

Health and Community Services Information and Advice CARE ACT STRATEGY

ONE PAGE SUMMARY

What our information and advice service should include:

- How the social care system works;
- How people can access it;
- What’s available and a choice of how people receive services (to include health, housing and employment.);
- Financial advice to understand care charges, ways to pay, money management and where to get independent final advice;
- How to raise concerns about safety and wellbeing; and
- How to support people with advocacy.

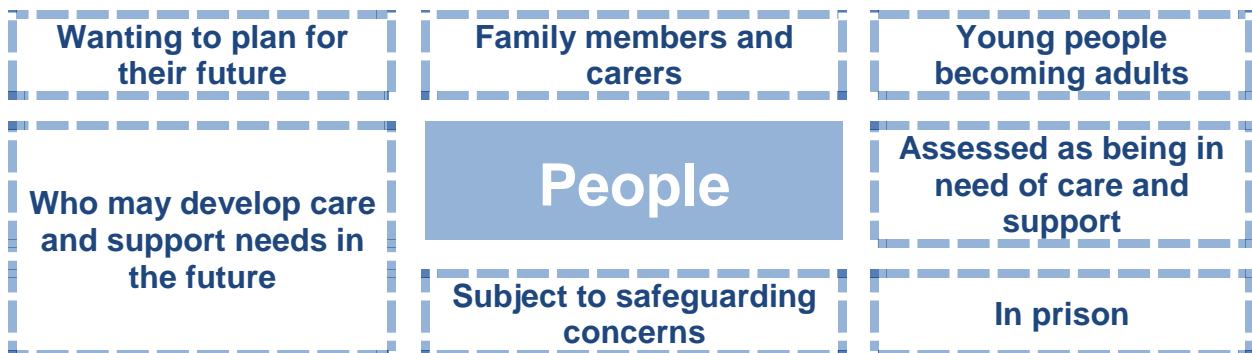
What service users and carers want

“I have the information and support I need in order to remain as independent as possible.”

People want to choose the best quality care for the situation in which they find themselves, plan for the future and understand what they are entitled to and what they need to pay.

People who have difficulty understanding the information and advice, retaining or weighing up the information or communicating their views they may need an **independent advocate**.

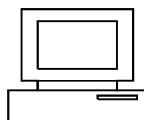
Who needs information and advice?



Our Information and advice principles:



- Involve and engage from the outset.
- Get the message out far and wide with a range of formats and channels.
- Be inclusive and accessible.
- Keep it simple, informal and in plain English.
- Check it is understood and offer independent advocacy when needed.
- Don’t reinvent the wheel – signpost to other credible independent or national sources of information.
- Join up with partners to develop consistent and proportionate information and advice where people look for it.
- Promote wellbeing and signpost people to preventative and universal services.



1. Health and Community Services Vision

People in Hertfordshire feel well informed about what's available to them so they can lead safe, happy and healthier lives in a way they choose.

They feel valued and listened to; have independence and a range of positive things to do.

We offer the best and most responsive services in the county. These are services our staff feel proud to deliver and would be pleased to receive.

For information and advice this means:

- ◆ A service for adult social care that helps people to take control and make well informed choices about the care and support they want - and how they find it.
- ◆ Making the best use of resources out there so people get relevant and clear information and advice on social care that they can act on, regardless of where they look for it.
- ◆ Involving people from the outset and take into account the needs of everyone, both those that contact us and others at key trigger points in their lives.
- ◆ A service that is open to everyone who would benefit from it regardless of eligible care needs, how they pay for their care, their background and their communication needs.
- ◆ Supporting those that need help to understand with independent advocacy.

2. Background

The Care Act requires us to set up an information and advice service for all people in our area regardless of whether they have eligible care needs or are known to us.

What the care act says we must tell everyone:

- ◆ How the social care system works;
- ◆ How people can access it;
- ◆ What's available and a choice of how people receive services (to include health, housing and employment.);
- ◆ Financial advice to understand care charges, ways to pay, money management and where to get independent final advice; and
- ◆ How to raise concerns about safety and wellbeing.

The Act states we must support the person's involvement. If they have difficulty understanding the information and advice, retaining or weighing up the information or communicating their views they may need an **independent advocate**.

Advocacy is about:

- ◆ Supporting people to have the information they need and understand it so they can make the right choices for them.
- ◆ Supporting people to speak up and be heard.
- ◆ Helping people to secure their rights, and the services and support they need.
- ◆ Enabling people to play a full part in their communities.

Advocates are trained and independent.

3. Information and advice principles

1. We will involve people who use services and their carers to develop our information and advice service. We will always ask for feedback and act on it when we can.
2. Our information and advice will be made available in a range of formats and through a range of channels to get the message out far and wide. This may mean face to face in communities, online or in print. We will take into account those with sensory needs, those who don't speak English and those who have a learning difficulty or disability.
3. Let's keep it simple, informal and in plain English. Wherever possible we will have the same source of information for the public and professionals.
4. We will always check that information and advice is understood and can be acted on, which may include offering an independent advocate.
5. We won't reinvent the wheel – it may be in a person's best interest to signpost to other independent or national sources of information. We will work with health colleagues, public sector partners and the community and voluntary sector to develop *consistent* and *proportionate* care and support information and advice where people look for it – including face to face.
6. We will always take opportunities to promote wellbeing and signpost people to preventative and universal services – whether we provide them or not.
7. We will make sure that those most vulnerable are kept safe from harm and that people know how to keep themselves safe or report abuse or harm if it occurs.

