*Joint Improvement
Partnership
South East*

South East Joint Improvement Partnership (JIP)

"Signposts"

**Towards
Universal Information & Advice**

December 2010

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Please note that all the cited references can be accessed via the PPF resource library.

Executive Summary

Overview

This report is the outcome of a project within the South East Region's Joint Improvement Partnership work programme. It has been produced by a project group made up of representatives of nine local authorities within the region. Its primary purpose has been to create a resource which helps local authorities develop their universal information and advice services. These "signposts" cover:

- Setting out the **strategic and policy context** for developing information and advice services
- Highlighting some **key issues** that should be taken into account when developing these services
- Summarising the main **findings from field work** undertaken with local authorities in the region
- Presenting a number of case studies that illustrate **developing practice** within the region and elsewhere
- Pointing to sources of **additional information**
- Identifying some **areas for further consideration and development**.

The report could not possibly reflect all the positive developments that are going on within the region or elsewhere, and as such is not comprehensive or definitive. What is demonstrated is that information matters – the provision of timely high quality information and advice for all citizens is a crucial component of transforming adult social care. The information contained in the report, particularly the case studies, is designed to promote shared learning and to stimulate and assist further progress. Whatever stage of development a local authority has reached, we hope that some of the case studies will be of interest. The report is structured using the framework developed by the Improvement and Development Agency, with a particular emphasis on three dimensions:

- ➢ Managing the information
- ➢ Managing awareness and knowledge and
- ➢ Management of the delivery mechanisms.

Key Findings

The key findings from research carried out with the participating local authorities are as follows:

Needs Assessment

1. In general, where needs assessments for information and advice have been carried out, they have not been strongly linked with the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) process, although in a few areas the JSNA had been used as a secondary data source. All respondents recognised the importance of making closer connections in future with the JSNA process.

2. Local authorities have linked into user and carer forums to help identify need, although the focus has tended to be on the needs of those people already in touch with services.

3. In most places, identifying the particular needs of self-funders remains an area for development, although some areas have undertaken specific work in this area by, for example, carrying out targeted consultation.

4. All local authorities interviewed reported that they had undertaken general work on equalities, although it was not clear whether existing and planned information and advice services had been subject to specific Equality Impact Assessments (EIA).

Co-Production

5. All areas reported that service users and carers had been involved in producing their Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) strategies. This tended to be as part of broader consultation processes via existing partnership groups and mechanisms, including User Led Organisations (ULOs), voluntary organisations, LINks and carer organisations. It was generally felt that the effect of this involvement has yet to be evaluated.

6. Commissioning of ULOs and voluntary organisations to provide information and advice services is at an early stage.

Prevention and Early Intervention

7. The research carried out with participating councils did not explicitly address how local authorities are linking the development of their information and advice services within their broader prevention and early intervention strategies. It appears, however, that the "service response" to self-funders and prevention and early intervention are closely linked. The general impression was that most local authorities recognise the important role played by information and advice in prevention, e.g. through websites and/or first point of contact and by the commissioning of third sector organisations. Evidence of the LINks being made with prevention and early intervention are shown in the case studies.

Support to Self-Funders

8. All local authorities provide information and advice and signpost to other sources of support, although most reported that this was an area for further development.

9. The provision of financial advice, or signposting to Financial Services Authority approved sources of financial advice, is not well developed.

Managing the Content and Organisation of Information

10. In most areas, standards for written information and website design are set corporately via communications teams. Particular pieces of information tend to be endorsed by a range of partners including service user groups.

11. Specific mechanisms for quality assuring information are not well established.

12. Most local authorities reported that there is currently no formal mechanism to ensure that information is updated regularly, but all recognised the importance of a system to ensure that information is kept up to date and relevant.

13. There is some awareness of the Information Standard, a recently introduced Department of Health accreditation scheme for health and social care information, and several local authorities are considering its use.

Enhancing Awareness of Where to Find Information and Advice

14. Local authorities have used a range of means to raise awareness with the public. Some of this activity has been about communicating the Putting People First agenda in general. Methods used include the production of DVDs, meetings with service user and carers groups, local roadshows, press articles and items in council newsletters.

15. Some of the above methods have also incorporated staff (internal and external). Other methods used included team meetings, newsletters, bulletins and briefings, and use of websites. Again, some of this activity has been promoting wider understanding of Putting People First.

16. A number of local authorities stressed the importance of having dedicated staffing to collect information and keep it up to date and the need to market the information available extensively and on an ongoing basis. The message was that this is not a job that needs only doing once.

The Delivery Mechanisms for Information and Advice

17. As one would expect, Information and Advice strategies, where these have been produced, are guiding the development of the delivery mechanisms. Most changes appear to be based on enhancing existing provision, generally first contact points and by re-designing or improving the adult social care section of council websites.

18. Most adult social care leads in this area were in discussion with colleagues from library services to enhance the role that libraries can play in providing information and advice.

19. In a number of authorities the initial point of contact is now located within a wider corporate contact centre. Other areas are considering moving towards this model with efficiency as a significant driver. A key issue is ensuring consistent standards and that staff are sufficiently knowledgeable to provide

20. The use of social media to assist information and advice provision was not well developed.

Developing the Building Blocks for Information and Advice Services

21. Most local authorities are considering developing their IT systems to allow people direct access to the sources of care and support available in the market, although being clear on what is exactly required (the specification), and the costs of developing and/or purchasing can be seen as barriers.

22. Some local authorities have reviewed their policy for funding the third sector to bring it more in line with Putting People First objectives. This is likely to lead to some rationalisation and consolidation of services commissioned from the third sector.

23. The extent to which local authorities are developing their information and advice services in order to allow for personalised support (i.e. direct contact with individuals), and are building in safeguarding, was not explored in any depth. Both are areas for further consideration.

24. No areas reported that they were actively collaborating with other local authorities in the provision and commissioning of information and advice. Joint work was being undertaken with the NHS, but mainly in terms of health and social care staff working together to provide "joined up" information and advice, rather than developing a joint strategic approach to information provision.

Areas for Further Consideration and Development

A number of areas are recommended for further consideration and development which are as follows:

1. Developing a more strategic approach to information and advice so that it is viewed and accounted for as a service in its own right.

2. Making needs assessment for information and advice more fully part of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment process.

3. Developing coherent approaches to commissioning information and advice from the voluntary sector and User Led Organisations, including increasing the contribution made by peer support.

4. Developing the role that libraries can play with delivery of universal information and advice in order to make full use of the expertise of library staff and their resources.

5. Developing cost effective approaches to providing personalised advice, including through direct contact (interpersonal support), to recognise that many people utilize and value "word of mouth", and that information rarely speaks for itself.

6. Developing thinking and practice around the provision and commissioning of financial advice on paying for care and support in the context of the Government's proposals for funding long term care, once known.

7. Exploring the scope for collaboration within and between local authorities and with other agencies such as the NHS in the context of efficiencies and savings.

8. Exploring the costs and benefits of the use of social media.

9. Integration of safeguarding responsibilities within the full spectrum of information and advice giving.

10. Developing simple means of evaluating the effectiveness of provision.

11. Consider the best way to integrate the provision of information and advice on housing.

12. At a regional level, consider producing a guide for adult social care staff on different forms of housing tenures and standards. This could be produced through the auspices of the Housing Learning Improvement Network.

1.   Introduction

This report on developing information and advice services forms part of the South East Region's **Joint Improvement Partnership** (JIP) agreed work programme for supporting delivery of transforming adult social care (TASC). The provision of information and advice is a key element in the transformation of adult social care. *Putting People First (*PPF*)* has, as one of its key objectives, the establishment in each locality of "*universal information, advice and advocacy services for people needing services and their carers irrespective of their eligibility for public funding.*" [1] In November 2010 the refresh of Putting People First, *Think Local, Act Personal*: *Next Steps for Transforming Adult Social Care* was launched [2]. This partnership agreement sets out areas where further action is required to transform adult social care services and the importance of information and advice has been reiterated.

Without access to timely and relevant information people will not be able to exercise choice and control. This is the case whether people are funding their own care and support or are funded by the local authority. An effective information and advice service is an important means of assisting people to self manage and mitigate demand on local authorities. It therefore plays an important preventative role and needs to be seen as an important service in its own right.

Advice in this area was therefore identified as being of relevance and benefit to all 19 local authorities within the region. The report offers local authorities the opportunity to share developing practice and to promote shared learning of what works well or has promise. In carrying out the work, and in structuring this report, extensive use has been made of work undertaken by the **Improvement and Development Agency[1]** (IDeA), who developed a framework for information and advice based on three dimensions of a) managing the information, b) managing awareness and knowledge and c) management of the delivery mechanisms. The aim has been to build on this work and not replace it.

The report should also be read in conjunction with *Universal Matters,* a companion JIP report on developing universal services [3], and a forthcoming JIP report on best practice for developing Joint Strategic Needs Assessments [4]. The report covers linkages to housing advice and information derived from a separate and fuller regional report on **Housing and Think Local, Act Personal: Making the Connection** [5]. Two areas for further consideration and development stem from this report (see numbers 11 and 12 above).

This report does not capture all the good that is going on within the region. It does, however, set out the strategic context for developing information and advice, highlights a significant amount of developing practice, and identifies some key issues in order to help stimulate further development. In recognition that there is

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[1] IDEA is now known as Local Government Improvement and Development

much to be gained by sharing ideas and experience as a specific output of this project, a **Community of Practice** has been set up hosted by LGID. This is free to join and details of how to do so can be found at the beginning of Section Seven on Resources and Sources of Additional Information.

2.   Report Structure

The report is structured in the following way:

- Project Methodology - A short overview on how the project was carried out.
- Strategic Context - The case for developing information and advice services made as part of Putting People First/ Think Local, Act Personal, other adult social care policies and other social policy.
- Strategic Framework and Developing Practice - including case studies, mainly from within the region but some from elsewhere.
- Conclusion - Setting out key themes from the work and highlighting areas for further development and consideration
- Useful resources and sources of further information
- Annexes and References.

3.   Project Methodology

The guidance was developed by a project group with representation from nine local authorities. See **Annex 1** for membership. **Key Person Interviews** (KPIs) were carried out with members of the project group to ascertain the state of development and a number of IAG strategies were examined. A total of 36 case studies were compiled from a combination of those local authorities represented on the project group, and a further seven local authorities, together with input from Improvement and Efficiency South East. Information was also obtained from a number of councils outside the region. A specific piece of work was commissioned looking at the links with housing information and advice, the results of which have been integrated into the report. Further details of how the project was carried out can be found in **Annex 2**. The report did not include within its scope the provision and development of advocacy services.

SECTION TWO

4.   The Strategic Context

Think Local, Act Personal (Putting People First)

This project specifically addresses a core element of TASC. Consistent and high quality information and advice is an essential pre-requisite to ensuring service users and their carers can receive personalised services, by enabling them to make informed choices about their care and support. ***Think Local, Act Personal*** states that, in their local leadership role, councils should "ensure that all people have the information and advice needed to make care and support decisions which work for them, regardless of who is paying for the care. This includes help to make the best use of their own resources to support their independence and reduce their need for long term care." Guidance and expectation around the provision of information and advice services has been included in a number of TASC documents shown in the box below [6-11].

