

Principal Social Worker for Adult Social Care in Bristol

Annual Report 2024/2025



Adult Social Care
April 2025

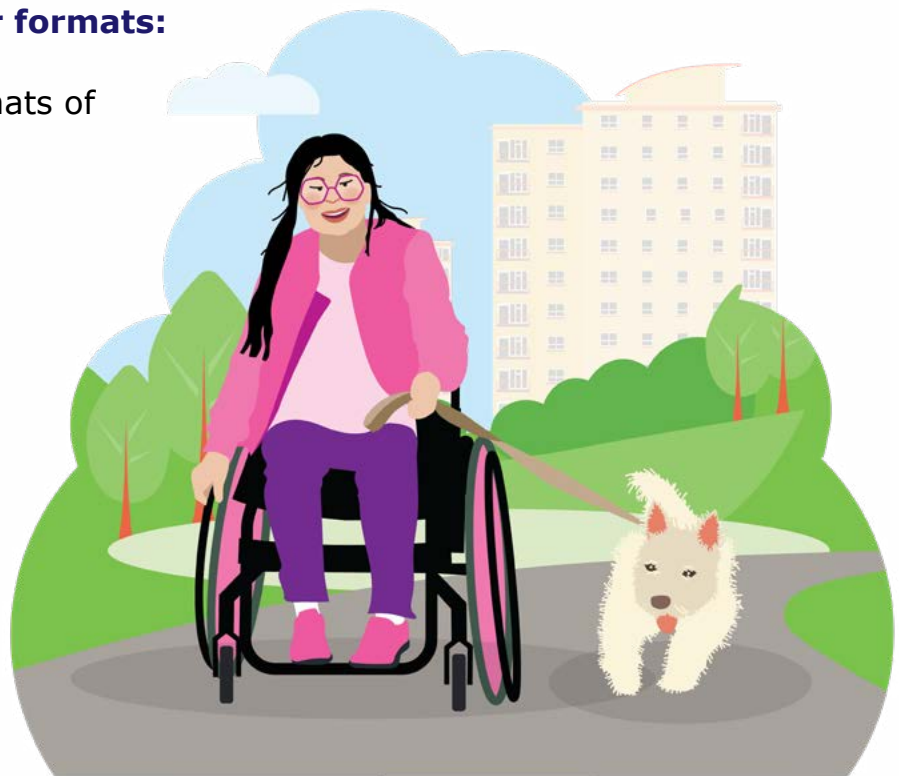
Supporting people in vibrant and diverse communities to live in a place they call home, with the people they love, doing the things that matter to them.

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Executive Summary

I am delighted to present our first Principal Social Worker (PSW) Annual Report for Adult Social Care 2024/2025. As interim Principal Social Worker (PSW) covering this important role, it is my privilege to share with you the progress and achievements we have made over the past year. So much has happened during my brief tenure since I joined the team on 1 July 2024. I also want to acknowledge the committed work done earlier in the year by my colleague Maria Hamood, the appointed PSW for Adult Social Care.

The purpose of this report is to offer a comprehensive overview of our joint efforts, highlighting key developments, challenges, and successes. It serves as a valuable tool for reflecting on our practice, identifying areas for improvement, and celebrating the advances we have made in enhancing the quality of care and support we provide.

The progress demonstrated is a testament to the dedication and hard work of our social care teams, who continue to provide exceptional support to people in our communities. Their contributions are the cornerstone of our success.



In this report, I reflect on the importance of Our Vision for Adult Social Care and how this is shaping our ways of working. Alongside this, I highlight our key achievements and areas of improvement, whilst also considering the challenges and underlining the work we have done to meet these during 2024–2025. Additionally, I will outline the PSW plan for 2025–2026, detailing how social work leadership will continue to strengthen Adult Social Care Services by implementing innovative strategies, fostering collaborative partnerships, and prioritising the well-being of the people and carers who draw on social care.

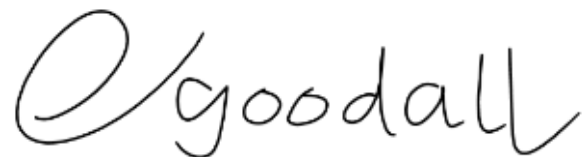
I am excited for the opportunities ahead in the coming year. This work is inherently collaborative, involving partnerships with our professional partners including Health, Housing and Police services, universities, care providers, and other key stakeholders. Therefore, the PSW role must remain pivotal in the system, advocating for

innovative solutions, promoting best practices, and ensuring that the voices of those who rely on social care and health services are heard.

To achieve this, the PSW role will continue to provide essential leadership in social work, ensuring that the voices of our social workers are central to building a resilient and responsive social care and health system.

With a sharp focus on quality and practice, the PSW will continue to lead in driving enhancements in our training and workforce development programs, alongside our continued drive for improvement. With a strategic lead in adult safeguarding and support to carers, the PSW will lead in ensuring that our social care and health services remain responsive, innovative, and inclusive for all.

