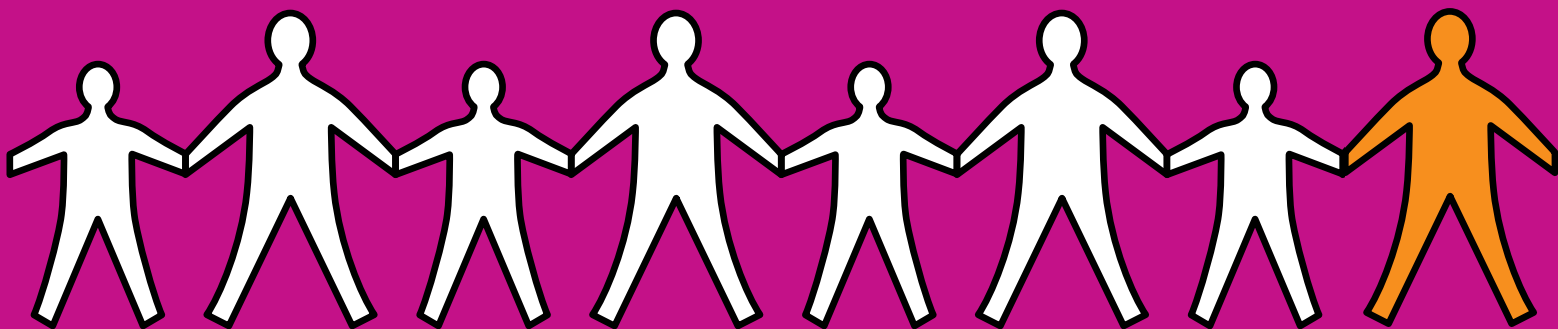


Transforming adult social care: access to information, advice and advocacy

Executive summary

Information, advice and advocacy are essential for all adults and their relatives and carers who need, or may need, services and support in order to lead their lives.

This includes people with the full range of needs and financial means.



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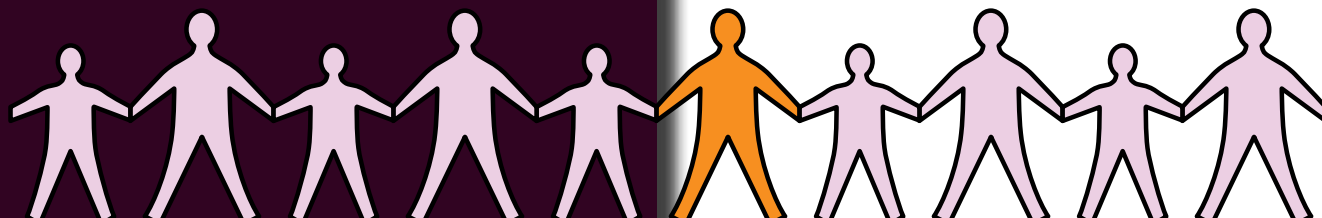
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background

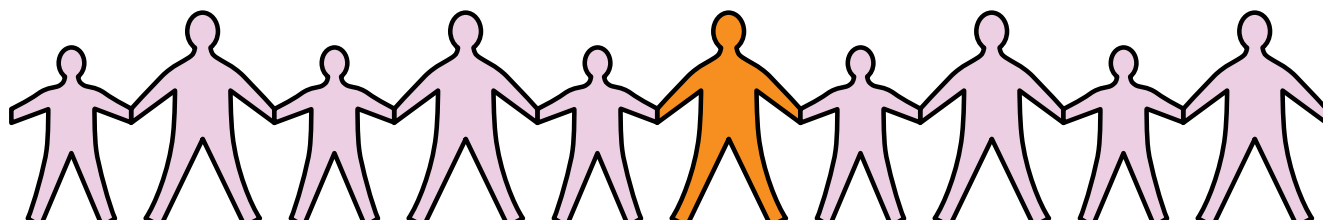
The Association of Directors of Adults Social Services (ADASS), the Local Government Association (LGA), the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) and Counsel and Care commissioned this piece of work, on behalf of the Transforming Adult Social Care Programme Board, to scope current activity and thinking in relation to information, advice and advocacy (IAA) and the delivery of Putting People First (2007).

The work has been funded from a top-slice of the Social Care Reform Grant and led through a steering group including the commissioners and funders and representatives from the Department of Health, the Department of Communities and Local Government, the Department for Work and Pensions and the Office for Disability Issues.

The original specification was to undertake a brief four month piece of work including a literature review and to map good practice in local authority areas through a survey. During the course of the project this developed and activities involved:

- a literature review
- a survey of Directors of Adults Social Services
- a review of a sample of local authority and national websites
- engagement with a range of stakeholders in a selected group of seven local authority areas including visits, focus groups and interviews
- engagement with a small sample of national statutory and voluntary organisations through interviews and visits
- modelling the development of orders and shapes for the findings in order to develop a structure within which to support the development of policy and practice.

