



LEICESTERSHIRE PEER REVIEW

Final Report

March 2026

EMADASS Peer Review Report

Introduction

The Peer Review process is one of the cornerstones of the East Midlands Branch approach to Sector Led Improvement. It supports Local Authorities to both respond to CQC assessment and to evaluate their current practice and processes.

As a Branch we strongly believe that Local Authorities should work together to take collective responsibility for the performance of the sector with a focus on improving the outcomes for the people we serve. This peer review is one of 10 reviews being conducted in the East Midlands over an 18-month cycle and, in that time, each local authority will both host and lead a review.

East Midlands Peer Challenge Process



The Key Lines of enquiry are agreed between the DASS, and the reviews take a multi-faceted approach to ensure that the team can triangulate and evidence their findings.

Following evaluation of the previous cycle and ongoing learning from the CQC assessment process we have maintained our 3-stage approach but have strengthened our case audits through adding feedback from the person and/or their family and where possible involving experts by experience in the team. We have retained our pre onsite review of documentation and the format of 2 days onsite and feedback remains unchanged, focusing on areas of strength, areas to improve and recommendations for focus/ action.

Leicestershire County Council Report

The Leicestershire Peer Review, held on 25th and 26th March 2026, was part of the East Midlands Sector Led Improvement programme. The review focused on how effectively the current Advice and Information and Carers (A&C) offer supports carers' wellbeing and delivers the department's strategic vision of promoting independence and managing need.

The process brought together a diverse team of professionals and experts by experience; all committed to improving outcomes for carers.

Peer Review Team

The review team comprised of representatives from across the region.

- **Guy VanDichele** – Lead Director, Nottinghamshire County Council (Peer Challenge Lead)
- **Mary Read** – Principal Social Worker, Nottinghamshire County Council
- **Sarah Don** – Senior Practitioner, Integrated Care Coordinator & Carers Lead, Rutland
- **Adrian Hartley** – Family Carer (Expert by Experience)
- **Anna Oliver** – Head of Integrated Strategic Commissioning, Nottinghamshire County Council
- **Hayley Eccles** – Deputy Director of Adult Care & National Carers Policy Co-Chair, Lincolnshire County Council
- **Stacey Roe** – Head of Service, Improvement, Practice & Quality, Nottinghamshire County Council
- **Lucy Boulton** – Service Manager, Leicester City Council
- **Melanie Grey** – Head of Strategic Commissioning & Contracting, North Northamptonshire
- **Sue Wilson** – Review Manager, East Midlands ADASS

Methodology

The review included team-to-team sessions, case record audits, and engagement with carers, staff, providers, and partners.

Team to Team

Team-to-team sessions included 7 staff from Nottinghamshire and 8 from Leicestershire, focusing on frontline practice and conducting 17 case record reviews. The audits evaluated assessment quality and the outcomes that they were striving to deliver.

Onsite review

During the onsite review, the team engaged with a broad range of participants, including carers, adult services managers, customer services, commissioning leads, specialist carers services, voluntary sector representatives, and public health and other strategic partners.

Mystery shopper exercises were used to assess the accessibility and accuracy of information for

carers both online and from access points. Multiple sessions were held for the review team to reflect, consolidate findings, and prepare feedback.

Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOEs)

The review was guided by two main sets of questions:

1. **Does the current A&C offer for carers support their wellbeing and help deliver the department's strategic vision of promoting independence and managing need?**
2. **Are there opportunities for further development across the department and commissioned services to support carers?**

Key Findings

Culture and Leadership

Leicestershire demonstrates a strong level of self-awareness about its journey to improve support for carers. There is a clear focus on carers and a genuine desire across leadership and frontline teams to strengthen the offer.

Staff described a culture characterised by enthusiasm, compassion and commitment to carers. This was evidenced by some of the feedback we heard directly from carers "Leicestershire council is great " and "staff are kind and pleasant"

The council is developing a new carers strategy with a clear engagement plan, and there is evidence of willingness to innovate through pilots such as support at home, technology-enabled care for carers and the use of AI in assessment / One carer reported that AI had been used in their assessment and "it was a true reflection of what I said"

Alongside this clear commitment, the review found that the strategic vision for carers is not yet consistently shared or embedded across the wider system. This is likely influenced by the recent shift to a council-only carers plan. The review team identified an opportunity to further strengthen delivery through clearer leadership accountability and more visible governance arrangements.

There would be value in greater clarity about the outcomes the council is seeking to achieve through new investments, and how success will be measured.

