

Making the difference that matters

Gloucestershire's Annual Report
for Adult Social Care

2025/26



Gloucestershire
COUNTY COUNCIL

WELCOME TO MAKING THE DIFFERENCE THAT MATTERS

It has been an important year as we continue to respond to the findings of our Care Quality Commission (CQC) assessment. The report recognised the progress we are making through our five-year transformation programme and highlighted our strong leadership and committed workforce - something I am proud to see every day.

As we move into the second year of this programme, we are continuing to invest significantly in Adult Social Care. An additional £5.6 million was committed to support our transformation and improvement plans until 2026/27, alongside the £224 million allocated in the 2025 budget. We also secured £600,000 of Accelerated Reform Funding to strengthen support for unpaid carers.

During 2025/26, we strengthened our focus on helping people get the right support at the right time. This includes reducing waiting times for Care Act assessments, improving the timeliness of finance and benefits assessments, making better use of data and quality assurance, and continuing to invest in prevention.

We continue to listen to people who draw on care and support, unpaid carers, staff and partners. Their feedback is helping us improve, particularly around choice, control, social connection and support for carers. While we are proud of the progress made this year, we know there is more to do, and I would like to thank everyone who has supported our improvement journey.



Sarah Scott

Executive Director of Adult Social Care, Wellbeing and Communities

I am absolutely committed to making sure people in Gloucestershire are supported to live independent, fulfilling lives, with the right help at the right time.

Over the past year, we have taken steps to make it easier for people to access our services when they need them, to help people maintain their independence by strengthening prevention, and to listen more closely to people who use our services and their carers.

We know support needs often come at difficult times. It is important that services are easy to access, work well together and focus on what matters most to each person.

Every day, I see the dedication of our staff and partners in action, making a real difference for people. As we look ahead, our focus remains on improving people's experience, helping people get support sooner, and working alongside those who draw on care and support to shape what happens next.



Councillor Dr Kate Usmar

Cabinet Member for Adults' Support and Independence

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KEY MESSAGES FROM OUR ANNUAL REPORT

WHAT WE'VE DONE

-  Reduced waiting times and improved access
-  Strengthened safeguarding and quality checks
-  Used data and feedback to improve services
-  Invested in our workforce and prevention
-  Improved support for unpaid carers

WHAT PEOPLE TOLD US THEY WANT

- Support that feels personal and easy to understand
- To be involved earlier
- Better communication and joined-up services
- Stronger support for unpaid carers



We are using this feedback to shape improvements

WHAT'S WORKING WELL

-  High quality residential care
-  Helping people stay independent after hospital
-  Supporting more people to live at home
-  Strong safeguarding outcomes

WHERE WE NEED TO IMPROVE

-  Some people feel less in control of daily life
-  Social connection and wellbeing need to improve
-  Access can still feel slow or complex
-  Take-up of some options, like direct payments, is low

WHAT WE WILL FOCUS ON NEXT



Improve access to earlier support



Make services easier to understand and use



Strengthen prevention and independence



Better day-to-day experience of care



Work more closely with people through co-production

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR GLOUCESTERSHIRE RESIDENTS



Quicker access to help



Clearer information



Fewer repeated conversations



More choice and independence

OUR COMMITMENT

We know people often reach Adult Social Care at difficult times. We will continue to listen, learn and improve the experience of care and support.

OUR FOCUS AND PROGRESS

WHAT'S IMPROVED THIS YEAR

How quickly we respond

Faster completion of Care Act assessments, stronger safeguarding work to keep people safe, earlier follow up on feedback, and shorter waits for finance and benefits assessments.

How we check quality and learn from what we see and hear

Improved audits, clearer performance dashboards, and a stronger link between feedback and service improvement.

Development of our workforce plan

Improved recruitment and retention of staff, support for international recruitment where needed, and a more skilled workforce.

Delivery of our prevention plan for older people

More support in communities, improved wellbeing, and earlier support so more people can stay independent for longer.

WHAT WE'RE FOCUSING ON NEXT

Helping people get the right support sooner

Better access to advice, assessments and support, fewer delays, and improved use of data to identify and reduce waiting times.

Making adult social care easier to understand and use

Clearer information, fewer repeated conversations, and more joined-up digital services.

Strengthening prevention and independence

Stronger partnership working, better use of technology, and improved use of data and feedback to target what works.

Improving people's day-to-day experience of support

Greater choice and control, stronger social connections, and improved support for unpaid carers shaped by feedback and co-production.

DID YOU KNOW? ... IN THE 2024-25 ADULT SOCIAL CARE SURVEY:



65%

of people were
satisfied with their
care and support



92.5%

said the services
they receive make
them feel safe

GLOUCESTERSHIRE AND ITS PEOPLE

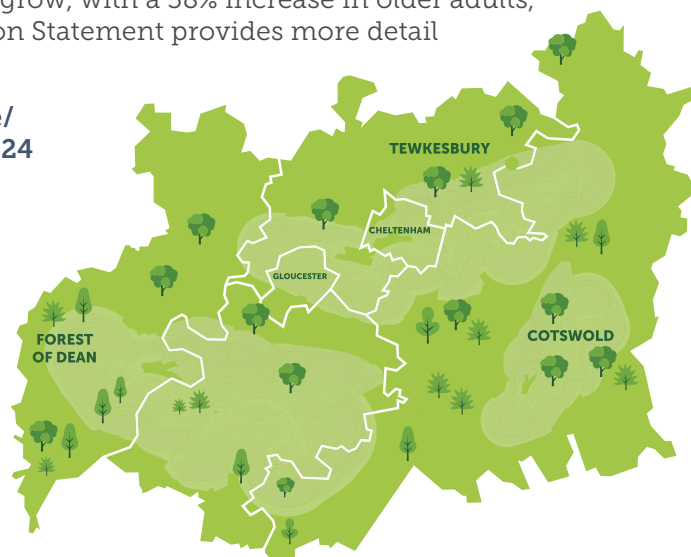
LOCAL DATA

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) estimates that the population of Gloucestershire was **682,262 in 2024**. In the next 20 years, it is expected to grow, with a 38% increase in older adults, particularly those aged 85 and over. Our Market Position Statement provides more detail on this growth and sets out how we will respond to it.

