to the provider to advise in the change of status.

The provider can appeal the suspension by writing to the Commercial and Quality Assurance Manager for review.

Revocation

In the event of concerns that may put people at risk of harm, B&NES Council may decide to terminate current placements or packages of care and put in place alternative care arrangements for individuals impacted by revocations. This decision will only be taken after exhausting all other options and may be the result of the following:

- The regulator has identified major concerns around the safety or wellbeing of residents and has or intends to issue formal proceedings against the provider.

- B&NES Council or the hosting authority have identified systematic safeguarding concerns that are causing or likely to cause harm to individuals.
- The Home Office have Revoked a Sponsorship Licence resulting in the provider being unable to deliver the contract support.
- The provider has been subject to an Improvement Plan with B&NES Council and has failed to provide the necessary assurance to address the concerns identified.

The process of termination will commence by inviting the provider to meet with the Commercial and Quality Support Manager and Commercial and Quality Assurance Manager where the intention to terminate will be discussed. If the necessary assurance is not provided during this meeting and intention is to proceed, then this will be put in writing to the provider along with plans for communicating with individuals being supported (and their families as required) and arranging transfer of care to alternative providers.

The provider can appeal the revocation in writing to the Assistant Director of Commissioning, at commissioning@bathnes.gov.uk.

Appendix A: Quality Risk Matrix

	Green	Amber	Red
Ofsted/CQC Rating	Outstanding/Good	Requires Improvement	Inadequate
Ofsted/CQC Inspection	<3 Years	>3 Years	
Overseas Sponsorship License	Active/Not Held		Revoked/Suspended
Organisational Safeguarding Enquiry			Active
Registered Manager	Yes	No	
Quality Assurance Review	Green	Amber	Red
Quality Assurance Review Date	<2 Years	3-4 Years	>5 Years
Safeguarding Audit	Satisfactory	Not Satisfactory	
Safeguarding Audit Date	<1 Year	>1 Year	

Appendix B: Suspension and Revocation Flowchart

