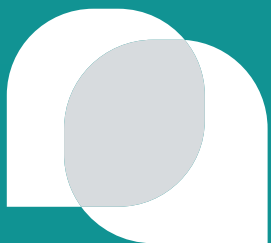


**National
Appropriate Adult
Project
Annual Report
2022/23**



**Appropriate
Adult**



COSLA

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Foreword



Sandy Riddell

Chair, National Oversight Group

Chair, Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland

This second annual report outlines the impressive progress made in further developing Appropriate Adult services in Scotland. I can safely speak on behalf of all members of The National Oversight Group when I say that we have been very proud to work with so many committed colleagues across the sector to take forward these vital frontline services. These services play such a critical role in helping to ensure that the rights of vulnerable people who come into contact with the justice system are fully protected.

So much has happened since the statutory service came into being and the National Oversight Group was established back in 2020. At our first National Appropriate Adult event in Dundee last November, we reflected with our partners and key stakeholders on the progress made to date and how back in 2020, despite the significant amount done by many individuals and groups to establish and drive forward provision, we found

a system in much need of further support and development. At that time, there was without question a need to promote greater consistency, quality and sustainability in provision across Scotland; the availability of training and development was nowhere near where it needed to be; awareness of the role of appropriate adults across sectors was patchy and that all important golden thread from practitioner to leader, within and across organisations, was inconsistent and sometimes non-existent. It would be fair to say that people on the ground were working with some of Scotland's most vulnerable people at very critical points in their lives without the full guidance, support and direction they needed. But since then, we have been continuing on that national journey and despite a global pandemic and the considerable uncertainty resulting from various major strands of on-going reform, we have come a long way.

Reflecting on what has been achieved during the period covered by this report, we can see that much needed development has been made on strengthening communication, governance and support across the sector; progress has been made on training and development; national guidance is being actively reviewed and a quality improvement framework has been developed and launched, which in itself will play a huge role in promoting consistency of service quality across Scotland.

I am particularly indebted to the amazing staff who have contributed to the work of the national project. In particular during 2022/23, I want to mention Frances Donohoe and Ffion Heledd for the huge amount that they have achieved. All the uncertainty regarding funding and the future of the project has been really unhelpful and has inevitably resulted in staff turnover. This position will unfortunately continue in the short to medium term. Yet despite how unsettling this has been, our staff have still managed to play a major role in supporting partners and stakeholders in further developing structures and progressing initiatives. I am also grateful to COSLA for hosting the project and playing such an important role, often behind the scenes, to ensure that the project remained on track.

Our ability nationally to continue supporting services will depend of course on the continuation of the project and the National Oversight Group. I am sure that you will agree that the progress outlined in this second report is promising and there is a lot to celebrate but I am still of the view that we still have a long way to go. Good foundations are now in place but much more remains to be done to ensure services evolve in ways that are of a consistently high standard across Scotland's communities and are fully delivered in ways that are fair and respectful of individual rights and the diverse needs of those who come into contact with them. A gap therefore still exists between our shared ambitions and actual practice commitments on the ground.

So this annual report heralds real progress despite the many challenges encountered. Our journey needs to continue though and in that respect we will all have a role to play in keeping that all important momentum going. Thank you for all the help and support given to the project - we look forward to working with you all in the year ahead.

Introduction

The Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2016 (Support for Vulnerable Persons) Regulations 2019 - which came into force on 10 January 2020 - confer on Local Authorities the duties to deliver Appropriate Adult services.

There are 21 Appropriate Adult services within Scotland representing all 32 Local Authorities. The services were placed on a statutory footing in January 2020 with work now underway to support Local Authorities transitioning to statutory arrangements.

The Scottish Government funded the role of National Appropriate Adult Coordinator for three years from 2020 to inform, support and promote change across Appropriate Adult services during the implementation of statutory provision and the move to a rights-based approach.