www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/gloucestershire-market-position-statement-mps-2024

682,262

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) estimates that at mid-year 2024 the population of Gloucestershire was 682,262.



ABOUT ADULT SOCIAL CARE



Adult Social Care can help people stay independent, safe and well for as long as possible.

People may draw on care and support at different times in their lives. Some will need short term help, such as after a hospital stay. For others, needs may develop gradually or suddenly. Some people will require support throughout their life.

We support adults of all ages with a wide range of needs, including learning disabilities, physical disabilities, mental health conditions, dementia, autism, and other long-term conditions. Our aim is to help people stay independent, safe and well, so they can manage their own lives and do the things that matter most to them.

GETTING IN TOUCH WITH US



There are several ways people can access information, advice and support.

Whether it's guidance about social care, help for unpaid carers, or information about local services and community activities, support is just a phone call, message or click away.

ADULT SOCIAL CARE HELPDESK

The Adult Social Care Helpdesk is the main point of contact for care and support enquiries.

Call: 01452 426868

Email: socialcare.enq@gloucestershire.gov.uk

www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/adult-social-care

ASK GRACE

Ask Grace is our free WhatsApp assistant for unpaid carers, providing trusted information and guidance 24 hours a day.

www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/ask-grace

GLOUCESTERSHIRE CARERS HUB

The Carers Hub provides information, advice and support for unpaid carers, including carer's assessments, wellbeing support and local activities.

Call: 0300 111 9000

www.gloucestershirecarershubs.co.uk

YOUR CIRCLE

Your Circle is Gloucestershire's online directory of care, support and community services, helping people find local groups, activities and organisations.

www.yourcircle.org.uk

ACHIEVING OUR VISION

This is how we are achieving our vision for Adult Social Care in Gloucestershire - helping people stay independent, safe and well. It highlights how different types of support work together, from early help and prevention through to more complex care, so people can get the right support at the right time. The section below explains how this works in practice for people.



OUR APPROACH: MAKING THE DIFFERENCE THAT MATTERS

Our “Make the Difference” model guides how we support adults in Gloucestershire. It focuses on people’s strengths, goals and what matters most to them, rather than only on the services they need. This approach has improved how we deliver care and support, making it more personal, responsive and effective.

We use three strengths based conversations to make sure people get the right help at the right time:

01

CONTACT AND PREVENTION

A first conversation to understand what has changed, what is working well, and what support already exists. We focus on community-based solutions that help people stay independent.

02

SHORT-TERM SUPPORT

When someone experiences a crisis, we provide short-term support to help them regain control, including reablement and occupational therapy. We focus on people’s strengths and work with occupational therapists to support independence. This may include home adaptations, equipment, Disabled Facilities Grants, and help to stay socially connected.

03

LONGER-TERM SUPPORT

If someone may need ongoing support, we carry out a Care Act strengths-based assessment to understand their needs and eligibility. If support is agreed, we explain how care is paid for. Our Online Financial Assessment helps people understand what they may need to contribute - this can be completed at a time that suits them.

LISTENING TO FEEDBACK - YOU SAID, WE DID

We listen to feedback from people who draw on care and support, unpaid carers, and our staff. We use what people tell us to decide what needs to change and where to focus improvement.

Here are some examples of what people told us, and what we did as a result.

“

YOU SAID

Support needs to feel local, personal and rooted in my community.

”



WE DID

Since 2018, we've invested over £3 million in more than 370 community projects to help people stay active, connected and well. In 2025, 69 organisations received funding totalling £426,130.

These projects help people feel part of their community, build confidence and enjoy life. They offer opportunities to try new activities, learn new skills and meet others.

Groups such as The Butterfly Garden, The Shop at Bromsberrow, Active Impact and St Michael's Cornerstone Trust provide welcoming spaces where people can come together and take part in activities they are interested in.



Active Impact



YMCA project

“

YOU SAID

Listen to me and involve me earlier.
Don't decide things for me.

”



WE DID

We worked with people with lived experience to co-design our new Co-Production Charter. This sets out how people will help shape Adult Social Care. We also involved people who have used mental health social work and occupational therapy services to help plan how these services move back to Gloucestershire County Council and support our prevention work.

As a result, we have:

- developed an action plan to strengthen co-production across Adult Social Care
- worked with people who use occupational therapy services to understand what helps them stay safe, independent and well at home
- listened to people who have used mental health social work services, so their experiences help shape how support is planned and delivered
- used feedback to help design services that better meet people's needs and focus on what matters most to them
- begun co-designing our new Practice Quality Assurance Framework, based on our Make the Difference approach
- recruited a full-time Co-production Lead
- started developing training to build staff skills and confidence in co-production
- worked with people to define what a good experience looks like and improve how feedback is collected
- strengthened oversight of Partnership Boards to ensure clearer impact and influence.