TASC Key Documents Relating to Information & Advice

- Transforming Adult Social Care Circulars March 2008, 2009, 2010

- Prioritising Need in the context of Putting People First: A whole system approach to
  eligibility for social care – guidance on eligibility criteria for adult social care, DH 2010

- Suite of documents produced by ADASS/IDeA/LGA in order to assist local authorities
  implement PPF*. They include:

  - Finance Systems and Putting People First June 2010

  - Operating Models Learning from the Early Adopters October 2009

  - Personalisation and the Law: Implementing Putting People First in the
    Current Legal Framework

  - Making a Strategic Shift to Prevention and Early Intervention DH October 2008

Key Milestones

In order to assist local authorities to develop TASC, and have some measures of progress, five key objectives and milestones have been agreed. Milestone four covers information and advice and is shown in the box below.

TASC Key Objectives Milestone 4
Universal Information & Advice

All citizens should be able to easily find locally relevant quality information and advice about their care and support needs in order to enable control and inform choice. Information should be available in a range of formats and through channels to make them accessible to all groups. Provision of information, advice and guidance should move from being largely developed from separate initiatives to a single coherent service strategy.

- By April 2010 every Council has a strategy in place to create universal information and advice services

- By October 2010 that each Council has put in place arrangements for universal access to information and advice

- By April 2011 that the public are informed about where they can go to get the best information and advice about their care and support needs

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National Support for Delivery

Improvement & Development Agency (IDeA)

To assist local authorities to develop their information and advice services the national Transforming Adult Social Care Programme Board commissioned the Improvement and Development Agency (now Local Government Improvement and Development) to scope current activity and thinking in relation to information, advice and advocacy (IAA). The resulting report, ***Transforming Adult Social Care: access to information, advice and advocacy[2]*** [12] identified some key issues shown in the box below. The framework has been used to guide the field work for the project and to structure this report, although equal coverage has not been given to all aspects.

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[2] Oliver Mills, Kent Director's of Adult Social Services was a member of the steering group

> ### *Key issues for improving access to information, advice and advocacy*
> ### *from IDeA study*
>
> - Ensuring the strategic significance of providing good quality information is understood by all stakeholders
> - Providing information related to points in people's lives when support is needed
> - Ensuring information is available in a range of formats and channels and is accessible by all groups
> - Ensuring that information needs for all groups are met and, where possible, ensure support is tailored to individual needs and preferences
> - Improving co-ordination and signposting between information providers across professional/governmental boundaries, and remove unhelpful barriers to information provision
> - Involving people who use information, advice and advocacy in the design, implementation and evaluation of those services
> - Defining clear responsibility for service provision
> - Supporting organisations to assure the quality of their IAA provision
> - Undertaking research into 'what works' in relation to IAA
>
> In relation to the development of local IAA strategies, the report identified a number of significant gaps, namely:
> - The identification of standards and quality assurance of provision
> - Marketing and making accessible existing provision
> - Meeting the needs of socially excluded people
> - Partnerships, including sharing information and effective referrals
> - Technological solutions

As a follow up piece of work, to help local authorities produce their IAA strategies, IDeA have produced a **Framework for Information and Advice (and Advocacy) Strategy**[3] [13]. This recommended that IAA strategies should be based on a needs analysis of the population. A number of key building blocks are highlighted, and a structure suggested, built around three key dimensions shown in the box below, with safeguarding as an underpinning theme. The following definitions were used and have been adopted by this project.

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.

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[3] Southampton City Council participated in the design and testing of the IAA strategy template.

Support for Self - Funders

As previously stated, a key objective of *Think Local, Act Personal* is that all citizens can easily access information and advice in order to make informed choices about their care and support, preferably before the onset of a crisis. An important and growing segment of the market is people who pay for their own care and support. Despite their significance, in research terms relatively little is known about self-funders. In order to plug this knowledge gap a review of the existing literature was commissioned nationally and published in 2009 as **A Parallel Universe? People who fund their own care and support: a review of the literature**. [14] The overarching conclusion was that self-funders are generally not served well by local authorities. Key findings are shown in the box below. Some follow up qualitative research has been commissioned by the national Transforming Adult Social Care Programme Board to follow the "care pathway" of some self funders.

A Parallel Universe?
People who fund their own care and support: A review of the literature
Henwood & Hudson
Key Findings

- The definition of self funder is not "watertight" e.g. people whose care is council funded may still make a substantial cost contribution from their pension and other benefits, some people may be part-funded by the council and pay the balance themselves; whilst people ineligible for council funding may still be helped with arranging their care.

- There is a policy-implementation gap: attitudes and local authority approaches are highly variable, there is a continuum ranging from service denial through to minimal support and (rarely) a robust strategy.

- Numbers: again data is poor, but there has been a steady rise and self-funders account for as much as 40% of the social care market.

A specific gap exists in the area of financial advice on paying for care and support, where the role of local authorities is not well developed. To help meet this gap the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services in partnership with Age UK, Counsel & Care, and the Society of Later Life Advisers (SOLLA) have produced a guide for consumers on paying for long term care.

Further Information: SOLLA guidance on Paying for Long Term Care in England

The guidance signposts to other sources of information and organisations, including SOLLA, which was established in 2008 as a not for profit organisation, with the primary objective of providing and promoting comprehensive financial advice for older people, their families and carers. SOLLA assists consumers and their families to find accredited financial advisors who have achieved the **Later Life Advisor Accreditation**. This accreditation scheme has been developed by the standard-setting body the Financial Skills Council in collaboration with a specialist financial services consultancy.

Further information: www.societyoflaterlifeadvisers.co.uk

The Consumer Financial Education Body is an independent body established by the Financial Services Authority in April 2010 whose primary purpose is to enhance the consumers understanding of financial services and to manage their money better. They produce a series of **Money Made Clear Guides** which include guides on pensions, equity and funding long term care.

Further Information: http://www.moneymadeclear.org.uk

National Provision of Information and Advice

There are a number of national sources of information and advice including *Direct Gov* for local authorities and *NHS Choices.* The balance of what should be provided nationally, as opposed to being delivered locally, is an issue that has not been covered in the project. Work is being carried out as part of the national PPF delivery programme to assess the scope and feasibility of a national spine of information and advice.

Most large national voluntary organisations (e.g. Carers UK, Mencap, MIND) also provide information and services. A number of older peoples' organisations are working in partnership to provide the ***First Stop*** service, which provides advice and information for older people and carers on housing and care options through a website and telephone advice. There is an associated development in East Sussex (see case study 11).

Further Information:

www.direct.gov.uk

www.nhs.uk

www.firststopcareadvice.org.uk

As part of refreshing the Carers Strategy (see box below), a specific grant scheme has been introduced to encourage condition specific voluntary sector organisations (e.g. Stroke Association, Parkinson's Society, MS Society) to undertake projects that support early identification of carers and signpost them to relevant advice, information and support. The scheme will provide direct help to carers from sources that they are likely to access when a condition is first diagnosed.

Policy Review

A number of strategies are currently being implemented, all of which emphasise the importance of information and advice services in achieving their key objectives. Relevant extracts from these strategies are shown in the box below. An important caveat is that these are subject to change and development as the Coalition Government sets its vision and direction for health and social care reform and in other related areas of public policy [15-18].

Information & Advice in related Adult Social Care Policy

Living Well with Dementia [DH 2009]
Aims to ensure significant improvements across three key areas: improved awareness, earlier diagnosis and intervention, and higher quality of care. There are 17 key objectives, three of which relate directly to the development of information and advice services:

Objective 1: Improving public and professional awareness and understanding of dementia. Public and professional awareness and understanding of dementia to be improved and the stigma associated with it addressed. This should inform individuals of the benefits of timely diagnosis and care, promote the prevention of dementia, and reduce social exclusion and discrimination. It should encourage behaviour change in terms of appropriate help-seeking and help provision.

Objective 3: Good-quality information for those with diagnosed dementia and their carers. Providing people with dementia and their carers with good-quality information on the illness and on the services available, both at diagnosis and throughout the course of their care.

Objective 4: Enabling easy access to care, support and advice following diagnosis. A dementia adviser to facilitate easy access to appropriate care, support and advice for those diagnosed with dementia and their carers.

There are nine national demonstrator sites in the South East Region for peer support and dementia advisors. Dementia adviser services have been established in Bracknell Forest, East Sussex, Hampshire, Medway and Oxfordshire. Peer support services are in Brighton & Hove, Kent, Milton Keynes and Surrey. These services should play an important role in the development of information and advice services within their locality.

People with learning disabilities - Valuing People Now [DH 2009]
Sets the vision that all people with a learning disability should have the same opportunities and responsibilities as others and access to information, advice and advocacy is a key means for achieving this.

New Horizons: A Shared Vision for Mental Health [DH 2009]
Aims to improve the mental health and well being of the population and improve the quality and accessibility of services for people with poor mental health. The main references to developing information are in relation to (i) Promoting Access – ensuring the availability of easily accessible information; and (ii) ensuring that carers have access to assessment, information, advocacy, services and support.

Information & Advice in related Adult Social Care Policy cont.

Recognised, valued and supported: Next Steps for the Carers Strategy (DH 2010]

The revised Carers Strategy identifies four priority areas which are to:

- Supporting those with caring responsibilities to identify themselves as carers at an early stage, recognizing the value of their contribution and involving them from the outset both in designing local care provision and in planning individual care packages.
- Enabling those with caring responsibilities to fulfil their educational and employment potential
- Personalised support both for carers and those they support, enabling them to have a family and community life.
- Supporting carers to remain mentally and physically well.

The importance of information and advice is emphasised, particularly under the first priority. The strategy states that "access to relevant and timely information and advice is also vital throughout the caring role, particularly at times of significant change, for example, to help parent carers negotiate the transition from children's services to adult health and social care services, and at the end of life."

In order to improve the provision of information and advice, the Department of Health is making £1 million available in 2010/11 to patient-led and condition-specific voluntary organisations. Additionally, an information strategy for carers and plans for its implementation will also be published by the Department of Health, following the consultation on *Liberating the NHS: An information revolution*.

Carers Direct
As part of implementing the Carers Strategy a national website specifically for carers with links to carers organisations has been set up hosted on the NHS Choices Website. Further information: www.nhs.uk/carersdirect.

Other Relevant Policy

Equalities

The Equality Act 2010 harmonises, streamlines and strengthens 40 years of equalities legislation. A **Public Sector Equality Duty** is to be introduced (implementation date subject to confirmation) which combines existing race, gender and disability equality duties. Under the Equality Duty, in carrying out their functions, public bodies will have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relations between different groups. Local authorities, when developing and implementing their IAG strategies, need to take due account of these requirements.

Co - production

TASC seeks to be the first public service reform programme which is co-produced. By that, it is meant that public services work with people on an individual level to give them more choice and control, and on a wider level with citizens to reshape the way services are commissioned and provided. Partnerships with people using services, carers and other citizens is therefore one of the five key TASC objectives previously mentioned. **User Led Organisations** in particular have a key role to play, both in influencing what information is produced and as potential providers of information, including through peer support.

Prevention and Early Intervention

Development of prevention and early intervention strategies and services is one of the four Putting People First domains, within which information and advice is a key component. Timely and consistent information and advice is an important way of helping people maintain their independence, and of mitigating demand for more intensive and expensive support. There have been a number of national prevention initiatives in recent years which include **LinkAge Plus** [19], a three year Department of Work Pensions funded programme aimed to develop accessible preventive services, and **A Sure Start to Later Life** [20] funded by the Social Exclusion Unit, aimed at stimulating communities to reshape services with an emphasis on prevention. A number of the **Partnerships for Older People Projects** (POPPS) [21] pilots specifically addressed improving information and advice, including East Sussex, West Sussex and Kent.

