

Adult Social Care

Information and advice strategy 2015 – 2018

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

ADULT SOCIAL CARE

Information and advice strategy 2015 - 2018

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Introduction

This strategy sets out how we are responding to the information and advice requirements for local authorities as stated in the Care Act 2014, whilst ensuring that the financial resources we have available to invest in the provision of information and advice are used effectively so that the council is able to meet its statutory obligations.

Information and advice for people in Oxfordshire is provided in a wide range of formats and delivery mechanisms by statutory bodies such as central government, county council, district councils and the NHS and also by voluntary, community, charity and faith organisations.

This strategy will ensure that Oxfordshire residents have access to the information and advice that they need to enable them to understand the range of support services that are available (with a particular focus on non-statutory services), how the care and support system works, what services are available and how to access them.

The strategy is aimed at all adults in Oxfordshire, regardless of ability to pay for any support required, who have a current need for social care support or who are likely to have a need in the future, or are supporting someone with a social care need, and who require information and advice to maintain their independence and prevent/reduce/delay the need for care and support.

What is 'information and advice' and why is it important?

'Information and advice' is an umbrella term, covering a range of activities and interventions that help people to become more self-reliant and better able to manage situations and circumstances in their lives.

The 'subject matter' that people seek information and advice on is wide-ranging but typically includes issues such as: welfare benefits; debt and money advice; social care support and services; housing; legal issues; health matters; employment; family/relationship issues etc.

This strategy assumes the following definitions taken from Care Act 2014 statutory guidance¹:

The term 'information' means the communication of knowledge and facts regarding care and support

'Advice' means helping a person to identify choices and/or providing an opinion or recommendation regarding a course of action in relation to care and support

In relation to social care and support, people (including self-funders and carers) need

¹ [Care and Support Statutory Guidance issued under the Care Act 2014, Department of Health October 2014](#)

access to comprehensive information and advice to help them to navigate the care system to find support that is right for them. Very often, a person's first experience of care and support may be at a time of crisis e.g. ill health, hospital admission, loss of carer, and at a time when important, potentially expensive decisions may need to be made.

The availability and provision of timely, relevant, comprehensive and accurate information and advice should help to promote wellbeing, increase people's abilities to exercise more personal choice and control, support them in their decision-making and contribute to the prevention or delay of the need for care.

National policy context

The Care Act 2014 represents the most significant legislation in adult social care in over 60 years, bringing together law that has grown incrementally over the years into a single statute. It aims to develop a clearer, more person-centred and fairer system. It makes important changes to the way the care and support system works to promote people's wellbeing, prevent and postpone needs for care and support, and put people in control. This includes putting carers on the same legislative footing as those they care for.

The Care Act 2014 places a duty on local authorities to *“establish and maintain a service for providing people in its area with information and advice relating to care and support for adults and support for carers”*.²

The council's responsibilities under the Care Act 2014 in relation to information and advice provision can be summarised as follows:

The council's offer *must* include:

- a. How to raise safeguarding concerns about any adult who may be at risk
- b. The care and support system locally, including the process for getting support
- c. How to complain or formally appeal
- d. When independent advocacy will be provided
- e. Paying for care and support (including charging arrangements)
- f. The choice and types of support, and the choice of care providers available in the area
- g. How to access independent financial advice on matters relating to care and support

The council's offer *should* include:

- h. Housing and housing-related support options
- i. Treatment and support for health conditions
- j. Preventative services (e.g. practical support, befriending, handypersons)
- k. Intermediate care services (e.g. aids and adaptations)
- l. Benefits advice
- m. Employment support
- n. Transition from children's services

² [Care Act 2014 Part 1 Section 4 \(1\)](#)

- o. Carers services and benefits
- p. Sources of independent information, advice and advocacy
- q. Planning for future care costs

Local context

Oxfordshire County Council is continuing to face significant financial pressures, and the amount of savings required in the next few years will require widespread and fundamental organisational change.

To respond effectively to these challenges, the council will make the transition to being an organisation that:

- prioritises work we are required to do by legislation, regulation or policy
- has a concentrated focus on prevention and early intervention
- ultimately provides a vital safety net for the most vulnerable people in our communities who we have a duty to support

The Corporate Plan³ sets out the council's vision for Oxfordshire:

'Our ambition is for a county where local residents and businesses can flourish – a Thriving Oxfordshire. To us this means having:

- *A Thriving Economy – with small businesses starting, existing small businesses growing, and large businesses choosing to locate here, creating good jobs for local people. A strong economy makes everything else possible.*
- *Thriving People and Communities – where residents are empowered to help themselves and can contribute to what happens locally, and where everyone can make informed decisions about their health and wellbeing.*
- *A Safety Net – where we support and safeguard some of the county's most vulnerable residents, focusing on those we have a duty to consider, such as older people, disabled adults, and children. We must ensure these residents are aware of, and are easily able to access, the services and care to which they are entitled.*

We will work to achieve these objectives by delivering essential core services and playing a key leadership role within the county to bring partners together to encourage the best possible outcomes for the residents of Oxfordshire. We will also, wherever appropriate, look first at how we can help people and communities to help themselves.'