Learn more about Partnership Boards

www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/disabilities/partnership-boards



“

YOU SAID

Make it easier to understand adult social care and navigate the website.

”



WE DID

We launched our People's Experience Transformation Programme to make care and support easier to understand and use.

As part of this, we have:

- improved Your Circle, Gloucestershire's directory of local care and support services, making it clearer and more accessible: www.yourcircle.org.uk
- redesigned our Adult Social Care and Unpaid Carers webpages so they are easier to use and navigate: www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/adult-social-care
- recruited a dedicated Engagement and Participation Officer to ensure people with lived experience and unpaid carers help shape how service improvements, including our information and guidance.





YOU SAID

As a carer I feel invisible. I want clearer support, quicker assessments, and help before I reach crisis.



WE DID

We listened to unpaid carers and acted on the challenges raised by the Care Quality Commission.

Over the past year, we have strengthened support for unpaid carers by:

- improving carers' assessments by aligning them more closely with the assessment of the person they care for, making the process clearer, reducing duplication, and supporting staff with training and renewed audit activity
- providing clearer information and communication about carers' rights, assessments and crisis support, including work with the Gloucestershire Carers Hub to improve newsletters, information and advice, and make support easier to understand
- redesigning our carers support offer with a new adult carers service launching in October 2026, with the current service extended for six months to support a smoother change and a stronger focus on outcomes, co-production and what matters most to carers
- strengthening leadership and listening through the Carers Improvement Group, links to the Carers Partnership Board, and better use of feedback and survey data so carers' experiences help shape improvements and the new service model
- changed the focus for hospital discharge pathways following engagement sessions as part of the Accelerated Reform Fund.

WHERE WE ARE NOW

We know there is more to do, and our next steps include:

- strengthening data and reporting on outcomes for unpaid carers
- increasing staff confidence in identifying and supporting carers
- ensuring the new service model delivers more flexible, personalised outcome-based help
- embedding co-production so carers help shape every stage of change.

HOW OUR SUPPORT MADE A DIFFERENCE TO PEOPLE

Stories help show what good support looks like in real life. The examples below explain what happened, what we did and the difference it made. Details have been changed to protect the people involved.

STORY 1 SUPPORTING SAFETY, STABILITY AND INDEPENDENCE

WHY THEY CONTACTED US

In summer 2025, an older man living with dementia, arrived at his GP surgery saying he had become homeless after a distressing incident at home. He had been receiving care in his own home, supported by family, but could no longer return. With nowhere safe to stay and no clear information about his housing rights, he was extremely vulnerable and at risk.

WHAT WE DID

Adult Social Care acted quickly to keep him safe by:

- organising an emergency short term bed in a local care home whilst longer term solutions were explored
- exploring his housing rights, but this could not be resolved quickly
- identifying supported living as the best longer term option. He moved into a supported living home in January 2026 as he did not need 24-hour residential care. This gave him a safe and affordable place to live
- arranging daily support and help with benefits and practical tasks such as support with his medication and food shopping.

THE DIFFERENCE IT MADE

He now lives safely in his own supported flat, with the privacy, choice and independence that matter to him. With the right support in place, he feels more settled, confident and hopeful about the future. He has regained a sense of control, choosing his own furniture from a local charity shop and making the space feel like home.

HOW WE KNOW

He tells us he feels safe and supported again. His GP and support workers have seen improvements in his wellbeing and daily routines, and staff report that he has settled in well.

STORY 2

KEEPING A COUPLE CONNECTED DURING A DIFFICULT TIME

WHY THEY CONTACTED US

Over Christmas and New Year, an older man with a learning disability experienced a sudden increase in physical support needs. He and his wife had been managing at home, but the situation became unsafe and urgent support was needed to support him. He required an emergency residential placement.

A short-term bed was found, but it was some distance from his home and family. Being apart had a clear impact on both his and his wife's emotional wellbeing.

WHAT WE DID

Adult Social Care acted quickly and with compassion by:

- arranging safe emergency accommodation
- recognising how important it was for the couple to stay close, our teams regularly contacted local care homes to find a suitable placement nearer to his wife
- continuing to advocate for the couple until the right option became available.

THE DIFFERENCE IT MADE

The man has now moved to a residential care home that can meet his physical needs, close to where his wife lives. They can see each other more often and have started going out into the community together again. Both report feeling happier, more settled and less anxious.

HOW WE KNOW

Feedback from the couple and staff shows clear improvements in wellbeing, confidence and hope after a very difficult period.



STORY 3

HELPING SOMEONE FEEL SAFER, HEARD AND HOPEFUL

WHY THEY CONTACTED US

A lady was referred to our Enablement Team feeling overwhelmed, isolated and unsure where to turn. She wanted help to rebuild her confidence, get back into the community and manage paperwork that had become too much to cope with alone.

She had lived with anxiety, trauma and grief for many years without formal mental health support. She wanted her independence back but did not feel able to take the first steps on her own.

WHAT WE DID

From the start, Adult Social Care focused on helping her feel safe, listened to and understood by:

- putting personalised support in place at a pace that felt right for her
- connecting her with mental health, domestic abuse and trauma informed services
- supporting a successful PIP appeal
- helping her organise important paperwork
- encouraging confidence building and reconnecting with activities she enjoys.