Housing

National housing policy sets clear expectations that information and advice on housing options should be available to older, disabled and vulnerable people. **Lifetime Homes Lifetime Neighbourhoods, the national strategy for housing in an ageing society** [22], recognised that homes can become unsuitable for people's needs when they become physically disabled or their mobility becomes restricted in older age. Lifetime Homes Lifetime Neighbourhoods sought to shift the focus of housing with care and support away from residential care by:

- Providing services enabling people to continue to occupy an independent home

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- Improving advice and information for older people about their housing options.

Housing issues are the responsibility of unitary and second tier (district) councils. Local housing authorities (LHAs) have a statutory duty to provide advice and assistance to vulnerable households who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. They have a range of additional responsibilities and powers which flow from the duty to develop and implement a housing strategy, setting out how housing needs and poor conditions will be addressed.

LHA information and advice provision focuses on specific areas: homelessness, access to affordable housing and improving and adapting the homes of older and disabled people. There is no general obligation to provide information or advice about housing to the community as a whole. In relation to homelessness, advice tailored to individual circumstances is usually given by LHA Housing Options Officers in the course of assessing a person's eligibility for assistance under the homelessness legislation.

Access to social rented housing is via a local housing register. Vacant homes are allocated to registered households according to need. By law, information about the LHA's allocations policy, including criteria for needs assessment, must be publicly available. The majority of local housing authorities now operate Choice Based Lettings, which involves advertising all available, vacant homes and inviting bids from interested applicants on the housing register. Advice is usually available to help service users take part in the bidding process.

The LHA also provides information, advice and assistance in relation to Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) and home improvements, to enable older and disabled people to maintain or recover their independence at home. LHAs are responsible for assessing eligibility and paying DFGs to owner occupiers and tenants of private landlords and housing associations. Many other services for owner occupiers and people renting privately are delivered by Home Improvement Agencies (HIAs).

HIAs are an important source of advice and information for older people, and often have a reputation or position in the community which enables them to support those who would not usually consider approaching the local authority. Many have been commissioned to fulfil LHA private sector housing responsibilities and deliver integrated cross-agency services. They can take a holistic view of a person's needs and provide information, advice and other services which may include:

- Home visits to give advice about any problems with the condition of the home
- Setting out the options available
- Help to obtain other support services
- Checking for any entitlement to financial help
- Helping with getting home improvement and adaptation work done
- Liaison with others who might be involved in the work, such as council grants officers and occupational therapists
- Additional services such as a handyperson to carry out small jobs around the home, help with gardening, or coming home from hospital

- Help to make the home more energy-efficient to protect older and less mobile people from cold-related illness.

LHAs also provide information about applying for Housing Benefit, (HB) and Local Housing Allowance (which is the equivalent benefit for people renting in the private sector). LHAs can help people to decide if they can afford to take up a private tenancy by providing information on the amount of benefit for which they would be eligible.

Independent Living for Disabled People

The Independent Living Strategy [23] was published in 2008, setting out a commitment to improve the life chances of disabled people needing support, with the vision of equality for disabled people by 2025. The aim of the five year strategy is that disabled people who need support to go about their daily lives will have greater choice and control over how support is provided. Accessible information is seen as a key aspect of achieving equality for disabled people.

Ageing

The Audit Commission has carried out work in local authorities to assess their response to an ageing population, and published its findings in *Don't Stop me Now* [24]. The report makes specific reference to the importance of improving information for older people, and recommended that councils provide tailored information for older residents through websites and booklets on services in the area. The study was aimed at influencing the revision of the last government's ageing strategy, subsequently published in 2009 as *Building a Society for all Ages* [25]. At the time of writing the Coalition Government has not published a comprehensive ageing strategy. A number of areas from the previous ageing strategy are being taken forward, for example, Directgov now has a "Planning Your Future" page, which brings together a range of information about planning ahead for later life.

SECTION THREE

5. A Strategic Framework and Developing Practice

This section sets out key issues on various aspects of developing information and advice services, summarises the findings from the KPIs, and presents a number of case studies of developing practice. With the exception of the latter, the key issues are largely (although not exclusively) drawn from the IDeA work previously mentioned. Each case study has the name of someone who can be contacted for further information.

Needs Assessment

Key Issues

The development of IAG strategies and services should be underpinned by needs assessment, linked with the wider process for producing Joint Strategic Needs Assessments. A needs assessment for information and advice services should cover the following:

- The full range of care groups
- Specific language and communication needs of people with sensory impairments and people lacking capacity
- Specific communities and cultural differences e.g. Black and Minority Ethnic communities
- The needs of people who are both eligible for council funding and those who fund services themselves
- Needs linked to benefits, health, housing, employment, leisure, education, finance and other information and advice including community information and advice (and advocacy)
- The needs of both people who live in the local authority area and needs for information and advice for families or friends who live elsewhere.

Key findings

In general, where needs assessments for information and advice have been carried out, they have not been strongly linked with the JSNA process, although in a few areas the JSNA had been used as a secondary data source. All respondents recognised the importance of making closer connections in future with the JSNA process.

Local authorities have linked into user and carer forums to help identify need, although the focus has tended to be on the needs of those people already in touch with services. Other ways of identifying information needs that were cited included information and advice surgeries, surgery link workers assessing information needs as part of their broader role, and health and social care staff providing information to individuals and families to assist hospital discharge. One council had sought advice from specialist national voluntary organisations (Royal National Institute for the Blind and Royal National Institute for the Deaf) to ensure that the

information needs of people with sensory impairments were considered in terms of accessible formats.

In most places, identifying the particular needs of self-funders remains an area for development. Some areas have, however, undertaken specific work in this area by, for example, carrying out targeted consultation.

All areas interviewed reported that they have undertaken general work on equalities, although it was not clear whether existing and planned information and advice services had been subject to specific Equality Impact Assessments (EIA).

Developing Practice

Case Study 1 - West Berkshire Getting the User View

West Berkshire Council is using a range of methods to build an understanding of information and advice needs which include:

- Following up signposting by the Contact Centre to see how effective the signposting was.
- Hosting a range of focus groups with different customer groups, a community panel and also staff groups to gather their views and feedback on current information (web, publications and initial contact points). This was an invaluable exercise, leading to the redesign of the adult social care website, a review of all publications and a review of the first contact operational model.
- A detailed survey looking at the role of surgery link workers, specifically to identify levels of signposting information and guidance provided, and evidence of the quality and impact (early intervention/prevention).
- Sending all users with a Personal Budget a questionnaire asking for feedback on the self directed support process, including the information they received to help them navigate the process and set up and manage a Personal Budget.

Further Information:
Joanna John
Communication & Information Coordinator
West Berkshire Council
Tel: 01635 503147
JJohn@westberks.gov.uk

Co-Production with People Using Services

Key Issues

The commitment to co-production should mean involving people using services and carers in the design, implementation and evaluation of services, and should be extended to include potential users. The Office for Disability Issues (ODI) has developed, in conjunction with disabled people, five core information principles to make sure that services and information are designed and delivered to a high standard (see box below).

Key Findings

All areas reported that service users and carers had been involved in producing their IAG strategies. This tended to be as part of broader consultation processes via existing partnership groups and mechanisms, including ULOs, voluntary organisations, LINks and carer organisations. It was generally felt that the effect of this involvement has yet to be evaluated.

In one area, funding was provided to a carers organisation to support engagement and involvement, as well as offering all carers an assessment. Another interesting initiative was described by a council who were developing a Citizens Portal to improve access to involvement in strategy and service provision development, although this will not be specific to information provision only.

Commissioning of ULOs and voluntary sector organisations to provide information and advice services is at an early stage.

Developing Practice

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Case Study 2 - Bracknell Forest Consultation on Information, Advice and Advocacy (IAA) Strategy

In order to help produce their IAA strategy, the council carried out consultation with local community groups covering older people, adults with learning disabilities and carers. These groups represented individuals who are receiving adult social care services. The consultation also went out to residents who were not accessing services. The aim of the sessions was to seek people's views on their preferred methods for receiving information and advice, particularly as information technology moves on and more people are using it. It was interesting to learn that people wanted to become involved in supporting the council to design user friendly software, and were keen to understand how they could be trained to use computers and where they could access them free of charge.

Another key area that came out of the consultation was that people with learning disabilities, who usually require support from a carer or support worker to access this information, wanted a system in place so that they could access information confidentially. The views and experiences generated have been directly used to inform the council's IAA strategy.

The council also identifies, through monthly website statistics, information that is most often accessed by the public. These include enquiries on needs assessments, direct payments and services provided by day time activities.

Further information:
Lynne Lidster
Personalisation Programme Manager
Tel: 01344 351610
Lynne.Lidster@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

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Case Study 3 - The Hub Epsom (a User Led Organisation)

Surrey County Council, in partnership with Surrey Coalition of Disabled People and Surrey Community Voluntary Services (SCVS), are currently jointly commissioning The Hub Epsom. The Hub Epsom is a drop-in First Stop Shop for information, advice, advocacy and other services, run by disabled people for disabled people and carers. It is situated in a central location in Epsom High Street and opened in September 2010.

The Hub provides the opportunity for disabled people and carers to not only improve access to the information and support they need, but also to provide these services directly. The Hub is also a point of access for service providers to engage with disabled people to offer services and find out what people want. As well as having a shop front, the Hub will also be accessible via a website (and links), e-mail, telephone and minicom.

As part of developing The Hub, a steering group of local disabled people and carers has been set up to shape what the service should look like, address accessibility issues, and inform content and format of information. This group also provides a level of quality assurance to the information offered and how the service is delivered.

Since its initial inception, this group has become a formally constituted User Led Organisation and will be responsible for organising the operational running of the Hub, e.g. ensuring that there is the right type of information available and supporting the volunteers who will work there.

Further Information:
Keri Marshall
Central Council for Voluntary Services
Tel: 01372 722 485
keri@centralsurreycvs.org

Case Study 4 - Southampton Citizen Leaders from engagement to co-production

The council has a well established Citizens Leaders Group which is involved in all aspects of the transformation agenda. The group is made up of a wide range of people using services and carers and the chair of the group sits on the TASC Programme Board. The group sees all information about self directed support and over time the level of involvement has moved from consultation to co-production e.g. over-arching procedure documents and the support plan.

Further Information:
Madeleine Cato
Project Manager, Market Development
Southampton City Council
Health & Adult Social Care Directorate
Tel: 023 8083 2391
Madeleine.Cato@southampton.gov.uk

Case Study 5 - Wokingham Co-production with Users

A website for people with learning disability established under the auspices of the Learning Disability Partnership Board (www.wow4me.org.uk) contains information on mainstream services and activities and allows users to give feedback based on their experience.

Further Information:
Matt Pope
PPF Project Manager
Wokingham Borough Council
Tel: 0118 974 6840
Matthew.Pope@wokingham.gov.uk

Prevention and Early Intervention

Key Issues

In making the "strategic shift" toward prevention and early intervention, access to good quality information, and help with how to find the way round services, is key to ensuring older and disabled people have choice and control over how they maintain their independence and wellbeing.

Key Findings

The research carried out with participating councils did not explicitly address how local authorities are locating the development of their information and advice services within their broader prevention and early intervention strategies. It appears, however, that the "service response" to self-funders and prevention and early intervention are closely linked. The general impression was that most local authorities recognise the important role played by information and advice in prevention, e.g. through websites and/or first point of contact and by the commissioning of third sector organisations. Evidence of the links being made with prevention and early intervention are shown in the case studies.