Within the short space of time available the work has engaged with a wide selection of stakeholders at a national and local level and in the statutory and third sectors although given the timescales it has inevitably had to be selective in this. It has also engaged with people thinking about or using services.



findings from the secondary research: literature review

definitions:

Whilst contested by some, we use the following definitions of information, advice and advocacy:

information:

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

advice:

'offers guidance and direction on a particular course of action which needs to be undertaken in order to realise a need, access a service or realise individual entitlements'

advocacy:

'the provision of support and encouragement, or representation of individuals' views, needs or rights. It is fundamental that advocacy recognises the centrality of the service user.'

(Margiotta et al., 2003: 9)

key issues from the literature review are:

- It can be difficult to unpick information, advice and advocacy services since for many users of social care, these three types of service provision overlap and are inter-related (Dunning, 2005). In order to access the right services and/or information, people may require support from each of these types of services.
- Much of the evidence around information, advice and advocacy services is descriptive in nature rather than based on robust assessments or evaluations of services. It is therefore difficult to know on what basis certain initiatives are deemed as 'best practice' (e.g. Godfrey & Denby, 2007, Baxter et al., 2006)
- The literature review identifies and sets out themes in order to inform policy and practice and highlights a range of examples of delivery.

recommendations from the literature review

The literature review identifies issues relating to information, advice and advocacy and themes them, resulting in recommendations as follows:

- i) ensure the strategic significance of providing good quality information is understood by all stakeholders
- ii) provide information related to points in people's lives when support is needed
- iii) ensure information is available in a range of formats and channels and is accessible by all groups
- iv) ensure that information needs for all groups are met and where possible, ensure that support is tailored to individual needs and preferences
- v) improve co-ordination and signposting between information providers across professional/governmental boundaries, and remove unhelpful boundaries to information provision
- vi) ensure that advocacy services are modelled on good practice principles
- vii) involve people who use information, advice and advocacy in the design, implementation and evaluation of those services
- viii) recognise the potential new roles of social workers
- ix) define clear responsibility for service provision
- x) support organisations to assure the quality of their IAA provision
- xi) undertake research into 'what works' in relation to IAA

findings from primary research:

survey of directors of adults social services

The survey was designed and tested with the steering group and a virtual group that included contributions from the LGA, ADASS, In Control, Counsel and Care and the Office for Disability Issues . The survey elicited a 55% response rate (82 Directors of Adults Social Services) of which there was a fair spread of local authority types and regions.

findings

- each element of information, advice and advocacy provision had a relatively high priority in relation to transforming adult social care
- information provision was seen by more respondents as ‘very important’ compared to the other two services
- respondents are on the whole ‘working towards better IAA and a more strategic approach’ but few are there yet
- respondents generally felt more confident in their ability to know the information needs of their local populations (over advice and advocacy needs where nearly three fifths of respondents are not confident or neither confident nor unconfident). This suggests Local Authorities may need to do more work in this area to better understand the needs of their local populations
- most didn’t have documented strategies to address IAA needs and did not believe that IAA services were strategically commissioned at that point in time.

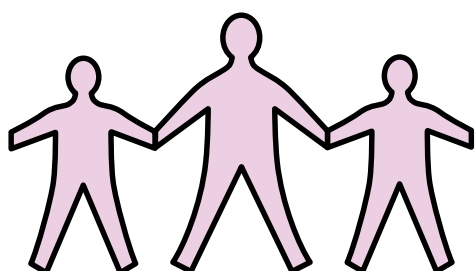
The most significant gaps in IAA strategies identified were (in order of frequency of response):

1. The identification of standards and quality assurance of provision
2. Marketing and making accessible existing provision
3. Meeting the needs of socially excluded people
4. Partnerships, including sharing information and effective referrals
5. Technological solutions

58 per cent of respondents had undertaken research or consultation to help ascertain the IAA needs of the local population. Work included including questions in regular customer feedback, consultation with or research into the needs of specific groups, reviews of advocacy needs and mystery shopping. In nearly a third of these, research and consultation had resulted in new services or products being developed or commissioned.

findings from the website review:

50 council and 10 national websites were reviewed to ascertain clarity, accessibility and content, based on searching for specific information for a range of needs. There were vast differences experienced by the researchers between sites, with examples of good and poor practice. Very few gave complete information to enable choice and access without further investigation: that is, they often excluded the complete range of factors including availability (almost exclusively), affordability and quality.



good practice included	examples of poor practice included
information held at a high level	information buried
clear page design	cluttered pages
well structured site	unclear navigation
helpful external links	links directing from site
information aimed at the public	information written for professionals
frequently asked questions	too much jargon
practical information	too many PDFs
comprehensive information	out of date information
information to aid choice	information lacking content
	no mention of choice, quality or cost

findings from more in depth work facilitated through selected local authorities

A selection of seven local authorities facilitated a range of more in depth work. In each case this included discussions with the Director of Adults Social Services, visits, and focus groups with stakeholders including people using service staff.

