



Halton Borough Council Adult Social Care Principal Social Worker Annual Report 2025/2026

Dean Tierney, Interim Head of Service for Assessment and Care Management
Principal Social Worker for Adult Social Care.



Dean Tierney, Head of Service for Assessment and Care Management, Principal Social Worker (Interim)



I am delighted to share my annual Principal Social Worker Report for Halton Adult Social Care Services during 2025/2026. The PSW annual report is an opportunity to reflect on the last 12 months, celebrate achievements, identify learning and look to the future.

As PSW, I recognise the importance of supporting our workforce in striving for the highest standards of practice when working with individuals, their families and carers.

As PSW, it is a privilege to work in partnership with people with lived experience, colleagues across social care, as well as in close collaboration with the regional and national PSW Network.

I am excited to be the Principal Social Worker. I will approach the role with compassion, warmth, empathy and responsiveness. Our teams will also continue to embed these values, who continue to rise to the challenges of these difficult time, which is a privilege to see.

I want to start by thanking everyone for their continued hard work and commitment, and I look forward to working with you all over the next 12 months.

Take care

Dean Tierney

'As Portfolio Lead and Acting Executive Director for Adults, we are pleased to present this report, which reflects our continued commitment to delivering high-quality, person-centred services that support adults and their families.

This document sets out our progress, key achievements, and the challenges we are addressing across the portfolio, with a clear focus on improving outcomes, promoting independence, and strengthening partnerships.

In a period of evolving demand and complexity, we remain committed to continuous improvement, strong governance, and innovation. This report highlights the dedication of our workforce and partners in working collaboratively to deliver our shared priorities and make a meaningful difference to the communities we serve.'

Zoe Fearon, Executive Director of Children's Services/Interim Executive Director of Adult's
Cllr Angela Ball, Portfolio lead, Adult Social Care.

Sarah Foy, Director for Commissioning and Provision Director of Adult Social Services (Interim)



As the newly appointed Interim Director of Adult Social Services, I am pleased to contribute to this annual report, bringing both fresh strategic leadership and a strong continuity of organisational knowledge, having worked within this authority for a number of years.

This dual perspective enables me to build on established strengths while maintaining a clear focus on improvement and innovation in practice. I remain committed to championing the vital role of social work, ensuring that our workforce is supported to deliver high-quality, strengths-based, person-centred interventions that promote independence, safeguard wellbeing, and uphold the rights of the people we serve.

Working closely with the Principal Social Worker, I recognise the importance of robust professional leadership, reflective practice, and a learning culture that empowers practitioners at all levels. Together, we will continue to strengthen practice standards, workforce development, and partnership working, ensuring that our services are responsive, resilient, and aligned with both local priorities and national expectations

Sarah

Thank you and best wishes Deb'

Debbie O Connor



In the last twelve months we have seen some changes to our senior management positions. A few sad goodbyes and a few warm welcomes. Debbie O Connor, our previous Principal Social Worker has successfully moved role, to our Operational Director, responsible for Assessment, Safeguarding and Quality

I want to highlight the positive work Debbie has done over the past 12 months within the PSW role, including key developments in ASC and success stories. Debbie supported the wider Adult Social Care Teams as a service, including myself, ensuring that our focus remained on what matters to the people of Halton.

We wish her every success in her new role.

Best Wishes Debbie

What is my role as the Principal Social Worker?