Developing Practice

Case Study 6 - Buckinghamshire In-Touch Service

Buckinghamshire's In Touch service aims to identify and help those who may need some assistance to cope at home. The service provides a pro-active telephone based assessment, information, advice and review service for adults who are finding it difficult to maintain independent living as a result of disability, illness, age or exclusion, and who are eligible for statutory services under the "soon will be" definition of substantial need under the Council's eligibility criteria. People on the scheme are telephoned four times a year to check their situation and to be given appropriate advice and assistance. The service has been evaluated by the Institute of Public Care at Oxford Brookes University, who concluded that the service was cost effective.

Further Information:
Alison Bulman
Service Manager for Service Provision
Adults and Family WellBeing
Buckinghamshire County Council
Tel: 01296 387 436
abulman@buckscc.gov.uk

Case Study 7 - Wokingham Information Network

http://info.wokingham.gov.uk

Wokingham Borough Council has set up Wokingham Information Network (WIN) The website provides information on a wide range of services and activities available in the borough, and is available online and via telephone. It does not provide a screening or assessment function, but is aimed at allowing residents to easily find information on services available in the community, and is a key element of the council's preventative and early intervention strategy. People can search by service type and location, and there are currently over 1,000 separate entries on the database. The website is accessed from the council's website, although hosted by the partner organisation that developed and maintain the site. The council has paid for the development work and an ongoing annual maintenance fee.

There is dedicated staffing resource within the council's call centre team, (Wokingham Direct) who respond to people making contact by phone. When a person makes contact, the staff members will ask a number of set questions and undertake a search of information, which is then posted or emailed out to the customer. If requested, they will also make contact with the service on the person's behalf in order to effect an introduction.

The system can harvest data from other sources and convert the information into the correct format. Organisations can also upload their own information entries and make changes to their information (which is then subject to the council's moderation process). Wokingham has a dedicated member of staff responsible for keeping the information up to date and increasing the amount of information available. Following a successful public launch early in 2010, there has been extensive marketing to raise awareness with both the public and the staff through use of posters, leaflets, press coverage and numerous visits to local groups and organisations. Information about WIN was also included with this year's local council tax bill for residents as part of a wider communication about Putting People First.

Further Information:
Fi Shailes
Communication and Information Project Officer
Putting People First
Community Care
Wokingham Borough Council
Tel: (0118) 974 6777
Fi.Shailes@wokingham.gov.uk

Case Study 8 - East Sussex Independent Living Service

The Independent Living Service (ILS) is a free, one-stop service aimed at helping people aged 60 and over to live independently at home for as long as they choose.

The signposting service, for people with low to moderate needs, is run in partnership with a local voluntary organisation, "Anchor Staying Put". A team of five geographically-based Independent Living Advisors have a wealth of knowledge about the support available in their area.

People are identified from a variety of sources (community matrons, primary care, voluntary organisations, social care etc.), including self referral. A 'holistic' assessment of the person's needs is undertaken by the trusted assessors, in the person's home, within two weeks of the initial referral. They are then sign-posted to local services and facilities tailored to their needs. If they are advised to purchase equipment from retailers, they can claim some of the money back from ILS.

Financial support is also available through the provision of grants to individuals for exercise, well being activities, carers and handyperson services. People can also be supported for up to six weeks through a transport grant, to help them increase or maintain their independence.

A follow up happens six to eight weeks later to review their situation and the support they are receiving. Externally-facilitated focus groups have been held with people who have experienced the service, to seek feedback so that further improvements can be made. In addition, a survey is sent to everyone who has been through the service to see how they are doing. Most people have reported the service as being very positive. Any negative comments are followed up with the advisors or services themselves.

Further Information:
Caryl Ganley
Independent Living Service Manager
Tel: 01323 446446
caryl.ganley@anchor.org.uk

Case Study 9 - East Sussex County Connect

County Connect is a paper based referral service for professionals, including the Pension Service, Adult Social Care, Police, Library Service, Fire Service, Energy Advice and District Councils. Its purpose is to make referrals between services, coordinated from a central point, to help deliver a seamless service to the customer.

Referrals are made when professionals pick up on areas of need relating to other services. They fill out the form and send it onto the Independent Living Service, who run the service. They will then make referrals onto the relevant service(s).

County Connect is hoping to develop their work into health and have begun by sharing the referral form with community matrons and working with commissioners.

Further Information:
Caryl Ganley
Independent Living Service Manager
Tel: 01323 446446
caryl.ganley@anchor.org.uk

Case 10 - Medway Living Well

The Living Well in Medway service is well-established and is delivered by two voluntary sector organisations across Medway. The service provides information, advice and signposting for local residents whose needs fall below the Council's eligibility criteria, including self-funders. Staff can assist individuals with a wide range of problems and queries including housing, benefits and accessing community-based resources. Staff help individuals to navigate their way through council services and will make direct contact with services and organisations on behalf of the individual.

Further Information:
Genette Laws
Social Care & Commissioning & Voluntary Sector Manager
Medway Council
Tel: 01634 3311345
Genette.Laws@medway.gov.uk

Case Study 11 - East Sussex and First Stop Pilot

FirstStop Advice is an independent, free national service, which aims to promote independence, dignity and choice for older people in meeting their care and housing needs by providing advice and information for older people, their families and carers about housing and care options in later life. The service provided by Elderly Accommodation Counsel, in partnership with other national and local organisations, brings together a wealth of expertise through one telephone number and one website to help older people, their families and carers explore the choices open to them, and access the housing, support and care services they need.

In East Sussex*, FirstStop* is working with partners to enable older people to access information and advice on their housing, care and support options more easily and in a way they prefer, providing a specialist telephone advice service for the county, signposting callers to local services wherever appropriate. An important aspect of the project is the directory of local services for housing, care, help at home, legal and financial advice which has been compiled and is available to users of the website and the advisors based in the *FirstStop* team. A comprehensive *FirstStop* in East Sussex Guide is also available from the *FirstStop* team which offers an introduction to services for older people in East Sussex.

Leading the partnership are East Sussex County Council, Eastbourne Borough Council, Hastings Borough Council, Lewes District Council, Rother District Council and Wealden District Council. Also involved are many local organisations that provide services to older people.

Further Information:
Emma Winter
Project Officer
Supporting People Team
East Sussex County Council
Tel: 01273 482391
emma.winter@eastsussex.gov.uk

Support for Self-Funders

Key Issues

As previously stated, a key intention of *Think Local, Act Personal* is that all citizens can easily access information and advice services, including those who have means above thresholds for funding from the public purse. Legislation and guidance make it clear that councils have a legal duty to assess a person's needs, where their circumstances come to the attention of the council, and it is thought they may be in need of community care services that the council has the power to arrange. This duty applies regardless of the person's entitlement to services or their financial circumstances. Guidance makes clear that the assessment of need should be separate from, and should precede, assessment of financial means.

The provision of information and advice is an important requirement in the above context, particularly given the large numbers of self-funders within the region, a trend that is likely to continue. Providing accessible and timely information to support the key decision factors of availability, suitability, quality and safety should help avoid people making decisions prematurely to enter formal care, or choose services based on limited of knowledge of the full range of care and support options that are available. Increasingly, the distinction between those receiving public funding and self-funders should therefore become less sharp.

Key Findings

All areas provide information and advice and signpost to other sources of support, although most reported that this was an area for further development.

The provision of financial advice, or signposting to Financial Services Authority approved sources of financial advice, is not well developed.

Developing Practice

Case Study 12 - Brighton & Hove Access Point

Access Point in Brighton proactively seek to support self-funders by offering an assessment to identify need, provide information and advice to meet need and also signpost people who require adult social care to appropriate services. This information is stored on the Access Point database, which is updated every six months to ensure that the information being provided is accurate and relevant.

The Access Point team are based at a central point in Brighton and provide:
- A single point of contact for new and existing users of social care services
- Information and advice on the full range of care options
- A simple assessment process designed to identify people's needs as quickly as possible
- Online assessment

Based on a simple assessment tool, a basic care plan is defined with the relevant information and signposting to enable the client to access support. From the Access Point Team, clients are able to get information and advice about what services they may require and what these services will cost. Access Point also provides information on non-residential community services, residential services and equipment.

In some cases the Access Point team may be able to provide services directly as a result of the basic assessment but, where needs are more complex, Access Point will refer the client to a specialist team to carry out a more detailed assessment. This assessment is more likely to be carried out face to face in the clients own home. This also works the other way around, in that due to the way in which Access Point are co-located with other specialist teams, clients who are not eligible for adult social care funding (but have identified needs) will be referred to the Access Point team and are able to get support in terms of identifying appropriate services, advice on costs, etc.

Further Information:
Guy Montague-Smith
Access Point and Daily Living Centre Operations Manager
Brighton & Hove Council
Tel: 01273 290463
guy.montague-smith@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Case Study 13 - East Sussex Support to Access Care Service (STACS)

The Support to Access Care Service was set up as a project in 2007 to provide support, advice and guidance to self-funders, based on feedback that they were unable to access the information they needed and weren't getting the same service as people that are publicly funded. As a result of this provision and associated learning, improved support to self funders has now been implemented as part of Putting People First across the assessment and care management service.

STACS aimed to provide an equivalent service to self-funders as is delivered to people that are publicly funded, by offering an assessment of care and support needs and providing information and signposting to a range of adult social care services. The service aimed to increase people's awareness of what is available in terms of home care, rehabilitation services, day care and respite provision, community health provision, support through housing adaptations and telecare. The outcomes from the pilot evaluation after the first year showed that more than half of the people referred resulted in them accessing a service, the majority of which were community-based.

One of the core aims of the service was about sustaining independence so that self funders are not inappropriately placing themselves in residential and nursing care when there are viable community alternatives. This has proved successful, with some people in long-term care having moved to less costly support, including back into their own home.

Another aim was making people aware of their financial situation and potential entitlements. The pilot showed that there is a significant reluctance in people agreeing to have a financial assessment, with people preferring to simply state they were over the threshold.

Contact was made through the Adult Social Care Contact Centre, whose staff were given low level training to help them proactively question people to better understand their situation and offer them an assessment. During the pilot, self funders were directed through to STACS. All people, irrespective of their financial situation, are now offered an assessment of their needs and assistance with planning their support through the locality-based Assessment Teams.

Further Information:
Beja Morrison
Service Development Manager (Older People)
East Sussex County Council
Tel: 01273 482517
beja.morrison@eastsussex.gov.uk

Case Study 14 - Buckinghamshire Improved Financial Decision Making for Self-Funders

The project developed from the In Touch Service (see case study 6) with funding and support from Improvement and Efficiency South East. Research was carried out by the Institute of Public Care and Department of Work and Pensions to forecast and model demand and financial obligations to the council. This showed that the council was facing significant financial pressures that were set to increase over time as growing numbers of self-funders in care homes use up their assets up until the point where they become the funding responsibility of the council. The council has set up a specific programme with annuities brokers in order to increase the uptake of these products in the county. A specialist advisor has been recruited into the In Touch service to provide benefits and financial advice to self-funders considering entering long term care. There is a direct link between this staff member and a number of brokers of annuities in order to provide financially regulated advice to the individual. A detailed operating model for the service is in development.