See also: [Principles for the provision of information and advice: Think Local Act Personal \(TLAP\)](#).

4. Priority objectives

1. Develop a range of information and advice that covers what we do and how people can benefit from our services; ensuring everything is available in a variety of formats that Hertfordshire residents, staff and partners tell us they want.

Actions to achieve this will include:

- Mapping our current sources of information and advice identify any gaps and develop new information to meet the needs of the Care Act.
 - Review existing information and how easy it is to access on the web, leaflets and factsheets and develop new content in a variety of formats in line with the new strategy and standards.
 - Support the development of a new HertsDirect website.
 - Support the digital inclusion programme to get more people benefitting from online services.
2. Develop a co-ordinated and responsive information and advice service that includes a wide range of local services to promote health and wellbeing.

Actions to achieve this will include:

- Extend and promote the Herts Help branding to become a recognised and credible source of information and advice.
 - Develop the Hertfordshire Directory and promote widely to staff, residents and service providers.
 - Develop a Herts Help branded social care information and advice programme and face to face access points with libraries.
 - Review, redefine and promote the scope and function of the eMarketplace.
 - Review and develop social care information and advice given by all customer services and front line staff.
 - Work with HPFT and health colleagues to review and develop social care information and advice.
3. Empower and support our statutory partners and the voluntary and community sector (including private and independent providers) to become credible sources for high quality information.

Actions to achieve this will include:

- Review the information and advice role of commissioned providers and feed information and advice requirements into the commissioning process.
 - Support the development of the Herts Help information and advice requirements in community wellbeing contract tenders.
 - Work with partners to develop *consistent* and *proportionate* care and support information and agree how we will promote to Hertfordshire residents.
4. Ensure all forms of social care information and advice are inclusive and fit for purpose.

Actions to achieve this will include:

- Review and rewrite existing written information to take account of any changes required by the Care Act; making sure we use plain English and meet our information and advice principles.
 - Develop key messages and provide them in a range of formats that are targeted to people with a sensory or communication need including Easy Read, subtitled video and British Sign Language (BSL) videos.
 - Promote the use of language line widely.
5. Ensure we support residents to plan for the future by signposting them to credible sources of independent financial advice and information on paying for care.

Actions to achieve this will include:

- Scoping an independent advice line.
- Developing a comprehensive gateway to:
 - Our own financial information (Money Advice Unit)
 - Independent financial advice (SoLLa accredited)
 - National sources such as Citizens Advice Bureau and Money Advice

5. What people in Hertfordshire tell us

We know that information and advice is critical to help people choose the best quality care for their personal situation, plan for their future care needs, understand what they are entitled to from the state and make the best decisions about funding care

There have been a range of local and national consultation and engagement events. These are summarised in the Information and advice Equality Impact Assessment. People have told us there are a lot of great things going in Hertfordshire and people feel well supported. They came up with plenty of ideas of how we can make things even better.

Key findings:

- We should provide help to support individuals in their choice of care.
- We need to improve guidance and awareness of different services out there.
- We need a single point of contact.
- There should be more signposting to preventative services and in particular to those that combat loneliness.
- Carers need better support.
- There needs to be a greater preventative role for GPs to sign-post individuals to relevant community services and support groups.
- HertsDirect needs improvement to make it more accessible and needs a better search function.
- The ‘first point of reference’ to seek information is often through local community services and charities.
- Information and advice is often disjointed - including from health, social care and local councils.
- Social care workers need to have a better understanding of local services.

Think Local Act Personal:

[Making it Real](#) is a set of statements from people who use care and support telling us what they would expect, see and experience if personalisation is real and working well in an organisation.

“I have the information and support I need in order to remain as independent as possible.”

“I have access to easy-to-understand information about care and support which is consistent, accurate, accessible and up to date.”

“I can speak to people who know something about care and support and can make things happen.”

“I have help to make informed choices if I need and want it.”

“I know where to get information about what is going on in my community.”

6. The diversity of Hertfordshire residents

Hertfordshire is a diverse county and our residents will have different needs and barriers to accessing and understanding information and advice. Whenever you are producing information you must understand the needs of your target audience and consider what you might need to do to make sure they can benefit from it.

- Nearly 15% of our residents are aged over 65 which is projected to increase sharply.
- One in five households in Hertfordshire contain only residents that are aged 65+. 59% of these households contain one person living alone.
- Nearly 10% of our residents have never used the internet.
- Over 68,000 people in Hertfordshire have some degree of physical disability.
- Around 26,000 people have a Learning Disability.
- Over 11,600 people have dementia.
- Just over 18% of Hertfordshire residents are from a Black or Minority Ethnic (BME) background.
- Just over 6% of Hertfordshire residents do not have English as a first language. Of these 3.15% are over 65.

Source - [National Census and Herts community profile data](#).

7. Evaluating our strategy

We will regularly review and publish information about the effectiveness of the information and advice service locally, including customer satisfaction. On the whole evaluation will be through existing frameworks and processes such as:

- Evidence we collect from our web feedback form, complaints and compliments;
- The number of people accessing our information and advice service;
- Evaluation data from commissioned services that have an information and advice element; and
- Service user and carer feedback against the 'Making it real' Think Local Act Personal statements through events and focus groups.

We also propose to seek accreditation for national standards such as the Information Standard and BSL Charter.

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