THE DIFFERENCE IT MADE

She told Adult Social Care that she now feels more hopeful about the future. With the right support in place, she feels better able to manage her emotions, feels safer leaving her home, and is beginning to rebuild her confidence.

She said having someone she could trust and speak to without judgement made a huge difference. Her family have also noticed a positive change in her wellbeing.

HOW WE KNOW

Before support ended, she said the sessions helped her feel more understood, organised and in control of her life. She told us she feels safer, more confident and can now see a way forward. Her wish to reconnect with the Enablement Team in the future shows the trust and positive relationship built.



HOW WE'RE PERFORMING

We use national measures to understand how well Adult Social Care is working and where we need to improve. These measures compare us with similar councils and show whether people are getting the right support at the right time.



WHAT WE'RE DOING WELL

Compared with similar councils, we are performing strongly in several areas:

High-quality residential care

86% of care homes rated Good or Outstanding by the Care Quality Commission - the highest in our peer group. This means most people receiving residential care experience safe, compassionate and effective support.

Helping people stay independent after hospital

76.5% of people aged 65 and over who received reablement after leaving hospital were still living at home 12 weeks later - the best in our peer group. This shows the value of a strengths-based, independence-focused approach.

More people living at home

65.7% of people aged 65 and over receiving support are living at home or with family. This means more people are staying independent at home for longer.

Strong support for people with a learning disability

82.1% of adults with a learning disability aged 18-64 live at home or with family, an improvement on previous years. This means more people are supported to stay independent and live in their own homes.

Safeguarding

In 90% of cases, risks are removed or reduced. This shows that most people are effectively protected from harm when concerns are raised.

WHERE WE NEED TO IMPROVE

People's experience of quality of life

National survey results show a decline in how people feel about their lives. Fewer people feel in control of daily life or have enough social contact. This shows we need to improve choice, consistency of support, and help people stay connected.

Self-directed support and direct payments

Our reported level of self-directed support remains low. This is partly due to long-standing issues with how we record and report the data, rather than just how services are delivered. We are improving how this information is collected and shared. Direct payments are a separate issue. Take-up is lower than we would like. We are working to improve the information, consistency, and access for people who want more control over how their support is arranged. We aim to increase take-up by 6%. To support this, some of our staff have met with colleagues from another council who have successfully increased their use of direct payments.

Reablement access

Reablement is short-term support that helps people regain confidence and daily living skills after illness, injury or a hospital stay. It can help with things like washing, dressing, moving around safely, preparing meals and rebuilding routines at home. It works well, but not enough people are receiving it. As reablement will be managed by the county council from September 2026, we expect to improve access and support more people to stay independent.

Learn more about reablement

www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/adult-social-care/types-of-care-and-support-available/occupational-therapy-and-reablement/

OVERALL PICTURE

Just over a third of our measures (7 out of 19) are performing strongly compared with similar councils. At the same time, some areas have declined over the past year, with more measures changing than improving.

Measures linked to people's experience - including quality of life, social contact and control - are performing below where we want them to be. This shows that while some services are working well, there is more to do to improve people's day-to-day experience. Improving this remains a key priority.

Change in reporting

We compare our performance with similar councils using national measures, known as the Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework (ASCOF).

In 2024-25, the way this data is collected changed. This means some results look different and cannot yet be directly compared with previous years. Even so, the overall picture is clear: we are performing strongly in some areas, but there is more to do to improve people's experience of care and support.

SPOTLIGHT EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION (EDI)

We want Adult Social Care in Gloucestershire to be fair, inclusive and accessible for everyone. Who you are, where you live or your background should never limit your ability to live a good life.

This spotlight shows what's working, what needs to improve, and what we're doing to reduce inequality.



WHAT'S WORKING WELL

Person-centred and culturally appropriate support

We tailor support to people's individual needs, backgrounds and life experiences so they feel understood and respected.

Reducing health inequalities

Working closely with Public Health, we are acting on evidence that shows life expectancy varies across the county. Our focus is on reducing these gaps so people in all communities have the same chance to stay healthy and independent.

Respectful and inclusive care

Our teams promote dignity, independence and wellbeing, supporting people to stay connected to their communities and live fulfilling lives.

Better use of data

We are improving how we collect and use equalities data so we can understand who is using our services, identify where barriers exist, and design services that are truly inclusive. New dashboards now help us see the demographic profile of people using Adult social care.

Strong community partnerships

Through Know Your Patch networks and Thriving Communities Grants, we work with voluntary and community organisations to support local, community led solutions and volunteering.

Learn more about Thriving Communities Grants

www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/public-health/our-communities/thriving-communities-grants

WHERE WE NEED TO IMPROVE

Some groups still face greater barriers and poorer experiences, and our equality data is not yet complete enough to fully understand this. We also know that people in Gloucestershire's most deprived communities are around 11% more likely to need Adult Social Care. To address this, we are building equality and inclusion into improvement plans, improving equality, diversity and inclusion data across Adult Social Care, and using data, lived experience and staff feedback to reduce inequalities. This matters because fair access and equal outcomes are central to good care.



The Kitchen Club

SPOTLIGHT CO-PRODUCTION: SHAPING SERVICES TOGETHER

We believe adult social care works best when it is shaped with people, not for them.

WHAT'S WORKING WELL

Over the past year, we have strengthened how we work with people with lived experience to shape services and decisions, including recruiting a dedicated Co-production Lead. This work has involved:

- listening events to improve occupational therapy services
- workshops with mental health social workers to shape practice
- working with youth ambassadors to support preparing for adulthood
- involving experts by experience in recruitment and selection
- co-producing our new Practice Quality Assurance Framework.