Further Information:
Alison Bulman
Service Manager for Service Provision
Adults and Family WellBeing
Buckinghamshire County Council
Tel: 01296 387 436
abulman@buckscc.gov.uk

Dimension 1 – Managing the Content and Organisation of Information

Key Issues

Managing the content and organisation of information encompasses the principles and standards of good information provision, deciding what information is required, how it is catalogued and stored. This prompts consideration of data bases, links to and between information, how it is structured and who owns and quality assures it. Findings from the IDeA study were that information was often fragmented, inconsistent and targeted mostly at people who are eligible for service. Examples given included: duplication and conflict of information; leaflets lacking clarity; poor communication channels; and, a general lack of consultation with citizens. The Henwood and Hudson report, referred to earlier, outlined the areas that at a minimum should be covered in any framework information. These are:

- Understanding the support people are entitled to, based on eligibility criteria
- Deciding on the best form of care and support
- Getting information on costs and funding
- Ongoing contact and support
- Robust redress and grievance
- Sound financial advice in relation to paying for care and support over an extended period
- Signposting to internal and external information.

One development designed to address some of the deficiencies around standards and quality assurance is the **Information Standard.** This is a new certification scheme for health and social care information. The scheme is open to any organisation producing health and/or social care information for the public in England. To qualify for membership, organisations must demonstrate that they have the necessary methods and systems to ensure that their information is accessible, accurate, appropriately researched, authoritative, clear, complete, readable, relevant, secure, up to date and well designed. Assessment is based on the processes for developing information, rather than individual pieces of information, although as an added check, a random sample of information materials is also tested.

The scheme is run by Capita on behalf of the Department of Health. Capita's responsibilities include promoting the scheme, providing support to potential members and authorising a number of certification bodies to assess scheme applicants and offer certification against standards. The scheme has been tested out with 35 organisations, including Oxfordshire County Council, who received accreditation in November 2009 following a nine month pilot (see case study 16 below). The precise cost of certification will depend on the size and complexity of the organization, but are reckoned to be around £1600 to pay for the cost of the certification body. There will also be costs associated with getting ready for the certification.

Further information: Andrew.Neighbour@capita.co.uk and
www.theinformationstandard.org

Key Findings

In most areas, standards for written information and website design are set corporately via communications teams. Particular pieces of information tend to be endorsed by a range of partners including service user groups.

Specific mechanisms for quality assuring information are not well established. In one area a Consultation Information Group has been established to ensure that information is accessible to all members of the community. Some areas reported that quality of information is assured via the various carer, user and citizen groups including the links.

In most areas it was reported that there is currently no formal mechanism to ensure that information is updated regularly, but all recognise the importance of a system to ensure that information is kept up to date and relevant. One area has a partnership group which meets monthly, part of which is set aside to update information. The information database they use is split into six units, and each unit is updated monthly, which should mean that no part of the database has information that is older than six months.

There is some awareness of the Information Standard, a recently introduced Department of Health Accreditation scheme for health and social care information, and several local authorities are considering its use.

Developing Practice

Case Study 15 - Wokingham Borough Council

A User Led Organisation is commissioned by the council to produce information in Easy Read format and to provide feedback on draft information that the council has produced.

Further Information:
Matt Pope
PPF Project Manager
Wokingham Borough Council
Tel: 0118 974 6840
Matthew.Pope@wokingham.gov.uk

Case Study 16 - Oxfordshire Implementing the Information Standard

Early in 2009, Oxfordshire County Council was one of a small number of organisations that volunteered to be part of the initial pilot of the Department of Health's Information Standard Scheme. The scheme was developed to support people using health and social care information and to make confident, informed decisions about their health and social care.

Those organisations that meet the criteria of The Information Standard will then be entitled to place a quality mark on their information materials so people searching for health and social care information can easily identify it as coming from a reliable, trustworthy source.

The scheme requires authors to explain in detail, before drafting the document, who the target audience of the publication is, if they have any specific requirements i.e. sensory impairment, learning disability etc., and also if the information exists anywhere else. If the criteria are met then permission is given to draft the publication. Once drafted, the information is then 'tested' by a sample of the target audience who give feedback on the format, readability and content of the publication. Following any amendments required after the consultation step, the publication is finally signed off by members of the Public Information Approval Board and is given permission to be printed.

Reported benefits of the scheme are a central database of information products, a reduction in the amount of duplicated information that is produced and an increase in the quality and consistency of publications.

As a pilot Oxfordshire did not have to meet the costs of accreditation, although there were costs associated with setting up the scheme and ongoing costs of running the scheme, mainly the costs of the Information Officer.

Further Information:
Suzanne White
Information Standards Officer
Oxfordshire County Council
Tel: 01865 328272
Suzanne.White@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Dimension 2 – Enhancing awareness of where to find information and advice

Key Issues

This aspect covers enhancing awareness, both the public and professionals across local organisations, through marketing or communications activity. The IDeA study confirmed that there is far more information available than most people are aware of, and recommends the following questions should be considered when seeking to raise awareness.

Key Questions to Address for Enhancing Awareness of Information and Advice

- How do the public, staff, independent organisations know where to look for information on what people are entitled to and what is available and how do they, if relevant, keep their knowledge up to date?
- Does any marketing/ awareness raising take place for the public in terms of where to look for Information and Advice (and Advocacy)?
- Are there briefing mechanisms for customer services/first contact staff, care managers, community and independent organisations, outreach workers and others?

Key Findings

Local authorities have used a range of means to raise awareness with the public. Some of this activity has been about communicating the Putting People First agenda in general. Methods used include the production of DVDs, meetings with service user and carers groups, local roadshows, press articles and items in council newsletters.

Some of the above methods have also incorporated staff (internal and external). Other methods used included team meetings, newsletters, bulletins and briefings and use of websites. Again, some of this activity has been promoting understanding of Putting People First.

A number of local authorities stressed the importance of having dedicated staffing to collect information and keep it up to date, and the need to market the information available extensively and on an ongoing basis. The message was that this is not a job that needs only to be done once.

Developing Practice

Case Study 17 - Newcastle City Council Creating a stronger information, advice and advocacy system for older people

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation supported the Quality of Life Partnership in Newcastle (a partnership between Age Concern Newcastle, the local older people's forum – Elders Council of Newcastle, Newcastle City Council and Newcastle Healthy City) to develop a more strategic approach to information, advice and advocacy. Findings have been published by Joseph Rowntree Foundation in *Creating a Stronger Information, Advice and Advocacy System for Older People* available from www.jrf.org.uk. Key features were developing with older people a central database of information so that older people, carers and staff can access information and advice through the Information NOW **(**Newcastle Older People's Website) www.informationnow.org.uk.

The website has been written from the perspective of older people and is actively promoted to a wide range of multi-agency staff available. Emphasis is placed on keeping information up to date and increasing awareness of the information. The crucial role of front line staff in giving information and advice was also recognised. A multi-agency referral scheme, similar to Nottinghamshire's 'First Contact', was developed, enabling older people to access preventive services through a single point of contact. A network of staff (from statutory agencies and voluntary and community sector organisations) and older people (including volunteers) was also established, meeting twice a year to discuss and work on issues.

Further Information:
Claire Horton
Newcastle City Council
Newcastle upon Tyne
Tel: 0191 211 5279
Claire.Horton@newcastle.gov.uk

Case Study 18 - Liverpool City Council Making it Personal

Liverpool City Council's re-designed website was highly rated in a review carried out by Livability, a national disability charity. It was re-designed in-house using the results of a large scale community mapping exercise carried out with the local Council for Voluntary Service. The review surveyed the views of disabled people and checked the information available over the telephone and on websites. The study looked in particular at how much information was available about Personal Budgets.

www.liverpool.gov.uk/makingitpersonal

A resource pack for Self Directed Support has been produced. In recognition that not everyone uses websites the council has worked with several voluntary organisations so that people can access the information through these organisations. Information is made available to people funding their own care. Key points:

- All information is consistently branded and produced in a range of formats including Easy Read
- Users of services sit on an Expert Panel and review the content of the resource pack as it continues to be updated
- A dedicated officer is employed by the council to keep the information up to date. The post is funded through the Adult Social Care Reform Grant
- There is an Information and Communication Group which takes responsibility for internal and external communications. A council communication professional chairs the group and provides input to make sure messages are put across effectively and consistently both to internal and external audiences. The communication campaign has been "highly commended" by the Association of Social Care Communicators at their recent annual awards.

Further Information:
Christine Beyga
Head of Transformation
Liverpool City Council
Tel: 0151 233 4167
Christine.Beyga@liverpool.gov.uk

Case Study 19 - Telford & Wrekin Council Promoting Public Information

The council ran an information pilot and placed leaflets on health and social care in a range of different locations (two council offices, library, local hospital and five GP practices). The take up from these locations was monitored in order to determine the most popular locations and information. As part of their work on prevention, the council also ran a campaign with local voluntary organisations to raise awareness with older people of the support available. Information on social care services was distributed at local supermarkets in order to reach people who would not normally receive such information. The results of both these initiatives are being used to inform the development of the council's Information and Advice Strategy.

Further Information:
Katy Driver
Communications Officer
Putting People First
Telford & Wrekin Council
Tel: 01952 388811
Katy.Driver@Telford.gov.uk

Dimension 3 – The delivery mechanisms for information and advice

Key Issues

This dimension covers the means through which information and advice are made available or delivered to specific groups. These are likely to include a range of types of information services, including websites, and be provided by a range of organisations. In relation to websites, IDeA draw a useful distinction between content – what sort of information is available – and navigation and usability, i.e. how easy a website is to navigate around to find the information provided. As part of their study, they reviewed a number of websites to ascertain clarity, accessibility and content using the evaluation criteria shown in the table below.

IDeA Evaluation of Websites

Good Practice	Examples of Poor Practice
Information held 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

Key Findings

As one would expect, IAG strategies (where these have been produced) are guiding the development of the delivery mechanisms. Most changes appear to be based on enhancing existing provision, generally first contact points and by re-designing or improving the adult social care section of the council websites.

Most areas were in discussion with colleagues from library services to enhance the role that libraries can play in providing information and advice.

In a number of authorities, the initial point of contact is now located within a wider corporate contact centre. Other areas are considering moving towards this model with efficiency as a significant driver. A key issue is ensuring consistent standards and that staff are sufficiently knowledgeable to provide good quality information and advice and can undertake at least basic assessments.

The use of social media to assist information and advice provision was not well developed.

Developing Practice

Case Study 20 - Hampshire County Council Website *Care Choice*

The Care Choice website is an online resource for independent living in Hampshire, providing improved information, support and guidance, enabling people to make informed independent decisions about their care and support.

Hampshire County Council Adult Services has developed the Care Choice website, which provides relevant and up to date information for Hampshire residents, and ensures that they have the tools needed to assess and plan individual personalised care, or the care of a family member or friend. This resource was developed through close consultation with service users, staff and partners, and the information and signposting included are as follows:

- The support and help people can get - information about the help on offer and what any individual is entitled to.
- Carers - help and support for people who care for someone to live independently.
- Information about access to support, suppliers and equipment, i.e. care at home, home help, care homes, equipment, approved suppliers of equipment and adaptations.
- Everyday Living - information and signposting to support people getting out and about, leisure and social activities, as well as support groups for carers and people with a disabilities.
- Hospital stays and discharge - information and advice when going into and leaving hospital and help with preparing for emergencies
- Information and advice about buying support and help - questions to ask care providers, employment advice and support and help form the HM Revenue & Customs about taxes, standards, etc.

