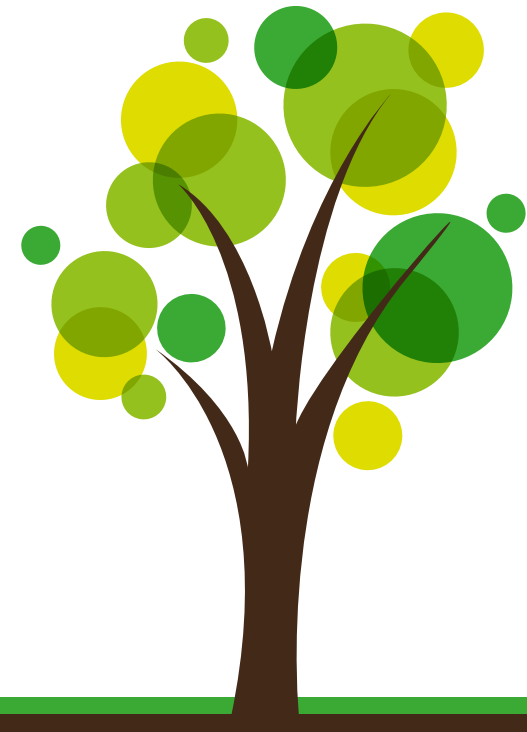


RICHMOND AND WANDSWORTH ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND PUBLIC HEALTH

PRINCIPAL SOCIAL WORKER ANNUAL REPORT 2025 - 2026

Prepared by Virindar Basi, Principal Social Worker
Adult Social Care and Public Health May 2026

ADULT SOCIAL CARE ACADEMY
Growing, nurturing, supporting and inspiring



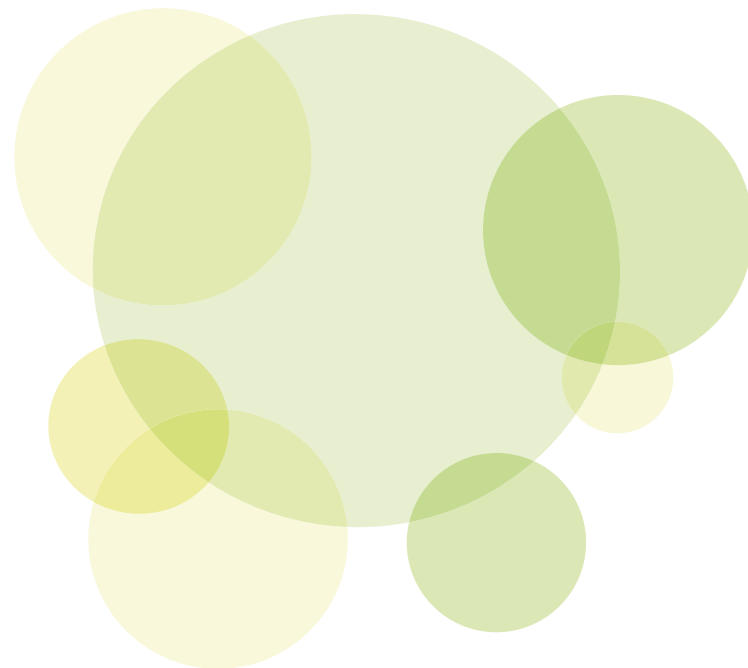
Executive Summary

Adult Social Care - Richmond and Wandsworth

- CQC rating: Good.
- Social work workforce: Stabilised through strengthened recruitment routes, apprenticeships, ASYE support and clearer development pathways.
- Practice quality: New, standardised audit framework introduced, with over 400 audits completed to strengthen assurance and consistency of practice.
- Safeguarding: Continued focus on proportionate, person-centred responses, with strengthened MCA and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards oversight.
- Professional leadership: Enhanced forums, reflective practice spaces and wellbeing support embedded across services, helping staff apply learning to complex practice.

Key priorities for 2026/27

- Workforce retention, wellbeing and professional development during organisational change.
- Leading cultural change and service transformation to support consistent, strengthen based practice.
- Strengthening quality assurance and demonstrating the impact of audit activity, in line with CQC inspection findings and preparation for future inspection.
- Embedding learning from SARs, safeguarding, MCA and risk management into everyday practice.
- Deepening co-production and strengthening the voice of people who draw on care and support.
- Strengthening support for carers by improving identification, involvement and access to timely information, advice and support.



Public-facing website summary

The Principal Social Worker Annual Report 2025/26 sets out the work undertaken across Adult Social Care in Richmond and Wandsworth to strengthen social work practice, support staff and improve outcomes for residents, carers and communities.

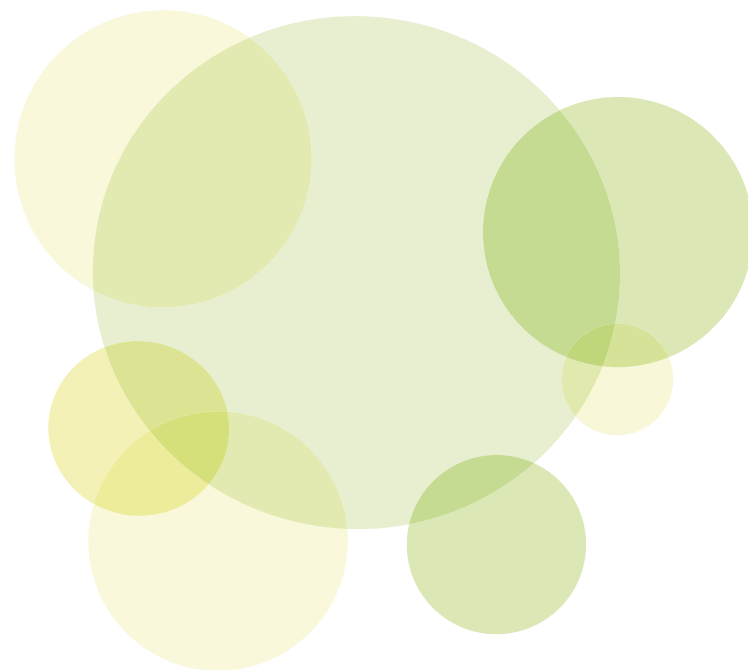
During the year, Adult Social Care received a 'Good' rating from the Care Quality Commission. This provides independent assurance that services are performing well and meeting expected standards. The report highlights how professional leadership, quality assurance, safeguarding, training and partnership working have supported safe, person-centred and legally robust practice.