Role of National Appropriate Adult Co-ordinator

The aims of the role are to:

- Promote consistency, quality and sustainability in relation to Appropriate Adult provision across Scotland
- Implement national Appropriate Adult training framework
- Promote awareness of the role of the Appropriate Adult across different sectors
- Contribute to implementation of quality assessment framework for local authorities in relation to Appropriate Adult services
- Contribute to development and implementation of policy initiatives relating to Appropriate Adults and communication support in the criminal justice system
- Deliver on specific and thematic pieces of work including the national Appropriate Adult reports, research and guidance
- Supporting the stakeholder group overseeing the implementation of the statutory service, structuring work of the group's agenda and coordinate its actions

In addition, the post of National Appropriate Adult Policy & Participation Officer was created in March 2022 to support the development of local governance, service delivery and training and standards.

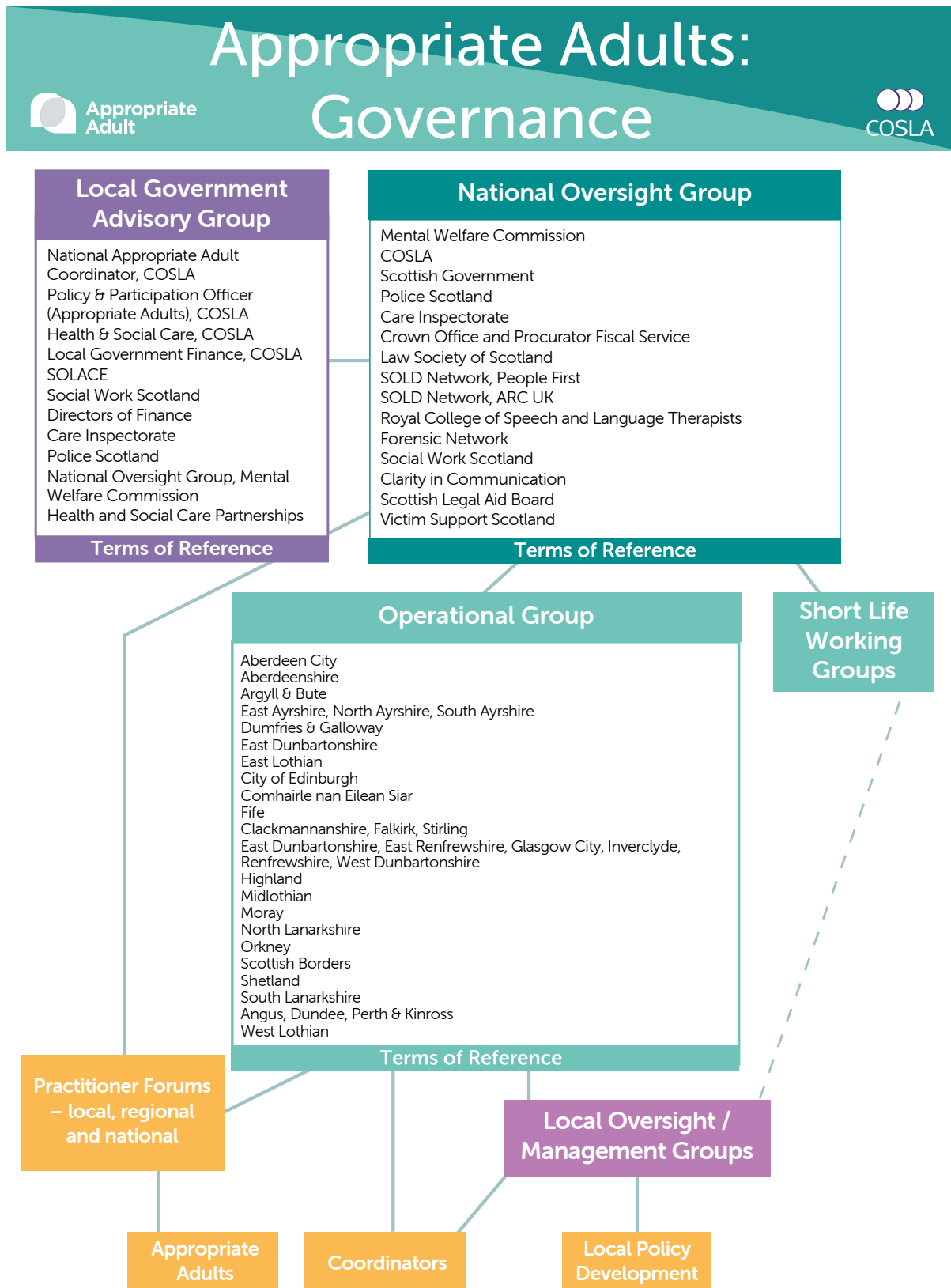
Both posts are hosted by COSLA and are subject to its governance arrangements. This ensures local government is closely involved in the implementation and development of policy and practice.

