

Telford & Wrekin Council

Adult Social Services

Information and Advice

Strategy 2015 – 2018

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Information & Advice Governance

Title	Information & Advice Strategy
Purpose/scope	To ensure that people across the Borough of Telford & Wrekin have access to up-to-date, accurate and relevant information and advice services
Subject key words	Information and Advice; Sign posting; Self help; Independent Financial advice; choice and control; promote independence
Priority	Protect and support our vulnerable children and adults Improve the health and wellbeing of our communities and address health inequalities
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1 Introduction

High quality, up to date, reliable and effective Information and Advice help people to make good choices about their social care needs, and also about their health and wellbeing. Information and Advice help people to help themselves, supporting self-care and self-management – so they are an important part of our approach to personalised care, as well as for prevention and early intervention.

This Strategy is written to ensure that Telford & Wrekin Adult Social Services meets its statutory obligations in providing good and effective information and advice as set out in the Care Act 2014 for all residents in the Borough of Telford & Wrekin.

The Care Act 2014 is being introduced at a time when demand for services is high, and the resources to meet that demand are limited. It is therefore important that we make the best possible use of our existing services and sources of Information and Advice, whether within the Council, commissioned by the Council or with our partners.

Adult Social Services will own this Strategy and associated action plan and ensure they are reviewed on an annual basis or more regularly as appropriate.

Information is defined as:

- The open and accessible supply of material deemed to be of interest to a particular population. This can either be passively available or actively distributed

Advice is defined as:

- Offering guidance and direction on a particular course of actions which need to be undertaken in order to realise a need, access a service or realise individual entitlements

The Strategy is applicable to the whole adult population in Telford & Wrekin and not just those residents already receiving support or people with immediate care and support needs. It covers all residents over 18, carers (in an informal caring role) including young carers, people with disabilities or impairment, people planning future care and their families, regardless of their ability to pay for care.

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this Strategy is to ensure that people across the Borough of Telford & Wrekin have access to up-to-date, accurate and relevant information and advice services. This Strategy recognises that information and advice and the services that provide them, need to be linked to other local policies and strategies and, although the focus of the strategy is on Adult Social Services, it recognises that people's needs are rarely limited to this area and will need to link to other services available in the Council and Communities.

Information and advice provided, must include: the care and support system locally, how to access care and support locally, choices of types of care and support, choices of care providers, how to access independent financial advice re: matters relating to care and support, how to raise concerns about the safety and wellbeing of an adult with care and support needs.

Information must also go wider than care and support and should include: housing/ housing related support, effective treatment for health conditions, availability and quality of health services, handyman services, befriending services, aids and adaptations, benefits, employment support, children's social care and transition, carers services, sources of independent advice and advocacy, awareness of need to plan future care costs.

1.2 Scope

To establish and maintain information and advice relating to adult social services support for all people residing in the Borough of Telford and Wrekin by:

- Ensuring the provision of accurate and up-to-date information and advice in relation to Adult Social Services
- Ensuring we have an effective network of Information and Advice relating to private and voluntary organisations via MyLife and/or other similar e-solutions
- Improving the range, quality and accessibility of information and advice available for all in their communities, so people understand how care and support works, their entitlements and who to go to for advice
- Promoting diversity and quality in care provision and community support so there is a range of high quality services available to meet people's needs and choices
- Connecting individuals with family, friends and community support networks so they can live independently and prevent or postpone the need for funded care and support services

- Continuing our commitment to personalisation with all systems, processes, staff and services, enabling people to have choice and control over their lives
- Striving for collaborative health and primary care services, where appropriate, to improve the health and social care for people
- Providing leadership in the joint commissioning of health and social care services to ensure diversity, quality, cost effective and sustainable services.

2 National and Local Policy Context

2.1 National Policy Context

2.1.1 Think Local Act Personal Making It Real

Making it Real sets out what people who use services and carers expect to see and experience if support services are truly personalised. They are a set of "progress markers" - written by real people and families - that can help an organisation to check how they are moving towards improving adult social care. The aim of Making it Real is for people to have more choice and control so they can live full and independent lives.