Finally, it's been a great privilege to be invited to hold the PSW role and to work closely with colleagues in Bristol. I'm incredibly proud of what we've accomplished together over the past year. Supporting the people of Bristol lies at the heart of our Vision, and it has been an honour to contribute to that mission alongside such dedicated colleagues.



Emma Goodall

Interim Head of Service for Practice & Quality and Principal Social Worker

April 2025



Maria Hamood

Head of Service for Practice & Quality and Principal Social Worker

1. Introduction

Role and responsibilities of the Principal Social Worker

The Principal Social Worker (PSW) for Adult Social Care is a statutory function, set within Care Act statutory guidance (2016). This sets out the overarching functions of the PSW role and the responsibility of the local authority to ensure arrangements are in place to have a qualified and registered social work professional.

The expectations for the PSW role are set out clearly in the [Principal Social-Workers in Adult Services Capability Statement](#) and reflect the unique nature of a role, which should be located at a strategic level and in direct contact with front-facing social work practice. The purpose of the PSW is to ensure that effective professional social work practice is developed and supported within the organisation.

Principal Social Worker in Bristol

The PSW role for Adult Social Care is held by a Head of Service, who provides leadership for practice and quality across our services. The PSW also holds strategic responsibility for Adult Safeguarding, ensuring that recommendations from formal proceedings, such as Safeguarding Adult Reviews, inform local policy and practice and ensuring that outcomes are communicated at all levels.

Working closely with the Principal Occupational Therapist, the PSW leads in strategic and operational management, quality assurance, and learning and development.

The PSW advises the Director of Adult Social Services (DASS), senior officers and the wider council through

regular meetings and reports. In these forums, the PSW updates the DASS and advocates for systems and structures that support our social work workforce. This includes highlighting the needs of individuals who require care and support and providing guidance on issues that may impact the local authority, its partners, and the broader system (see DHSC, 2019).

The Principal Social Worker (PSW) plays a crucial role in ensuring that regular updates are circulated to front-line colleagues, which is key to our overall communication strategy for Adult Social Care. This annual report is an important part of that strategy, providing insights and updates that help align our efforts and enhance our future service delivery.

2. Achievements and progress

Highlights 2024–2025

It has been an exceptional year for Adult Social Care Services in Bristol, marked by significant achievements and progress in improving the quality of care and support for people, carers and our wider communities.

We are extremely proud of our dedicated managers and teams who have worked tirelessly to design, deliver and implement innovative solutions, improve service delivery, and to ensure the safety and well-being of the people who draw on our services.

Our Vision for Adult Social Care

June 2024 marked a pivotal moment with the launch of our [Vision for Adult Social Care](#). This publication represents a significant milestone in our service transformation plan. Developed collaboratively with colleagues, system partners, and most importantly, the people and carers who receive care and support in Bristol, our Vision serves as our 'north star' and provides the foundation for all our actions, setting clear guiding principles for everything we do.

It is vital that our Vision is embodied by all everyone working in Adult Social Care, and our efforts to embed this in practice are ongoing. The next year will see us continue to work on clearly articulating these intentions in our ways of working. As the interim Principal Social Worker (PSW) it is important to me that the Vision is central to our drive

for continuous improvement, inspiring us to strive for excellence. How we measure this is important, and we have worked diligently over the past year to ensure that our assurance process translates our learning into meaningful actions that benefit everyone involved.

To enable this, we have implemented robust metrics and feedback mechanisms to track our progress and identify areas for improvement. This has allowed us to make data-driven decisions and continuously refine our practices to better serve our community. Our commitment to transparency and accountability enables us to work collaboratively, upholding our guiding principles, and in doing so, make our Vision real.

Care Quality Commission

On 24 June 2024, the council received initial notification from the Care Quality Commission (CQC) of their plan to start the Local Authority Assessments (inspection) process with Adult Social Care in Bristol City Council. The Health and Care Act 2022 gives the CQC new powers that allows them to undertake an independent assessment of care at a local authority and integrated care system level. The aim is to understand the quality of care and provide independent assurance to the public.

This assessment is important, and it helps us in several ways:

- **Enhances our accountability and transparency** by providing an independent evaluation of how well we are delivering services to people.
- **Strengthens our improvement** planning by highlighting our strengths and areas for development, offering valuable insights to inform our continuous improvement.
- **Increases public confidence and trust** in local Adult Social Care services by clearly communicating how we are meeting our responsibilities to provide safe and effective services to people and communities.

The CQC Assessment Process

In preparation for CQC assessment we asked the Local Government Association (LGA) to complete an Adult Social Care 'Peer Review'. Completed in December 2023, the Peer Review provided us with an opportunity to understand current achievements, areas for development and capacity to change. The Peer Challenge Report set out our strengths and the areas we needed to improve, and this enabled us to better prepare for inspection.