Further Information:
Joseph Stepney
Hampshire County Council
Adults and Health Web Programme Manager
Tel: 01962 847723
e-mail: Joseph.Stepney@hants.gov.uk
web: www.hants.gov.uk

Case Study 21 - Reading Borough Council Web redesign

In order to provide useful information and signposting the council has re-designed its community care webpage and developed a resource directory. The resource directory is an intuitive list of categories with primary categories and sub categories. Each category has a graphic that acts as the entry portal to the information. The directory is a searchable list of organisations and services.

The resource directory includes information on local services and links to internal council services e.g. leisure services, library services. It also includes links to useful national websites. The resource directory is in the final stages of development and full functionality will be achieved by October 2010.

Further Information:
Garry Probert-Briggs
Reading Borough Council
Project Manager
Tel: 0118 9372406
Garry.probert-briggs@reading.gov.uk

Case Study 22 - Kent Online Care Services Directory

www.kent.gov.uk/careservices

The Kent Care Services Online Directory was developed to give the public and staff access to up to date information on care and support services available across Kent.

The online directory provides information about providers and the services they offer, including pricing information and bed vacancies in residential homes. It also links to CQC inspection reports of providers and there is a notice board which KCC publishes information for providers when they log in.

The online directory aids the public and staff to make informed decisions when choosing services. It can save time when searching for a relevant service as the directory contains information on contract price, contract standards, vacancies and specialist services and whether a provider has a current contract with social services or any adult protection issues. Providers benefit by being able to provide up to date information about their services.

Further information:
Melanie Hayes
Project Manager Personalisation
Kent Adult Social Services
Tel: 01622 221 118
Melanie.Hayes@kent.gov.uk

Case Study 23 - Kent Dementia Web

http://www.dementiawebkentandmedway.org.uk/

The Kent & Medway Dementia Collaborative have developed a Kent wide online information resource for people with dementia and their carers. The site is easy to navigate and enables users to link through to other related sites through this single portal.

Linked to the website is a 24 hour dementia telephone helpline to offer emotional and practical support. Usage is growing and the site is continually being refined as well as ensuring all current information remains up to date. As part of its ongoing development, plans to develop a peer to peer network where people can share experiences and support each other online, are being considered.

Further information:
Melanie Hayes
Project Manager Personalisation
Kent Adult Social Services
Tel: 01622 221 118
Melanie.Hayes@kent.gov.uk

Case Study 24 - Stockport Council's Website *My Care, My Choice*

http://www.mycaremychoice.org.uk/

Stockport Council have worked with an external company called 'Quickheart' to develop a website as part their work on efficiency by seeking to reduce inappropriate first contacts. Possible users were categorized into three broad categories and the website designed to meet these different needs.

GREEN: People know what they need and just want to choose and move on as quickly as possible.

AMBER: People who know that they have a need but are unsure of the best way to go about resolving that need.

RED: People who don't want to be in the situation in the first place and are in active denial about a need.

The site uses an intuitive finding process for customers to access the website. The site was launched formally in October 2009. All copy was written by Stockport staff with the help of the company to ensure the same style of language across the whole site. The site meets AA accessibility standards and runs "browse aloud" for people with sensory loss. According to Stockport critical factors in the process were:

- Commissioning an ethnographer who spent quality time with a variety of service users to understand their information needs for Stockport and their preference for accessing information
- Commissioning an IT company whose focus was on design rather than an IT specification
- Commissioning a professional copywriter, who worked with the local team to input the copy from the user perspective.
- A parallel initiative has been the setting up of a community hub of voluntary organisations called FLAG (For Local Advice and Guidance) which is part of overall development of User Led Organisations in Stockport. There is a website with information on third sector organisations. The combined service offers:

    o 24 hour access via the mycaremychoice and FLAG website
    o Face to face at outreach locations across the borough
    o Telephone access via a single number
    o Information about local groups and activities
    o Supported access to advocacy services
    o Printed material

http://www.stockportflag.org.uk/

Further Information:
Jude Wells
Personalisation Manager, Stockport Council
07800 618811
Jude.wells@stockport.gov.uk

Case Study 25 - Leicestershire *Connect*

www.leicestershireconnect.org.uk

Connect is a partnership project designed to give Leicestershire citizens "local access to local services". The website has been designed to help people find information on services provided by the county council and district councils in Leicestershire. *Connect* consists of:

 - Connect Website

 - Connect Help-Points

 - Connect Service Shops

Connect Help Points and Service Shops provide local access to county council services, information and can provide advice where appropriate. Members of the public who wish to help themselves can obtain information from the County Council Website or the Connect Website, www.leicestershireconnect.org.uk, via the free-access computer. There are 54 Connect Help Points based around Leicestershire, mostly in libraries. These are intended as a self-help service for members of the public although staff are available for assistance if needed.

There are currently five Connect Service Shops in Leicestershire. Each has trained, knowledgeable staff to help people. Service Shops are run jointly with the local borough or district service and aim to provide "one-stop" access to any council Service.

Further Information:
Cassandra Haywood
Leicestershire County Council
Tel: 0116 3058315
Cassandra.haywood@leics.gov.uk

Case Study 26 - Reading Adult Contact Team (ReACT)

Reading Borough Council has been developing a service that will provide 'one front door' with one telephone number for adults to access information, signposting and referral and assessment. As part of the development of the service, Reading Adult Community Care and Berkshire West PCT have been working in partnership to develop an integrated first point of contact for adults who are being discharged from hospital, adults who require intermediate care services and adults who require a referral for social care support. Under the ReACT service umbrella there are three functions:
1) Information and signposting
2) Hospital Discharge Referrals and re-start notifications
3) Referrals for Intermediate Care Services and General Social Care.

The ReACT service consists of two teams (see below) and a simple call routing system provides access to the appropriate service.

Information and signposting - This is provided by the corporate customer call centre. Community care has provided funding for three full-time staff and a robust induction and training programme for the staff. Professional support is provided via senior practitioners, one occupational therapist and one social worker. The call centre uses customer relations management software (CRM); a list of the most frequently asked questions has been developed (FAQ's) and embedded within the CRM system. A web based resource directory has also been developed to support the provision of information and signposting. The customer call centre has a limited access to the adult electronic record system, which allows call handlers to view basic client details and know whether someone is known to social services. For new enquiries where a referral is deemed necessary, the call handler is able to enter a referral directly onto the system without having to hand the call on.

Single point of access (SPOA) for referrals and hospital discharge - The SPOA consists of two PCT referral coordinators and five social care advisory officers. The team is responsible for taking all new enquiries for intermediate care and social care, including safeguarding referrals, and will also facilitate all hospital discharges. There is a fully integrated multidisciplinary team that is co-located with the SPOA. The team consists of a community nurse, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, reablement assistants, social workers and case coordinators.

If a caller does not meet the eligibility criteria for therapeutic based intermediate care services the advisory officers will, where appropriate (e.g. non complex low risk situations) complete a telephone assessment and arrange for a service to be provided. The council is in the early stages of embedding self-directed support processes. It is envisaged in the near future that the SPOA will initiate the completion of the supported assessment questionnaire.

Further Information:
Garry Probert-Briggs
Service Manager & Transformation Manager
Reading Borough Council
Tel: 0118 9372406
garry.probert-briggs@reading.gov.uk

Case Study 27 - Hampshire Information Centres & Customer Access Points (CAPs)

The Information Centres provide easy and friendly access to information about services provided by Hampshire County Council and other local authorities within the county, together with a range of community and other service information. These centres are based across the county in five key conurbations (Basingstoke, Farnborough, New Milton, Waterlooville and Winchester) providing free services to all customers. The centres offer the following information:

- Information on Hampshire County Council and all tiers of local government
- Voluntary and community services within Hampshire
- Signposting for any queries regarding Hampshire County
- Information on different disabilities
- Holidays, sports and leisure activities including for disabled people and their carers
- Blue Badge
- Proposed legislation enquiries
- Wheelchair information
- Transport enquiries

As the service provided by the Information Centres is not a statutory requirement, there are no national standards in place to base the service on. Corporate Information Services has therefore initiated a benchmarking scheme with other local authorities across England. This should help the service see how it compares with other similar services and create targets for what the service should be achieving.

Alongside Information Centres, Customer Access Points (CAPs) have been set up to ensure that all members of the public have access to information about services provided by Hampshire County Council and their partner organisations. These CAPs can be found in a wide variety of public offices including libraries, Adult and Children's Service and Age Concern offices in some Parish, Town and District Councils, Councils of Community Services, in Youth, Education and Health establishments and many more. A recent CAP customer survey indicated a high degree of satisfaction, with 92% indicating that staff were helpful and knowledgeable.

Further Information:
Jospeh Stepney
Adults and Health Web Programme Manager
Hampshire County Council
Tel: 01962 847723
Joseph.Stepney@hants.gov.uk
Web: www.hants.gov.uk

Case Study 28 - Kent County Council Gateway

www.kent.gov.uk/gateways

The Gateway model offers the public a convenient single access point to public services using the latest innovative technologies and strong partnerships working within at a retail location. Increased effectiveness and efficiency are essential and the face of public sector service delivery is changing.

The Gateway concept focuses on shaping services to fit around customers and following the success of the first Gateway in Ashford is now being rolled out at other locations in Kent. Gateways are crucial to improving access to all public services. They are multi-agency centres that offer information, advice and guidance to all and a range of services based on eligibility, from statutory and non–statutory organisations. Kent Adult Social Services is continuing to develop its service provision in Gateways, which includes the running of social care clinics where people can come in and see a social care professional in the same way as they would go to a GP surgery. The gateway core model is based on the following foundations:

- Public internet access and modern retail environments
- Core professional services with seven day a week access
- Multi-agency using web and digital based technology
- Business centre with neutral branding

Further Information:
Melanie Hayes
Project Manager Personalisation
Kent Adult Social Services
Tel: 01622 221 118
Melanie.Hayes@kent.gov.uk

Case Study 29 - Surrey Information Point

Surrey Information Point was launched in autumn 2010 and provides customised information through an online directory of community services, activities and facilities. The service will be available to all Surrey residents and supports people who use services, their families and carers to live more independently. People will be able to self serve, or access the information through advisors at key information points, such as the Epsom and Redhill Hubs and the Surrey County Council Contact Centre. Surrey Information Point will offer:

- Universal access to information irrespective of eligibility
- Support offered alongside information provision
- Trusted source of local information from information providers, both voluntary sector and statutory bodies
- People the chance to seek information linked to circumstance or perceived limitations in independence and offers a maximum range of suggested solutions, for example services to buy, to access for free, or be eligible to receive or where to go for more details
- Geographically relevant and accessible information – postcode related or area served
- Information prescriptions, available for GPs and professionals to print for people who do not have web access
- Good accessible formats
- A primary information source for the new Hubs in Epsom and Redhill
- Seamless linkage and maximised choices going into Self Directed Support

Surrey Information Point has evolved through a widely represented steering group and been tested with willing partners who currently offer information and advice in Surrey to agree the key information areas for inclusion. The initial information groupings include:

- Money Matters
- Living at Home
- Staying Safe
- Getting Around
- Things to Do
- Working and volunteering
- Health Matters (dementia, stroke, diabetes – first areas)

SIP will act as a single repository of information (data source) and support existing information, advice and advocacy services in Surrey, including the Surrey County Council Contact Centre.

