

Information and Advice

Social Care, Health and Wellbeing – Community Support Market Position Statement

Information and advice is critical to help people choose the best quality care for the situation in which they find themselves, plan for their future care needs, understand what they are entitled to from the state and make the best decisions about funding care.

Under the Care Act 2014 Local Authorities must provide comprehensive information and advice about care and support services in their local area. The Act also states that we must support the person's involvement. If they have difficulty understanding information and advice about their care, retaining or weighing up the information or communicating their views they may need an independent advocate.

As an authority we provide a range of useful information and advice but there is currently no overarching strategy in place relating to its provision. Information and advice delivery arrangements have been developed and implemented in isolation which has resulted in a system that is fragmented and does not facilitate easy access to all the information that an individual may want or need. This is based on feedback from people stating that need services, already in existence, but to which they had not been signposted.

Though the current information and advice offer contains elements that could be viewed as meeting the needs of people who use services, it is unlikely that it will be able to provide effective solutions to some key transformation challenges including:

- Preventing people from being inappropriately drawn into the social care system;
- Actively encouraging people towards the types of information and or advice that may be particularly relevant to them;
- Facilitating the awareness of and access to information and support services to 'all' particularly those who are outside of the system, e.g. self-funders.

There is a range of commissioned preventative services in place that provide information and advice by a variety of channels and formats including

- Advice lines
- Drop in services
- Websites
- Care Navigators

We spend in the region of £720k on grants to a range of providers to deliver these services. Many providers offer information services as part of their operational delivery. We are seeking to explore a new model for information delivery with key partners, providers and stakeholders.

This new model could provide significant and numerous benefits including:

- Single point of access for all to social care information and community-based support services;
- No wrong door for those accessing the information and community support services;
- Care Act compliance;
- An integrated function that supports and enhances our prevention and demand management strategies;
- Consistency across statutory agencies ensuring user friendly functionality and language;

- Access to commissioned and non-commissioned resources;
- Sharing of individuals and local community experience and knowledge;
- Facilitating the development of community capacity and community self-sustainability;
- Developing of links, networks and understanding between those who are required to make information available and those who provide it;
- An integrated information service is a shared funding and working opportunity;
- Information harvesting to inform commissioning and market shaping exercises;
- Identification of joint commissioning opportunities.

We have recently awarded a contract for the provision of community equipment services to NRS Healthcare for a period of 5 years until 30 November 2020 with the possibility of a further 2 year extension. A requirement of this contract is to supply an information and advice service. NRS call this “Safe and Well”, and the offer includes a website, a retail offer (a physical shop in Aylesford and online store) and clinical advice from an occupational therapist.

Tendering Opportunities

An Information Strategy is in development, this Market Position Statement will be updated as soon as we have more information.