Key developments included a strengthened audit framework, with more than 400 audits completed, improved oversight of safeguarding and Mental Capacity Act practice, continued development of Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards processes, and expanded training and support for the workforce. These areas help ensure that staff are confident, supported and able to make clear, well-evidenced decisions with and for residents and carers.

The report also recognises the increasing complexity of people's needs and the importance of working closely with families, carers, health partners, housing, voluntary sector organisations and wider council teams. This partnership approach helps services respond earlier, coordinate support more effectively and promote people's independence, safety and wellbeing.

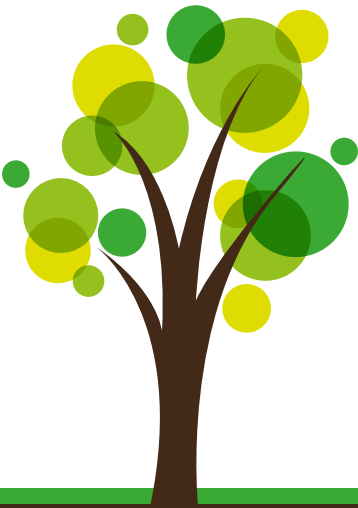
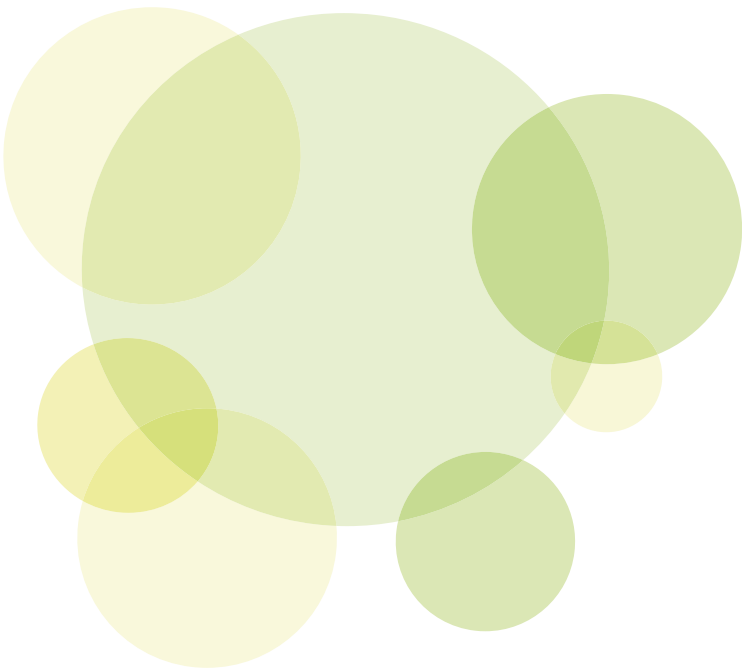
Looking ahead to 2026/27, the focus will be on strengthening workforce stability and wellbeing, improving quality assurance and learning from audits, embedding safeguarding and Mental Capacity Act practice, increasing co-production and carer involvement, responding to complex and diverse needs, and using digital tools to support better practice and outcomes.

The Principal Social Worker will continue to provide professional leadership across Adult Social Care, helping to ensure that social work values, resident voice and continuous improvement remain central to the way services are delivered in Richmond and Wandsworth.



Contents

1. Introduction	5
2. Achievements and progress	6
3. Our final CQC rating and score	9
4. Quality Assurance	10
5. Safeguarding, Mental Capacity Act and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards	11
6. Workforce, Professional Development and Wellbeing	13
7. Equality Diversity & Inclusion	14
8. Networks and Partnerships	14
9. Priorities for 2026/27	15
10. Closing Reflections	19



1. Introduction

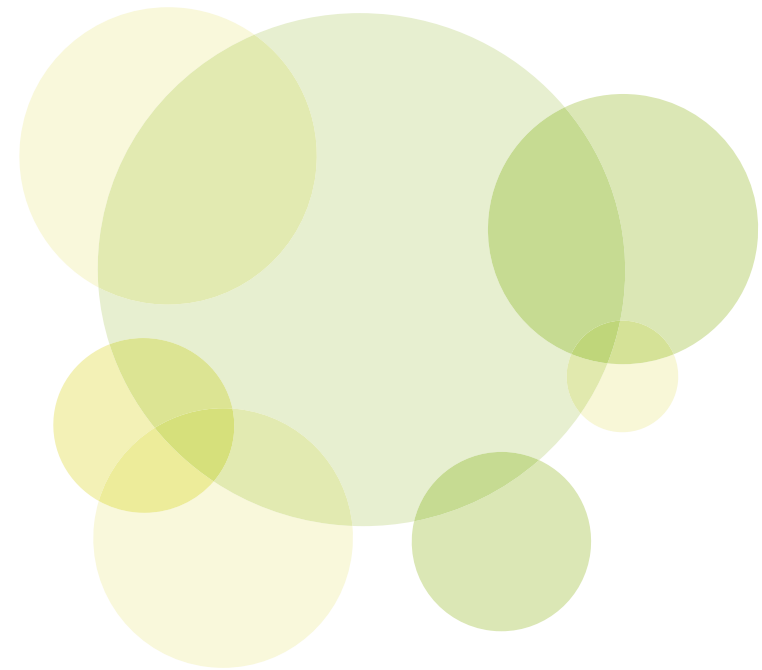
I am delighted to introduce the Principal Social Worker (PSW) Annual Report for Adult Social Care 2025/2026, which shares our achievements and progress over the past year.