The first part of our assessment was completing an Information Return and Self-assessment, this was submitted to the CQC on Friday 12 July. The second part included an on-site inspection visit. This visit occurred seven months after our first notification, and we welcomed the inspection team to Bristol for a four-day on-site visit starting 20 January 2025.

Our final rating and score

I am pleased to report that the CQC have rated our Adult Social Care Services 'Good', and we are extremely proud of this result. This means that our Adult Social Care Services are performing well and meet CQC expectations and provides independent assurance to the people of Bristol for the quality of care in their area.

Our [CQC Local Authority Assessment Report](#) highlights our strengths which we will continue to build on, and areas for continued improvement and development, this will support us in focusing our efforts on making continued and sustained progress.



CQC reflections

The inspection has given us a valuable opportunity to showcase our commitment to person-centred, strengths-based, and trauma-informed approaches. Since the on-site visit, I have reflected on the incredible efforts of our leaders, managers, and teams in planning and preparation. We presented strong evidence of our assurance processes and how these practices are embedded in our ways of working.

Our service partners and the people and carers who draw on services played a vital role in this process; their feedback will be used to inform our progress. This collaborative approach ensures that

results are grounded in real experiences and shaped by those who matter most.

Finally, as interim PSW, I cannot be prouder for having had opportunity to support Adult Social Care and Bristol City Council on the journey to 'good'. The standout moment for me, and others, was hearing colleagues at all levels talk proudly about their work and share their experiences. This passion and pride powerfully demonstrated our collective commitment to delivering on our Vision for Adult Social Care in Bristol, and it is this shared commitment that will drive our continued improvement.

Co-production

It's important to highlight the policy work that has been directed by our Co-production Policy Working Group. Formed by people with lived expertise of care and support and lead officers from the ASC commissioning team, the working group has challenged our ways of working and emphasised the importance of co-production in promoting democratic involvement and inclusion when planning services alongside people and communities.

Our new [Adult Social Care Co-Production Policy](#) aims to clarify the distinction between various forms of participation and co-production, ensuring community

acknowledgment and awareness of genuine co-production efforts. The working group that successfully co-produced and launched the policy has now transitioned to our 'Co-Production Policy Advisory Group,' a highly valued group that our colleagues and managers can consult for advice on how to implement the policy. The group provide critical oversight on council practice and review and monitor the policy's effectiveness and usage. The PSW role has a clear remit to champion the drive for co-production in the delivery of social care services and the upcoming year will present significant opportunities to apply the policy in practice.



Co-Production Policy Working Group

Key achievements 2024–2025

Highlighting our major accomplishments over the past year.

Inter-professional Practice and Competency Framework

As interim PSW I have had the privilege of working alongside our Principal Occupational Therapist in bringing to life our **Interprofessional Practice and Competency Framework**.

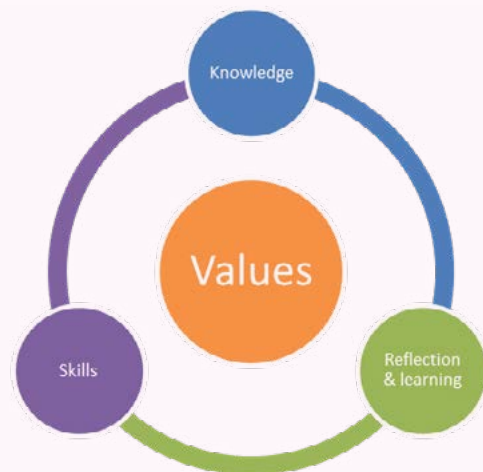
Launched in September 2024, the Inter-professional Practice and Competency Framework is underpinned by our **Vision for Adult Social Care** and describes what standards are required by social care practitioners to deliver our Vision.

A values-based model, the framework describes clearly how a focus on knowledge, reflection, learning, and skills will support high-quality, person-centred care.

Importantly, the framework emphasises the importance of continuous professional development for Social Workers, Occupational Therapists and our non-regulated assessing colleagues. Supported by a focused learning plan, it outlines the core competencies necessary for effective practice, including:

- **Knowledge:** Building on a strong foundation of evidence-based practice to ensure informed decision-making.
- **Reflection and Learning:** Encouraging practitioners to engage in reflective practice to continually improve their skills and understanding.

- **Skills:** Developing practical skills that are essential for delivering person-centred care and support.



It is important that our workforce is equipped to provide compassionate, effective, and responsive care that meets the diverse needs of our communities. This is more than guiding individual practice, it requires that we work to ensure practitioners are supported in collaborative workspaces where learning and improvement are continuous processes.

More work is planned for 2025–2026, beginning with a review of our policy and practice guidance to ensure it reflects our standards. This will help our colleagues use the framework effectively to better articulate how they work with people to achieve the best outcomes. Our Workforce Development Team will lead this work as part of a focused strategy for learning and development in the coming year.

