

Jon Soros

Principal Social Worker

Annual Report 2025/2026



www.lancashire.gov.uk



Introduction

The annual Adults Principal Social Worker (PSW) report serves several key purposes. It evaluates the effectiveness of social work practice within adult services, identifies areas for improvement, and highlights achievements and progress made over the past year in enhancing social work practice and service delivery.

The report also:

- Provides insight into workforce development.
- Assesses the impact of policies, legislation, and safeguarding measures on social work practice.
- Promotes engagement with people who draw on services and carers.
- Outlines key challenges and areas requiring further development in adult social care.
- Establishes priorities and strategic goals for the coming year.



The Role of the Adults Principal Social Worker:

The Principal Social Worker (PSW) for Adult Social Care is a statutory function, set within Care Act statutory guidance (2016).

The expectations for the PSW role are set out clearly in the:
Principal Social Principal social workers in adult services: capability statement - GOV.UK

The purpose of the PSW is to ensure that effective professional social work practice is developed and supported within the organisation.

Legislation:	Duty:
The Care Act 2014	The Act places a duty on local authorities (LA) to promote individual well-being and outlines the PSW's responsibility in ensuring high-quality, person-centred practice. The PSW also contributes to safeguarding and supports workforce development.
The Mental Capacity Act 2005	The PSW ensures that practitioners follow best practice in supporting individuals to make decisions, assessing mental capacity, and applying the principles of the Act.
The Mental Health Act 1983 (amended 2007 & 2026 reforms)	The PSW plays a crucial role in ensuring that social work practice aligns with the principles and requirements of the Mental Health Act.
Human Rights Act 1998	Social work is a human rights-based profession. A key milestone for the development of human rights in the UK was the Human Rights Act 1998. Every day social workers across the UK tackle issues that are underpinned by human rights.
The Children and Families Act 2014	Although focused on children, this Act influences transition planning for young people moving into adult social care, an area where the PSW provides oversight and guidance.

Overview



I joined Lancashire County Council at a pivotal moment of growth and system development. Over the past year, adult social care in Lancashire has made clear and measurable progress in:

- Strengthening person-centred, strengths-based practice.
- Enhancing quality assurance and oversight.
- Embedding learning and reflective practice across the workforce.

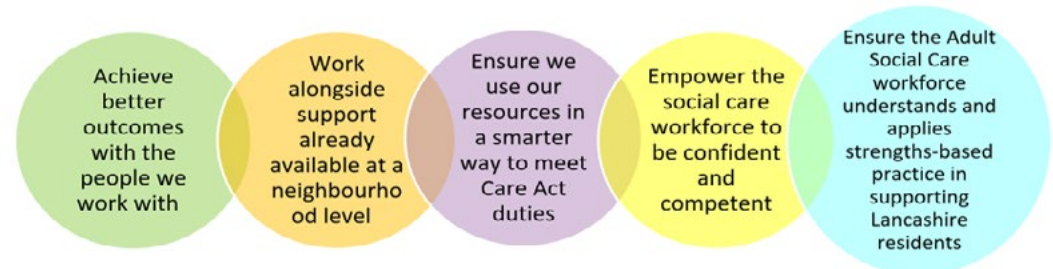
As Principal Social Worker, I provide professional leadership that is high in support and high in challenge, setting clear expectations for practice while creating the conditions for practitioners to succeed.

A key priority of mine for the next 12 months is to review and strengthen the Social Care Academy, ensuring it is fully aligned with our strategic vision of People Living Better Lives in Lancashire. This will support the development of a confident, skilled and values-driven workforce, equipped to deliver consistently high-quality, lawful and ethical practice.

I will leading the development of an interactive Academy learning library, offering accessible, imaginative and practice-focused resources that translate learning into improved day-to-day practice and better outcomes for people who draw on care and support.

Alongside this, I will ensure the council has a coherent, purpose-built, comprehensive suite of professional policies, practice guidance and decision-making tools, aligned to LCC statutory duties and ensuring best practice.

To underpin this work, I will introduce a robust and transparent quality assurance and governance framework, providing clear lines of professional assurance and insight for the Executive Director, Portfolio Holder and Chief Executive, and enabling confident oversight, learning and continuous improvement at a system level. This framework will provide clarity for practitioners, strengthen professional judgement, and support the consistent, person centred and strength-based confident discharge of our statutory responsibilities across adult social care.