Practice and Case record Audits

The case record review highlighted a number of strengths in practice, including clear examples of the carer's voice being captured and a strong focus on supporting carers to achieve the outcomes that matter most to them.. Records consistently used strengths-based language and increasingly demonstrated that carers had been offered relevant information and advice. Building on this solid foundation, the offer could be enhanced further through a more consistent approach to contingency planning, making best use of one-off carers' budgets, and maximising the support available through your voluntary sector partner.

As part of the review, you shared clear and credible plans to strengthen and reshape the carers pathway, supported by significant investment in additional staffing to reduce delays in carers'

reviews and respond to the increased focus on assessment. This transition also creates a positive opportunity to extend your standardised risk tools and ‘waiting well’ processes to carers, building on approaches that are already working well elsewhere in the system. To maximise the impact of this investment, you can now be explicit about the outcomes you want to achieve and agree how progress and impact will be measured and reported consistently across the partnership.

Partnerships and provision

There is clear evidence of strong partnership working within the council, particularly with Public Health, who demonstrate a shared commitment to early help and prevention for carers. This is strengthened through initiatives such as local area coordination and the First Contact Plus offer, which provide practical routes to identify need early and connect carers to timely support.

Collaboration with primary care to identify carers at an early stage is a further strength. As neighborhood health arrangements continue to develop within the emerging health landscape, there is a positive opportunity to build new partnerships and ensure that carers remain a consistent and visible priority within local plans and pathways.

Leicestershire already has a number of well-regarded elements within its carers offer. The carers passport was referenced frequently, and the new practical support offer from Enrych—while still in its early stages—has seen strong demand. The commissioned carers support service delivered by Voluntary Action South Leicestershire (VASL) is valued by carers and staff alike, with positive stories of impact that were also reflected in our mystery shopping.

The forthcoming recommissioning process provides a positive opportunity to build on these strong foundations—deepening partnership working and making the most of voluntary sector expertise to strengthen the parts of the pathway that carers experience as more challenging, such as initial contact and up to date information and guidance .

Coproduction, Citizen Engagement and feedback

Carers we spoke to shared very positive experiences of working with the council, particularly where support had been built through long-standing, trusted relationships (for example, carers of younger people). Carers of older people—especially those who are newly navigating adult social care—highlighted that they would welcome more proactive guidance to help them understand the support available. As one carer put it, “you don’t know what you don’t know”. They also noted that some information within the carers offer on the website would benefit from being refreshed and brought up to date. These insights were considered alongside our mystery shopping findings.

We tested the two main access points for carers of an older person requiring support. Our contact with the commissioned voluntary sector provider, Voluntary Action South Leicestershire (VASL), was particularly strong: the worker asked the right questions, provided proportionate and helpful advice, and added value by researching additional information relating to the cared-for person’s home area. While this reflects one contact, the review team felt confident that carers using this service are likely to receive a responsive and supportive experience. Our contact with the council’s Customer Service Centre highlighted an opportunity to build on current practice by offering a wider range of non-digital options, so that carers can access information and guidance in the way that works best for them—particularly those who may be digitally excluded.

The relaunch of the revised Leicestershire Carers Strategy provides a strong opportunity to

strengthen relationships with key stakeholders, including partners and carers, and to embed co-production within governance arrangements.

Reflections on the Key Lines of Enquiry

1. Does the current A&C offer for carers support their wellbeing and help deliver the department's strategic vision of promoting independence and managing need?

The peer team observed strong intent, good practice and a comprehensive offer. However, further work is required to **understand, evidence and measure impact**, and to ensure the strategic vision is widely understood and embedded across the system.

2. Are there opportunities for further development?

Yes. The review identified clear opportunities to strengthen governance, partnership working, co-production, data use, equity of access and consistency of practice across the carers pathway.

Areas for Development and Recommendations (NB this is not a prioritised list)

The launch of the new draft strategy provides a strong platform to further unite and reinforce the shared Leicestershire vision. Building on the positive momentum already in place, you can refresh your approach to co-production, strengthen storytelling and communications, and build wider commitment from partners—particularly through neighbourhood working and the Health and Wellbeing Board, including other council departments and external partners. This also creates a timely opportunity to re-establish and re-energise governance arrangements so they are clear, connected and fit for purpose in the current environment. **Continued and active engagement from health partners will support a confident transition from the joint strategy, reinforcing a shared commitment to carers and embedding their needs within integrated care system arrangements**

The planned redesign and investment in a refreshed carers offer and pathway provides an excellent foundation to embed a Think Family approach and further strengthen equity of access and experience for all carers. Building on your developing approach to modelling, alongside your established data capability, and tracking investment and activity consistently across the system, you will be well placed to focus improvement activity where it will have the greatest impact, clearly demonstrate the difference this investment is making, and support the system to manage demand confidently.