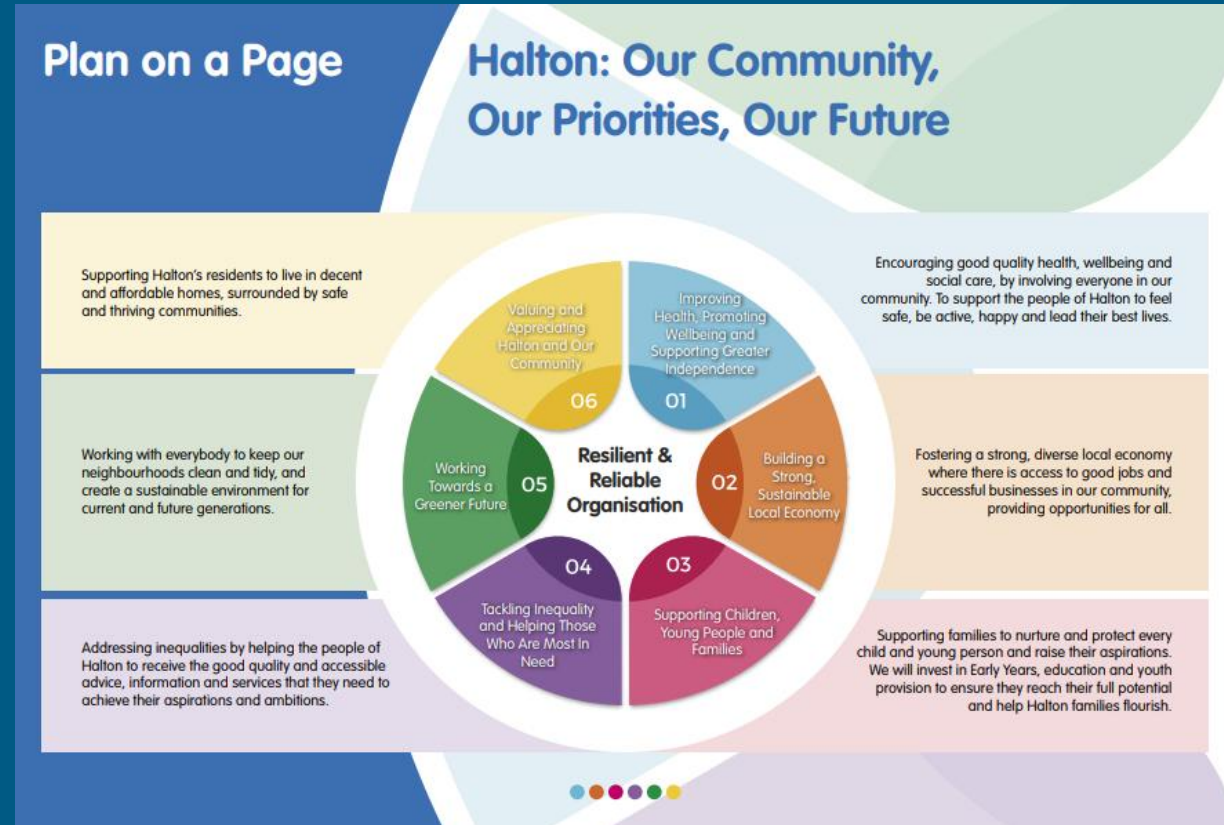
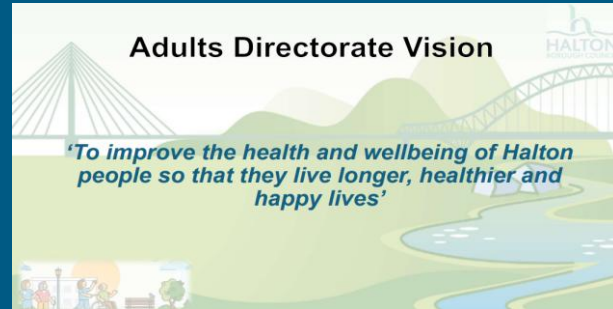
- Principal Social Workers take a professional leadership role across the organisation and act as a bridge for better communication and understanding between Senior Management and Social Workers.
- the Principal Social Worker should be visible across the organisation, from Elected Members and Senior Management, through to Social Workers and people who draw on care and support and their carers.
- Principal Social Workers should also have a broad knowledge base on safeguarding and 'Making Safeguarding Personal'. It also states that local authorities should make arrangements to have a qualified and registered social work professional practice lead in place to -



- *Lead and oversee excellent social work practice*
- *Support and develop arrangements for excellent practice*
- *Lead the development of excellent Social Workers*
- *Support effective social work supervision and decision making*
- *Oversee quality assurance and improvement of social work practice*
- *Advise the Director of Adult Social Services (DASS) and/or wider Council in complex or controversial cases and on case or other law relating to social work practice*
- *Function at the strategic level of the Professional Capabilities Framework*

ASC Vision and Strategic Priorities

- Halton Values Framework



ASC Operational Social Work Teams

Prevention
and
Wellbeing
Service

Halton
Integrated
Discharge
Team

Halton
Intermediate
Care and
Frailty
Service

Integrated
Adult
Safeguarding
Unit

Complex
Care
Runcorn

Complex
Care Widnes

Transitions
Team

Adult
Reviewing
Team

Mental
Health
Recovery
Team

ASC Workforce Development Team

The Care Act 2014 is the key legislative framework for Social Work and they support people by:

- **Assess needs and eligibility**

Carry out Care Act assessments to identify care and support needs

Apply national eligibility criteria (Care Act 2014)

- **Promote wellbeing**

Support physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing

Consider factors like independence, dignity, relationships, and safety (Care Act s.1)

- **Care planning and review**

Develop person-centred care and support plans

Regularly review outcomes and adjust support

- **Safeguarding adults**

Identify and respond to abuse or neglect

Lead or contribute to safeguarding enquiries (Care Act s.42)

- **Support choice and control**

Promote personal budgets and direct payments

Enable individuals to have control over their care

- **Apply Mental Capacity Act 05 (MCA)**

Assess capacity where required

Make or support best interest decisions

Ensure least restrictive options are used

- **Work with carers**

Assess carers' needs and offer support (Care Act duties to carers)

- **Coordinate multi-agency support**

Work with health, housing, providers, and other professionals

Contribute to MDT working (e.g. for complex needs / PBS)

