

# e-marketplaces for care and care information

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This paper aims to explore operating models of an online marketplace of housing and care and current websites with care information, review their service, make comparisons with EAC's HousingCare site, where appropriate, and make recommendations on further work to develop online care and support advice and information.



# Care Information Research

## 1. Introduction

This paper aims to explore operating models of an online marketplace of housing and care and current websites with care information, review their service, make comparisons with the housingcare site, where appropriate, and make recommendations on further work to develop online care and support advice and information.

## 2. Examples

The following examples of *emarketplaces*, consultancy firms and care information websites will be explored:

- *Hertfordshire*
- *Birmingham*
- Shop4support
- Quickheart
- Information NOW (Newcastle)
- Find Me Good Care
- NHS Choices

## 3. Hertfordshire

Hertfordshire County Council has set up an eMarketplace, where you can search and shop for goods and services online from a range of providers. It can be accessed on the Herts CC website under a list of most popular topics on the right hand side. Below are extracts from the site:

“On the eMarketplace you can:



- Compare prices.
- Contact providers to make enquiries.
- Order and pay online for a range of services and goods.
- Manage your services.
- Rate providers you have used and see how others have rated them.

The new Herts eMarketplace launched to the public on May 8th 2013 via a 'soft' launch, initially including a range of local authority contracted organisations - and independent traders. Live organisations and traders currently on the site offer a wide range of products and services including day opportunities and leisure, support in the home like home care and equipment, residential care, voluntary services including information, advice and carers support and traders offering handyman services, building and plumbing plus more. More providers are being added to the site all of the time. Much of the site has been developed with the voluntary sector in Hertfordshire.

The eMarketplace offers an exciting opportunity for businesses to advertise their services online, which is particularly useful for small firms without a website.

Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) are now keen to welcome more organisations and traders to get on board. Get in touch to find out more about the joining process.

For;

- Equipment Suppliers
- Gardening
- Handyman / Home maintenance
- Hairdressing
- Financial Advice
- Ironing
- Cleaning services

Please contact [tradingstandards@hertfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:tradingstandards@hertfordshire.gov.uk) or call 01707 292429. More information about the joining criteria can be found here [Trading Standards](#).

In the future we aim to publish a phased plan which outlines which provider groups will be invited to join and when.

For initial enquires or to register your interest please contact:

[empcommissioner@hertfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:empcommissioner@hertfordshire.gov.uk) “

Herts CC also provide support for registered eMarketplace suppliers with guides on building eMarketplace web sites and merchant account guidance.

### **Service Categories**

The eMarketplace has six main categories of service:

- Help at home

- Equipment for Easier Living
- Care Homes and Alternatives
- Transport
- Support for Carers
- Community Support and Leisure

Taking two which fit best with current EAC data, Care Homes and Alternatives and Help at home, the first has six categories:

- Residential, Nursing and Short Breaks
- Supported Housing
- Flexi Care Housing
- Emergency Accommodation
- Information, Advice & Advocacy
- Financial Advice Services

Two of which are repeated in Help at home -

- Information, Advice & Advocacy
- Financial Advice Services (this has only one entry – Citizens Advice Disability Benefits!)

The eMarketplace sits alongside other services provided or supported by Herts CC, such as **HertsHelp**, which is a network of community organisations working together. They can help you find the practical support, guidance and information you need to get the most out of life. **HertsHelp** has one phone number 0300 123 4044 (costs no more than a national call) and website address to help you find your way around the 100s of community groups in Herts who may be able to help. In addition, Herts run a community directory which includes other groups and societies which are not set up to help but cater for common interests, such as astronomy. The eMarketplace website also refers people to other websites – Good care guide, DLF, Gov.uk, Carers UK and Leonard Cheshire – direct payments. Herts CC also run a first contact and village agent scheme.

### **Summary**

The site has been developed by the County Council and reflects the investment that has been made over a year or two to turn the project into a live service. It is easy to access from the main county council website and, once in, easy to use. The involvement of the voluntary and community sector has been critical to the progress they have made so far. Given the ease of access, EAC could assess the architecture of the Herts site and explore with LGA how to build national modules for information, advice and advocacy and financial advice service to underpin other LA online marketplaces and reduce endless iterations of roughly the same information.

### **4. Birmingham**

The market place in Birmingham is not easy to access from the main city council website You have to know that it is called “market” to be able to find it at all from the main site. It is located within [www.mycareinbirmingham.org.uk](http://www.mycareinbirmingham.org.uk).