Staff turnover led to additional pressure on the national project during 2022/23, but work continued during this period. Jo Savege left her post as the National Appropriate Adult Coordinator in September 2022 and the post was vacant for six months. Subsequently, Ffion Heledd took on the role in April 2023 and remained in post until December 2023. During this period, Frances Donohoe continued in her secondment from Aberdeen City as the national Appropriate Adult Policy & Participation Officer, supporting partners and stakeholders. In September 2023, the Policy & Participation post was extended until March 2024, in recognition of the need for continuing resource to progress priorities.

National Governance

National Governance arrangements continue to develop, with increasing engagement from an expanding network of stakeholders.

There is now an established link between the National Oversight Group and service providers and practitioners at a local level through the National Operational Group and the National Practitioners Forum. This has helped to identify knowledge gaps and has encouraged the sharing of good practice, which in turn can inform policy development.



Appropriate Adult National Oversight Group

The National Oversight Group was established by the Scottish Government in 2020 as part of the measures to oversee the implementation of Appropriate Adult services moving to statutory provision. It is an advisory group that makes recommendations to relevant organisations and groups concerning Appropriate Adult provision. The aim is to ensure high quality and consistent service is provided in all parts of Scotland. This includes, but is not limited to, recommendations about:

- Delivery of services
- Use of services
- Training
- Quality assessment
- Updates to the guidance
- Development of policy at local and national government level

Members are providers, key stakeholders and partners with an involvement or interest in Appropriate Adult provision. This promotes a coordinated approach to the implementation and development of the statutory service. Current active membership is:

- [Mental Welfare Commission](#) (Chair)
- [Scottish Government](#)
- [Convention of Scottish Local Authorities \(COSLA\)](#) (Secretariat)
- [Care Inspectorate](#)
- [Police Scotland](#)
- [Social Work Scotland](#)
- [Royal College of Speech & Language Therapy](#)
- [Supporting Offenders with a Learning Disability \(SOLD\) Network](#)
- [People First](#)
- [Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service](#)
- [Law Society of Scotland](#)
- [The Forensic Network](#)
- [Victim Support Scotland](#)
- [Scottish Legal Aid Board \(SLAB\)](#)
- Representatives from the National Operational Group
- Representatives from the National Practitioners Forum

The group continued to hold quarterly meetings with high levels of attendance. New members joined and others re-engaged during 2023. These include the Scottish Legal Aid Board (representing Public Defence Solicitors) and practicing Appropriate Adults. Some stakeholders experienced increased pressure on resources and high staff turnover over this period, which was reflected in their ability to attend Oversight Group meetings, but engagement continued in other, more informal ways.

Minutes from the Group's meetings are published on the [COSLA Appropriate Adult webpage](#).

National Operational Group

The governance structure agreed by the Local Government Advisory Group and the National Oversight Group included the development of a National Operational Group as a subgroup of the National Oversight Group. As the name suggests, the group focuses on the operational aspects of service provision as well as training and standards. Membership of the group includes Local Co-ordinators and Local Authority leads with Police Scotland, the Care Inspectorate and other partner organisations attending specific to agenda items.