- **Promote independence and prevention**

Reduce long-term dependence on services

Support reablement and early intervention

- **Advocacy and voice**

Ensure individuals are heard and represented

Arrange independent advocacy where required

- **Manage risk proportionately**

Balance safety with autonomy ("positive risk-taking")

Ensure legal and ethical decision-making

- **Address equality and accessibility**

Make reasonable adjustments (Equality Act 2010)

Ensure accessible communication and inclusion

CQC – Halton Borough Council

Overall summary - Care Quality Commission

Summary of peoples experiences

- Workers trained in assessments
- Waiting lists have reduced
- Risk management
- Telling their story multiple times
- Outlier in feedback on choice offered
- Positive experience of front door service
- Information on referral routes not readily accessible
- Carers and contingency planning inconsistent
- Co-production – mixed and may not be fully embedded



Strengths

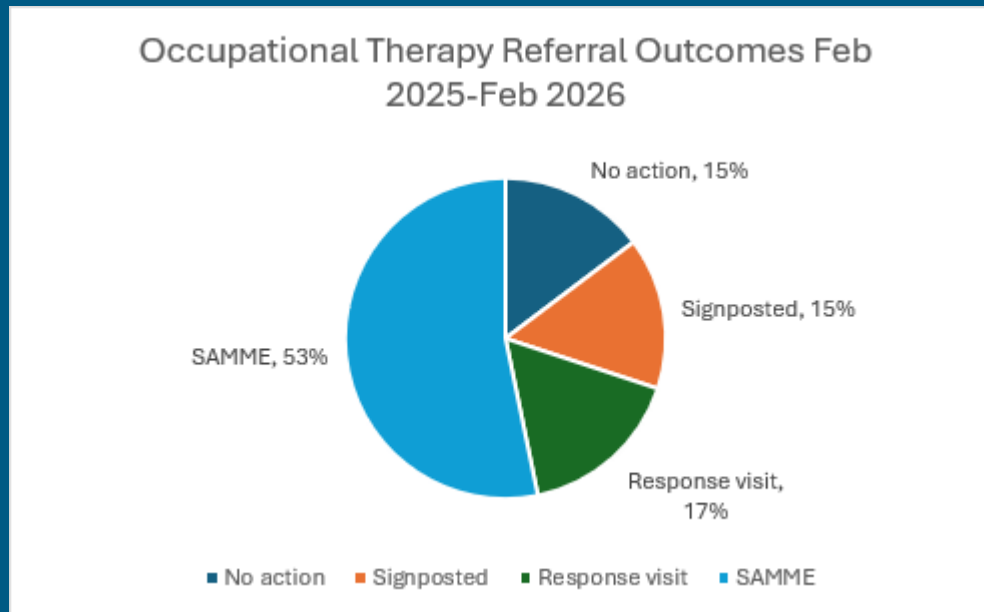
- Good support at all levels
- Strong leadership
- Culture of strengths based model
- Prevention and Wellbeing offer
- Arrangements for Safeguarding
- Hospital discharge arrangements
- Work with seldom heard groups evidenced
- Culture of development and informed decision making
- 'grow your own' approaches

..and areas for development

- Prevention based model – across all services
- Transformation
- Transition and consistency
- Domiciliary care and new framework

Prevention and Wellbeing Service

- Front door to adult social care – established 2023/2024
- Social Workers, Occupational Therapists, CCWs and Wellbeing Officers
- Daily huddle
- Prevention Panel
- Strengths based and Systems approaches
- Carers support
- Embed work with Seldom Heard Groups
- Community presence/improving accessibility to PWS
- Interface with Public Health/HIT
- Co-production and Effectiveness
- Prevention panel implementation
- AI Pilot (discussed later)



How have we lead and overseen excellent social work practice

- Bespoke training offer to meet the needs of the service
- Social Work Matters
- Service Development
- Quality social work practice
- Leading development of excellent social workers
- Performance and development of new Dashboards.
- Benchmarking and networks
- A strong Business Support offer
- Co production and listening to people who use services, their families and care givers.
- Working towards a world of AI in Social Work.



- Case File Audits / Multi Agency Audit

Positives

- Evidence of effective partnership working
- Excellent documentation of person wishes
- Excellent use of MCA
- Advocacy appropriately used
- Planning future needs evidenced
- Good problem solving skills and positive outcomes evidenced



Areas of development

- More focus on carers
- Clearer processes around transition into adult services

Advise the Director of Adult Social Services (DASS) and/or wider Council in complex or controversial cases and on case or other law relating to social work practice

How?

Over the past year, Halton Adult Social Care have enabled Social Workers with mechanisms to advise the PSW on complex or controversial cases, or law relating to Social Work Practice. These mechanisms include

- Social Work Matters forum – chaired by the Principal Social Worker and attended well by Social Workers across Adult Social Care
- Risk Enablement Panel – a mechanism to escalate any cases or scenarios to the Principal Social Worker and Senior Management which may need oversight
- Attendance at team meetings of Social Work/Care Staff and continued presence within the service
- Embedded legal access pathways
- Regular Principal and Practice Manager Meetings



Lead the development of excellent Social Workers

How?