The markers of progress are 26 "I" statements - which describe what people expect and want when it comes to care and support - and are themed around six key areas including information and advice

Information and Advice – “Having the information I need, when I need it”

- I have the information and support I need in order to remain as independent as possible.
- I have access to easy to understand information about care and support which is consistent, accurate, accessible and up to date.
- I can speak to people who know something about care and support and can make things happen.
- I have help to make informed choices if I need and want it.
- I know where to get information about what is going on in my community

For more information on Making it Real please visit the TLAP website:

[TLAP Making it Real](#)

2.1.2 Care Act 2014

Within the Care Act 2014 there is a duty placed on local authorities to establish and maintain information and advice services relating to care and support for all people in its area, which includes:

- The broad audience for the information and advice service;
- The local authority role with respect to financial information and advice;
- The accessibility and proportionality of information and advice;
- The development of plans/strategies to meet local needs

Information and advice is fundamental to enabling people, carers and families to take control of, and make well-informed choices about, their care and support and how they fund it. Not only does information and advice help to promote people's wellbeing by increasing their ability to exercise choice and control, it is also a vital component of preventing or delaying people's need for care and support.

Therefore Adult Social Services in Telford & Wrekin will develop information & advice against the outlined fundamental principles in the Care Act 2014 by:

- Complying with the law in a way that is consistent with our vision for Adult Social Services in Telford & Wrekin
- Promoting individual wellbeing, prevention, providing information & advice, promoting quality and diversity of services, co-operating with partners
- Treating carers with the same esteem as the people that they care for and being aware of the needs of children in the household
- Ensuring an equal value on access and outcomes for all regardless of reason for need or ability to pay
- Making it as easy as possible for people to have or to access the information & advice that they need, at the right time and in the best way for them
- Enabling people to be in control of their own care and support
- Responding flexibly and appropriately to people's needs
- Responding in a way that takes account of and uses our community and partners needs, expertise and resources

For more information on the Care Act 2014 for Information and Advice please visit the Department of Health website: [DoH Care Act 2014 Guidance](#)

2.1.3 Better Care Fund Reforms (BCF)

The Better Care Fund has been established by the Government to provide funds to local areas to support the integration of health and social care. Section 75 of the National Health Service Act 2006 gives powers to local authorities and clinical commissioning groups to establish and maintain pooled funds out of which payment may be made towards expenditure

incurred in the exercise of prescribed local authority functions and prescribed NHS functions. Under the BCF “Section 75 Agreement” the Partners agree to collaborate to secure the future position of health and social care services through lead or joint commissioning arrangements.

The BCF agenda focuses on the delivery of health and adult social services to ensure major changes are made to create seamless services fit for future generations and to focus more effectively on preventing ill health and preventing deterioration of health. In order to deliver these services local authorities, health and communities need to work jointly to redesign services to meet the needs of users.

Consideration will be made, when undertaking any Partnership planning under Better Care Fund, to ensure that there is joint planning and delivery of information and advice services. This will ensure best practice and value for money.

For more information on BCF please visit the Department of Health website: [DoH Better Care Fund](#)

2.2 Local Policy Context

2.2.1 Telford & Wrekin Council Co-operative Values, Principles and Priorities

Being a Co-operative Council is about us working together with our residents, partners and local organisations to collectively deliver the best we can for the people of Telford and Wrekin. We believe that how we do things is just as important as what we do. That is why we have adopted Co-operative Values.

- Openness and Honesty
- Ownership
- Fairness and Respect
- Involvement

To reflect our ambitions the Council has worked with residents and partners to identify the following **Council priorities** for the mid term (2014 - 2016):

- put our children and young people first
- protect and create jobs as a 'Business Supporting, Business Winning Council'
- improve local people's prospects through education and skills training
- protect and support our vulnerable children and adults
- ensure that neighbourhoods are safe, clean and well maintained

- improve the health and wellbeing of our communities and address health inequalities
- regenerate those neighbourhoods in need and work to ensure that local people have access to suitable housing

The priority for Adult Social Services is to Protect and Support our Vulnerable Children and Adults

2.2.2 Commitment Statement - Promoting Independence

In addition to our co-operative values, Promoting Independence will be at the heart of social care in Telford and Wrekin Council.

We have established a structured and fair service system which works to make the very best use of the limited resources that we have.

We will promote health and wellbeing through the effective development of universal services, such as leisure centres, parks and libraries, ensuring that we offer 'something for everyone.'

We will ensure that all staff understand how to work with service users in ways that promote their independence, ensure their safety and support their recovery.

Information and Advice: We will aim to improve and enhance our information and advice offer to ensure the development of a service that is accessible, intuitive and directs people efficiently and effectively to appropriate information, advice or services in a minimal way. It will direct the customer (adults with care and support needs and carers) to services of relevance and provide a service that allows people to determine self-help options to assist them to manage their health and care needs and promote independence and resilience.