Since its inaugural meeting in August 2022, the group has met 7 times. For the time being, the group continues to be Chaired by the National Policy & Participation Officer – allowing a direct link to the national team and the evolving structures and programme of work as governance arrangements continue to evolve and embed. A representative is nominated to represent the Operational Group at the National Oversight Group at each meeting. Members agreed to share responsibility for this, due to other time pressures and work demands.

Minutes from the Group's meetings are published on the [COSLA Appropriate Adult webpage](#).

National Practitioners Forum

Monthly drop-in sessions for practitioners were established in August 2023. These are informal half hour sessions via MS Teams over lunchtime, open to all Appropriate Adults in Scotland, offering a safe space for practitioners to explore practice issues, share experiences and to hear more about national developments. The group is hosted by the Policy & Participation Officer and relevant issues discussed are passed on to the Operational Group and National Oversight Group as appropriate.

Sessions were originally set up with invited speakers on a 3 monthly basis in July 2022 following a poll which people responded to asking for input from Police Scotland, The Care Inspectorate, The Law Society and The Crown Office. Following review and feedback it was agreed to have shorter drop-in sessions on a more frequent basis and the offer of extra time after the half hour session was offered if needed.

Some feedback from Appropriate Adults who joined the drop ins:

“ Thank you for inviting me to these sessions. As a new AA I find it really helpful to share and learn from other more experienced AA's ”

“ I enjoyed the points raised at today's meeting ”

Local Government Advisory Group

The creation of a Local Government Advisory Group strengthened connection between the National Oversight Group and local authorities from a strategic and corporate perspective. It also created a formal mechanism between the National Oversight Group and statutory provision whilst developing and embedding responsibilities nationally.

Membership of the group includes representatives from the following organisations:

- SOLACE
- Social Work Scotland
- Directors of Finance
- Care Inspectorate
- Health & Social Care Partnerships
- Police Scotland
- COSLA (Health & Social Care, Local Government Finance and Communities Teams)

Over the next period, there will be an important role for this group in supporting the establishment and embedding of local oversight arrangements and the roll out of the new Appropriate Adults Quality Improvement Framework.

Local Governance

There are 21 Appropriate Adults services across Scotland, with different models of delivery including services delivered through local government departments, third sector provision, and partnership arrangements. Sound leadership and local governance arrangements are critical to supporting the development of sustainable, accountable and transparent services.

The National Guidance for Appropriate Adults services stipulates that each Appropriate Adult service should have its own local Oversight Group, involving all relevant partners and stakeholders. Local oversight groups are in different stages of development across Scotland. The national team continues to support these developments, attend local oversight group meetings and continue to offer support on an individual basis to local coordinators as appropriate.

Developments

Awareness Raising and Engagement with Stakeholders

The national team engages on an ongoing basis with a wide range of partners and stakeholders, to highlight Appropriate Adult services and to influence the shape of relevant related policy developments. This includes presentations, training, conferences and input to meetings. Engagement over 2022/23 has included:

- The Children and Young People's Centre for Justice (CYCJ)
- Community Justice Scotland
- Presentation at Forth Valley Appropriate Adults Day
- Presentation at Police Scotland national training
- Adult Support and Protection Learning & Development network
- Training for Scottish Legal Aid Board PDSOs
- Presentation at National Forensic Service Clinical Forum Network
- COSLA national conference
- Adult Support and Protection Strategic Forum
- Equally Safe policy development
- Social Work Scotland Learning Disability and Autism subgroup
- COPFS
- HM Inspectorate of Prosecution Scotland

We have also contributed to the following consultations and information requests:

- A request from the Convenor of the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee of the Scottish Parliament for information on the use of Makaton in the Legal system

Newsletter

The Appropriate Adults Newsletter continues to be distributed on a quarterly basis, with subscriptions growing as awareness is raised. Along with signposting to training, research articles and partner/stakeholder information it also provides updates on local and national developments. To subscribe to receive newsletters straight to your inbox, [please sign up here](#).