Further Information:
Siobhan Abernethy
Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Manager
Surrey County Council
Adult Social Care
Tel: 01483 517257
Siobhan.abernethy@surreycc.gov.uk

Use of Social Media

Key Issues

Guidance on social media has been produced for central government departments by the Central Office for Information, ***Engaging through social media, a guide for civil servants*** [26]. By social media, it is taken to mean "online technologies and practices that are used to share opinions and information, promote discussion and build relationships." The guidance highlights that the defining feature of social media is the opportunity it provides for two way communication, and that in order to be effective, initiatives must form part of a wider communications strategy designed to achieve tangible benefits. The costs and benefits of new social media, which inevitably will be fast changing, require further study. IDeA has produced two publications on social media. ***Connected Councillors a guide to using social media to support local leadership*** [27] describes the various forms of social media and the potential opportunities and issues for elected Members including how social media can be used in support of efficient service delivery. A second report titled ***Local by Social: How local authorities can use social media to achieve more for less*** [28] explores the various uses of social media and issues that need to be considered. The relevance for social care is not explored in depth in these reports.

Developing Practice

The project group held a session on use of new social media, based on work undertaken in West Berkshire, to raise awareness of these channels and a question was asked in the KPIs about use of new social media. Little evidence was found of authorities having agreed strategies in place to make use of new social media to support transforming adult social care, although some have policies in place for staff use. Some issues identified were:

- Whether these channels should be used to enhance existing channels or over time whether they would replace them
- That maintaining these channels does require some dedicated time and resource within the local authority
- A requirement to be able to moderate the content
- The potential for new social media to facilitate peer support

Developing the Building Blocks for Information and Advice Services

Key Issues

As was stated earlier in the report, the IDeA study suggested that there are a number of building blocks that should underpin effective information and advice provision. These include getting the technical infrastructure right, developing the market for information provision - which points to developing a coherent approach to commissioning information and advice - and putting in place opportunities for "interpersonal support" (i.e. to talk and/or meet someone direct) underpinned by a safeguarding approach.

Key Findings

Most local authorities are considering developing their IT systems to allow people direct access to the sources of care and support available in the market, although being clear on what is exactly required (the specification) and the costs of developing and/or purchasing, can be seen as barriers.

Some local authorities have reviewed their policy for funding the third sector to bring it more in line with Putting People First objectives. This is likely to lead to some rationalisation and consolidation of services commissioned from the third sector. As stated earlier in the report, commissioning information and advice services from ULOs or other providers is at an early stage of development.

The extent to which local authorities are developing their information and advice services in order to allow for personalised support (i.e. direct contact with individuals), and are building in safeguarding, was not explored in any depth and are both areas for further consideration.

No areas reported that they were actively collaborating with other local authorities in the provision and commissioning of information and advice. Joint work was being undertaken with the NHS, but mainly in terms of health and social care staff working together to provide "joined up" information and advice, rather than developing a joint strategic approach to information provision.

Developing Practice

Case Study 30 - Hampshire County Council and Counsel and Care

Hampshire County Council has partnered with the national charity Counsel and Care, who provide a specialist advice phone line for older people. Pilots have taken place in the New Forest and Rushmoor areas aimed at publicising Counsel and Care's service and increasing uptake of calls to their advice line.

Counsel and Care is a national charity working with older people, their families and carers to get the best care and support. They provide personalised, in-depth advice and information to make sure that everyone who comes to them for advice and information receives the support that they are entitled to. Counsel and Care's Advice Service provides help and guidance for people on many different issues, and particularly those who are searching for care and support services, either in the community or in residential care.

Local residents can contact Counsel and Care for advice on care and support issues affecting older people by calling the Advice Line, which is equally relevant whether people are paying for their own care, are supported by the local authority, or simply have questions about possible future care and support needs.

After discussing their issues on the phone, enquirers can receive a detailed letter setting out the advice given in writing. Its user-friendly website provides a wide range of information. Visitors can select to download, free of charge, from a range of more than 60 guides and fact sheets, all written in plain English. Issues covered include support at home, hospital discharge, finding and paying for a care home and maximising income.

The pilots, which are funded by Hampshire County Council, are part of Hampshire County Council's social care transformation programme, the Hampshire Model. This model is not just about adult services or social care, but is designed to stretch across all county council departments covering everything from transport, housing, leisure, libraries and culture and other services.

Further Information:
Joseph Stepney
Adults and Health Web Programme Manager
Hampshire County Council
IT Department
Hampshire County Council
Tel: 01962 847723
Joseph.Stepney@hants.gov.uk
www.hants.gov.uk

Case Study 31 - East Sussex Rural Access to Services Programme

Action in Rural Sussex is developing a Rural Access to Services Programme (RASP) in partnership with East Sussex County Council. Part of the RASP is the development of village information hubs in rural settings, holding local information covering health and social care. The purpose of the RASP was to raise awareness of, and therefore improve access to, services in rural communities.

A virtual network of information providers has been built, with a heightened health and social care presence through them as a result. They have been utilised to ensure rural information coverage has improved, and as a conduit to get information out there and address key health and social care areas.

The hubs have built on existing information sources and core information sets, including leaflets, posters etc. A joint health and social care poster has also been developed to help raise awareness of the service and signpost people. The poster is available in different formats and includes contact details.

A small team oversees a list and map of where information is distributed and where any gaps are. There are existing mechanisms within social care for people to feed back about what information they would like, which is monitored and fed back into the service. Contacts to the council, via Social Care Direct, have increased. It is felt that the information hubs have contributed to that, although how much is difficult to quantify.

Further Information:
Frood Radford
Self Directed Support Project Manager
East Sussex County Council
Tel: 01273 481474
Email: frood.radford@eastsussex.gov.uk

Case Study 32 - Thames Valley Demonstrator Portal

Working in partnership with the Thames Valley Innovation & Growth team (part of South East England Development Agency), Improvement and Efficiency South East (IESE) contributed grant funding towards the development, by a consortium of local technology companies, of a prototype information and procurement portal to meet the needs of service users (including self-funders), their carers and supporters, service providers and local authorities.

The consortium worked with West Berkshire Council to gather requirements from groups of service users and providers. The aim was to demonstrate how online technology could help service users control and manage their own care whilst reducing bureaucracy, and thus saving money for councils.

The portal features an information and guidance service, online self-assessment, an easy to use service procurement forum for purchasers and providers and a payment system that can work online or via mobile. There are various features that enable service users to collaborate and share information to help them meet their outcomes and get best value for money. Some specific features that emerged in relation to information and guidance were:

- A starting point on the homepage for those new to care services titled "Recently Diagnosed?"
- A section on the homepage highlighting the most commonly asked questions
- Users are encouraged throughout the site to look up local voluntary services rather than channeled towards council support
- A database of service user stories displayed at relevant points to stimulate ideas based on how others with similar needs have met their outcomes
- A seamless link into an online self-assessment for which registration is required
- Information can be provided in a number of formats including:
  - Downloadable leaflets
  - BSL films with voice-over, subtitles and transcripts
  - Foreign languages
- Free services directory with integrated GIS mapping, providing access to the following:
  - Charities
  - Local support groups
  - Free activities provided by the local authority and not for profit groups
- User feedback on service suppliers populated directly from the integrated procurement portal

Because of the grant funding, councils can use the functionality and design ideas demonstrated by the portal when developing their own system requirements. For more details visit www.assistdirect.co.uk

Further Information:
Claire Simpson (claires@systemassociates.co.uk) for a copy of the portal demonstration on CD.

Case Study 33 - Isle of Wight Support Planning Pilot

Improvement and Efficiency South East (IESE) provided grant funding to Isle of Wight Council, who have been working with Plan My Care (www.planmycare.com) to develop an online support planning tool that can be used by local authority care management staff, brokerage providers and ultimately by service users themselves or their carers.

This tool enables whoever is working with the service user to help them create a support plan that best meets their outcomes identified through their care assessment. This is facilitated by the provision of information about how other service users have achieved similar outcomes and about potential service providers in the local area. There is also a simple review feature to track progress against outcomes.

Plan My Care worked closely with the Isle of Wight through a series of rapid development cycles, including detailed consultations with groups of service users, local service providers and the organisations lined up to provide brokerage services. This approach has shown how this kind of online solution can be integrated into council SDS processes and enables improvements to the efficiency of those processes.

In terms of information provision, the following high level requirements were identified by the pilot:

- Provide support for self-funders and local authority funded individuals
- Provide universal access to information and guidance
- Establish a community that can support each other with their care
- Provide information on services and providers of support and advice
- Provide information on what financial support may be available to them and the process for obtaining financial support

A community website was defined and built to enable people to research their personal needs, identify services and providers of support in their local area, and share ideas and experiences with others. The idea being that the website brings together users with similar needs and experiences in a safe managed environment and that the website needs to be managed and moderated by the community not the local authority.

The full requirements specification for the website including detailed requirements for information provision can be found on the PPF website:
http://www.puttingpeoplefirst.org.uk/_library/Resources/Personalisation/Localmilestones/SDS_Requirements_for_online_support_planning.pdf

Further Information:
Vicky Jones
Acting Programme Manager, Transforming Adult Social Care
Isle of Wight Council
Community Services
01983 520600
Vicky.Jones@iow.gov.uk
or
Chris Gee (chris.gee@planmycare.com)

Case Study 34 - Isle of Wight *Your Care Pathway*
Brokerage/Advocacy/Advice, Information & Guidance Pilots

Background
The council has piloted a prospectus approach to commissioning services from the voluntary sector. Outcome based service specifications have been used as a basis for tendering for new services. Three organisations have been successful. Each will offer a unique service to Island residents, whilst working together to provide a seamless service to users and their families, signposting and referring between the three services as appropriate.

IW Advocacy Trust
The service will support users to decide how, when and through whom they access care and services and achieve a Personal Budget to support this. It will offer brokerage and support to ensure a person-centred approach, even when a Personal Budget is not appropriate.

CAB
The service will deliver information and guidance on care options for adults and be based at community locations across the Island. The pilot will seek to provide individuals with an informed choice, looking at appropriate processes and pathways available to them and what services can be purchased with a Personal Budget.

'Information zones' will provide free, independent, confidential and impartial information for individuals and vulnerable adults on what 'Your Care' means and how care might be funded. Information will be produced in a range of formats and give details of a wide variety of services, e.g. home support services, personal care services, sheltered accommodation, aids and adaptations, social activities, organisations and support groups. The service will also explore the possibility of completing the Shared Assessment Questionnaire with a user. Where specialist advice is required (e.g. people with very complex needs) or for the next stage of the process, clients will be signposted/referred to Adult Social Care or appropriate agencies.

Help and Care
The service will provide advocacy and brokerage for users who are about to leave hospital, or have recently left hospital, and those going through reablement. Users will be introduced to the concept of, and given information on, personalisation, person-centred support planning and, where appropriate, Personal Budgets users and their families/carers will be supported in finding the right services to meet their needs and to prepare a person-centred plan based on these needs.

Further information:
Vicky Jones
Acting Programme Manager, Transforming Adult Social Care
Isle of Wight Council
Tel: 01983 520600
Vicky.Jones@iow.gov.uk

Case Study 35 – South West Wellaware website

www.wellaware.org.uk

The Care Forum, three local authorities and three PCT partners have come together to develop a comprehensive database of health, wellbeing and community resources in South Gloucestershire, Bristol and Bath & North East Somerset. The start up funding for this work was provided by the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership and ongoing funding will come from the LAs, PCTs and other partners.

The Well Aware database is free and searchable directly via the user-friendly website. It can be used to find support for a friend, family member, a client or patient or the person themselves.

Information includes personal health services, lunch clubs or social groups, volunteering opportunities, home help and handyman services, benefit, legal or debt advice, counselling, and many other forms of support.

The website can also be searched for services relating to a specific group such as carers, support relating to particular disabilities, or for culturally specific services. There is also a dedicated part to help anyone with mental health difficulties get equal access to employment.