- ✓ Prevention and Wellbeing Service – the front door to Adult Social Care
- ✓ Budget Recovery and working with stakeholders and services to deliver high quality services
- ✓ Social care Debt Recovery Workers – supporting people who have accrued care fee debt, for better outcomes.
- ✓ From April 2025, a new Domiciliary Care Framework has been implemented.
- ✓ ALD Redesign and Transformation
- ✓ Strengths based approaches
- ✓ Continue to support people of Halton who are currently in Hospital with dedicated teams, with a focus on home first.
- ✓ Recruitment and Retention success
- ✓ Pilot AI
- ✓ Key partner at regional and national networks, including the ADASS NW Principal Social Workers Network, Cheshire and Merseyside Social Work Teaching Partnership (CMSWTP)
- ✓ A monthly Social Work Matters roundup newsletter goes out, highlighting, new Government guidance, Legislation updates, and articles of interest from Social Work England, BASW, SCIE, NICE, RIPFA etc., with CPD opportunities for Adult Social Care staff



Support and develop arrangements for excellent practice



How?

- Shared strategic vision – review of the Vision for Adult Services will take place 2026/27
- Social care guidance – vital tool for Adult Services staff.
- Dedicated ASC workforce Development team
- Focus on Self Neglect/Hoarding and learning, Debt Recovery, Legal Literacy and learnings from Safeguarding.
- Forging a positive working relationship with the Cheshire and Merseyside Social Work Teaching Partnership (CMSWTP),
- Social Work and Occupational Therapy Degree Apprenticeship Programme
- A relationship with the FEI providers has been strengthened and a presentation on Social Work as a career choice has taken place with more to follow. This work has strengthen the pipeline of Social Work training, development and recruitment in Halton.
- Regular monthly support sessions have been set up for Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWs).
- The Continued Professional Development (CPD) of Social Workers has continued to be supported by the Social Work Matters (SWM) forums. Particular themes that have been covered are support to carers, Prevention & Wellbeing, hoarding, working with people who have complex needs.
- A monthly Social Work Matters roundup newsletter goes out, highlighting, new Government guidance, Legislation updates, and articles of interest from Social Work England, BASW, SCIE, NICE, RIPFA etc., with CPD opportunities for Adult Social Care staff
- Staff Action Learning sets, Journal clubs and dedicated time to uphold their CPD requirements to uphold their registration for social work England.
- Established progression pathways
- Grow your own model



Social Work Matters Forum

The social work matters forum is well established, embedded and enables the opportunity for social workers in Adults to come together, share learning and provide reflective discussions on key themes, changes, concerns. at the end of the 2025/2026 period, we asked social workers what their priorities would be in 2 key areas

Feedback on Social Work Matters Forum, determining 5 key priorities on how the forum can support them as Social Workers for 2026/2027

- 1. Shared Learning and Cross-Team Collaboration
- 2. Practice-Based Learning Through Case Studies and Law
- 3. Workforce Development and Early Career Support
- 4. Engagement, Incentives, and Attendance
- 5. Broader Partnerships and Career Pathways

Feedback on their role as social workers generally, and determining 5 key priority areas for 2026/2027 for the PSW

- 1. Workforce Capacity, Pay and Working Conditions
- 2. Workforce Development, Specialisation and Skills
- 3. Wellbeing, Culture and Organisational Stability
- 4. Preventative and Life Skills Support
- 5. Service Provision and Financial Sustainability

Continual Professional Development and our 'Grow your own' Model

- We currently have 7 workers who have started or coming to the end of the Social Work Apprenticeships Scheme. We also have 1 worker who is currently on a Visual Impairment Apprenticeship and another worker who has recently commenced the Occupational Therapy Apprenticeship Scheme.
- During 2025, 8 newly qualified social workers started their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE). 3 Social Workers completed their ASYE in 2025.
- We have had 1 Social Worker complete their Best Interests Assessor Course and 2 due to start in 2026.
- We have had 4 Social Workers start their Practice Educator Training in 2025 and an additional 3 workers, who have successfully completed the course
- We have had a Social Worker complete their Approved Mental Health Professional training in 2025, with another due to commence on the training and another Social Worker due to restart their training in April 2026 following a period of leave.
- We have had a community care worker complete a course in British Sign Language. In addition, 10 workers are due to complete training around communicating effectively with people with a learning disability.
- In 2025, we have rolled out to all Adult Social Care staff on the Oliver McGowan Mandatory training on Learning Disability And Autism. We are currently in the process of developing a network of experts by experience, to deliver sessions to staff going forward. Jennifer Foreshaw trained to be our lead trainer and we wish her success this this role.
- CIC Autism Wellbeing are currently provided 3 courses as part 2 face to face training, for up tp 90 staff over 3 sessions.
- CPD is captured within our supervision processes and we continue to monitor and review the impact of this, aligned with the Halton Values Framework.