This report shares our achievements and progress over the past year. It reflects on practice, identifies areas for further development, and highlights work to strengthen the quality of care and support for residents, carers and communities. The achievements in this report reflect the commitment of social care teams across Richmond and Wandsworth, whose work continues to make a positive difference to people in our communities.

The Principal Social Worker (PSW) provides professional leadership for adult social work across Richmond and Wandsworth. The role supports high standards of practice, workforce development, safeguarding, carers, quality assurance and partnership working, while giving assurance to senior leaders on practice quality and improvement.

This report sets out how the PSW has supported high-quality social work, reinforced professional standards, and contributed to safe, person-centred services in Adult Social Care.

It also highlights learning from the year and the priorities for 2026/27, including practice quality, safeguarding, workforce stability, co-production, carers and professional leadership. Looking ahead, the focus remains on building a resilient, skilled and confident workforce that can meet the needs of our diverse communities.



2. Achievements and progress

During 2025/26, the Principal Social Worker role focused on strengthening professional practice, workforce capability and system leadership.

Key achievements include:

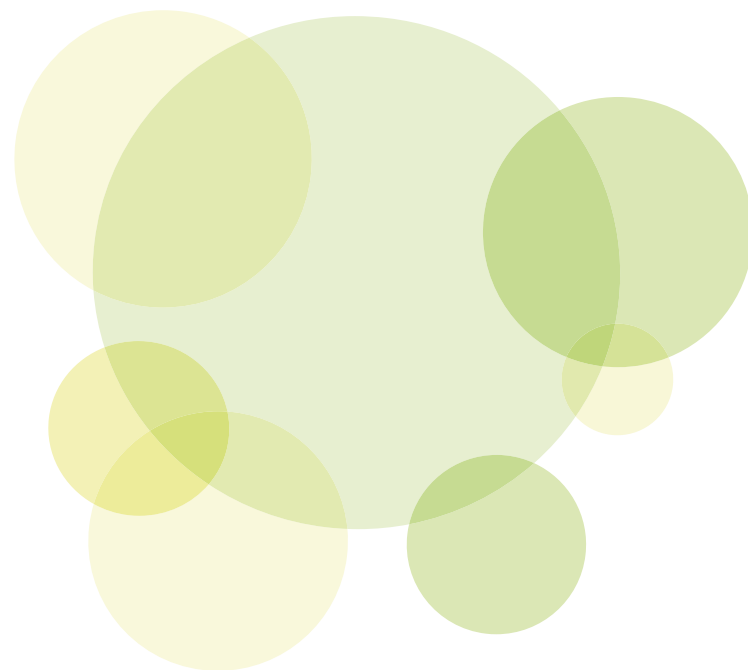
Workforce development and capability:

- Expanded training offer across safeguarding, Mental Capacity Act, trauma-informed practice and legal updates.
- Continued success of the Adults Social Care Academy, including a strengthened ASYE programme supporting retention of newly qualified social workers.

Recruitment and retention

- Successful locum-to-permanent initiatives, supporting workforce stability and progression into senior and specialist roles.
- Proactive recruitment approaches, including rolling advertisements and a continued focus on transitioning agency staff into permanent roles
- A return-to-practice pilot has also supported experienced practitioners returning to the workforce, contributing to overall workforce capacity
- Oversight of apprenticeship routes into social work, with staff currently completing social work degree apprenticeships.

Continued on next page



Key achievements continued:

Safeguarding and legal practice

- Strengthened safeguarding practice through more streamline and proportionate response, SAR learning, quality assurance activity and enhanced partnership working.
- Improved oversight and support for community DoLS activity to ensure lawful, timely authorisation of care arrangements.

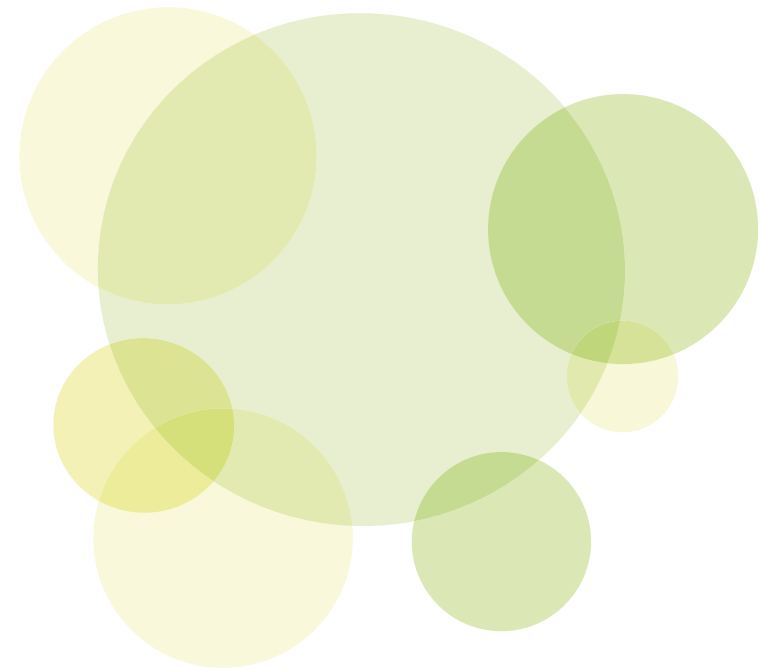
Practice development

- Over 400 staff completed updated Section 22 Care Act training.
- Initial pilot of Family Group Conferences to support more relational, family-led and person-centred practice.
- Co-production of a shared language guide with residents to promote respectful, inclusive communication across Adult Social Care.

