

Cheshire West

Area Assessment (Summary version)

Pre-publication version dated 19 October 2009

Provided under embargo

If you have any concerns about the assessment please discuss them with your CAA Lead first.



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Cheshire West, at a glance

This assessment sets out how your local public services are working together to tackle the major issues facing the people of Cheshire West. Where we use a red flag, this is to highlight where something more or different needs to happen to ensure that the most important challenges in Cheshire West are addressed. Where we use a green flag, this means that public bodies are achieving exceptional outcomes in priority areas, or something innovative, and that others can learn from.

Green flags - major achievements and innovation

No green flags have been identified for Cheshire West

Red flags - where action is needed

No red flags have been identified for Cheshire West

The local area

West Cheshire has a population of 328,100 and includes the city of Chester, the industrial towns of Ellesmere Port, Northwich, Winsford, Neston, Frodsham, Helsby and Malpas.

Overall deprivation levels are not high, although there are pockets within the area. Over 3 per cent of West Cheshire residents are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Of these about a third are of Asian origin with a significant number of people who have arrived from Eastern Europe to work in the area. The most deprived wards are in Ellesmere Port, Winsford and Chester.

The Local Strategic Partnership was formed on April 2009. This group of partners will decide what improvements are needed in the area.

Cheshire West's public services have agreed the following challenges that they need to tackle:

Safer and Stronger Communities

Children and Young People

Health and Well-Being

Ageing population and adult social care

Jobs and Enterprise

Environmental Sustainability

Housing

The next section tells you how Cheshire West's public services are doing in each of their local priority areas.

How is Cheshire West doing?

Safer and Stronger Communities

Most parts of West Cheshire are safe. Partners have identified reducing reoffending, tackling the adverse impact of alcohol and reducing anti-social behaviour, arson and criminal damage as priorities. They are doing well in reducing some types of crime but local people still have concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime and progress in some areas has been slower than expected.

Arson is a problem in some parts of West Cheshire but work to tackle this is having a positive impact and arson has fallen by 21 per cent across West Cheshire during the last 12 months. Road safety has also improved - there has been an eight per cent fall in the number of people killed or seriously injured on the roads in West Cheshire.

Children and Young People

Schools help children to be healthy and adopt healthy lifestyles. Arrangements for keeping children safe are generally good in most services and most providers are effective in protecting children from harm and helping them to stay safe.

Children and young people's educational outcomes are mainly good. Provision for the youngest children and those in primary schools is good in most cases. There is room for improvement in a number of secondary schools; only 28 out of 44 schools are assessed to be good or better. Only 14 of the 24 school sixth forms are judged to be good. However, there is very little inadequate provision.

Children and young people are encouraged to make a positive contribution to their communities. Provision for achieving economic well-being is good in most services. A high proportion of providers help children to develop skills that will contribute to their ability to get work and be successful.

Health and Well-Being

The overall health of most people in West Cheshire is good. People in West Cheshire live longer, but there are big differences in life expectancy depending where people live. People in the least well-off areas are more likely to contract diseases, such as cancer and heart disease than people living in the most well-off parts of West Cheshire. Partners have committed to reduce

the health gap, and they understand the health issues and differences within the area. However, local plans to tackle the many different causes of ill health such as poverty, poor educational attainment, smoking and poor diet are at an early stage and progress needs to be made more quickly.

Ageing population and adult social care

Good progress is being made in developing social care services for older people and vulnerable adults. The Council has started to review the needs of the area and determine the shape and nature of the social care services that it will deliver.

People now live longer and there will be more older people within West Cheshire in the future. Partners have not yet effectively addressed the needs of the growing numbers of older people. They have committed to deal with this as a priority but plans currently focus on health and social care instead of the wider challenges faced by older people. Only three in ten older people receive the support they need to live independently.

Jobs and Enterprise

West Cheshire traditionally had a stable local economy with low numbers of people out of work and a wide range of local businesses.

The recession is a significant risk for the economy. This is because of the large reliance on banking and car-making businesses. Fewer people are out of work than the rest of England but the number of people who are claiming job seekers allowance has risen by two thirds in the last 12 months. The number of young people who are not in education, employment or training has risen. Job vacancies for young people have halved in the last year.

Government funding for 250 new jobs across West Cheshire will support unemployed 18-24 year olds in most need. Support to local business has been good. The Redundancy Action Support Team has worked with several businesses in the area to support jobs at risk of redundancy.

West Cheshire has many places of interest and the tourism industry is strong. However, there has been a lack of services to support its development. Partners are working to improve this and create new opportunities to promote the area as a place to visit.

Environmental Sustainability

Good progress is being made in promoting environmental sustainability. Recycling is high and the amount of waste created has fallen.. Partners have been successful in reducing CO2 emissions and community groups are supported to reduce their carbon footprints. The village of Ashton Hayes has reduced carbon emissions by 22.8 per cent since 2006.

The condition of main roads is high but local roads are not as good. A review of Highway Maintenance is taking place to improve the roads.

Less than half of people in the area are satisfied with local bus services and local transport information. Access to key services such as health care and employment from rural and poorer areas is not always good. Partners have started to address this but know that there is more to do.

Housing

Housing is a big challenge for the area. The condition of housing in Ellesmere Port is poor and does not meet the Government's standards for decency in housing. The Council is beginning to address this long-standing matter and has taken action to make some immediate improvements. It has a plan for the next steps and we will continue to monitor progress.

House prices are higher than in most other areas. Plans are in place to deal with this. Demand for Council housing is increasing. In Ellesmere Port the waiting list for Council houses has almost trebled. Increased numbers of older people means more demand for single person or extra care housing and partners are dealing with this. The Council has improved services for homeless people.

This assessment includes the summary and full text that it is intended to appear on the oneplace website in December. Your CAA Lead will have discussed this assessment, including any flags, with you in recent weeks.

Please read this assessment in conjunction with our letter to you dated 19 October 2009.

If you have any concerns about the assessment please discuss them with your CAA Lead first.

From 10 December 2009 you will find the results of Comprehensive Area Assessment on the Oneplace website.

For more information, go to www.audit-commission.gov.uk/oneplace



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