current delivery

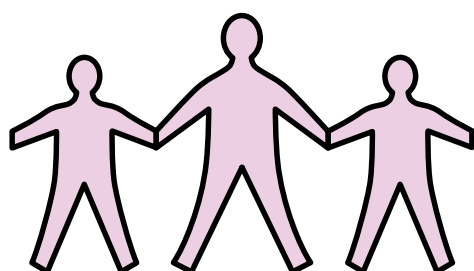
Typically local authorities deliver information and advice at an authority wide level through a corporate website and either a corporate or social care specific contact centre together with a small number of specialist services such as Independent Mental Capacity Advocates. In districts or localities they have delivery mechanisms through a patchwork of one stop shops, libraries, health centres and other mechanisms. A number of local authorities work with a Centre for Independent Living. At a neighbourhood or village level there is a further patchwork layer of local advice centres and outreach work. It is unusual for provision to be consistent across a local authority, and there is a range of good practice examples at each of the above levels.

Current provision of information, advice and advocacy has developed from a multiplicity of separate initiatives, largely as an adjunct to other initiatives rather than as part of a coherent service strategy. All local authority areas therefore have an array of services but largely these are not at present strategically ordered or coherent

developing strategy

This work indicated that practice and thinking is developing rapidly and is outpacing the findings of the literature review, which was, of necessity, retrospective. Most people in local authority areas indicated that their initial energies in relation to transforming services had focussed on developing the mechanisms and culture for personal budgets but that they were now proactively engaged on a broader front of transforming services, including strategy and practice in relation to information, advice and advocacy and related work in community capacity building and engaging with current (and building new) markets.

Some local authority areas are in the process of developing such a strategy or strategies and defining the needs and outcomes to address.



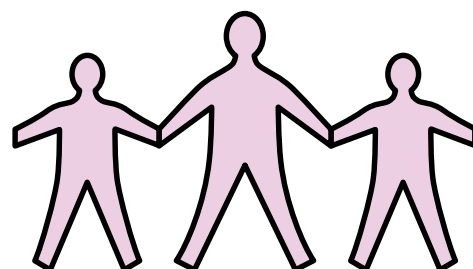
Key issues which emerged during the engagement in local areas and which informed this report were:

information, advice and advocacy are critical building blocks for good outcomes

- Information is **necessary** to enable control and to inform choice. Personalised information, explanation, advice and often advocacy are essential if resultant support and services are to be personalised. Information needs to support the key decision factors of availability, affordability, suitability and quality and safety.
- There is a key **overlap of roles** and experiences in the field of Information, advice and advocacy. Most people in professional roles also have personal experience of using or trying to use the services. Some of the people we met who were using services are also engaged in providing information, advice or advocacy.
- People are thinking about how to meet the **range of needs** of the public, both in terms of those who are articulate and energetic and who want maximum involvement in the management of their services AND those who are isolated, without capacity or exhausted.
- There is far more information generally available than people are aware of and awareness raising and **managing knowledge** is therefore key across the whole range of stakeholders including the public, front line statutory and voluntary organisation staff, communities and other key services such as housing, primary care, libraries etc.

information, advice and advocacy as part of a spectrum of interpersonal support

- The development of information, advice and advocacy is inextricable from the development of other interpersonal dimensions of support including **support planning, support brokerage, the ongoing management of services and safeguarding**.
- There is some concern about **the divestment of social work and care management posts** as a result of having developed streamlined assessment and a Resource Allocation System **without having made provision for adequate support to facilitate assessment, information, advice, advocacy, support planning and brokerage services and, as part of all of that, safeguarding**. Who provides these key functions needs to be planned strategically so as not to unintentionally strip local government of key interpersonal support for people through contract by contract exercises for these functions.
- Issues arose about **funding and charging** and by and to whom. There an indication of **some willingness to pay**, at least in some quarters, for comprehensive, personalised advice, brokerage and ongoing management (described by one group as a personal social worker).