Workforce

Over the past year, we have seen significant improvements in recruitment, retention, and overall colleague satisfaction. The level of people leaving Adult Social Care for new employers has dropped significantly, currently at 10% this is the lowest since the post-COVID period and is a notable decrease from a peak of 21% in December 2023. This reduction is partly due to the efforts made to ensure pay parity with our Children's Services, alongside pay increases for social workers and occupational therapists, which have positively impacted retention rates.



Employer Standards Health Check

We continuously review our workforce data using our data dashboard. Additionally, annual employee surveys and the Local Government Association Employer Standards Health Check provide valuable insights into employee satisfaction and areas for improvement. The LGA Health Check survey:

- Supervision and Support
- Continuing Professional Development (CPD)
- Workload Management
- Wellbeing and Safety
- Leadership and Management
- Organisational Culture and Values
- Engagement in Change
- Retention and Motivation

In 2023/2024, we commissioned the Employer Standards Health Check specifically for our Occupational Therapy colleagues. This decision was made with the understanding that other Social Work and Social Care Practitioners had already participated in various surveys and co-productive activities as part of our transformation planning. The results, published in 2024, showed notable improvements for our Occupational Therapy colleagues. They reported high satisfaction rates with managerial support, access to continuing professional development, and the quality of supervision. These results were above the national average, reflecting positively on the progress made in supporting this professional group.

The results of the 2025 national survey will be published this year. Our organisational results, which we have yet to analyse, suggest improved engagement with the survey, with 121 respondents, this is an increase on previous years. This year's survey included Social Workers, Occupational Therapists, and non-regulated colleagues.

The early findings indicate that our colleagues have a strong and clear understanding of the practice framework. This is highly encouraging following the introduction of our Inter-professional Practice and Competency Framework in September 2024. It also suggests we are performing well across all areas, with our overall scores reflecting 'Good – to be celebrated' across all domains for Social Workers and Occupational Therapists – particularly in areas such as supervision and managerial support, wellbeing and a sense of safety at work, and access to continuing professional development and supervision. These scores are on par with regional and national averages.

Amid ongoing financial pressures and transformational change, our non-registered colleagues have reported slightly lower satisfaction scores (moderate range) on how organisational change is experienced and how we are seeking their views on decisions that affect their wellbeing.

This was not reflected in the scores for Social Workers and Occupational Therapy colleagues. Work is already underway to address this and offer more targeted employee support to our non-regulated colleagues and in early 2025/2026 we will be running a series of targeted surveys and focus groups, with the aim of establishing a co-designed practice forum for our Social Care Practitioners (see 'Learning and Development' below).

Our next steps include a detailed analysis of the findings and reporting them to our Quality & Improvement Performance Board (QUIP) alongside our action plan. This will be outlined in greater detail in the Principal Social Worker (PSW) Annual Report for the coming year.



Recruitment and retention

Growing our own professional workforce is a vital part of our work to improve employee retention. Feedback from our apprentices has been consistently positive, highlighting the outstanding support and opportunities provided. We are proud to report that 90% of our Social Work Apprentices who have qualified in the last two years have chosen to stay to build their careers in Bristol.

Our Occupational Therapy retention rate is exceptional, and employee turnover is low. Our Principal Occupational Therapist has worked hard to support workforce development, and we are proud to be an employer of choice within the region. Currently we have no requirements for agency/locum staff and will be increasing the number of our Occupational Therapists in the coming year.

In terms of employee attraction, we have implemented rolling advertisements throughout 2024/2025, resulting in the steady recruitment of Social Workers and Occupational Therapists. Our attraction and interview processes have been enhanced in 2025 to ensure we bring in the best candidates. We are also focused on transitioning agency colleagues to permanent roles, this has been highly successful, supported by

excellent employee benefits, including protected Continuing Professional Development (CPD) time and access to Council wellbeing support services. With an agency workforce reduction program in place, we are ambitiously aiming for 100% of our workforce to be employed with us on permanent or fixed term contracts by the end of 2025/2026.

To achieve this, talent development remains a priority, with a clear progression pathway based on learning and accountability. We showcase our colleague achievements through newsletters, briefings, and professional forums, and encourage participation in writing competitions, research projects, and award nominations. Notable recognitions include nominations for Social Worker of the Year and Apprentice of the Year.

Ensuring sufficiency in our workforce means having the right workforce, with the right skills, in the right place, at the right time. We are working hard to develop our ways of working to ensure the balance of professional experience in our teams, this has been a challenge, and we are actively targeting recruitment at finding experienced Social Workers. Our Target Operating Model (TOM) is due for launch in the coming year. This aims to better manage

existing capacity and future demand by strengthening our systems and teams, while maintaining Social Work capacity, and increasing capacity in Occupational Therapist and non-Regulated roles.