Key achievements this year include:

- Expansion of the Shared Lives service
- Strengthened safeguarding governance, including refreshed approaches to self-neglect and multi-agency risk management.
- Investment in workforce development, with new degree apprentices, expanded ASYE programmes, and improved induction processes.
- Supported quality assurance through the PPPG portal, increasing access to up-to-date policies and guidance.
- Lancashire County Council has been shortlisted for the Digital Impact Award in the 2026 LGC Awards for our Empowering People, Enhancing Services:
- Neighbourhood working in Lancashire is evolving.

Challenges have included organisational change, limitations within information systems, and the need for enhanced assurance and learning.



The Main Priorities for the Coming Year:

- Further embed strengths-based, asset-focused , preventative practice.
- Strengthen quantitative oversight and impact measurement.
- Enhance co-production and engagement with people who draw on services.
- Support workforce wellbeing, equality, diversity, and inclusion.
- Drive continuous improvement through targeted learning and robust quality assurance.
- Build on our CQC Improvement Plan.



Key Areas of Activity - Quality and Practice

Achievements

- The allocation of audits and moderations, piloted supervision audit tools, and sustained monthly audit allocation.
- Developed targeted learning resources based on audit findings, including guidance on the Mental Capacity Act, contingency planning, and professional rationale.
- Embedded strengths-based and asset-focused approaches, with clear evidence of person-centred practice and capturing the person's voice.
- Supported quality assurance through the PPPG portal, increasing access to up-to-date policies and guidance.

Challenges:

- Data consistency and oversight.
- Consistent feedback from people drawing on care and support.
- Need a framework that enhances operational practice.

Future Priorities

- Review and strengthen the audit and moderation framework.
- Improve quantitative oversight and impact measurement.
- Embed supervision audits and strengthen assurance around supervision quality.



01

Assuring Quality

We lead on developing and implementing audits and moderation processes, identifying patterns, and sharing insights with senior leaders to strengthen services and improve outcomes.

02

Analysing Feedback

We lead on reviewing compliments, complaints, Ombudsman reports, Safeguarding Adult Reviews, and manager escalations to identify strengths and areas for learning.

03

Collaborating and Sharing

We lead on collaboration and shared learning by turning key themes into clear insights. Through reports, dashboards, and presentations, we share findings and best practice with teams and senior leaders.

Quality Assurance and Practice Development Cycle



Shaping Practice

We lead on transforming feedback and evidence into ideas for learning sessions, resources, and guidance updates to keep practice person-centred, proactive, and strengths-based.

04

Driving Practice Forward

We lead on delivering Shared Learning in Practice sessions, updating policies and guidance, and providing training to strengthen practice and improve outcomes.

05

Reviewing Impact of Improvements

We lead on monitoring improvement plans, actions taken, and impact on practice to ensure learning leads to positive change and better lives for people in Lancashire.

06

Adults, Health and Wellbeing



Key Areas of Activity - Safeguarding

Achievements – Safeguarding Workshop

- **We** believe safeguarding is everyone's business at Lancashire County Council.
- **We** all have a role to play in keeping our vulnerable people safe.
- **We** brought leaders in Adults and Children's social care to talk all things safeguarding.
- **We** came together to ensure that teams across all services are engaged in an over-arching response to safeguarding concerns.
- **We** are committed to addressing gaps in service provision and implementing both short and long-term improvements to our services.
- **We** are committed to working alongside our colleagues in the NHS and emergency services to eliminate gaps and keep our residents safe.
- **We** have strengthened safeguarding governance through peer review preparation and whole council discovery sessions.

Sharpen the Improvement Plan:

"Clearly describe what success looks like, how to measure it, and keep staff and stakeholders engaged".

Boost Data Confidence:

"Improve how data is used for decision-making and recording protected characteristics".

Sharpen the Improvement Plan:

"Clearly describe what success looks like, how to measure it, and keep staff and stakeholders engaged".

Strong Corporate Commitment:

"Safeguarding transformation is linked to the council's wider improvement framework".

Motivated Workforce:

"Staff and partners are keen to safeguard people and recognise the need for ongoing improvement".