ASC Workforce Development Team

- Lisa Cookson, Practice Manager
- Catherine Burchell, Practice Manager
- Melanie Skelton, Service Development Officer

An overview of the team from Lisa,

- Adult Social Care Learning and Development (or Workforce Development as we are frequently referred to) are a very tiny team working hard to make a big impact. We are here to enable the workforce to grow, with provision of mandatory training and wider learning opportunities. Since I came into post in 2022 I am proud that we have grown the Apprenticeship programme and developed the ASYE programme with support from managers and teams. As our tiny team has expanded to include Catherine Burchell in a Practice Educator role, and as Melanie Skelton has become more involved with the SC-RES, I feel the support that we offer the workforce is expanding with a greater emphasis on wellbeing, not only developing the skills of the workforce but also ensuring that people feel supported and understood in the workplace.
- We have also been working with the PSW to build on Social Work Matters, to encourage workers to come and talk about local cases we can learn from, in addition to listening to what social workers want to hear about and responding to the evidence from case file audits that helps to inform the topics that need to be covered. Mel also gathers information from far and wide on learning opportunities for the whole wider workforce and shares this treasure in the monthly Mash UP newsletter.
- I work closely with the Cheshire and Merseyside Teaching Partnership and have recently enjoyed completing a small research study on workloads with a focus on NQSWs. We are now looking at how we can improve the ASYE portfolio to keep the quality of evidence but with less work for NQSWs and their ASYE assessors. I am constantly looking at how the programme can be improved and I am very proud that we have introduced input from People with lived experience of receiving services on the panel.

Kym Lawson, Principal Manager of the Complex Care Widnes and Adult Reviewing Team

- Working with Halton Borough Council I have been provided the opportunity to grow and professional develop. I began my career in an administrative role within the finance department in June 2002, where I developed valuable organisational and communication skills. Although I enjoyed the role, I realised that I wanted a career where I could work more directly with people and make a positive difference within the community. This led me to move into community care worker within the (then) Older People's Team in Widnes (OPW).
- During my time in OPW, I was encouraged to further develop my skills. With the support of managers and colleagues, I successfully secured a place on the Social Worker Apprenticeship programme. This opportunity was pivotal and demonstrated Halton's commitment to nurturing their own workforce. Balancing work, study, and personal responsibilities was challenging, but I felt supported throughout the process.
- After qualifying as a Social Worker in 2009, I continued to develop professionally and gained experience across adult social care services. I have completed additional training as part of this role, as a Best Interest Assessor and also as a Practice Educator, supporting Social Workers in their learning journey as well as ASYE who are newly qualified. Over time, I progressed into the role of Advanced Social Work Practitioner in the Transition team, where I was able to mentor colleagues, support complex case work, and contribute to service improvements. The opportunities available to grow within the organisation gave me confidence to continue pushing myself professionally.
- Wanting to further strengthen my leadership and management skills, I undertook an ILM 5 qualification. This development enabled me to successfully secure a Practice Manager role within the newly created Adult Reviewing Team. Being part of a new team brought exciting challenges and opportunities to help shape and develop the service.
- Currently, I have stepped up as Interim Principal Manager within Complex Care Widnes, a role that has allowed me to continue developing my leadership skills while supporting both staff and service users through increasingly complex and demanding work. Its positive to work within an organisation that recognises and actively supports career progression.
- Looking back over the past, nearly 24 years, I can confidential say that the development opportunities, encouragement, and willingness to support staff have been key to my career journey and working in Adult Social Care in Halton has enabled me to grow both personally and professionally.



'Grow your own'

Testimony's

Student Social Worker Apprentice, Kelly Parkinson, Complex Care Runcorn

My name is Kelly Parkinson; my current role is working as a Community Care Worker in Complex Care Runcorn where I have worked since 2020. I have worked for Halton Borough Council since 2008. The roles I have undertaken include working as a domiciliary care worker, a care assistant in Oakmeadow, an installation officer in Telecare and a senior in Dorset Gardens. The different roles I have worked in have enabled me to develop extensive experience, skills and knowledge. I applied for the social work apprenticeship as I felt empowered to take the opportunity to further expand on my knowledge and skills and to continue to develop on a professional level. I am passionate about working in adult social care and thoroughly enjoy my role. Whilst the work required to complete the apprenticeship is challenging on top of continuing to work, I feel inspired and motivated and I am enjoying the apprenticeship. I am very grateful that I have been offered this opportunity

Natasha Boirchall, NQSW and ASYE, CCR

I am 34 years old and will complete my ASYE this year. In 2016 I started an admin role for a local council, working alongside IRO's, CP chairs and the LADO to organise and minute meetings. During this time I discovered the hard work and dedication that social workers put into their roles, for families and children. It was originally a temporary contract, however, I remained in the role for two years, and during that time, I decided to attend an access to social work course at a local college.