Workforce development remained a major focus, with an expanded training offer covering the Mental Capacity Act, safeguarding, trauma-informed practice and legal updates.

This has supported staff to apply legal literacy, professional curiosity and person-centred practice in increasingly complex situations.

The PSW has supported recruitment and retention through social work apprenticeships and locum-to-permanent initiatives, helping to stabilise the workforce, support career progression and retain newly qualified staff. Future work will explore Occupational Therapist apprenticeship opportunities and contribute to the ADASS agency task and finish group to review agency rates and promote greater consistency across London.



Safeguarding practice has been strengthened through multi-agency reviews, SAR learning and system changes that support proportionate, person-centred responses. Closer work with the Safeguarding Adults Board has improved collaboration with health, housing and voluntary sector partners, supporting more coordinated responses to risk.

The DoLS Team has strengthened support to operational teams on community DoLS activity, improving documentation, resolving blockages through regular monitoring and supporting lawful authorisation of care arrangements as demand rises.

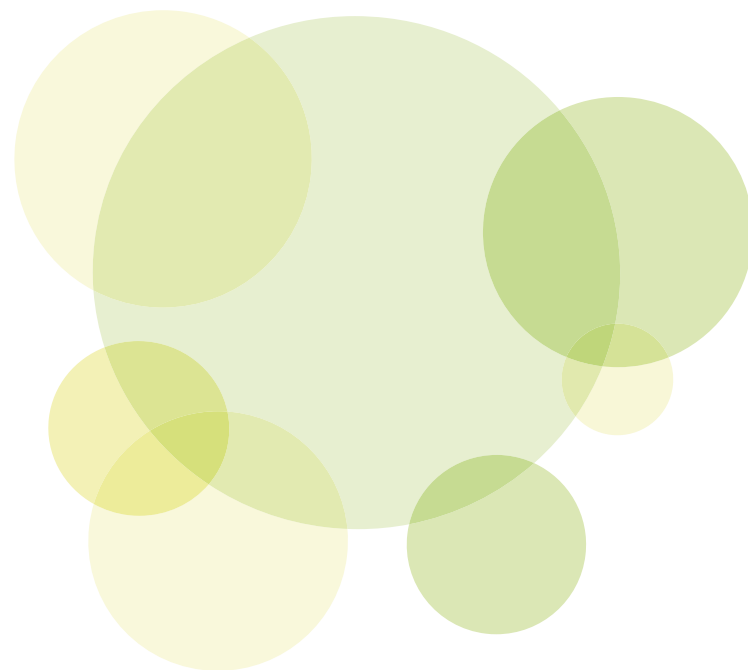
Over 400 staff have completed the updated Section 22 Care Act training, strengthening their understanding of how to identify and respond to health-related needs as part of holistic assessments.

An initial pilot of Family Group Conferences has also renewed focus on family-led solutions and more collaborative, person-centred practice in Adult Social Care.

The Lead Senior Social Worker for Rough Sleeping has continued to embed this role in practice, providing targeted support and stronger oversight for people who are rough sleeping. This has helped improve engagement through more consistent outreach, relationship-based practice and closer coordination with housing, health and voluntary sector partners, supporting more timely and person-centred responses to complex needs.

Mental Capacity Act and Safeguarding staff forums have been strengthened to provide professional leadership, shared learning and regular staff engagement. These forums create opportunities to discuss complex casework, reflect on learning from audits and safeguarding reviews, and promote consistent application of legal and practice standards. Regular newsletters have also reinforced key messages, policy updates, training opportunities and examples of good practice.

Links across the PSW network have supported the sharing of good practice and strengthened preparation for future CQC inspection.



3. Our final CQC rating and score

I am pleased to report that the CQC has 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, meeting CQC expectations and providing independent assurance to the people of Richmond and Wandsworth about the quality of care and support in their area.

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, I could not be prouder to have had the opportunity to support Adult Social Care and Richmond and Wandsworth Councils 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 reflected a collective passion and commitment to delivering our Vision for Adult Social Care, and it is this shared commitment that will drive our continued improvement.

Alongside celebrating this outcome, the inspection has also informed our ongoing improvement focus. Learning from CQC feedback, audit findings and partner engagement will continue to shape priorities for 2026/27, including Mental Capacity Act practice, recording of professional reasoning, evidencing the impact of quality assurance activity, and strengthening cultural competence. This supports a culture of continuous learning and assurance, aligned with CQC expectations and statutory responsibilities.