In response to these challenges, Adult Social Care will focus on **prevention**, **protection** and **personalisation**: keeping people well through investment in services that prevent some people from needing social care, or reduce/delay the need for care; ensuring people can live a life free from abuse and the fear of abuse;

³ [Corporate Plan update for 2015/16](#)

ensuring people have more choice and control over the way they are supported and facilitating a market of good quality services that can be used by everyone.

The vision - our strategic intentions

The Social & Community Services vision is *'to support and promote strong communities so that people live their lives as successfully, independently and safely as possible. We believe that people themselves, regardless of age or ability, are best placed to determine what help they need'*.⁴

To support this vision, we have determined the following priorities for information and advice:

PRIORITY 1: Increasing general awareness of information and advice and supporting people to 'self-serve' wherever possible

PRIORITY 2: Ensuring access to more specialised advice and support which enables individuals to fully understand the range of options available to them to meet their care and support needs

PRIORITY 3: Focusing on our statutory responsibilities to support and safeguard the county's more vulnerable residents such as older people and adults with disabilities

The ways in which people access information and advice are changing; there have been significant developments in online services and websites in recent years, and an overwhelming wealth of information is now available online. This is coupled with developments in the use of social media to communicate and share information and the rise of the '24/7' culture, where the expectation is that resources and services are available beyond traditional 'office hours'.

However, we know that not everyone chooses to or is able to use online services and therefore we will ensure that information and advice is easily accessible and is provided in a choice of delivery mechanisms and formats which reflect the varying needs of everyone who might want to use the service: by phone, in person face to face, written information/publications, as well as online.

Our ambition and the outcomes we wish to achieve are for Oxfordshire residents to have access to the information, advice and guidance they need in order to get the right support at the right time. We aim to help people to become more self-reliant and better able to manage their personal health and well-being. We want people to be able to lead full and independent lives, to stay connected to and part of their local communities.

⁴ [Adult Social Care Business Strategy 2015/16 to 2017/18](#)

We will do this by putting in place high quality and well-structured provision that:

- supplies clear, comprehensive and accurate information about adult social care and other related issues
- is accessible and is delivered in a variety of methods and formats
- has a broad, countywide 'reach' - offers a consistent level and quality of service across the county
- complements existing national and local resources from all sectors

These outcomes are linked to the following 'I' statements from Think Local Act Personal's 'Making it Real'⁵ initiative:

"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 know where to get information about what is going on in my community."

The current situation

Oxfordshire County Council both internally provides and externally commissions a variety of services that specifically provide or include an element of information and advice. This will not change, as effective services always include elements of information and advice.

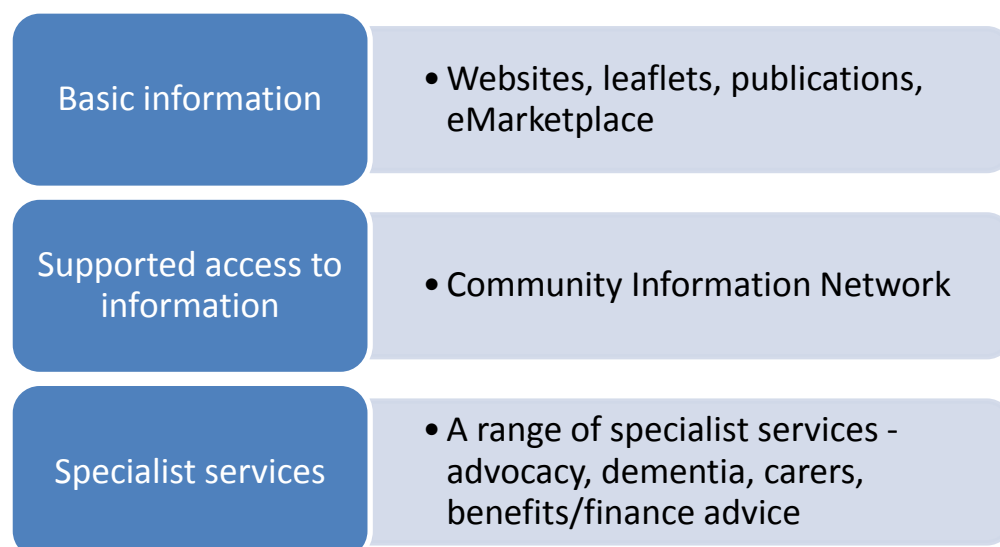
Alongside our externally commissioned services, information and advice provision and signposting to other agencies and services as appropriate is a key function of the Social & Health Care Team in our Customer Services Centre, and our frontline social care teams working with adults in the community and hospitals also provide information and advice to service users, their families and carers in the course of their work.

Information and advice is also available on our public website and via our corporate and Public Health communication and marketing campaigns.