Overall, our workforce approach is yielding positive results, with improved retention, effective recruitment, and

a strong focus on talent development and sufficiency. We are proud of the progress made and remain committed to supporting our workforce wellbeing and enhancing our services, however we know that the next step is to develop our long-term workforce strategy, this is a priority for the PSW and is planned to start in 2025/2026.

Data and reporting

The beginning of 2024/2025 saw the continuation of ongoing service improvement, continuing the transformation work we began during 2023/2024. This work has targeted significant improvements to our data reporting systems, and key to this success has been our collaboration with the data and policy team to develop new Power BI Dashboards. These dashboards ensure that our managers have the information they need at their fingertips.

A good example of how we are using data to improve what we do is in our work with our NHS partners. We have a responsibility to support the flow of patients through our local hospitals and to avoid undue delays in their discharge. The data we collect has helped us to better understand the length of stay of people in discharge pathways, this allows us to analyse where our workforce resources are best placed, ensuring that our services are targeted and that we are delivering the right care, in the right place, at the right time.

The success of our data improvement work has been largely due to the extent to which data-rich insights have been used to inform our continuous improvement. Another good example of this is ensuring we know how many people are waiting for care and support, and for how long. This knowledge has played a significant role in helping us manage waiting times, including efforts to ensure that people waiting are doing so safely.

There is still work for us to do in the coming year, particularly in upskilling our managers and teams at all levels to feel more confident in data analysis. We want to make sure they are equipped with the skills to make informed decisions based on available data.

Waiting well

With the capability to draw down on new data and insights, we have made significant improvements in reducing the numbers of people waiting. This work is underpinned by our **Vision for Adult Social Care**. This means providing a timely response essential to our strengths-based approach and supporting people to live as independently as possible.

We know that too many people have waited too long for an initial Care Act Assessment. The work to manage this has been focused on two key workstreams. The first approach has been to reduce our waiting time, investing in additional capacity to reduce waiting lists and improve waiting times. The second approach has been to ensure that when people are waiting, they do so safely and with access to the right guidance and support. 'We call this waiting well'. Careful prioritisation of urgent support has played a pivotal role, in ensuring that we can respond quickly to risk. This has been managed through the combined efforts of our managers and colleagues who, with the right approach, have worked hard to ensure we prioritise those people who need our help quickly and support those who are waiting to do so safely.

Our waiting times are now below the national average and continue to decrease.

In 2025-2026 our transformation programme will see the implementation of a new Target Operating Model (TOM), this aims to ensure that we are able to better manage the demand on our services, now and in the future. This means changing the ways we work and ensuring that people get the help they need quickly.



Changing Futures Bristol - My Team Around Me

We are proud to be a key partner in the delivery of [Changing Futures](#) and delivering the [My Team Around Me](#) (MTAM) approach when working with people experiencing multiple disadvantage and who need multi-agency support.

Our Homeless Move On Team uses the MTAM approach, meaning we share accountability and ensure service continuity with the person at the heart of their care and support.

We recently presented our progress to the Health and Wellbeing Board. This report outlined the impact of the programme and highlighted how it enables our colleagues to intervene earlier, build an evidence base for support, and work collaboratively with stakeholders. Central to this is a person-led, strengths-based, and trauma-informed approach.

We remain committed to working with people experiencing multiple disadvantage. As funding for this programme is set to conclude in 2025/2026, we are working with project leads to ensure its long-term sustainability. This includes sharing the approach and learning across our services and teams—particularly with our 'front door' services, which are positioned to offer early support.

Training and learning will be delivered by our Workforce Development Team, supported by a dedicated senior practitioner who will lead on learning and development.

Partnership working has been critical to the success of this programme. The challenge ahead is to maintain the progress we've made through business-as-usual activity. Ongoing collaboration with partners and a shared commitment to system improvement will be key. To this end, we are investing in supporting local exchange groups.



3. Quality Assurance

Continuous learning is the cornerstone of our practice in Adult Social Care. We have a strong culture of quality and improvement and a well-established model of assurance. The last year has seen the culmination of a two-year programme of assurance work where we have led practice audits with our teams in every service area.

A new programme for 2025-2026 has been established to ensure our audit work effectively reports on areas of practice that align with our strategic priorities. This was recognised by the CQC who have highlighted the strength of our leadership and practice.

The PSW role leads in ensuring that our assurance insights inform our professional development and service design, and that assurance priorities are embedded in our learning and practice culture.

We can be proud of the ways in which the insights from our audits are driving continuous improvement. To achieve this, we employ various assurance methods, including thematic and listening audits as well as team-focused peer audits.

Additionally, we have made changes to the way we work to ensure that we are listening to the voices of people with lived experience. We embed learning from audits through Practice Improvement Plans (PIPs) that are co-produced and monitored by our managers and teams.

During the last year we have learnt more about the quality of our Care Act (2014) assessments. Key to this has been ensuring that we are listening to the people and carers who draw on care and support. In the last year we have focused on strengthening listening within our audit practice. Our preparation for CQC assurance provided a focus for 'case tracking', with 120 cases tracked in preparation for assurance. Our internal audits have shown that 80% of our Care Act Assessment reports are assessed as 'good'.