Audio Visual Resource

The Scottish Government funded Police Scotland and Clarity in Communication (who at the time provided Appropriate Adult services in the Ayrshires) to produce three audio visual clips which can be used to raise awareness or to help train Appropriate Adults and Police Officers. These were launched in June 2023 and are available to view [here](#).

National Event: *Appropriate Adults – Our National Journey*

We held the first National Appropriate Adult event at The Steeple in Dundee on 29 November 2023. Close to 100 delegates attended, representing a wide range of partners and stakeholders, including Appropriate Adults and people with lived experience. Delegates took time to reflect on developments since 2020 and took part in a series of focused conversations to consider priorities for the next stage of development – specifically around the themes of:

- Quality Improvement
- Training and Standards
- Performance Information
- Sustainability

It is hoped that this will become a regular event that will bring a wide range of interested stakeholders together to both celebrate achievements and to ensure continued impetus and accountability for progressing actions.

Feedback was very positive with many commenting on the chance to make new connections, to challenge and discuss misconceptions, and to contribute to a wider discussion about future priorities for supporting and developing a sustainable service in the future.

“ The conference was a fantastic day and the information and the contacts gained were great, the review of all that has been achieved over recent years was unbelievable. Looking forward to the next one. ”

Clare Mills, our visual scribe from Listen, Think, Draw captured the information from the day and this was used to inform considerations about next steps as the initial funding for the project draws to an end in March 2024.

Review of National Guidance

The [Guidance for Local Authorities](#), published by the Scottish Government in January 2020, is a live document that requires to be kept under review. This is to ensure it reflects ongoing changes across health & social care and the legislation which supports this. In July 2022, the first review of the Guidance started with members of the National Oversight Group. This was followed in autumn 2023 by a wider request for views from the Scottish Government on draft amended guidance to ensure the Guidance reflected the voice and experience of local services. The Scottish Government aims to publish refreshed Guidance in 2024.

Quality Assurance and Improvement

The Care Inspectorate launched the new Quality Improvement Framework (QIF) to support self-evaluation for appropriate adult services in Scotland at our national event in November 2023. The model is based on the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) framework which is widely known, used, and highly regarded across a wide range of public and private sector organisations. The development of the framework was informed by extensive mapping, surveys and consultations across the Appropriate Adult landscape including people with lived experience of being supported by Appropriate Adults.

During the next stage, the Care Inspectorate will be engaging with the sector to support services to use and embed the QIF to support service development and continuous improvement through self-evaluation.

Training and Standards

Local Authorities have been legally responsible for providing training for Appropriate Adults since the implementation of the statutory service in January 2020. The regulations allow flexibility to tailor training to suit local needs, meaning that the function can be delivered in-house, in partnership with other areas and organisations or by contracts with third parties to deliver the service.

During the development of the model for the statutory Appropriate Adult service, there was support for creating a national training framework to help ensure that all of those carrying out the role have access to the same level of training, regardless of how the service or training is delivered in their area.

In April 2019, the Scottish Government set up a group consisting of delivery partners, stakeholders and specialists to identify what training is required for Appropriate Adults and the best way for this learning to be delivered. The group agreed that there was a pressing need to redesign initial training materials to ensure a more consistent approach in regard to core training across the country and to enhance training materials on areas which cut across justice, health and social care, including Speech and Language therapy, the role of the solicitor and other specialist inputs.

The Scottish Government appointed West Lothian College to develop and deliver a core set of training materials to be rolled out across Scotland and used in initial training for Appropriate Adults in all local authority areas to ensure that consistency in terms of core training for the role.

The contract led to core online training which could be tailored for use in local areas. The contract did not include any arrangements for on-going updates to the training materials, delivering in person initial or refresher training locally or providing training the trainer sessions over and above one initial session.