From there I attended Chester University with the aim of becoming a children's social worker, however, I was fortunate to be offered a dual placement during my 2nd year, as well as working with children and families, I worked at a local community centre for two days a week where I supported a local learning disability group with activities and a food bank and a local deaf group with fund raising for new vans, and an accessible garden for some of their elderly/disabled members, from there begun my passion for supporting adults.

I was originally offered a 100 days placement on a children's social work team, however due to personal circumstances, I had to delay my final placement for a year. On return I was offered a placement at Halton and I enjoyed every moment of it.

The team I was placed on is made up of lots of dynamic characters, and there was an immediate sense of being part of the team from the moment I joined as a student. Building working relationships with the team was easy, everybody including the managers are extremely supportive of each other. We respect and value each others opinions from the senior members of the team, down. The role can be challenging and this isn't a secret to anybody, however the support of the team makes the role less challenging for all of us, nobody is alone.

I enjoyed my placement at Halton so much, that I asked during most supervisions about upcoming jobs within the team. When it became available, I applied for the position, but had to wait for my final grade to apply for registration. I didn't want to leave, and come back, so I was fortunate enough to be supported by management into a temporary agency role within the team as a CCW whilst waiting.

The support is also echoed across other professionals working within adult social care at Halton Borough council, I have received a lot of guidance and support throughout ASYE, I have been given the opportunity to access training, and support with other peers across the team also completing their ASYE.

When you look across the adult social work teams, a lot of people are longstanding employees of Halton borough council, and hopefully that will also be myself in 10 years time.

Social Worker, Rob Clements, Complex Care Widnes Team – recently completed his ASYE

My name is Rob and I have recently completed my ASYE in 2025.

I studied criminology and sociology at Sheffield Hallam University with initial aims of becoming a probation officer. I decided to remain living in Sheffield for a few years after finishing my degree and started employment in a care role for an agency in Sheffield. This was originally intended to be a temporary role, having never undertaken a care role prior to this. However, when fulfilling my role, it became apparent to me how much I enjoyed helping/caring/supporting vulnerable adults.

I then needed to move back to Chester due to unforeseen circumstances, and sought a caring role in Chester. Over the next few years I became passionate about my role, and the effect this had on vulnerable individuals. Making a small difference to individuals lives within 24hr care settings felt ever more rewarding. I was offered various senior roles however I declined as I knew that I did not want to remain in this specific role for many more years – I wanted to take the way in which I could support individuals, further.

I applied and was accepted to complete a Social Work Master with Chester University. Towards completion of the MA, I researched various Local Authorities and decided to apply for Halton to which I was offered the ASYE post to begin February 2024.

ASYE was a very positive experience throughout. I feel that I was given guidance and support when needed, but not in an over bearing way. My case load and case complexity grew as I developed in my social work practice throughout my ASYE at a pace that was suitable for myself.

Working for Adults in Halton has been very positive throughout. I feel that I am in a supportive team, and have built working relationships with other professionals from other teams. I have found all professionals working within Adults Halton to be friendly, approachable and generally happy to help if needed.

I can envision myself remaining in Halton for many years to come.

Louise Derbyshire, Social Worker, Complex Care Widnes

My name is Louise Derbyshire, and I am currently completing my ASYE as a social worker. I joined Halton on 17 March 2025, having worked in the health and social care sector since 2016 in a variety of roles, including domiciliary carer, support worker, activity coordinator and lead activity coordinator, before undertaking my social work qualification.

I chose to pursue social work because of the impact it had on my own family. I witnessed first-hand the value of person-centred practice and how empowering it can be when done well. I also saw how the inherent power within the profession can cause harm when it is used insensitively or without taking the time to truly understand individuals and their lived experiences. These experiences shaped my belief that social work plays an essential role in our communities. When delivered with empathy, respect and curiosity, it can have a profoundly positive impact on people's lives.

Being an ASYE social worker in adult services at Halton is both highly rewarding and challenging. I value the opportunity to support adults to maintain their independence, uphold their rights, and improve their quality of life, particularly when they are facing complex health, social care or safeguarding situations. It is incredibly fulfilling to see individuals regain stability or confidence through the interventions I have been involved in. At the same time, the role brings its own pressures—managing caseloads, working within multidisciplinary teams, and learning to balance professional curiosity with empathy can feel overwhelming at times as a newly qualified worker. However, every experience contributes to my growth, and I am proud to be developing my skills while making a positive difference to people's lives in Halton.