This quality and assurance work is monitored by our Quality & Improvement Performance Board (QUIP) and locality forums. The board and our forums have helped us to foster a reflective and transparent culture across our services and teams. Ensuring that we understand what works and that we are accountable for continuous improvement.

4. Safeguarding

As a PSW my role in safeguarding involves providing strategic leadership and support to adult safeguarding, including the Head of Service and the wider partnership. The last year has seen a strengthening of the PSW role in safeguarding in Adult Social Care, including work to improve the coordination of our audit programme and collaborative work to update our Safeguarding Adult Review governance.

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

One of the significant achievements in safeguarding has been the progress made within the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). This collaborative initiative has strengthened our ability to respond effectively to safeguarding concerns, ensuring timely and coordinated interventions.

Implemented in October 2024, the MASH has been critical to managing waiting times and improving our approach to multi-disciplinary safeguarding. It brings together local partner agencies, including the Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board (BNSSG ICB), Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust (AWP), the Police, the Probation Service, and Bristol City Council as the lead agency.

During the last year essential work has been done to manage waiting times in safeguarding, alongside a system wide approach for 'waiting well' (see 'Waiting Well' above). This includes a safeguarding focused strategy designed to improve waiting times. As a result, we have seen significant improvements to wait times for both safeguarding and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards.

In the coming year, the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) will undergo a review, alongside ongoing improvements to ensure we continue to embed the principles of Making Safeguarding Personal (MSP). This will help ensure that safeguarding practices remain person-centred and empowering for individuals.

Innovation

Introduction of the Safeguarding Financial Protection Legal Officer during 2024/2025 has had a considerable impact on our ability to identify financial abuse through early intervention. This role has been highly successful in bringing together our operational and commissioning teams, and evidence of outcomes in managing risk means that we remain committed to this collaboration for 2025/2026.

Further strengthening this improvement work with our Young Adults Transition Service during 2024/2025 we are pleased to be developing our new transitional safeguarding pathway, co-produced with young people, this will be launched in 2025/2026.

National recognition

Our Safeguarding Adults Team was nominated at the beginning of 2025 for the National Risk Awards in recognition of our exceptional work in managing corporate risk. This nomination highlights our commitment to maintaining high standards in safeguarding and risk management. The outcome will be revealed in the

coming year, and we look forward to the results. Nonetheless, this is wonderful recognition that reflects the service's work on 'Waiting Well' and the development of effective action plans for the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS), aimed at reducing waiting times and managing associated risks.

Our continuous improvement

A key priority for the coming year will be further embedding the principles of MSP alongside learning from Safeguarding Adults Reviews (SARs). We are pleased that the Care Quality Commission (CQC) has recognised the efforts our teams are making to embed MSP in their practice.

To build on this, I am pleased to announce the introduction of a dedicated senior practitioner. This role will work across service boundaries to lead on safeguarding learning and development, with a focus on strengthening our approach to MSP and how we apply the learning from SARs to improve outcomes and practice.

5. Workforce

Workforce Development Team

We have a dedicated Workforce Development Team, led by a Team and Service Manager, under the leadership of the PSW. The team also provide several specialist roles including senior practitioners and research focused colleagues who provide leadership in learning and development, quality assurance and workforce support. They provide specialist leadership and support to students, learners, practitioners and teams.

Learning and development

Our training offer to the workforce has been designed to support us deliver on our Vision, mission being to build a confident, skilled, and resilient workforce, with professional learning and development at its heart.

We have evolved our training programme based on feedback from our the workforce. For example, colleagues told us that online training was leading to knowledge decay. In listening to this feedback, we have focused on providing more opportunities for in-person training and peer support sessions.

The last year has seen our Workforce Development Team deliver on key workforce priorities. These priorities are designed to enhance skills and capabilities and support professional growth and career progression. Table 1.0 outlines our key training and development initiatives.