These activities are helping us better understand what matters to people and make more informed, person-centred decisions.



WHERE WE NEED TO IMPROVE

We believe co-production should be more consistent, inclusive and embedded in everything we do. That's why we are delivering a new 18-month Co-production Action Plan, putting lived experience at the heart of how we design services, make decisions and measure impact.

The plan focuses on co-production at three levels:

- 1. Individual** - improving choice, control and personal outcomes
- 2. Service** - involving people in how services work day-to-day
- 3. System** - involving people in shaping strategic decisions and commissioning

HOW WE WILL KNOW IT'S WORKING

Across all three levels, we will track:

- who is involved, and how diverse participation is
- how early and meaningfully people influence decisions
- where feedback and co-production lead to visible change
- improvements in how people feel heard, involved in decisions and satisfied with services
- a reduction in complaints and an increase in compliments relating to involvement.

From summer 2026, we will publish a clear annual co-production report showing what has changed, what has been achieved, and what happens next.



“

Being part of interview panels has helped me feel valued and heard. With the right support, I've been able to share my views and see how lived experience can shape decisions. There is still more we can do to make things more accessible, and I'd like to see even more diverse voices involved.

”

Katie Peacock

Co-Chair of the Physical Disability and Sensory Impairment Partnership Board

HOW WE LEAD, LEARN AND IMPROVE

Strong leadership, skilled staff, effective partnerships and a focus on prevention are central to delivering good Adult Social Care. This section explains how we lead services, support our workforce, use evidence to improve practice, and work with partners to keep people safe and independent.

OUR LEADERSHIP AND CULTURE

Our vision is simple: **we make the difference that matters**. We are clear about what we are trying to achieve, honest about where we need to improve, and focused on turning learning into better experiences for people.

Over the past year, we have strengthened how Adult Social Care is led and overseen, so we have a clearer understanding of what is happening in day to day work and in people's experiences.

We are using data and feedback more effectively to spot issues early and take action sooner. This is helping us focus on what matters most to people, including access to support, how quickly we respond, and how consistent services feel. Prevention and early help are a key part of this, helping people get support sooner and avoid crisis where possible.

We also know that good leadership should be felt by our staff. That is why we continue to invest in wellbeing, supervision and development, while building our future workforce through apprenticeships, early career routes and recruitment. We are committed to learning, listening and improving together so we can deliver better care and support.

OUR DIRECTORATE LEADERSHIP TEAM



Sarah Scott
Executive Director
of Adult Social
Care, Wellbeing
and Communities



Amanda Jones
Director of Adult
Social Care
Operations



Benedict Leigh
Director of Adult
Social Care
Commissioning



Emily White
Director of Quality,
Performance
and Strategy



Siobhan Farmer
Director of
Public Health

 **Improving
people's
experience,
timely
access and
prevention**

 **Reducing
waits and
improving
consistency**

 **Strengthening
quality and
sustainability
of local
provision**

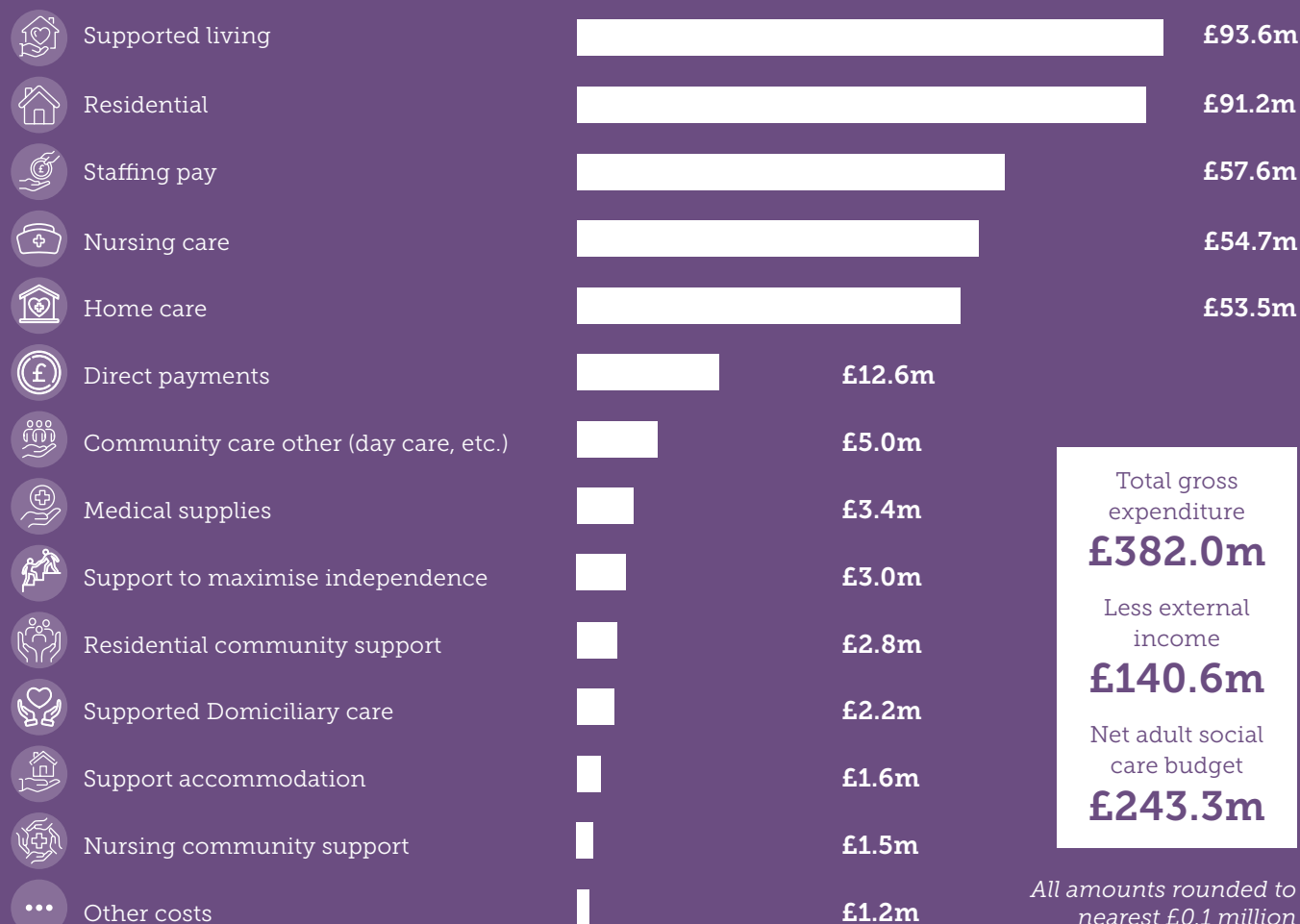
 **Turning
learning
from audits
and feedback
into clear
improvements**