Even people can't access the website directly, they will still be able to find help by getting in touch with the Well Aware team on (freephone) 0808 808 5252 or info@wellaware.org.uk.

It is free to use and be listed on, and already contains the details of over 5,000 different services ranked by relevancy, with no advertising. The website is maintained and managed by a team of information workers from the Care Forum. There is a stakeholder group who formally feed information in, and there is a contract officer for each of the six main partners who informally have a role to feed information in and promote the website.

Further information:
Leon Quinn
Information and Research Services Team Manager
The Care Forum
Tel: 0117 958 9307
leonquinn@thecareforum.org.uk

Case Study 36 - Signpost Kent A Model of Self Directed Support

www.signpostuk.org

Signpost provides information, tools and support to help people take control of their mental health and achieve improved mental wellbeing. Set within the context of personalisation, this model of self-directed support is underpinned by the principles of choice and control. The person-centred approach helps people find their own solutions by supporting them to navigate their way to a better mental health.

The Signpost model has been developed with Department of Health funding, alongside investment from its founding organisations Maidstone Community Care Housing, Mental Health Matters and Sanctuary Carr-Gomm. Although Signpost currently operates across Kent and Medway, the model is based on a community development approach that could be replicated in any area. The model includes:

A comprehensive mental health and wellbeing website:

- Self-directed support toolkit
- Brokerage training and accreditation framework
- Peer brokerage in collaboration with Canterbury Mental Health Forum and Canterbury Christ Church University
- Collaborative work to develop clearer pathways

Co-production is fundamental. Signpost benefits from the direction and contribution of people with personal experience of using mental health services. The approach is to build on what is already within a community, creating connections between providers and identifying service gaps and development opportunities for local providers to pursue. The emphasis is on helping people develop connections within the community by thinking through what works for them now and what they might like to change or keep the same in their life.

Further Information:
Jo Woollett
Project Director
Signpost Kent
Tel: 01622 688003
Email: Signpostkent@mcch.co.uk
www.signpostuk.org.co.uk

6. Conclusion

This report pulls together a range of information and resources to assist local authorities develop their universal advice and information services. The case studies illustrate some of the developing practice across the region and elsewhere. These examples are inevitably a snapshot and show that local authorities are in varying stages of development. A key challenge is to translate the vision that information, advice and guidance should be regarded as an important service in its own right into practice, particularly at a time of financial challenge. It is hoped that the work embodied in this project contributes to this objective. A number of areas of further consideration and development are as follows:

1. Developing a more strategic approach to information and advice so that it is viewed and accounted for as a service in its own right.

2. Making needs assessment for information and advice more fully part of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment process.

3. Developing coherent approaches to commissioning information and advice from the voluntary sector and User Led Organisations, including increasing the contribution made by peer support.

4. Developing the role that libraries can play with delivery of universal information and advice in order to make full use of the expertise of library staff and their resources.

5. Developing cost effective approaches to providing personalised advice, including through direct contact (interpersonal support), to recognise that many people utilize and value "word of mouth", and that information rarely speaks for itself.

6. Developing thinking and practice around the provision and commissioning of financial advice on paying for care and support in the context of the Government's proposals for funding long term care, once known.

7. Exploring the scope for collaboration within and between local authorities and with other agencies such as the NHS in the context of efficiencies and savings.

8. Exploring the costs and benefits of the use of social media.

9. Integration of safeguarding responsibilities within the full spectrum of information and advice giving.

10. Developing simple means of evaluating the effectiveness of provision.

11. Consider the best way to integrate the provision of information and advice on housing.

12. At a regional level, consider producing a guide for adult social care staff on different forms of housing tenures and standards. This could be produced through the auspices of the Housing Learning Improvement Network.

7.   Resources and Sources of Additional Information

This section also includes reference to various resources and paid for services. Please note that inclusion in this guidance does not does not constitute endorsement of the service or organisation concerned.

If you wish to join the **Community of Practice** mentioned earlier in the report you can do so in the following way. Sign up with the Local Government and Improvement website http://www.communities.idea.gov.uk/welcome.do
You can then join the South East Region Information and Signposting Group at http://www.communities.idea.gov.uk/c/4209333/home.do

Please contact Fiona Hague at Department of Health South East if your require assistance. Tel: 01483 882272/ Fiona.Hague@dh.gsi.gov.uk

Websites

The British Standards Institute (BSI) is developing a **Web Accessibility Code of Practice (BS 8878)**, which aims to be applicable to all public and private organisations wishing to offer accessible and usable websites. It is being designed to introduce accessibility, usability and user experience for disabled people to non-technical professionals. The new standard will stress the impact that an organisation's choice of technologies has upon its audience and will give guidance on how to assess this. It will also include guidance for considering the needs of web users according to specific impairments. The standard will be available in November 2010 and will replace the existing standard PAS 78:2006. A guide to good practice in commissioning accessible websites, based on the existing 2006 standard, can be purchased from BSI.

Further Information: cservices@bsigroup.com/ Tel: 020 8996 9001

Accessible Information

The Office for Disability Issues works across government to ensure equality becomes a reality for disabled people and in support of the Independent Living Strategy. The ODI has developed, in conjunction with disabled people, five core information principles, which are seen as essential to make sure that services and information are designed and delivered to a high standard. A range of products are available to assist communication with disabled people. This includes a **Communication toolkit for local government.** The toolkit encourages councils to involve disabled people, produce accessible information, test their products, signpost to other services and have a disability strategy. It can be downloaded from the website. The website also includes a sizeable section on information and resources for a **Strategy for Alternative Formats** (located within the Images of Disability Section of the Website). Key points for a strategy are:

- How will you anticipate the needs of disabled people?
- What minimum standards are in place?

- Who is responsible for, and who will pay for, the alternative formats?
- What type(s) of information will be given priority?
- How will you enforce and monitor the strategy?

The point is made that the need for alternative format versions can be reduced by keeping the initial document as simple as possible. Guidance is given on use of the following alternative formats with access to other resources:

Communication Formats

Visual Impairments – audio, audio description, Braille, Moon, telephone
Learning Disability and Literacy Difficulties – audio, audio description, Easy Read, easy access, Makaton, sub-titles
Hearing – British Sign Language, Makaton, sub-titling, text phone, SMS
Co-ordination Difficulties – Large Print, audio, audio description, telephone

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Information on all of the above is available from the Office for Disability Issues and most documents are free to download.

Further Information: www.officefordisability.gov.uk

Department of Health published in March 2009 **Basic guidelines for people who commission Easy Read information**, the purpose of which was to provide a set of basic guidelines for people commissioning information in Easy Read format.

Plain English Campaign an independent organisation that campaigns against jargon and confusing language and which offers a range of editing and training services and a number of accreditation schemes which are briefly as follows. These services are all charged for.

- Crystal Mark gives a seal of approval for documents. Current crystal mark holders include Bracknell Forest, Brighton & Hove, Bucks, East Sussex, Isle of Wight, Medway, Milton Keynes, Portsmouth, Reading, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, Slough, Surrey, and Wokingham
- 'Approved by Plain English Campaign' logo for documents such as magazines where the contents change regularly
- The Internet Crystal Mark, initial assessment and regular review of content.

Further Information: www.plainenglish.co.uk

Scottish Accessible Information Forum (SAIF) is a forum made up of people representing providers of information and advice, as well as organisations of and for disabled people and carers. SAIF acts as an advisory body to the Scottish Government on issues relating to disabled people and their carers and their right to access information. They publish free of charge **A Brief Guide to Easy Reading** which can be obtained via their website. The guide contains useful references to other sources of advice and information on making information accessible.

RELEVANT ORGANISATIONS

The Association of Social Care Communicators (ASCC) is a membership based organisation that links and supports public information workers in social care and related areas. The website contains some useful resources and publications specifically relevant to information and signposting. There is a South East region network. The regional representative for London and the South East is Sally Kennet [Sally Kennet@southend.gov.uk]

Further Information: www.ascc.me.uk

Socitm is the association for ICT and related professionals in the public and third sector, and is a subscription based organisation. They offer networking and peer support, professional development and carry out research and consultancy on a wide range of policy and technology. They have a regional structure with a southern branch. The organisation carries out an annual survey of local authority websites using the criteria below. The last survey covered information on jobs, library, schools, family history, planning, rubbish collection.

Information	Do people find answers to their questions?	
Links elsewhere	Are people referred to another organisation if the council does not have the information?	
Currency	Can people rely on the site being up-to-date?	
News value	Does the content capture people's attention by its newsworthiness?	
E-mail	Can people do business with the council by e-mail?	(Sample e-mail test not used in assessing website)
Transactions	Can people transact business with the council?	
Participation	Do people have the opportunity to influence council policies and decisions?	

They provide a paid for Website Assessment Service covering standard professional review, technical accessibility review (with RNIB), usability and accessibility review (with Usability Exchange) and readability review.

Further Information: www.Socitm.gov.uk / Tel: 01604 497373

Voluntary Organisations

A number of national voluntary organisations provide services to assist organisations to develop accessible websites. Some of these organisations are listed below.

AbilityNet help disabled people adults and children use computers and the internet at home by offering a 'one stop shop' for assistive technology needs and offer a range of services aimed at making websites accessible some of which are paid for.
Further Information: accessibility@AbilityNet.org.uk / Tel: 0800 269545

RNIB support blind and partially sighted people and provide guidance on accessible information and offer a range of paid for services aimed at making websites accessible with their own accreditation.
Further Information: accessibleinfo@rnib.org.uk / webaccess@rnib.org.uk

RNID support deaf and hard of hearing people, and provide guidance on communication.
Further Information: informationline@rnid.org.uk / Tel: 0808 808 0123

Shaw Trust, which supports disabled and disadvantaged people to prepare for work, find jobs and live independently and provide a paid for Web Accessibility Service with their own accreditation.
Further Information: webaccessibility@shaw-trust.org.uk / Tel: 07973 234 489

Annex 1

Members of the Project Group

Garry Probert-Briggs - Reading

Tracy Cartmell - Slough

Mike Crisp - Improvement and Efficiency South East

Steven Goldensmith - Buckinghamshire

Rob Guile - Department of Health South East

Melanie Hayes - Kent

Joanna John - West Berkshire

Vicky Jones - Isle of Wight

Amanda Joyce - West Berkshire

Genette Laws - Medway

Tim Parkin - Department of Health South East

Janaka Perera - Consultant

Matt Pope - Wokingham

Guy Montague-Smith - Brighton and Hove

Acknowledgement and many thanks for the immense contribution and forbearance from all members of the project group. Thanks also to Joseph Stepney from Hampshire, Siobhan Abernethy from Surrey, Mike Crisp from IESE and a number of colleagues from East Sussex who also contributed significantly to the project.

Annex 2

Project Methodology

Key Person Interviews were carried out with members of the project group and interviews undertaken and/or information obtained from the following councils which were:

- Bracknell Forest
- East Sussex
- Hampshire
- Oxfordshire
- Southampton
- Surrey

Information for case studies was obtained from a number of councils outside the region. These were:

- Leicestershire County Council
- Liverpool City Council
- Newcastle City Council
- Telford & Wrekin Council
- South West Care Forum
- Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council

Information and Advice Strategies from Bracknell Forest, East Sussex, Kent and West Berkshire were examined. The housing researcher (Catherine Stubbings) provided the information on housing contained in the Policy Review and Improvement and Efficiency South East provided significant assistance through Mike Crisp.

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