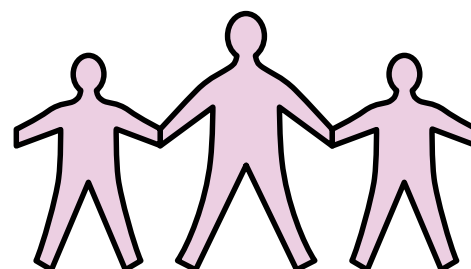
scoping a framework for the further development of services

- Thinking is developing about how to **manage the information base**, including models (merging databases and links, citizen based postings of information, provider/supplier owned postings, Trip Advisor models etc) and key issues such as availability.
- Thinking is developing about **making the range of delivery mechanisms more coherent** including websites, call centres, assessment and care management teams, libraries, local advice centres, Centres for Independent Living, one stop shops, community development and outreach workers.
- There are key issues in relation to signposting. **People experience signposting much more than once as being passed from pillar to post** and getting lost through lack of follow up.
- Those involved felt that most information, advice and advocacy should be **commissioned, managed and delivered locally** rather than nationally, drawing from **national sources where a) information was applicable nationally** (e.g. benefits) or **b) in specialist areas** (e.g. Motor Neurone Disease). People cited some use of DirectGov (though there was not a wide awareness of its social care dimensions and links to local authority websites) but none of NHS Choices except for searching for health services such as dentists or opticians.
- There is an awareness that there ought to be a possible regional or sub-regional dimension to information, advice and advocacy, but no examples were given of initiatives of this nature as it was felt to be too complicated. There is also a suggestion that some local functions might be drawn on across the country, for example services for specific BME communities concentrated in one local authority area but needed elsewhere.
- There have been developments in 'market engaged' solutions such as Care Bay, Plan My Care and others. There is a key need for real time availability information, without which people are experiencing frustration about apparent choices that cannot be realised due to a lack of availability.

findings from more in depth discussions with selected national organisations

During the course of the project, concerns were raised by some steering group members about what should be provided nationally and what locally. Therefore, discussions and correspondence were undertaken with a small number of representatives from national organisations. These included individuals from the Princess Royal Trust for Carers, Age Concern, Counsel and Care, the Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities, the Departments of Health and Communities and Local Government, ADASS and LGA.

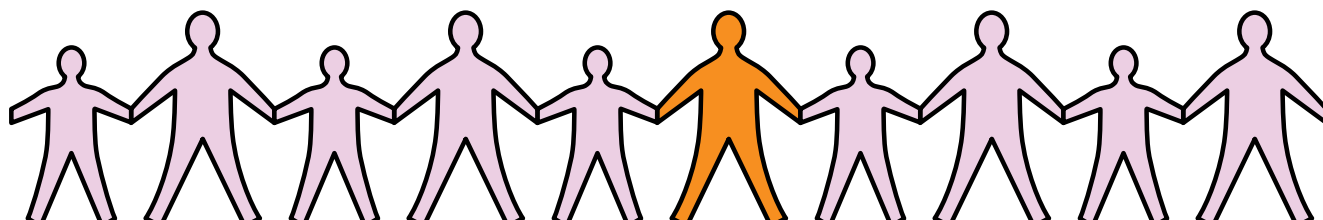
There were mixed views about the national and local dimensions, particularly in the provision of advice services. There was agreement that national sources of information were key where a) information was applicable nationally (e.g. benefits or the entitlement to assessment) or b) in specialist areas. There was, in addition, a view that there is importance to having a fall back advice service for situations where people had "got stuck" in local services or needed support to challenge them. Further to that adds to what is already a complex array of services and may make the jigsaw even more complicated. A proportion of advice provided nationally responds to referral from local services and, in turn, signposts people to local services. There is a minority additional view that there should be investment in additional national helplines such as FirstStop. It was argued that this could provide extended hours cover and greater consistency of quality. There is unanimity that face to face advice, outreach and personal information and advice about local services must be done locally.



models and recommendations for the development of information, advice and advocacy services

In the context of models developed, and in addition to the recommendations from the literature review and the good practice identified from the website review it is recommended that future work should:

- a. Articulate and re-iterate the principle that transformation and personalisation are dependent upon good information, advice, advocacy, support planning and brokerage being available. These services need to encompass developments in both consumer and social inclusion and community or citizenship models
- b. Frame the development of information, advice and advocacy in the context of the spectrum of interpersonal support including support planning, support brokerage, the ongoing management of services and underpin all of these with the dimension of safeguarding
- c. Frame the development of information, advice and advocacy in three dimensions: managing the information, managing awareness and knowledge and the management of the delivery mechanisms
- d. Market the sources of information, advice and advocacy services that are available currently
- e. Build the statutory information base on the DirectGov and local authority website core that currently exists. Raise the access to local authority sites to a higher level of navigation on Direct Gov. Ensure that there are clear links between DirectGov and local authority websites and between them and key independent sector sites
- f. In relation to the market for support and services set out in information and advice, frame standards linked to sufficiency: affordability, availability, quality, cultural appropriateness and type
- g. Map and model the ideal type relating to the balance between national and local provision based on the principles of what is applicable across the country and what is best delivered locally. This could include rationalising provision and developing frameworks.



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Local Government Association

The Local Government Association is the national voice for more than 450 local authorities in England and Wales. The LGA group comprises the LGA and five partner organisations which work together to support, promote and improve local government.



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