4. Quality Assurance

Strengthening our quality assurance framework

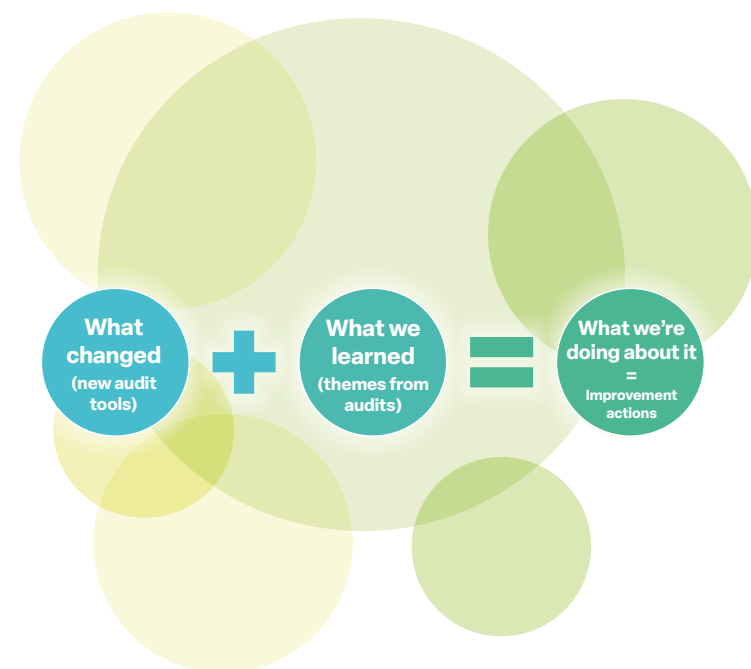
A revised set of audit tools has been introduced to strengthen the quality and consistency of casework review across Adult Social Care. The new framework supports a clearer picture of practice quality and provides evidence to inform improvement planning. One-page practice resources and updated policies have also been developed to make guidance clearer and easier for staff to apply in day-to-day practice.

Key learning from audit activity

Audit activity has identified key areas for development, including:

- Clearer recording of professional reasoning in Mental Capacity Act and safeguarding practice.
- More specific and measurable goal setting within Care Act assessments and reviews.
- More consistent identification, recognition and involvement of carers.
- Stronger future planning within assessments, including cultural competence, changing needs and contingency arrangements.
- Stronger consideration of preventative options, community support and assistive technology to promote independence, choice and earlier support.
- Using learning to drive improvement

Audit findings are triangulated with supervision, performance data and staff feedback to shape targeted improvement activity. Supervision records also include consideration of staff wellbeing, helping managers identify pressures and providing timely support. This helps ensure that learning from over 400 audits is translated into clearer expectations, more consistent practice and improved outcomes for residents and carers.



5. Safeguarding, Mental Capacity Act and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards

Safeguarding remained a core priority throughout 2025/26, with continued focus on timely, proportionate and person-centred responses to risk. Demand remained high, particularly in relation to self-neglect, neglect and acts of omission, exploitation, and mental capacity issues.

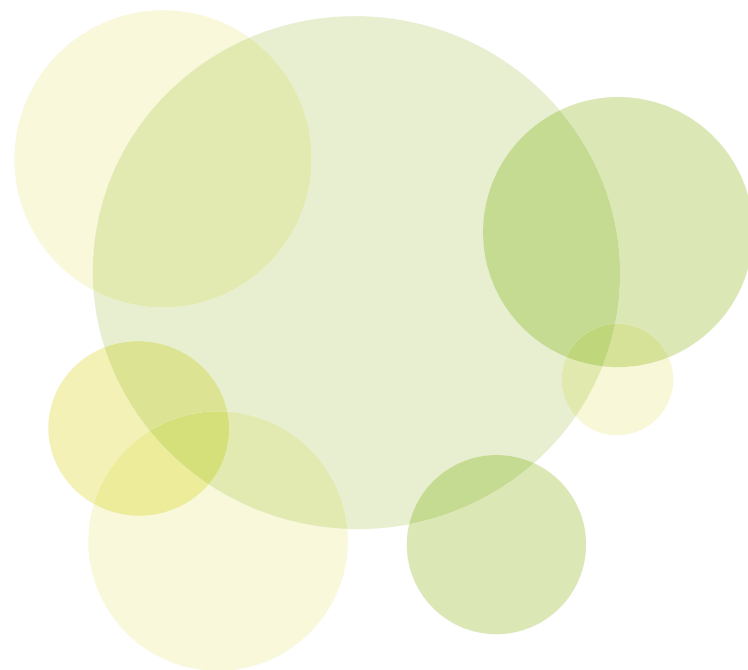
Assurance, oversight and learning from practice.

Targeted quality assurance and stronger management oversight have strengthened practice quality and consistency. Learning from audits and safeguarding adults' reviews has been shared through forums, newsletters and learning events. A continued focus on the interface between safeguarding and the Mental Capacity Act has also supported clearer decision-making.

Multi-agency safeguarding and system leadership.

Multi-agency safeguarding arrangements have continued to strengthen through work with the Richmond and Wandsworth Safeguarding Adults Board. Contributions to Board activity, sub-groups and safeguarding adults' reviews have supported shared learning and system-wide improvement. There has also been greater focus on early intervention, information-sharing and role clarity across agencies, supporting more coordinated responses in complex cases.

Workforce development has been central to safeguarding improvement. Training, reflective forums and professional leadership have helped staff build confidence in managing complex risk, applying the Mental Capacity Act and involving adults and carers meaningfully in safeguarding processes. Reflective spaces have also supported stronger professional judgement and ongoing learning from practice.