 **Prevention and
targeted support
for communities
facing the
greatest
disadvantage**

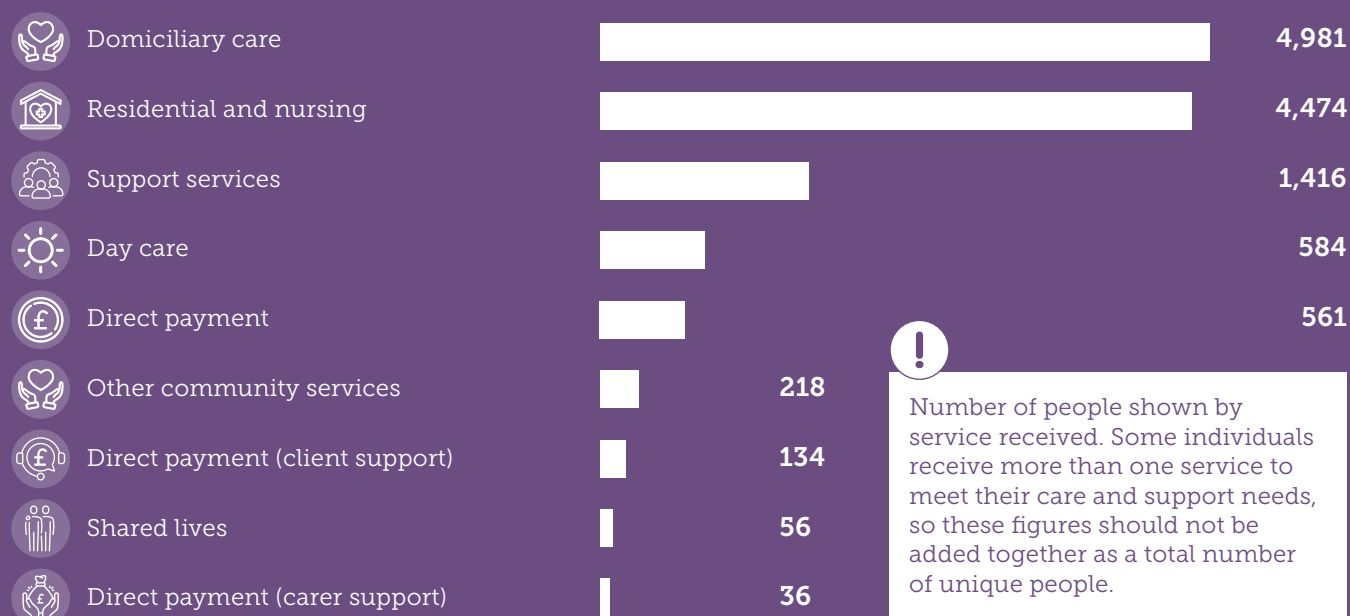
Learn more about our teams and what they do, together with our career pathways and latest job opportunities, at: www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/ascruitment

HOW WE USE PUBLIC MONEY TO SUPPORT ADULTS WITH CARE AND SUPPORT NEEDS IN GLOUCESTERSHIRE

WHERE THE ADULT SOCIAL CARE BUDGET IS SPENT



HOW MANY PEOPLE RECEIVE SUPPORT



SUPPORTING AND DEVELOPING OUR WORKFORCE

We know staff experience and people's experience are closely linked. Over the past year, we have strengthened wellbeing support, supervision and development, using data to understand where pressure is greatest and provide support where it is most needed. This has helped reduce sickness absence and keep a stronger focus on stress and work-related health.

We support staff at every stage of their career, from induction onwards. New starters are helped to settle in through shadowing, a buddy and face-to-face support. Staff also have access to regular training and development opportunities, including apprenticeships, qualifications and continuing professional development, helping them build confidence, skills and experience throughout their career.

We are also investing in the workforce of the future. Through apprenticeships, early career programmes and our T-Level placements, we are helping more people discover Adult Social Care as a rewarding career and gain real experience in our services.