Once in, it is categorised in a similar way to Hertfordshire:

#### **Service categories:**

- Equipment
- Personal assistants & care agencies

- Getting out and about
- Members Area
- Care and Accommodation
- Advice and other support
- Support for carers
- Health and wellbeing

Taking the two categories, Care & Accommodation and Advice and other support, topics in each are comparable to Hertfordshire without the inclusion of Information, Advice & Advocacy and Financial Advice Services

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Care & Accommodation:

- Residential care
- Residential care with nursing
- Extra Care
- Sheltered housing
- Supported living
- Short breaks/respite
- Personal Assistants

The one difference is that Birmingham has a separate category for Advice, while, in Herts, advice & information underpin other categories without being a category in its own right. Information on Financial Advice lists very few financial advice specialists apart from payingforcare, Partnership's site, and Money Advice Services. Most of the others listed are domiciliary care agencies rather than financial advisers. Interestingly, there are no SOLLA advisers in Birmingham and only four within 25 miles, two in Solihull and two in Worcestershire.

The category on advice and other support includes:

- Legal advice
- Financial advice
- Direct payment support services
- Employing someone
- Independent care brokers
- Advocacy, Advice and counselling
- Resources and books
- Support to live at home

Birmingham's site does not give the same guidance to potential providers as Herts on the pages everyone can access. I have not registered so this is an initial assessment of what you can access by browsing.

## **5. Shop4support**

Shop4support (s4s) provides a national service for organisations wishing to set up online marketplaces and is currently being used by local authorities and 300+ providers nationwide. They have strong links with Local Authorities (Manchester, Lincolnshire, Shropshire, Gloucestershire, Harrow and all 15 in the Yorkshire and Humberside region) and Age UKs in the North, three of which are featured on the website – Barnsley, Calderdale & Kirklees and North Lincolnshire. In November 2012 shop4support was appointed as provider for the biggest

social care e-Marketplace ever developed in the Yorkshire and Humber region. The website states "The e-Marketplace will help people access the support they need all in one place, by visiting a "shop" online, viewing care services, leisure services and other activities that promote health and wellbeing. Shop4support is part owned by In Control and Valueworks, a Wigan based IT company." One of the first LAs to work with them was Harrow.

"S4s operates on a low-risk, self-financing 'pay-as-you-go' transaction fee model. The transaction fee is paid by providers as they are a major beneficiary of the platform and the service provided by shop4support. In order to create a level playing field, it has been set at a flat rate of 2.5% of sales value in respect of self-funders and recipients of cash personal budget holders. ....

For LAs there is an entry level charge of about £45,000 - for a package that has significantly more functionality and usability than that of other online portals and resource directories." Newcastle City Council recently considered a proposal from Shop4Support but decided to reject it. If more work was done to determine the role EAC could play in developing information advice modules for an online market place, it would be valuable to discuss Shop4support's approach with Sean Cocking of Newcastle City Council to understand the reasons for rejecting their approach.

## **6. Quickheart**

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Quickheart is a company which developed mychoicemycare, a web system offering information and advice on social care for adults for a DH CSED Project, which delivered £330k pa saving to one Council (Case Study available). They used ethnographic customer-centred design to ensure the system delivered the easiest-to-use experience for disabled people and their helpers who may be confused or anxious.

It contains over 300 pages of comprehensive advice written by subject experts with "Fairer Charging" calculators for Home & Residential, multiple Directories for suppliers/signposts, over a hundred links to national resources and unlimited links to local content. This system is now used by 22 councils.

[mychoicemycare.org.uk](http://mychoicemycare.org.uk)

They have also developed emarketplace solutions for councils, including Birmingham and Stockport. The local authorities I can identify using Quickheart are set out in Appendix 1.

## **6. Information NOW**

Information NOW is the website of the Quality of Life Partnership (QLP) and stands for Newcastle Older people's Website. It was set up in 2007 to give people over 50 in Newcastle, their families and carers information and advice. It is supported by the Elders Council of Newcastle, Newcastle City Council (NCC), Age UK Newcastle, QLP and Newcastle NHS. It has just been refreshed and is now attracting 8,000 visits a month, doubling its previous rate. It is run by Lauren Hoy, employed by QLP, who also operates the Newcastle First Contact scheme.

It works closely with two other sites in the city which give specific information:

1. **My Care Newcastle** is a directory, run by NCC, which gives information on adult social care

2. The **Health Signpost Directory** brings together local groups and services that offer a wide range of support, advice and activities which aim to improve the health and well-being of people in the City.

The site has eighteen categories, which all have articles, either on topics or local services, also linked to the two other sites above or other smaller local sites. It is very easy to use and the article content is clear and succinct.