2.2.3 Local Account 2013/14

In the Local Account, we set out our aim to help individuals to find the information they require easily and quickly in order for them to help themselves. Where possible we will signpost individuals to the most appropriate information, advice and services for them whether this is provided by the Council or by other voluntary sector organisations.

We will

- Provide them with information and advice to help themselves
- Help them to regain skills they may have lost and develop new ones
- Help them to have choice and control over the support they need.

For people who do have care and support needs we have a responsibility to make sure that a diverse range of good quality service provision is available in their local community, where possible. In addition to our community care responsibilities we take the lead in safeguarding vulnerable people who have been or may be at risk of abuse. For full details of our services visit <http://telford.mylifeportal.co.uk>

For more information on Telford & Wrekin's Local Account 2013/14 please visit: [Local Account](#)

Accurate and easily accessible information and advice will allow the individual, their family and carers to make well informed choices on how they control their lives. For example the use of a Direct Payment and the Telford Personal Assistant Register allows the individual to choose and arrange the way they wish to manage their identified needs.

2.2.4 Local Strategies

The Strategies below are inextricably linked to the Information and Advice Strategy and should be read in conjunction with it:

- Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2013 – 16) has ten priorities including to support people to live independently and to improve life expectancy and reduce health inequalities
- Carers Strategy – Making Connections for Carers in Telford and Wrekin (2013 – 16). One of the eight priorities identified in the strategy is Information and Advice and Support. 'We know good quality information and advice is essential in how carers reach a decision. Information can shape what steps carers take, ensuring they have the confidence and are informed to access appropriate support. This leads to greater choice and control in the services they purchase and receive'
- Wellbeing and Prevention Strategy (draft) (2015 – 18)
- All information and services will be online wherever possible and we will encourage customers to use this channel wherever possible. This will support the draft Council Channel Shift Policy

3 Assessment of Current Provision

3.1 Current provision, gaps and consultations

Information about services for people with adult social care needs should be easy to find. In the national Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework Survey (2013/14), the proportion of people who use services who found it very easy

or fairly easy to find information about services was 76%. This is compared to 72.5% (West Midlands) and 74.5% (National).

Customers should be satisfied with the levels of customer service. During a mystery customer exercise carried out in 2013, across all contacts made to the Access Team, 90% were satisfied with the service they received from the Council, 68% reported the service they received was better than expected and 88% would speak highly of the Council following their contact.

Information and Advice should be consistent – currently there is a duplication of Information and Advice across multiple organisations, and some of this is not consistent with other sources of Information and Advice.

Information and Advice should be up to date – but much information about adult social care on the Council’s website (via MyLife) is out of date

We will further explore, where we are now, where do we want to get to and how will we get there, with the use of the TLAP toolkit, in co-production with service user and carer representatives.

<http://www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk/Browse/Informationandadvice/Information-and-Advice-Strategy-Toolkit/>

3.2 Current local services

People currently get information and advice in many different ways, and from many different services. Local places where people get information and advice include:

Local sources of information and/or advice	
Council Access Team	Council’s First Point
Council Website (and MyLife)	Carers Contact Centre
NHS and other public sector websites	Advocacy Organisations
The NHS e.g. GPs	Other social care and support services commissioned by the Council
National websites e.g. government departments	Adult Social Services staff and care managers
Healthwatch	Citizens Advice Bureaux
Libraries	The voluntary and community sector

4 Objectives

4.1 Understand the information and advice needs of our residents

It is fundamental to understand the information and advice needs of the residents in Telford & Wrekin including carers and families to take control of and make well informed choices about care and support. The information and advice will ensure people know about funding for services, promotion of peoples well-being by increasing their ability to exercise choice and control. By ensuring that we understand the needs of local people for information and advice it will also prevent or delay peoples need for adult social services.

4.2 Connect more people to accessible, local personal support

To be developed through partnership working involving health, voluntary and private organisations and local communities to ensure that all potential information and advice support is available in the community and can be accessed in various formats. There is a strong focus to make more use of 'assistive technology', such as digital and web based services, however not all customers would be able to get the best information and advice if the only channels for that advice were digital channels. Face to face information and advice, and telephone based information and advice, are also important.

4.3 Review the information and advice and the method by which it is provided

To ensure that regular reviews of all information and advice are undertaken to ensure accuracy, consistency and up-to-date information and advice is available at all times. Consideration must be given to ensure that information and advice is available in various formats and is accessible across Telford and Wrekin. All information and services will be online wherever possible and we will encourage customers to use this channel wherever possible.