In 2023, Local Coordinators and Appropriate Adults expressed an urgent need for refresher training and training the trainer sessions locally. A group of local coordinators formed a short life working group over summer 2023 to review training materials and deliver refresher training for local coordinators under the banner of Scottish Appropriate Adult Network (SAAN). This was considered a holding position until longer-term plans can be made about training and development support at a national level and within the agreed national governance arrangements. In the meantime, new Appropriate Adults and Local Coordinators continue to be able to access the national resources by contacting West Lothian College directly or via the Policy and Participation Officer.

Performance Information and Data Collection

Progressing work on collecting performance information has been challenging, not least due to staff turnover, and a joined-up and considered approach across partners and stakeholders is now needed to progress this element.

A short life working group was set up in March 2021 to establish a national process for data collection and processing which could reliably inform service development and funding and identify training needs, both locally and nationally. Membership of the group was made up of representatives from a range of local authorities, providers and organisations. The group met on six occasions and agreed a consistent method for collection was required for use by all providers to reduce risk of error, ensuring reliable data.

The group developed an Information Pathway which reflects the information gathered by Appropriate Adult services. The Pathway is indicative of the information currently gathered and not a stipulation that all the information is gathered by all services for all referrals. Each service has a different process for referrals and gathering information.

Subsequently, the Improvement Service introduced the Data Acquisition Team at the Scottish Government as a possible system provider. Members of the Data Acquisition Team delivered a presentation on 'Procxed'. This is a platform (part of the wider [Scottish Exchange of Data \(Scotxed\)](#)), currently used by local authorities to support the collection and validation of data gathered by services working in areas including child protection, unpaid carers and justice. The platform would be adapted for Appropriate Adult service requirements and training for its use provided. The use of this platform would allow information gathered by Appropriate Adult services to be secure, reliable and able to be analysed alongside other data collections such as health inequalities and socio-economic deprivation. This in turn allows for a more informed approach to distribution of funding, training and service developments, locally and nationally.

The group recommended that:

- Services transition to data gathering practices in line with the Information Pathway
- Procxed was purchased to support data improvement, both in terms of gathering and analysis
- Funding avenues were explored

The group also identified risks:

- A reliance on a central national point, currently the National Appropriate Adult Co-ordinator (NAAC), as the point of contact for national analysis of the data and to take a lead on the use of Procxed, in particular linked to longer-term plans for the post
- A continued reliance on user input with the potential for data input error
- Initial and on-costs

Local Appropriate Adult Coordinators were given training and access to Procxed and training in July 2022. The system was subsequently suspended in September 2022 due to concerns raised by individual local authorities.

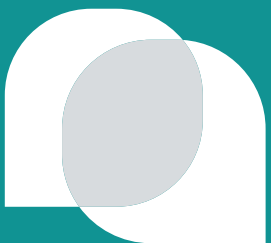
Since the system was suspended, the National Coordinator has reviewed progress to date and established that:

- It has not been possible to identify an agreed list of data items to be collected which is more specific than the information pathway agreed by the short life working group.
- Scottish Government Justice Analytical Services colleagues do not currently consider that the Appropriate Adult information would sit helpfully in any existing national dataset and would not foresee analysing it in conjunction with other data.
- There has been no whole systems mapping exercise undertaken to review where information currently sits, where there are gaps and how this could be most effectively used to improve outcomes for people receiving Appropriate Adult services.
- Local Oversight Groups are not fully established in all areas. Although local services collect information to inform local planning, this is not consistent. Performance information is not regularly scrutinised in all areas – more support is needed to help embed local oversight groups.

There are opportunities to learn from experience in other similar areas of work, for example the work on developing a minimum dataset for Adult Support and Protection services. The new Quality Improvement Framework offers an opportunity to look at performance information and data collection through a different lens, and this could be broadened out beyond local authorities to other partners. In October 2023, the National Oversight Group agreed that there is a need to look again at the collection of performance information at a national level.

The Journey Continues...





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