#### Browse by Category

**Advocacy** (3 articles); **Benefits** (32 articles); **Care** (28 articles); **Consumer** (23 articles); **Crime** (17 articles); **Disability** (24 articles); **Employment** (6 articles); **End of life** (7 articles); **Family and Relationships** (10 articles); **Finance** (13 articles); **Getting Online** (10 articles); **Health** (66 articles); **Health Conditions** (36 articles); **Housing** (25 articles); **Legal** (11 articles); **Leisure** (27 articles); **Transport** (14 articles) and **Useful Local Support** (11 articles)

It also has a function which enables you to browse by A to Z:

Click the initial letter of the subject that you want to find information on, for example to find information on Attendance Allowance click on 'A', or to find information on benefits in general click on 'B'.

#### The most popular are

- **Winter Fuel Payments**  
Am I eligible for a Winter Fuel Payment? If you were born on or before 5 January 1951 you may qualify. It's not mean... [Read more](#)
- **When Someone Dies: A Practical Guide**  
What happens first? If the death occurs in hospital, the hospital staff will cont... [Read more](#)
- **Leisure Centres in Newcastle**  
Age UK Newcastle Age UK Newcastle runs a variety of activities at 3 centres across Newcastle. The Heal... [Read more](#)

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The recent workshop on "Information in the City" was held to:

- understand how well the local system is working to inform older people about care, support and wider choices
- stimulate thinking about the provision of information within an emerging market involving both statutory, voluntary and commercial providers
- draw conclusions about how we might work together in the future.

There was no clear consensus from the workshop on the way forward to create an online marketplace but there is no doubt that many of the ingredients needed to deliver one are already in place.

#### Summary

The links with QLP as a FS exemplar, with the Elders Council as a forum, with Moyra Risebrough as a researcher and now with Information NOW and Newcastle City Council,

suggest that EAC should discuss with QLP the Herts model and put a proposal to Sean Cocking to develop the information and advice modules for an online marketplace in care, housing and support.

## **7. Find Me Good Care (FMGC)**

FMGC is a website, run by SCIE, offering information on care for people of all ages. It is not designed as an emarketplace. The architecture of the site is complex but presented very clearly on the home page. There are seven categories in a column on the left and three main headings in the centre – *Good Care Planner*, *Search for care* and *Paying for care*. Taking the *Good Care Planner* heading, that is split into three sub headings in the centre – *Care in a Crisis*, *Planning future care* and *Changing care* with 8 topics in the left hand column. Each of those 8 topics has between 3 and 15 sub-topics to explore.

*Search for care and support* enables you to search for care and support services *in a residential setting, in my current home and other*. The number of listings is impressive but basic listings only give contact details, user rating, type of care, care specialism, Local Authority/Social Services and a question asking “Do you manage this organisation?”, which invites providers to register to enhance the listing. None of the description of the service with photographs, found on housingcare, is found on the basic listing on FMGC.

Comparing the results of the same search for care at home within the same area on FMGC and housingcare, the former has more relevant agencies very local to the area but a dearth of private care agencies covering a wider area, which are well represented on the housingcare site. FMGC avoids the criticism that can be levelled at housingcare, that there are too many national, regional and sub-regional private care services on the local listings, which may claim to cover the area but may have difficulty in so doing. However, someone wanting a wider choice to compare rates would probably prefer housingcare. A specific google search for a named local service in the area was not covered by housingcare but was by

- the Good Care Guide, developed by My Family Care and United for All Ages.,
- FMGC,
- NHS Choices,
- Better Care Guide, run by ReallyCare CIC, a not-for-profit company,
- yourcarehome – provides photographs of care homes
- CQC .

Two other main categories on the site are *Help from your council* and *Help from our partners*. The first has very little information and refers to council websites, the second lists a number of specialist partners, mainly small national voluntary organisations.

There seem to be some gaps. I searched for community equipment but there was no topic under that heading. Telecare was a topic but not featured in local services.

## **8. NHS Choices**

NHS Choices is still primarily a site with information about the NHS. The section on social care is one of five headline categories - Health A-Z, Live Well, Care & Support, Health News and



Services near you. Within the social care section, the site makes extensive use of links to voluntary organisations and related sites (see below), particularly Find Me Good Care, as well as signposting people to local authorities. The private sector is well represented in listings of nationwide providers of homecare services (see below) as well as care homes. In the last few days technical difficulties have prevented further exploration of the ease of functionality of the search facility for local services. On the main Care and Support page, people are directed to contact Carers Direct, which reinforces the impression given by some of the sections that care and support are seen more through the prism of someone caring for another person than the person themselves.