Table 1.0 Key Learning and Development Initiatives

| Area | What we do |
|--|---|
| Learning Hub | Launched in 2023, our Adult Social Care Learning Hub has continued to go from strength to strength over the past year. As a one-stop shop for all colleagues, it is central to our efforts in promoting continuous professional development, offering easy access to resources and training opportunities. |
| Apprenticeships | <p>We are committed to career progression and offer our non-registered colleagues opportunities to train as Social Workers and Occupational Therapists through our Apprenticeship scheme. Over the past year, we have strengthened our commitment to “growing our own” in Social Work. During 2024/2025, we supported 22 apprentices across three cohorts. For 2025/2026, we plan to invest in six new apprentice Social Work trainees, demonstrating a 20% increase in our commitment to the scheme.</p> <p>We have eight Apprentice Occupational Therapy trainees across four cohorts. This successful programme is overseen by our principal Occupational Therapist and provides progression opportunities for our Occupational Therapy Aides and Social Care Practitioners.</p> |
| Assessed and Supported Year in Practice (ASYE) and Occupational Therapy Preceptorship | We are exceptionally proud of our ASYE programme for Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWs). This 12-month, employer-led programme supports and assesses NQSWs. We host approximately 25–30 ASYEs at any time, with support facilitated by specialist practitioners, team managers, and senior social work colleagues. We have worked hard to ensure the quality of our training and support. Our Principal OT will be launching a new Occupational Therapy Preceptorship in the coming year, and we will continue to strengthen our practices, ensuring our Global Majority colleagues achieve the same outcomes as white colleagues. |
| Career Progression | Over the past year, we have delivered a comprehensive support program for social workers and occupational therapists to help them progress in their careers. This includes specialist training qualifications such as Practice Education, Approved Mental Health Professional, Best Interests Assessor, and Sensory Impairment post qualifying awards. |

| Area | What we do |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Supervision | <p>We prioritise good supervision and practice, with a clear policy outlining our standards. Our inter-professional practice framework emphasises wellbeing, strengths-based, and trauma-informed practice. Over the next year, we plan to update our policy and develop tools for anti-racist supervision.</p> <p>Additionally, we have been trailblazers for the Practice Quality Standards for Practice Supervisors, evolving our programme through colleague feedback. Our co-production approach has been shared with other local authorities, who have adopted successful elements of the Bristol model.</p> |
| Evidence Based Practice | <p>Our development programme backs applied research projects and advanced degrees. Collaborations with ConnectED and the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) have greatly improved our evidence-based practice. We also support post-qualifying doctoral programmes for our Social Work and Occupational Therapy colleagues, keeping our practice updated with the latest research.</p> |
| Forums | <p>Our Social Work and Occupational Therapy Forums are well-established spaces for practitioners to support each other in practice and learning. We plan to extend this model in the coming year by launching a peer learning forum for our Social Care Practitioners (SCPs), reflecting the value of non-regulated colleagues in our new Inter-professional Practice Framework. Our SCPs will be invited to co-produce this learning space, aligning with our co-production policy values.</p> |
| Partnerships | <p>Our Workforce Development team collaborates with health and social care partners. Recently, a reciprocal training programme has strengthened links with housing, health, and VCS partners. We support professional learning in local universities and HEIs, and partner with neighbouring local authorities to ensure quality training. Importantly, Adult Social Care hosts third-year social work students for their final practice placements, working closely with universities to provide a quality learning experience. This activity is highly regarded by managers and benefits our recruitment and retention of social work colleagues.</p> |

Equality Diversity and Inclusion

We are committed to equality, diversity, and inclusion in Bristol and tackling race inequality in our workforce is a top priority for Adult Social Care. This includes promoting anti-racist and anti-discriminatory practices through our workforce strategies. As an employer Bristol City Council promotes diversity, flexible working and an inclusive culture. We proactively ask applicants if they need reasonable adjustments, anonymise applications and guarantee interviews to applicants who meet all the essential criteria, and who declare themselves disabled or a care leaver.

In the last year we have taken tangible steps to improve outcomes and experiences for our global majority and disabled colleagues. This includes work with higher education institutions and additional support for global majority students and Newly Qualified Social Workers who are undertaking the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE).

The Skills for Care – Workforce Race Equality Standard (Social Care)

Adult Social Care is proud to be a trailblazer in implementing The Skills for Care – Workforce Race Equality Standard (Social Care) (SC-WRES), having joined as a pilot site in 2021. The SC-WRES aims to support organisations in addressing evidence

and making progress towards race equality. Delivering the WRES has enhanced our efforts to promote a workforce of diversity and equality and support positive culture change at both a local and national level. Most importantly, it has enabled us to critically examine Adult Social Care, identify inequalities, advocate for change, and reinforce our commitment to accountability.

Oversight and governance of the SC-WRES is managed jointly with Bristol City Council's Children's Services. This is supported by our Principal Social Workers, our Joint Social Work and Occupational Therapy Board, and relevant Divisional Management Teams (DMTs). Working together we collect and submit data on an annual basis based on nine metrics which aim to highlight differences in experiences of Black, Asian and minoritised colleagues, though in Bristol we prefer to use the term 'Global Majority and minoritised colleagues', as these better reflect our values and our Vision.

As early adopters of the SC-WRES we have developed a publicly available WRES action plan which was signed off in July 2022 [Social Care Workforce Race Equality Standard](#).

We have submitted our 2023/2024 data to Skills for Care in June 2024, this return is used in support of the national data published by [Skills for Care \(skillsforcare.org.uk\)](https://skillsforcare.org.uk). National data has shown similarities with our experience in Bristol. Importantly, the publication of this national data suggests that overall, colleagues from ethnic minorities are more likely to experience disadvantages across most of the Social Care Workforce Race Equality Standard (SC-WRES) indicators compared to their white colleagues.