Accessible Leadership:

"Leaders are visible, approachable, and morale is high.
Faster Responses: Waiting times and delays in safeguarding processes are reducing".

Faster Responses:

"Waiting times and delays in safeguarding processes are reducing".

Key Areas of Activity – Our Self Neglect Approach

Achievements – Safeguarding Workshop

- Refreshed Vulnerable Adult Risk Management (VARM) and self-neglect approaches.
- Promoting multi-agency working and ethical decision-making.
- Developed new guidance and best practice meetings for self-neglect and hoarding.
- We recently held a Safeguarding Whole Council Discovery Session to remind colleagues across the LA that safeguarding is everyone's business.

These developments demonstrate strengthened safeguarding governance and a proactive approach to risk.

A poster titled 'Safeguarding adults' with a blue background and white clouds. It features an illustration of a red brick building with people inside and outside, including a person in a wheelchair and a dog. The text on the poster provides information about self-neglect and the VARM model.

Safeguarding adults

Sharing early concerns about **self-neglect** can change lives.

Our **Self-Neglect Best Practice Meetings** and **Vulnerable Adult Risk Management (VARM)** model help us to act early together.

If you spot signs of self-neglect, which can include hoarding, remember to **SHARE**:

- S** – **Spot** early signs or changes
- H** – **Have a conversation** with empathy and curiosity
- A** – **Ask and understand** risks, wishes and what matters to the person
- R** – **Raise concerns** – speak to your manager or team promptly
- E** – **Enable support** – use Self-Neglect Best Practice Meetings or VARM

Find the Self-Neglect Best Practice guidance and VARM guidance at lancashireapp.co.uk

lancashire.gov.uk >>>>

Lancashire
County Council

Key areas of activity - Prevention & Early Help

Helping people sooner: What's changed

Over the past year, we've been working hard to make it quicker and easier for people in Lancashire to get the help they need from Adult Social Care. We know that waiting for support can be stressful, especially when you or someone you love needs help to stay safe and independent. That's why we've made improving our response times one of our top priorities.

"The current way of working feels much more effective. It allows us to assess situations while they are still current and to make timely decisions about directing people to the most appropriate services or putting appropriate support in place before issues escalate. It also creates a much smoother experience for the person contacting us." - Social Worker

Faster responses when people first contact us

At the start of 2026, many people were waiting several weeks for an initial conversation with our team. We knew this wasn't good enough, so we changed the way our Front Door/First Contact Service works.

Since January 2026, we have:

- Reduced Numbers of people waiting to zero, and
- Cut average response times from four weeks to just 24 hours.

This means people now hear from us much sooner, get clearer advice straight away and can be connected to the right support without unnecessary delays.

A new approach focused on better outcomes

Focusing on what matters to each person. We've introduced new ways of working that help us:

- understand people's needs earlier
- offer the right level of support at the right time
- reduce avoidable delays
- make the best use of our budget so we can support more people

We're now applying this approach across our Neighbourhood Teams so that people experience the same high quality support wherever they live in Lancashire.

"When people have been appropriately provided with advice and signposting, many have spoken with increased positivity feeling that if circumstances did change and they had to contact the local authority again in future, there will be no delays." - Social Worker

Key Areas of Activity - Neighbourhood Working

Achievements

- **Neighbourhood working** in Lancashire is evolving as adult social care teams take support directly into local communities through the Promoting Health in Lancashire (PHIL) van.
- **We** go out to communities and creating a space where anyone is welcome to pop in for a chat about staying well, living independently, the approach brings advice, early help and community connections right to people's doorsteps.
- **We** aim is to strengthen relationships between professionals and neighbourhoods, build trust and make it easier for people to get the right help at the right time.



Accessibility, Inclusion and Community Engagement

The service continues to strengthen inclusive practice and community outreach.

- A new BSL video relay service and a commissioned outreach service for the deaf community.
- The Sensory Impairment Team is highlighting through case studies the impact of their work.
- Regular engagement with the Learning Disability Partnership Board, with co- production sessions arranged to support the customer journey.
- Marking World Mental Health Day alongside our system partners with sessions emphasising the importance of open conversations and highlighting support services to promote inclusion.