These challenges are significantly eased by the support of a highly experienced and approachable social work team. Knowing that I can seek guidance, discuss complex cases, or share how I am feeling makes a substantial difference to my confidence and resilience. Their ongoing encouragement, thoughtful supervision, and willingness to mentor me help me stay grounded and supported. This strong sense of teamwork has made my ASYE journey both rewarding and enriching, and it has enabled me to develop my practice with confidence while continuing to provide meaningful support to adults in Halton.

Student Social Worker Apprentice – Lynne Metcalf, Community Care Worker, Mental Health Team

I have worked for Halton Borough Council since 2002, with a brief break in service when I moved to the NHS - an experience that reminded me the grass isn't always greener.

I chose a career in social care because I want to support people and make a meaningful difference. The role of Community Care Worker felt like a natural fit for my skills and experience. I initially worked in the Whiston Discharge Team, which provided invaluable experience, but I later moved into mental health - an area I have always been passionate about. Gaining experience in community-based work was important to me, and now I couldn't imagine working anywhere else.

I applied for the apprenticeship because I wanted to deepen my knowledge and skills to further support the people I work with. Community Care Workers make a significant impact, but the role has limitations, and becoming a social worker will enable me to help people in a more comprehensive way. I am fortunate to work alongside inspiring social workers who lead by example every day. I can honestly say that I love the apprenticeship. Balancing work and study is challenging, but it is incredibly rewarding and there is so much support and encouragement, both internally and from the university, and I am truly grateful for the opportunity.

I enjoy working in Adult Services in Halton - it is a great place to be.

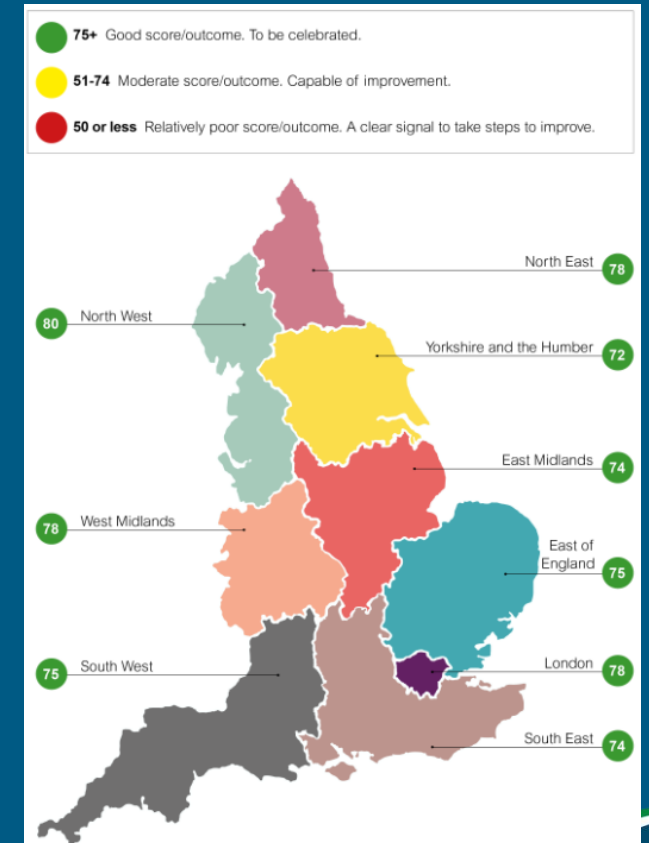


2025 Adult Social Care Employer Standards Health Check Survey

Employer standards survey for registered social workers and social care workers 2025: National summary / Local

Government Associational

- An annual **Health Check Survey** is conducted by the LGA at a national level. Halton Social Workers have taken part in the survey every year since 2020. The purpose of the health check survey is to better understand the experiences of Social Workers. It is intended to help support and deliver effective social work and means that issues can be identified, addressed and allows social workers to feel listened to.
- Overall, the 2025 survey results provide valuable insights into the experiences of social workers and social care staff, and highlight areas where employers can focus their efforts to improve working conditions and support for their staff. By addressing the identified challenges and building on the strengths, employers can create a more positive and effective work environment for social workers, ultimately benefiting the communities they serve.
- Overall, this year saw a slight increase in satisfaction with the employer standards overall by one percentage point, with half of the standards receiving a more positive score than last year. All eight standards were rated a good average score.
- However, there remains room for improvement. While standard 1 – strong and clear social work framework – retains a good score, it dropped two points lower than last year. The survey also highlighted that workplace experience continues to be rated with a moderate score. Employers should focus on supporting their workforce's wellbeing in the context of rising pressure and additional burden across the sector.



Oversee quality assurance and improvement of social work practice, including Support effective social work supervision and decision making



Co production framework and advisory group now established



Direct Payments / Personal Assistant focus group



Listening to people who use services – embedding of Co-Production within Adult Services



Audit and governance arrangements.



CQC – what did people who use services tell us?



a review is being undertaken of the Supervision Policy and the Case File Audit Policy.