For more information, visit our Adult Social Care recruitment page:

www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/ascrecruitment

“

I've loved being a part of such a supportive group of fellow ASYE colleagues. I will take the learning from this programme with me throughout my career.

”

Newly qualified social worker



Recruitment team at Social work show in Birmingham, March 2026



Practice development team delivering training



Recruitment team preparing for an event

EXAMPLES OF WHERE WE HAVE MADE DIFFERENCE

Prevention is about helping people stay well for longer and getting support in place early, before problems become more serious. Our focus is on helping people to:

- stay well and independent for as long as possible
- recover more quickly after illness or hospital stays
- access the right support before needs escalate.

The examples below show some of the ways we are putting prevention into practice. They highlight how we are working earlier, joining up support, and creating more local options so people can stay well, recover more quickly and remain independent for longer.

COMMUNITY CATALYSTS

Through our partnership with Community Catalysts, we are helping grow small, local care and support options across Gloucestershire. This gives people more choice and control, supports independence at home, and helps fill gaps where local support can be harder to find.

The programme supports local people to set up small, sustainable care and support businesses that can help older and disabled people in their own homes. It also helps people who pay for their own care, or use direct payments, find more flexible local options that work for them.

We have invested £170,000 to grow these small local businesses and strengthen local capacity. The programme also improves access to information through an online directory and offers practical support such as coaching, mentoring, business advice and local networking opportunities.

Learn more about Community Catalysts
www.communitycatalysts.co.uk/our-work/gloucestershire

CARE NAVIGATORS

Care Navigators help people and families get the right advice and support at the right time, especially when someone is in hospital or getting ready to leave hospital. They reduce confusion, avoid unnecessary hand-offs, and help people understand their options so they can make informed decisions about care and support.

They work closely with health, social care and community services to join up support quickly. This includes helping people understand housing, benefits, financial options and local care choices, and linking them to the right teams and organisations. They also support people who pay for their own care to explore local options and avoid delays.

Feedback shows Care Navigators make a real difference. They help reduce pressure on families, provide practical and compassionate support at stressful times, and support safer, smoother discharge from hospital. People and professionals describe them as responsive, helpful and focused on what matters most to the person.

Learn more about Care Navigators
www.local.gov.uk/case-studies/gloucestershire-care-navigators

PREPARING FOR ADULTHOOD

Moving from children's to adult services can feel like a big step for young people with additional needs and for their families. That is why Preparing for Adulthood is an important part of our preventative approach. We want planning to start earlier, feel clearer, and focus on what matters most to each young person.



Joint workshop with Children's Ambassadors

We are strengthening this by starting planning from age 14, working more closely across education, health, children's services and adult social care, and focusing on four key areas: independent living, good health, employment and being part of the community. Our aim is to make sure support is joined up and tailored to each young person's needs, strengths and goals.

Feedback from young people and families is helping shape this work. They have told us how important it is to be listened to, have clear communication, and avoid the "cliff edge" that can happen during transition. We are using this learning to guide the next phase of improvement.

SAFEGUARDING AND KEEPING PEOPLE SAFE

Safeguarding matters because everyone has the right to feel safe, listened to and supported. In Gloucestershire, safeguarding adults is led by the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Adults Board (GSAB), which brings organisations together to protect adults from abuse and neglect and respond when concerns are raised.

Over the past year, we have strengthened safeguarding across Gloucestershire. A new Independent Chair has improved oversight, partners have shared learning on key risks such as domestic abuse, exploitation, financial abuse and self-neglect, and the GSAB website is now easier to use. We have also improved how we understand and report safeguarding activity, helping us respond more quickly and effectively.

Looking ahead, we are focusing on making safeguarding more personal, joined up and transparent. This means working closely with partners across health, police, fire and rescue, housing, care providers and community organisations, while keeping the person's wishes at the centre. We will also make better use of learning, feedback and data to strengthen practice, raise awareness earlier, and build confidence that concerns will be taken seriously and acted on.

Learn more about GSAB • www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/gsab



New GSAB website

PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP: SOCIAL WORK AND OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

Strong professional leadership helps make sure practice is safe, consistent and focused on what matters to people. Our Principal Social Worker and Principal Occupational Therapist provide expert leadership, support good decision making, and help turn learning into better practice across Adult Social Care.

SOCIAL WORK

Over the past year, social work has continued to strengthen through leadership, learning and reflection. Training has been updated, supervision is improving, and there is a clear focus on strengths-based practice and good decision making. Development routes such as ASYE (the supported first year after qualifying), student placements and apprenticeships are helping new social workers build confidence and practise safely.

There is still more to do. Feedback, audits and external reviews show we need to continue improving areas such as legal knowledge, supervision, mental health practice and consistency. We also know that supporting young people to move from children's to adult services remains important, and this will require continued joint working and clear communication across teams.

Over the coming year, we will build on this progress through stronger supervision, continued learning and development, and a co-produced Practice Quality Assurance Framework to help define what good practice looks like in Gloucestershire. This will support more consistent, confident and person-centred social work.

“

I'm proud to be part of such a committed Adult Social Care workforce and the great work we are doing. Thank you for the compassion, resilience and professionalism you bring every day - it makes a real difference to people's lives.

”

Jo Sutherland
Principal Social Worker



OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

Over the past year, occupational therapy (OT) has continued to play an important role in helping people stay safe, well and independent. The service has been delivered locally through the Community NHS Trust, working closely with Adult Social Care and partners. Under the leadership of the Principal Occupational Therapist, there has been a stronger focus on prevention, early support and person-centred care. This includes earlier access to OT, better access to equipment and adaptations, and stronger links with wider Adult Social Care improvement work.