4.4 Ensure the information and advice is accurate and effective

All information and advice must be reviewed at least annually and in some cases more often dependent on changes and up-dates. Where possible we should create information once and use it many times and link our online service to existing information on other websites e.g. benefits, rather than creating and maintaining the information on our site.

5 Outcomes

The Strategy and associated action plan will ensure the outcomes for the current and planned approaches for information and advice delivery are met.

5.1 An effective public information and advice service will be available

We will improve our digital communications ability by being proactive in our use of social and digital media, supporting people to use these channels through clear guidelines and policies and to continue to look for new ways of engaging people using digital and social media.

We will target communication and engagement to maximise impact, using data to reach people more effectively, including people who have been harder to engage in the past and who will benefit from tailored approaches to communication and engagement.

We will provide good information & advice by working as one team, build effective, co-ordinated communications and engagement that is consistently high quality and provides value for money

- Through the use of Multi Media channels, reach the maximum number of residents, allowing them to make decisions for themselves.
- Review of information needs of local residents
- Access to information and advice.
- Use of Local 'Hubs' for information access, GP surgeries, Hospitals, First Point, Libraries, Council offices, Faith Groups, BME Groups
- Prepare staff and Members with the information resources and guidance for any enquiries in relation to the Care Act 2014
- Carers information, including young carers linking to the Carers Contact Centre
- Dementia
- Safeguarding – Making Safeguarding Personal

5.2 Information and advice service will be co-produced with key strategic partners

- Working with Partners, we will build on sharing advice, building a 'library of assets' and links to external sites , to improve the information available to residents
- Identify funding to support the strategy
- Identify key providers for financial advocacy
- Links to key central directories e.g. NHS England, CQC
- Develop further the E market place
- Engagement with Service user groups to promote strategy
- Working with Communities, private and voluntary organisations; ensuring that all relevant information and advice is available

5.3 MyLife, or other agreed e-system, will be the key local directory, encouraging public and professional use to support ‘self help’ and to promote independence

- Content monitoring e.g. accuracy of data and regular updating
- User experience surveys and audit
- Easy read and plain English
- Customer feedback through MyLife
- Critical friends through the Readers Group for ongoing testing of MyLife for easy use and navigation to access information and advice

5.4 Local providers will be commissioned and encouraged to provide information and advice services

- Working with Commissioning, we will engage Stakeholders –ensuring that other statutory, voluntary and/or private sectors information and advice resources are incorporated.
- Ensure that National and Local messages are delivered
- Links to JSNA
- Links to Health initiatives also providing information and advice
- Links to other external organisations providing information and advice such as DWP and Skills for Care

5.5 Appropriate and accessible signposting to independent financial advice will be available

The Care Act guidance talks about ‘financial information and advice’ which includes a broad spectrum of services whose purpose is to help people plan, prepare and pay for their care costs. In places it talks of ‘independent’ financial information or advice, by which it means services independent of the Council. This guidance also refers to ‘regulated’ financial advice which means advice from an organisation regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) which can extend to individual recommendations about specific financial products. The Council has to ensure that people are able to access all of these types of financial information and advice which help people plan and pay for their care.

The details of providers of independent financial information and advice would be accessed through MyLife linking to national websites.

The Council will ensure that its staff and partners can actively describe the general benefits of seeking independent financial information and advice and explain these to an individual, actively helping people to locate sources of further information and advice through national websites.

We will ensure that there is provision of advice relating to debt, benefits, employment and housing issues across the Borough.

Whilst always operating within the statutory obligations and spirit of the Care Act 2014 the Council must be guarded against claims of undue influence and negligence when assisting people with access to independent financial advice (and where this results in a financial loss to those people) and to limit any potential liability it is advisable a disclaimer should accompany assistance given.

Disclaimer

“The Council’s role is that of a facilitator and the final choice of independent financial advisor will lie entirely with the person seeking that advice. The Council accepts no responsibility or liability for any direct or indirect loss, damage or inconvenience caused by any inaccurate or incomplete advice nor for the content of any websites (or the content of websites that are accessed via links to that website)”.

6 Action Plan to deliver on Strategy Objectives and Outcomes

(Link to separate action plan document)

7 Performance Management

The Think Local Act Personal Strategy Information and Advice toolkit will be used to assist with how success will be measured and will provide a framework for monitoring. Measures will include:

- Increase up-take of Information & advice through digital and social media usage
- Satisfaction ratings
- Feedback on Information & Advice through various channels including forums, meetings, hubs etc

We will bring together data about information and advice services, to consider how good and how useful the information and advice is, whether provided by the Council, its partners or services commissioned by the Council.