Safeguarding - summary

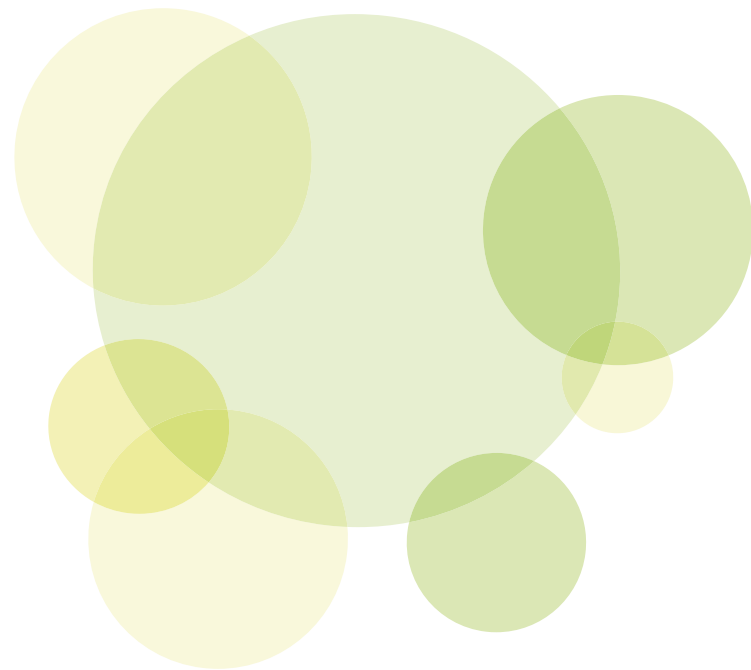
- High and increasing demand, reflecting growing complexity of need.
- Clear emphasis on Making Safeguarding Personal, legal robustness and proportionate responses.
- Stronger interface between safeguarding and Mental Capacity Act practice.
- Active dissemination of learning through forums, audits and multi-agency activity.

Mental Capacity Act, DoLS and digital assurance

The DoLS function has continued to ensure that adults who lack capacity are protected through lawful and proportionate restrictions on liberty. Over the past year, the DoLS and Community DoLS teams have strengthened monitoring through better use of Power BI and Mosaic, supporting improved tracking, stronger cross-team liaison and clearer processes to reduce the risk of authorisations lapsing.

Automated administrative processes are also being developed to improve efficiency and release staff time from routine tasks. This includes an online form and work to transfer information directly into Mosaic. Reporting from the Performance Team continues to support monitoring of activity and statutory timescales.

The Mental Capacity Assessment form has been updated to align with current case law and best practice. This work has been developed in closer collaboration with Legal Services and social work teams, ensuring that the revised form is both legally robust and practical for frontline use. The revised form gives clearer prompts, supports stronger recording of decision-specific assessments, and improves the quality and defensibility of decision-making.



6. Workforce, Professional Development and Wellbeing

The training programme delivered through the Adult Social Care Training Academy has continued to strengthen workforce capability and professional confidence.

The programme includes mandatory safeguarding and legal training, trauma-informed practice, and specialist learning on Section 22 health needs and advanced Mental Capacity Act practice. It is complemented by wider continuing professional development routes, including Best Interests Assessor, Approved Mental Health Professional and Practice Education pathways. Staff feedback has helped shape the programme, including increased in-person learning and peer support.

Work is also continuing to increase the number of staff qualified as Best Interests Assessors. This will improve resilience in the workforce, support timely assessments and strengthen the local authority's ability to meet its statutory duties under the Mental Capacity Act.

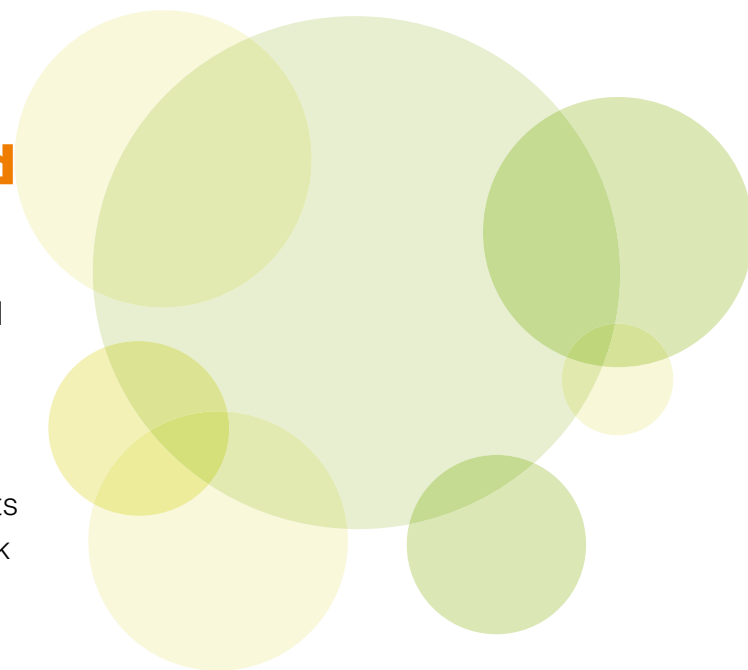
Supporting wellbeing and professional growth has remained a central priority. High and complex caseloads continue to place pressure on staff, and the PSW has promoted initiatives to strengthen resilience, reflective practice and professional identity.

Regular reflective practice sessions are now embedded across teams, supported by Team Ambassadors and Lead Champions. These roles help reinforce positive practice, promote well-being resources, strengthen staff voice and identify where further support or development is needed.

Wellbeing resources and initiatives, including the Employee Assistance Programme, mental health support and targeted wellbeing activity, continue to promote resilience and reduce work-related stress, supporting a sustainable workforce.

Managers have also been encouraged to monitor wellbeing actively, support flexible working where appropriate and ensure staff feel heard and valued.

Practice development approaches such as Practice Circles are also supporting reflective learning, particularly in relation to Care Act assessments and preventative practice.



7. Equality Diversity & Inclusion

The Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES) provides a consistent, evidence-based way to identify and address racial inequalities in the workforce. By collecting and analysing data against national indicators, it helps organisations identify disparities, tackle discrimination and target action to improve inclusion, representation and staff experience.

Within Adult Social Care, the WRES continues to inform work on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion by improving understanding of staff experience and highlighting where further action is needed. It supports greater openness and accountability, helping leaders identify barriers, challenge inequality and promote inclusive leadership.

The data shows both strengths and areas for further attention. While many staff report positive experiences of teamwork and support, disparities remain in areas such as senior representation, workplace discrimination and confidence in organisational processes. This reinforces the need for continued action during 2026/27, linked to workforce development, leadership accountability and inclusive practice.