Our key statutory partners such as the City and District councils, Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group and Public Health also provide and fund information and advice services in the county. Our intention is to complement and not duplicate these services, whilst focusing our resources on meeting the care and support information and advice needs of people for whom there is a statutory responsibility - this includes older people, adults with learning disabilities, adults with mental health problems and those with physical and sensory impairments and their carers.

⁵ [Think Local Act Personal Making it Real](#)

Commissioning intentions



The diagram above sets out our model for information and advice provision.

Commissioning intentions for priority 1: general awareness of information and advice

- We are investing in the development of a new 'eMarketplace', which will bring together information, advice and guidance on care and support with a searchable directory of local services, activities and providers in Oxfordshire. The eMarketplace will be available and accessible to everyone without having to make contact with the council.
(This relates to the following Care Act responsibilities (see p.4 +5) - b, e, f, g, j, k, o, p)
- We have published a revised edition of the [Oxfordshire Support Finder Care and Support Guide](#), which is available in various locations across Oxfordshire and signpost adults to services that enable them to stay independent for longer. The 'hard copy' guide enables those who do not have access to the internet, or who do not use it, to get the information they require.
(Care Act responsibilities - b, e, f, g)
- We are continuing to fund the [Community Information Network](#), a significant component of our information and advice 'offer' which is now in its second year of operation. The Community Information Network provides a free 'awareness-raising', linking and signposting information and advice service for adults of all ages, local communities and organisations in Oxfordshire, keeping everyone informed about the range and variety of support services, activities and other opportunities that exist across the county.
(Care Act responsibilities - a-q)
- We are updating and continually improving the [social and health care](#) pages on our public website to ensure that Oxfordshire residents understand the care and support 'system' and can find the information and advice they need.
(Care Act responsibilities - a-q)

Commissioning intentions for priorities 2 & 3: specialist advice and support and focus on statutory responsibilities

- **Carers** - [Carers Oxfordshire](#) provides accessible on line and face to face assessments, support information and advice on all aspects of services and needs for carers. The service has been reviewed and the intention is to re-procure a similar model in 2016, which will also include mental health carers support services.
(Care Act responsibilities - o)
- **Advocacy** - services are currently delivered by a number of organisations within Oxfordshire, with the key partnership organisations [Oxfordshire Advocacy](#) and [SEAP](#) (a national advocacy provider) supplying the majority of the statutory and NHS complaints advocacy in the county. Services include access to trained advocates to support people with mental health and mental capacity needs or who require an advocate to support them in matters relating to adult social care. A review of the services has been undertaken prior to re-procurement in 2016.
(Care Act responsibilities - d)
- **Equipment information and advice** - [Guideposts Trust](#) provides accessible specialist information and advice about products, services and organisations to assist people with disabilities and older people to increase and maintain their independence. A new countywide service for children and adults is being procured in 2015. It will bring provision of equipment and assistive technology closer together and include provision of:
 - General information and advice relating to disability
 - Specialist information and advice relating to assistive equipment and technology
 - Equipment demonstration and support to purchase products
 - Assessment, referral and review for equipment and assistive technology services
 - Trading - provide the structure for people to purchase simple aids to daily living from all points of service delivery.*(Care Act responsibilities - k, p)*
- **Dementia** - there is a range of services available in the community to support people with dementia and their carers, funded by both the council and the NHS. A new specialist dementia advice service targeted at people with dementia who have been recently diagnosed and are requiring advice, information and support will be launched towards the end of 2015. The new service will replace a number of existing similar services, but will be offered through a single county wide team. Dementia information and advice will also continue to be offered through national specialist charities supplemented by the [local Dementia Web](#).
(Care Act responsibilities - i)
- **Wellbeing and employment** - a new Wellbeing and Employment Support Service is planned to start in 2016 that will support people with a range of

disabilities to live a productive life, with minimal dependence on services, by enabling them to access informal community support and friendships, start volunteering, and get paid work. The service will be universally available to all adults resident in Oxfordshire who are: people with learning disabilities; people with autism; people with physical disabilities, including people with a sensory impairment. The service will be delivered to service users in a variety of community settings across the county and will deliver outcomes that enable people to make healthy choices around their lifestyle, participate in sports and physical activity, social activity and friendships, enable people to move into and maintain volunteering opportunities and/or employment.

(Care Act responsibilities - m)

- We are proposing to commission a **specialist advice service** that is focused on supporting people for whom we have a statutory responsibility: older people, adults with learning disabilities, adults with mental health problems, adults with physical and sensory impairments, adult and young carers, young people aged 16+ and families with young children (particularly those with disabled children) to access benefits and entitlements, and with other financial issues such as debt and budgeting.

We believe that supporting people to make the best use of the money available to them, maximising income and helping manage debt will improve people's choice and control to meet their needs and enhance their wellbeing.

The service will include telephone and face to face provision, and will assist people who fund their own care and support as well as those who are eligible for support from the council. The new advice service will work closely with and complement the [Community Information Network](#).

(Care Act responsibilities - l, o, p)