Complex Needs Forum, Legal Access Pathways and Risk Enablement Panel fully established and overseen by leaders within Adult Social Care.

Adult Safeguarding update

- There have been a number of policy reviews for 2024/2025 including
 - Safeguarding Induction Booklet
 - DoLS in Community Settings Policy updated
 - DoLS Policy updated
 - HSAB Escalation Policy updated
 - Safeguarding Case File Audit Policy updated
 - PIPOT Policy updated
 - Thematic Multi Agency Audits well embedded
 - Plus... the organisation of events for National Safeguarding Week
- The HSAB annual report for 2025/26 is in development – all reports and information can be accessed here: [The Board | Adult Safeguarding](#)

Adult Safeguarding | Adult Safeguarding



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI).

Halton is committed to taking action to improve equality, diversity and inclusion across the organisation for both staff and the communities we serve, with a corporate EDI plan.

The organisational wide EDI plan has identified 14 key strategic aims.

Whilst Adult Social Care fully endorses the corporate aims, we went 'one step further' and deliver on actions specific to the Adult Social Care service area.

As such, the EDI plan for Adult Social Care has been produced which outlines the responsibilities we have around EDI, defines what we mean by EDI and how we embed EDI in the department through:

- Promoting community integration
- Promoting social inclusion
- Supporting carers
- Service Development
- Listening
- Adult social care as an EDI leader
- Safeguarding
- Monitoring EDI progress

As a result, Adult Social Care have

- ✓ Investigated what community resources (mapping) that support social inclusion and integration of marginalised or seldom heard groups, such as refugees, traveller communities and the LGBTQ community.
- ✓ Actively feeding back staff comments to the Corporate Strategic EDI group on the requirement for staff EDI networks to provide peer support and have a voice.
- ✓ Updating information resources that can help people socially integrate, such as the Living Well in Halton Leaflet and webpages.
- ✓ An equitable and transparent staff reward scheme
- ✓ Discussion about involvement in the Skills for Care Race Equality Scheme.
- ✓ Embedded with Corporate Colleagues the Reverse Mentoring Programme. Further details are here. [CorpPPB2Sept25 EDIPolicy.docx.pdf](#)

- Isaac Atkins, Social Worker Complex Care Runcorn and Chair of the EDI Disability and Neurodiversity Staff Network Group.



- Emran Ali, Social Worker Complex Care Runcorn and Chair of the EDI Race Equality Staff Network Group.



Social Work and AI

What we are doing

As part of the wider offer corporately around implementation of AI, a company we are working with have developed an AI app. This is at the Pilot phase, but the aim is to supplement recording of social care assessments and using AI to translate them directly into a case management system

Aim

- provides faster, more accurate documentation,
- reduces administrative burden for practitioners, and
- improves the consistency and quality of case records.
- Avoids duplication

By capturing rich, natural conversations and converting them into structured information, AI helps ensure key details are not missed, supports timely decision-making, and allows staff to spend more time with individuals rather than on paperwork. This approach also strengthens compliance by producing clearer, more complete records and creates a more efficient, user-friendly workflow across social care services.

The current pilot consists of 20 members of staff across CSC and Adults and focuses initially on the following forms:

- Child Supervision
- Child Assessment
- Carers Assessment
- Occupational Therapy Assessment
- Safeguarding Concerns
- Agreement to pay

Outcome

- We hopefully will be able to report on the progress of this pilot in next years PSW Annual Report. Best Wishes to the teams.
- This year's priority is to develop a robust policy and audit process around the use of AI.



- In addition to support the workforce around AI, we have
- eLearning Module , focusing on AI
- Support from the ICT Service and Information Governance Team

We would like to wish the teams every success with the Pilot and look forward to how AI can support our Adult Social Care staff going forward.



Celebrating Success Awards 2025

CELEBRATING
SUCCESS

Just to say...

... you are valued

- ✓ A number of people who work in Adult Social Care were nominated/awarded awards for their contributions to Adult Social Care, at our Halton Celebrating Success Awards 2025
- ✓ A Massive well done and a fantastic achievement.
- ✓ Its important we recognise and celebrate the work people do, supporting the people of Halton when they need it the most.



Our priorities for the next year as PSW

Review **audit and governance** arrangements

Review Social Worker
Supervision and Progression Policies

Promote **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

Learning from people who use services – continue to embed co-production within policy, processes, decision making and recruitment processes

Prepare for change –AI, Mental Health Amendment Bill, SEND Reforms, Neighborhood's and Transformation

Making **information** more **accessible**

Continue to embed
Strengths Based Assessments and Support Planning including a review of the Transition Protocol

Listening to and **Increasing the local offer for informal carers**

Dean Tierney
Interim Head of Service
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'Best wishes for 2026/2027 and thanks for taking the time to read the report.'

'Any questions regarding the report, or if you want to discuss Social Work with adults in Halton, please do not hesitate to contact me on the email address provided'