Key Areas of Activity - Provider Services and Community Engagement

Achievements

- The Shared Lives service has expanded its long-term carer base over the past twelve months, now supporting 212 individuals in long-term placements.
- The service offers respite provision for sixty-four individuals and daytime support for an additional thirty people.
- As the lead for a Northwest forum, the service facilitates the sharing of best practices among other Northwest Shared Lives services.

July 2025, the service commenced delivery of the DWP' Connect to Work programme, building on its successful implementation of the Local Supported Employment (LSE) programme 'Trailblazer' in Lancashire.

Reducing the need for commissioned support by seven hours per person each week. Feedback from a range of sources indicates that the Enablement Service not only increases an individuals' skill sets but also fosters greater confidence, improves social interaction, and enhances overall wellbeing

- LSE initiative achieved positive outcomes, with 47.5% of referrals supported into paid employment aligned to individuals' preferences and strengths, and an impressive sustainment rate of 85.9%, meaning that the majority remained in employment for at least 26 weeks.
- The Enablement Service has supported 210 individuals in developing and enhancing their daily living skills.

The service actively promotes its successes through the sharing of case studies on social media, with social work colleagues and local community events.

Notable achievements within the service

- A wedding for a couple residing in Shared Lives.
- Individuals obtaining paid employment.
- One person has been recognised with the Dynamic Ambassador Award for their outstanding performance in a new role.



Key Areas of Activity - Access, Digital Modernisation and Front Door Reform

Achievements

Significant progress has been made in modernising access to adult social care and improving the digital experience for residents and professionals.

- The Digital Front Door programme has advanced, including the planned closure of legacy mailboxes and phone lines for professionals and the introduction of streamlined access routes.
- Lancashire County Council has been shortlisted for the **Digital Impact Award in the 2026 LGC Awards for our Empowering People, Enhancing Services: Lancashire's Gen AI Journey.**
- The Adults Front Door Project refreshed the first tranche of web content, improving clarity and accessibility for residents.
- Preparatory work for the migration of adult services content to the new LCC website is underway, ensuring improved navigation and user experience.

These changes support a more consistent, modern and accessible customer journey.



Key Areas of Activity - Young Adults Team (YAT): Supporting Strengths, Independence and Positive Move into Adulthood

The Young Adults Team has been a standout area of activity this year, focusing on strengths-based, person-centred practice to support young people as they move into adulthood.

The team works alongside young people and their carers, guiding them through the transition between Children's and Adults social care, and prioritising independence before long-term support.

Achievements

The Young Adults Team works alongside young people and their family and carers as they move into adulthood, using a strength-based approach to achieve the best outcomes for our young people. Guiding and supporting young people as they move between guides them through the transition between Children's and Adults social care, providing advice, information and assessments, prioritising independence before long-term support.

We support young adults with eligible Care Act needs (up to age 25 where an Education, Health and Care Plan is in place), offering guidance on key areas such as developing daily living and employment skills, exploring housing options, building community connections and accessing healthcare.

Grace Young Adults Team | Lancashire County Council

Irene Young Adults Team | Lancashire County Council



Key Areas of Activity - Workforce Development

Achievements

The Adult Social Care Academy is a mandatory part of recruitment into Adult Social Care with Lancashire County Council. It is a bespoke induction programme introducing new starters to Adult Social Care, providing opportunities for learning, and engagement with departments in the Council and beyond.



- 177 new starters attended the Academy Induction programme Jan 25 -Jan 26.
- 13 Social Work Degree Apprentices recruited onto the 3-year University of Lancs BA course commencing Jan 26.
- We had a cohort of 7 Social Work Apprentices graduate alongside our first OT Apprentice.
- All graduating Social Work Apprentices offered a permanent Social Work position with us and 100% have continued to be employed by Lancashire County Council.
- Matt Devlin (Head of Strategic Engagement at Social Work England) hosted our second ASYE Celebration Event on 22nd January 26.

Key Areas of Activity - Learning

Workforce Development and Academy In 2025

We delivered learning that directly met the needs of our services. This included our Financial Implications of Care sessions, developed in response to rising complaints about how information was explained and recorded.

We also developed and ran our Professional Curiosity sessions at the request of the Lancashire Safeguarding Adults Board. We delivered nine sessions to more than four hundred attendees and shared resources with almost five hundred professionals across Lancashire.

