Social Care Institute for Excellence

Commissioning for better outcomes

(October 2026)

The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) is an independent social care charity working with a wide range of partners and people with lived experience, to improve people's lives.

We provide innovative consultancy, expert training, extensive resources and information and evidence-based insights for the continual improvement of social care. As an independent not-for-profit charity, we are driven by improving social care for adults and children.

We are therefore developing our offer to support local authorities across England with commissioning.

National context

Increased demand for care and support is going to have an impact on all aspects of social care delivery

Between 2025 and 2035, significant population growth is projected across England: approximately 4% among people aged 18 to 64[1], 20% among people aged 65 and over, and 42% among people aged 90 and over[2].

Over the same period the number of people aged 65 and over living with dementia is projected to increase by an estimated 27%.

The number of autistic people aged 65 and over is projected to increase by an estimated 20%.

There is also an estimated increase of 31% of people requiring to live in a care home with or without nursing. This growing demand will become unmanageable unless councils start planning for it now.

[1] Projecting Adult Needs and Service Information System,

[2] Projecting Older People Population Information System

Changing political environment

In July 2026, Andy Burnham was appointed as the new Prime Minister. His priorities for social care include better integration of health and social care, sustainable funding, a focus on prevention and independence, and support organised around people's needs. Meanwhile the changing political environment presents huge opportunities for us to deliver ever better care.[3]

Baroness Louise Casey is chairing the independent Casey Commission, which is developing recommendations to reform adult social care and establish a National Care Service in England. Co-production will be vital to ensure holistic representation and equity. The Commission launched The Big Conversation on Care, "the most ambitious public conversation in a generation, handing the public a direct role in shaping the future of adult social care in England" to address this. Its final report is due in summer 2027.[4]

Regulated standards to drive better outcomes for people and the communities they live in

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) identifies strategic, outcomes-focused commissioning shaped by people's experiences as a priority, rather than commissioning that is reactive or primarily transactional.

CQC expects local authorities to align commissioning with prevention and workforce planning, engage meaningfully with providers and communities, address inequalities, support sustainable local markets, and use evidence to demonstrate impact on people's outcomes. [5]

Problem statement

Without a strategic approach to adult social care commissioning, councils, providers, the NHS and the voluntary sector will struggle to respond to rising demand, meet people's care and support needs, and reduce inequalities.

SCIE's insight of the impact on councils and residents, drawn from our own experience and from our analysis of CQC reports, is that:

Impact on councils is significant

- Cultures of service-led support planning, that moves practice away from strengths-based approaches.
- Ineffective spending that doesn't address the need of residents and reinforces corporate financial pressures.

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[3] PM sets out new path to fix social care together: 29 July 2026 - GOV.UK

[4] The Casey Commission | Independent Commission on Adult Social Care

[5] Commissioning - Care Quality Commission

- A limited number of commissioned organisations or services leading to market gaps and pressures for greater flexibility in care and support delivery.

Impact on people drawing on care and support

- People do not receive the care and support they need at the right time, increasing the risk of crisis.
- People have less choice or control over their care and support.
- People become disempowered, deskilled, and dependent.
- People are less able to maintain their independence.
- And can result in negative experiences for people drawing on care and support.

The solution: a people, place and partnership approach

Our point of view

SCIE believes the time is right for a fundamental rethink of the role, function and strategic objectives of commissioning, enabling services to be redesigned around changing needs.

Our experience shows that effective neighbourhood-based, co-produced commissioning can improve outcomes, strengthen local markets and support long-term financial sustainability.

Strengthening sector learning

Through a range of national and regional projects supporting local authorities to develop commissioning strategies and outcomes-focused commissioning models, SCIE has identified 8 principles that define and underpin best practice commissioning models:



How does your current commissioning strategy and delivery model compare against these principles?

Where are the opportunities to improve outcomes, strengthen local markets and reduce long-term costs?

SCIE can help you:

- **Diagnose** your current commissioning model
- **Identify** improvement opportunities
- **Redesign** commissioning strategies and neighbourhood delivery models
- **Build** commissioning capability and capacity
- **Deliver** sustainable financial and practice improvements

Co-production and equity in care are guiding principles for SCIE's work and in this context a People-Place-Partnerships model will help you reshape commissioning for better outcomes, stronger communities and long-term financial sustainability.

Please email us for further information: consultancy@scie.org.uk