There is still more to do. We need to make access to OT support more consistent, reduce waiting times, and strengthen how we check that OT is supporting people to stay independent. Occupational Therapists and social workers are now working more closely together to review feedback and learning, helping to improve advice, decision making and day-to-day practice. We have also appointed a Head of OT to support the next phase of development.

Looking ahead, occupational therapy will move to be managed by the Council from summer 2026. This will give clearer oversight and help ensure OT is fully supporting assessment, prevention and independence. Over the coming year, we will focus on making this transition safe and well planned, improving access to aids, adaptations and reablement, and continuing to build a confident and skilled OT workforce. This will support our Prevention Strategy and help more people stay in their own homes and communities for longer.

“

I'm really encouraged by how occupational therapy is evolving, with a stronger focus on prevention and improving access to support. Our workforce is making a real difference every day, helping people live more independently.

”

Caroline Parker

Principal Occupational Therapist



Learn more about our Prevention Strategy

www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/media/wlmlptmm/ascs4pop-v053-pdf.pdf

CONCLUSION

As we close this year's annual report, our message is clear: we are determined to keep making the difference that matters for adults, carers and communities across Gloucestershire.

We are proud of the progress made this year - strengthening prevention, improving access to support, and using data, feedback and lived experience to guide improvement. At the same time, we remain honest about where more needs to change, particularly in improving people's experience of care and support.

Looking ahead, we will build on this progress while recognising the challenges ahead, including rising demand, increasing complexity of need and continued financial pressure. We welcome challenge, assurance and inspection as part of our improvement journey, helping us show what has changed, what we are learning, and what we will do next. Our focus will remain on people's experience, timely access to support, strong partnerships, prevention, and consistent strengths-based practice.

We are
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LOOKING AHEAD: OUR PRIORITIES FOR 2026/27

These priorities set out what we will focus on next, based on what we have learned this year. They explain what we want to improve, what people should notice changing, and how we will track progress.

1



MAKING SURE OUR ASSESSMENTS AND SUPPORT ARE RIGHT FOR THE FUTURE

People should get the right help, in the right way, at the right time.

- Fewer repeated conversations and clearer information about what matters to each person.
- Faster advice and support through an improved contact service (often called the "Front Door").
- Better recording of information so staff can see what matters most.

2



WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PEOPLE WHO HAVE LIVED EXPERIENCE

People who use care and support should help shape services.

- Embedding our Co-production Charter so lived experience shapes what we do.
- Involving people in boards and improvement programmes.
- More opportunities for feedback and co-production to shape change.

3



MODERNISING SERVICES THROUGH SAFE AND SECURE DIGITAL TOOLS

Services should be easier to use and better joined up.

- Online Financial Assessment so people can understand costs more quickly.
- Joined up systems so staff have the information they need.
- Technology-enabled care, such as sensors and alarms, to support independence at home.

4



FOCUSING MORE ON PREVENTION SO PEOPLE STAY INDEPENDENT FOR LONGER

People should be supported to stay well and avoid crises in their own communities.

- Earlier help so people can stay well and avoid crisis.
- Know Your Patch networks connecting people to local groups and support.
- Closer working with GPs, hospitals and community organisations to spot issues earlier.
- Equipment, home adaptations and reablement to support recovery and independence.

5



SUPPORTING AND DEVELOPING OUR WORKFORCE (INCLUDING PARTNERS)

Staff should feel skilled, confident and valued.

- More training in strengths based practice, safeguarding, the Care Act and digital skills.
- Clear career pathways and development opportunities.
- Working with providers through a Care Academy to strengthen the wider care workforce.

6



WORKING WITH PROVIDERS AND PARTNERS TO IMPROVE AND INNOVATE SERVICES

We need a strong and sustainable range of care and support.

- Regular forums with care providers to share updates and solve problems.
- Support for new and innovative approaches to care and support.
- A long-term Market Position Statement to plan services around local needs.

7



USING DATA, FEEDBACK AND QUALITY CHECKS TO IMPROVE SERVICES

We want to understand what is working and where we need to improve.

- Better use of data to spot trends and issues early.
- A clearer approach to quality so we can plan improvements and act quickly when needed.
- Learning from feedback, complaints, compliments and audits to improve services.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to everyone who has contributed over the past year. In particular, we thank adults who draw on care and support, unpaid carers, and people with lived experience who have shared their views and helped shape better services.

We are also grateful to our workforce and leaders for their compassion, professionalism and resilience, and to our providers and partners across the voluntary and community sector, NHS, district councils, safeguarding organisations and elected members for their shared commitment to joined-up support.

There is more to do, but we move into the coming year with energy, ambition and a shared commitment to continue improving lives across Gloucestershire.

ACCESSIBILITY AND HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

We want this report to be easy to access and understand for everyone.

READING THIS REPORT ONLINE

This report will be available on our website in a web page format. This means you can:

- read it on a phone, tablet or computer
- use screen readers and other accessibility tools
- adjust text size, colours and contrast to suit your needs
- use translation tools to read it in different languages.

GETTING A COPY IN A DIFFERENT FORMAT

If you need this report in a different format, or would like help to access it, please contact our Adult Social Care Helpdesk:

Call: **01452 426868**

Email: socialcare.enq@gloucestershire.gov.uk

We will do our best to provide the information in a way that meets your needs.