SC-WRES data

In Bristol we have found differences in terms of outcomes and experience between white colleagues and colleagues from global majority backgrounds. Our data suggests:

- Our Global Majority colleagues are more likely to experience harassment and abuse from citizens.
- Harassment and abuse are under reported.
- Global Majority colleagues are disproportionately represented among Social Work students and Newly Qualified Social Workers in their ASYE who are failing professional courses.

SC-WRES Improvement Action Plan for 2025/2026

In response to the data, we have updated our SC-WRES Improvement Action Plan for 2025/2026. This process includes ensuring that actions are robust and sustainable. Key actions include:

- Ensuring our recruitment process is accessible and inclusive.
- Improving our Continuing Professional Development, mentoring and career development opportunities.
- Establishing a more robust system of supporting colleagues and addressing harassment and abuse against colleagues.
- Co-producing a peer support group for colleagues from Global Majority and minoritised groups.

No Space for Hate Guidance – Adult Social Care

Building on the SC-WRES, in the last year we have successfully launched our No Space for Hate Guidance. Co-produced by our managers and colleagues in Adult Social Care, the guidance is easily accessible to all managers and colleagues and provides a clear framework through which they can address racism and other forms of discrimination against social care colleagues, commissioned carers and other professionals. This includes establishing a safe work environment and ensuring that the people drawing on care and support receive the best possible service from competent and experienced colleagues.

6. Networks and Partnerships

The PSW offers their leadership and support to local and national groups and partners, including:

- **Principal Social Workers Network** – regional and national networks, hosted by Research in Practice.
- **Association of Directors of Social Services** – Southwest Networks.
- **Department Management Team** – ASC Operations and Commissioning leadership team.
- **Quality & Improvement Performance Board (QUIP) and locality forums** – ASC quality improvement groups.
- **Social Work and OT Board** – Joint Adult and Children service board focused on workforce development.
- **Research Governance Group** – Bristol City Council, system and academic partners.
- **Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership SAR Subgroup** – Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) sub-group.
- **Bristol Sanctuary Services** – Adult Social Care lead supporting in the delivery of our council strategy of support to refugees and asylum seekers.
- **Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Health and Care Professional Executive Meeting** – Adult Social Care lead.



7. Future Priorities

The PSW priorities for 2025/2026 in Table 2.0 focus on enhancing quality and assurance, developing practice, promoting anti-racist approaches, and advancing co-production initiatives.

Table 2.0 PSW Priorities

| Area | PSW Priorities 2025/2026 |
|--|---|
| Vision | Continued leadership to embed our Vision. |
| Practice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lead efforts to embed the inter-professional practice framework. ● Update policies and practice guidance to align with our Vision and standards. ● Lead in the delivery of quality training focused on strengths-based and trauma-informed practice. |
| Workforce | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Work in partnership to develop a comprehensive workforce action plan for ASC 2026/2027. ● Continued leadership in driving improvements in recruitment and retention, including progression. |
| Quality Assurance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continued leadership of quality, assurance and continuous improvement including ways of working to enhance listening and feedback. ● Continued leadership and coordination for the Care Quality Commission (CQC) Local Authority Assessment. |
| Carers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lead in the launch of Bristol's joint all-age carers strategy. ● Lead in enhancing our support for carers, including trusted assessor relationships. |
| Equality, Diversity and Inclusion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Influence anti-racist practice, including SC-WRES and No Space for Hate Guidance. ● Ensure recruitment processes are accessible and inclusive. ● Lead in improvements in CPD, mentoring, and career development opportunities for Global Majority and minoritised colleagues. ● Lead in establishing robust support systems for colleagues, addressing harassment and abuse. |

| Area | PSW Priorities 2025/2026 |
|------------------|---|
| Safeguarding | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Influence learning from Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SAR). ● Influence Making Safeguarding Personal (MSP). |
| Co-production | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Influence work to embed the new co-production policy. ● Foster collaborative efforts with key stakeholders. |
| Statutory Duties | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Influence decisions by prioritising the Wellbeing principles in Section 1 of the Care Act 2024, while scrutinising methods of working that support sufficient resources. ● Provide advice and guidance to senior leaders, managers and colleagues. |

8. Summary

We have made substantial progress in our performance. As we look ahead, we can be proud of our work, whilst recognising there is more for us to do. Staying focused on our Vision for Adult Social Care will guide us through the upcoming year, providing a road map for continued improvement.



9. Acknowledgements

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Laura Saint, Head of Service Hospitals and Front Door

Claudine Mignott, Head of Service Safeguarding Adults, DOLS and Young People in Transition

Jamie Mahood, Head of Service Operational Transformation Lead

Amy Townson, Service Manager Inner City and East Specialist Teams

Report author

Emma Goodall, Interim Head of Service for Practice & Quality and Principal Social Worker

Bristol City Council
Adults and Communities – Adult Social Care

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