Practice Bulletin Throughout 2025

We produced the monthly Focus on Practice bulletin covering topics including financial implications of care, professional curiosity, cultural competence, trauma-informed practice and human rights.

Shared Learning

We played an active role in the Shared Learning Group and sub-groups, working closely with Quality Assurance and Practice Development presenting in the monthly Shared Learning in Practice sessions.



Improving outcomes

Key Areas of Activity - Recognition and Celebration

Social Work Week and World Social Work day

We celebrated Social Work Week with an all-day event, bringing adults' and children's services together to reflect, connect and celebrate our profession. With the theme Co-Building Hope and Harmony, we explored how collective strength supports better outcomes for our communities. We heard from spoken-word artist Nathan Parker and from leaders across both services in a panel focused on collaboration, shared learning and hope-building.

Randip Bhogal Safeguarding Award

We hosted the annual Randip Bhogal Safeguarding Award to recognise exceptional safeguarding practice that reflects Randip's kindness, humility and person-centred values. The 2025 award winner was Donna Alexander for her thoughtful and rights-based work with people and families. All nominees were celebrated, with Donna receiving an additional award and support from Randip's family.

Social Work Apprentice Celebration

We ended Social Work Week by celebrating 7 Social Work Apprentices who completed their degrees and are now starting as newly qualified social workers.

Staff Engagement Conferences

Through our Transforming Together series, we supported 6 major engagement events:

- Social Work for the Future brought 200 social workers together to explore co-production, lived experience and strengths-based practice.
- Occupational Therapy for the Future gathered almost 100 practitioners and partners to celebrate the profession's centenary and align practice with wider health priorities.
- Support Services for the Future recognised business support colleagues and explored smarter ways of working, including digital integration.
- Commissioning and Quality for the Future brought colleagues together to discuss value for money, collaboration and impact.
- A final event for Support Officers for the Future will complete the series in May 2026.



Additional Areas of Activity

At time of this report being published I have been PSW Lancashire for 3 months. This has been an exciting and fast-moving time for me. In a recent corporate peer challenge, I was asked “*what made me come to Lancashire?*” That was easy question for me to answer.

I have been struck by the pride, determination, shared vision and desire to ensure that the people of Lancashire live their ‘Gloriously Ordinary Lives’. Without exception everybody is and excited to be part of major transformation to achieve our journey to “good” and beyond.

- I have built important and supportive internal relationships within Lancashire County Council.
- I have already established links with our local Care and Health Improvement Adviser (CHIA),
- I have already established links the Northwest PSW network,
- I have already established links with the national PSW network, and our Social Work England regional representative.
- I am actively involved in a wide community of practice on transitional safeguarding and will be attending a national event on AI and the future of social work in Birmingham later in May.
- I am a member of the national Moving Social Work Steering Group.

Leadership and Influence

- I contributed to regional and national research, policy, and programme development.
- I am supporting the Greater Lancashire Teaching Partnership and curriculum development for social work education.
- I Led and facilitated staff conferences and engagement events, promoting co-production and lived experience in decision-making.



Local Government Reform (LGR): Key Challenges and Opportunities for Social Work and Social Care

Lancashire is undergoing Local Government Reorganisation, following a formal invitation from the UK Government on 5/2/25. This is part of a national plan under the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, aiming to simplify how councils are structured and improve how services are delivered across England.

Challenges

- Navigating uncertainty while maintaining safe, person-centred practice.
- Protecting local identity and community voice during structural debate.
- Managing transition risks to workforce stability, market confidence and service continuity.
- Sustaining quality and oversight across multiple organisational proposals.
- Ensuring that social work values and statutory duties remain central to redesign conversations.

Opportunities

- Stronger, integrated system leadership around safeguarding, prevention and community support.
- A more coherent footprint for market shaping, commissioning and workforce planning.
- Greater consistency in practice standards and quality assurance across Lancashire.
- Clearer accountability for outcomes, enabling more confident and defensible decision-making.
- Renewed focus on early help, strengths-based practice and person-led models of care.

From a PSW perspective LGR has highlighted the importance of our professional voice, ensuring any future structure strengthens safeguarding, protects social work identity, and improves the conditions for good practice to flourish. Something that in Lancashire we are getting ready for.