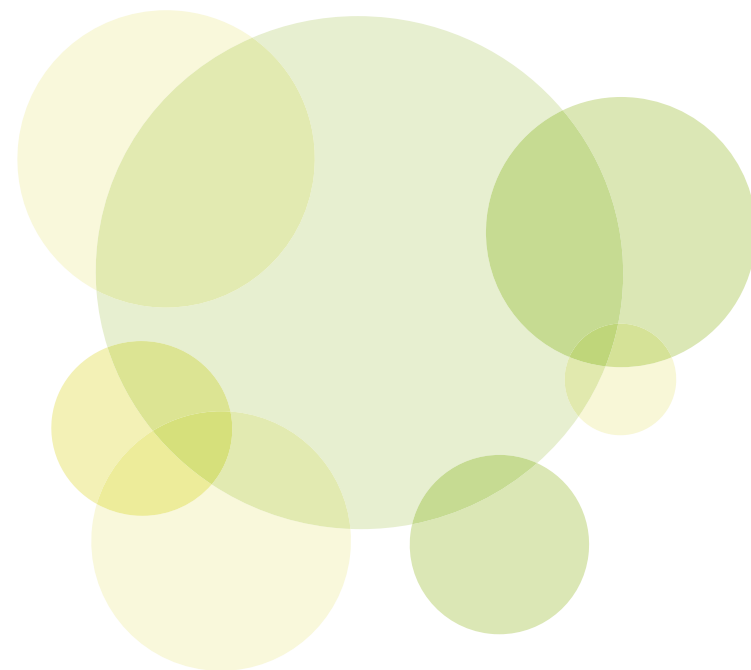
8. Networks and Partnerships

The PSW has continued to review and strengthen local procedures to ensure alignment with statutory requirements and best practice. Partnerships with health, housing, voluntary sector organisations and wider council teams have supported more coordinated and person-centred care, as well as opportunities to share learning and align local approaches with wider sector priorities.



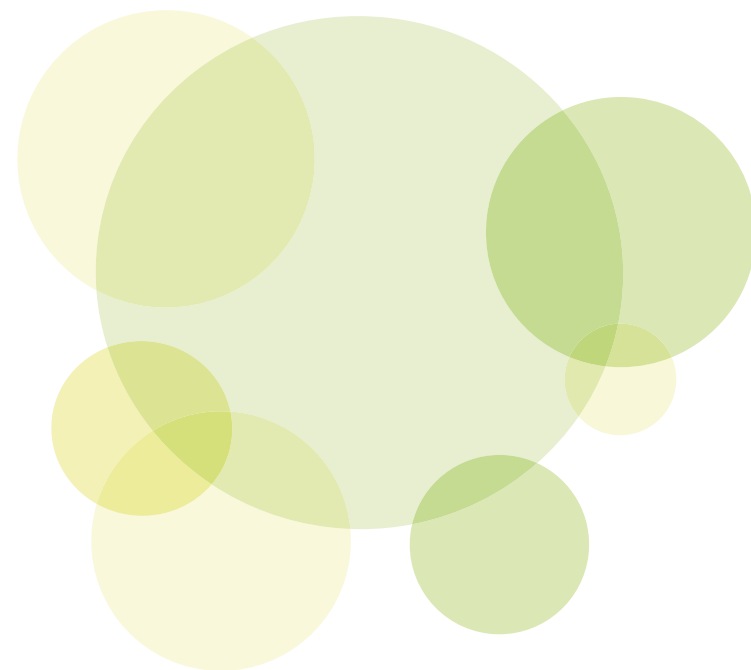
9. Priorities for 2026/27

Priority area	What this will focus on	How impact will be evidenced
Workforce stability and wellbeing	Improving retention, strengthening workload management, reflective supervision and staff wellbeing	Workforce data, staff surveys, supervision compliance and review wellbeing offer
Quality assurance and improvement	Using audits, learning events and reflection to improve consistency and outcomes	Audit outcomes, improvement plans, learning feedback, follow-up audit findings and evidence of changes in practice
Safeguarding practice	Strengthening timely, responses, with clear risk management, professional reasoning	Safeguarding audits, case reviews, SAB learning, supervision records and evidence of improved recording and decision-making



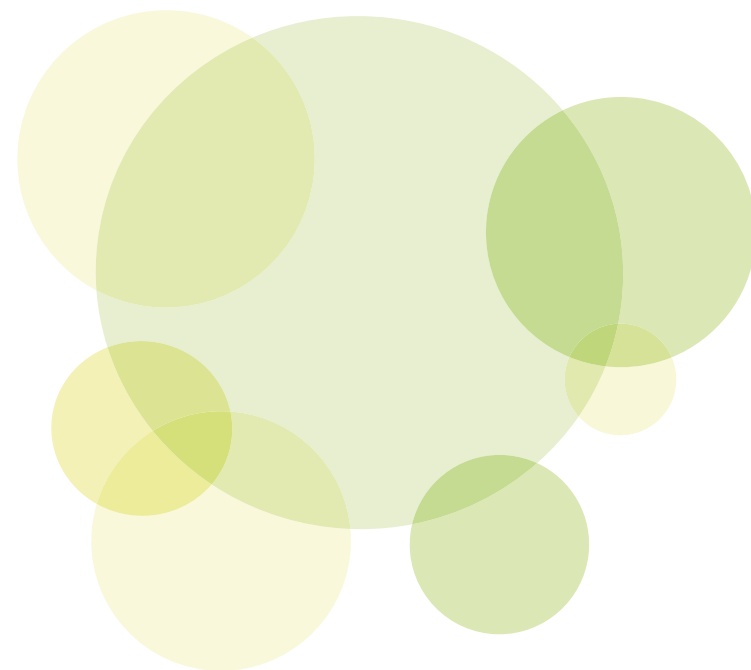
9. Priorities for 2026/27 (continued)