### ***Nationwide providers of homecare services***

- [Able Community Care Ltd](#)
- [Advantage Healthcare Group](#)
- [Agincare](#)
- [Almond Care](#)
- [Ark Home Healthcare](#)
- [Bupa Home Healthcare](#)
- [Care UK](#)
- [Helping Hands Home Care](#)
- [HomeCareDirect Limited](#)
- [Origin Recruitment](#)
- [Pulse Healthcare Limited](#)
- [Sevacare](#)
- [Spinal Homecare Services](#)
- [The Good Care Group](#)
- [Vanguard Care Limited](#)

**Housing** is featured within the section on Care & Support and EAC is featured in sections on **sheltered housing**:

### **“Where to find out about private developments**

Some private developers have sheltered housing properties that the person you care for can buy or part buy through shared ownership schemes. These are advertised on the open market and are usually sold as leasehold properties. Some private developers also rent out these properties. For more information on private providers of sheltered accommodation see the [Elderly Accommodation Counsel \(EAC\)](#) website or call [First Stop](#) on 0800 377 7070.

.....The Elderly Accommodation Counsel (EAC) has developed a quality kitemark to encourage scheme managers to provide detailed information about their facilities to potential residents, their families and carers. For further details see the [EAC website](#).

### ***External links***

- [Age UK](#)
- [Age UK retirement housing advice service](#)
- [Elderly Accommodation Counsel](#)
- [First Stop care advice](#)
- [Independent Age”](#)

and on **Extra care housing**:

“Extra care housing residents still have access to means-tested local authority services.

[The Elderly Accommodation Counsel website](#) has details of where extra care housing developments can be found.”

And in external links for a section on housing options for older people, under Housing:

### **“External links**

- [Shelter](#)
- [Elderly Accommodation Council](#)
- [Shared living/adult placement schemes](#)
- [Citizens Advice Bureau advice guide](#)
- [FirstStop: housing advice](#)
- [Home Improvement Agencies](#)
- [Trustmark directory of builders and tradespeople](#)
- [Houseproud loans and equity release schemes](#)
- [The Law Society - find a solicitor](#)
- [Age UK: housing options guide \(PDF, 670Kb\)](#)
- [Age UK: adapting your home guide \(PDF, 3Mb\)](#)

One feature of the NHS Choices is the ability to rate pages, which is already relatively well used.

### **Local Authorities**

As noted above, the site signposts people to their local authority, an example of which is given below:

“ Help in your home or in a care home

.....Your local authority will be able to provide you with information and advice on what services are available in your local area.”

People are routed to their local authority through a link to Gov.uk, which then links them to their local authority website or contact centre.

## **9. Conclusion**

This paper has explored two operating models of an online marketplace of housing and care, one created by the Council (Hertfordshire) and the other using an off the shelf solution (Birmingham & Quickheart), two companies offering emarketplace services (Shop4support and Quickheart) and three current websites with care information, one local (Information NOW) and two national (Find Me Good Care and NHS Choices). This impressionistic overview yields the following conclusions:

- Many local authorities have opted for emarketplace systems developed by shop4support and quickheart. For comparison, a quick trawl was conducted of the four

biggest social services authorities in the country, in terms of numbers of older people over 74 – Lancashire, Hampshire, Essex and Kent, which found that none had an emarketplace and their advice and information online was either not well developed, not well presented or not offering a wide range of choice, compared to other LA sites. All these sites looked as though they had been developed in house, which, given their greater internal resources due to size, may have seemed a logical step. So, although off the peg solutions are gaining ground, many LAs prefer to develop their own sites. In other words, there is still a market for the development of online information and advice.

- The EAC site, housingcare, compares well with other sites reviewed but local gaps in coverage of care services, compared to other national sites, make it vulnerable. Automatic inclusion of all services registered with the Care Quality Commission, depending on resources, would help to remedy this.
- The degree of competition between national care information and advice websites makes it important to develop and issue marketing material, particularly to local authorities to ensure that they are aware of EAC's offer. For example, Hertfordshire refers people to the Good Care Guide, but not to housingcare.
- EAC needs to decide how to develop the care element of its work, given the competition described above and the recognition of its specialist expertise in housing.
- Further exploration with Barbara Douglas and Lauren Hoy, Quality of Life Partnership, and Sean Cocking of Newcastle City Council of work to develop EAC and Information NOW resources to create an online marketplace for care and support in Newcastle is possible but needs a strategic decision by EAC on the direction of its online care advice and information.

## **APPENDIX 1: QUICKHEART**

### **Local Authorities which are clients of Quickheart**

Birmingham  
Stockport  
Trafford  
Enfield  
Barking & Dagenham  
Camden  
Lincolnshire  
Havering  
Rochdale  
Knowsley  
Cambridgeshire  
Lewisham  
Richmond  
York  
West Sussex  
Wigan  
Devon  
Halton  
Westminster  
Warwickshire  
Kensington & Chelsea  
Leicestershire  
Newham  
Hammersmith & Fulham  
Bury

Quickheart also have other parts of the business which cater for commercial clients, wishing to enhance the customer journey.