Priority area	What this will focus on	How impact will be evidenced
Mental Capacity Act practice	Improving confidence and consistency in Mental Capacity Act assessments, best-interests decision-making, legal literacy	MCA audits, best-interests decision records, DoLS oversight, legal feedback, training evaluation and reflective learning evidence
Co-production and engagement	Strengthening lived experience influence on service design and delivery	Feedback mechanisms, audits, advisory forums and evidence that lived experience has influenced service design or practice improvement
Support to 'Carers'	Improving carer identification, involvement and timely advice and support	Audit outcomes, performance data and feedback from carers' consultation groups



9. Priorities for 2026/27 (continued)

Priority area	What this will focus on	How impact will be evidenced
Responding to Complex and Diverse Needs	Building staff confidence in working with diverse communities, trauma, neurodiversity, co-morbid mental health, substance misuse and complex safeguarding needs	Audit findings, staff feedback, training evaluation, supervision evidence and examples of improved practice with people with complex and diverse needs
System leadership and partnerships	Strengthening multi-agency working with Public Health and wider partners on drug and alcohol-related harm, suicide prevention, shared learning and coordinated responses to risk.	SAB activity, Public Health partnership activity, partner feedback, system outcomes and shared learning evidence
Digital transformation and agile working	Using digital tools to improve support planning, streamline workflows and evidence impact for residents and carers	Improved support planning records, clearer outcomes evidence, digital reporting and staff feedback



Over the coming year:

- Workforce development will continue to focus on retention, workload management, reflective supervision and professional development, with a particular emphasis on strengthening leadership and management capability.
- Quality assurance will further strengthen the link between audit learning and demonstrable improvement in practice and outcomes
- Co-production will be expanded through stronger use of feedback from forums and advisory groups, including building on work such as the co-produced language guide

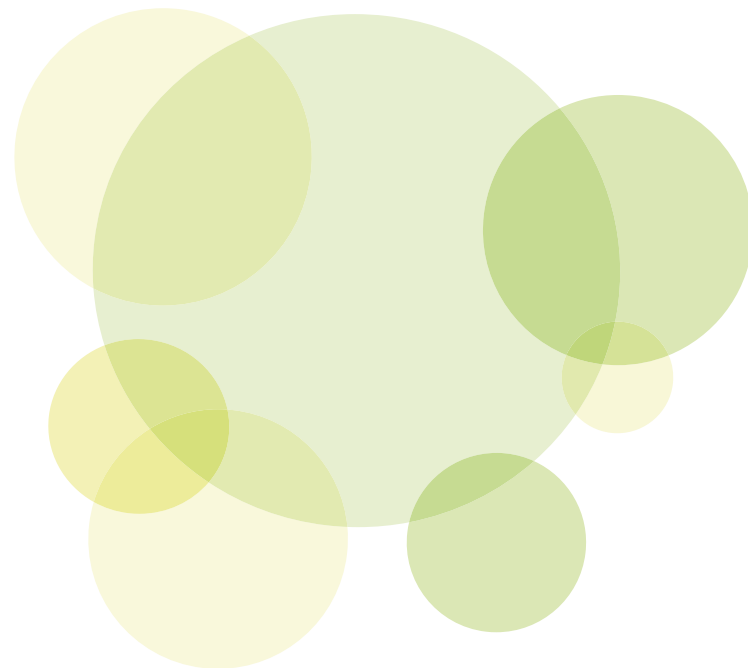
There will also be an increased focus on:

- Responding effectively to increasing complexity of need, including co-morbid mental health, substance misuse, ADHD, autism, trauma and safeguarding concerns.
- Strengthening partnerships with Public Health and wider system partners to respond to drug and alcohol-related harm, suicide prevention and wider population health risks.
- Continuing digital transformation to improve efficiency, strengthen quality assurance, streamline processes and support agile working.

The PSW will also continue to contribute to system developments such as the Urgent Community Pathway, ensuring social work practice is embedded from design through to delivery.

The *Transforming Social Care - Future* programme will support long-term system improvement, strengthening integrated, person-centred approaches.

Action Learning Sets have been reintroduced for Assistant Locality Managers and Senior Social Workers to strengthen reflective practice, peer support and leadership development. These sessions provide structured space to work through complex practice and operational challenges, supporting stronger decision-making and a learning culture.



10. Closing Reflections

This year has seen continued progress alongside sustained demand, complexity and change across Adult Social Care in Richmond and Wandsworth. Throughout this period, social workers and care professionals have continued to demonstrate resilience, compassion and sound professional judgement in delivering person-centred support.

During 2025/26, there has been a strong focus on professional standards, practice quality and workforce development. Quality assurance activity, learning from audits and safeguarding work, and clearer Mental Capacity Assessment practice have all supported service improvement. Investment in reflective spaces, leadership capacity and partnership work has also helped strengthen coordinated responses to risk and complex need.

Looking ahead, the focus remains on building a sustainable and future-ready Adult Social Care system. This includes continued attention to workforce capacity, wellbeing and retention, alongside preparation for legislative and system change. We will also ensure that local DoLS and Community DoLS practice remains aligned with the Supreme Court ruling on deprivation of liberty, with clear guidance, legal oversight and proportionate decision-making embedded in frontline practice. The PSW role will continue to provide professional leadership and assurance so that social work values remain central to service delivery.

Overall, the report provides assurance on progress made and shows how professional leadership, learning from practice and partnership working across SWL are contributing to better outcomes for residents and carers.

