

# Wellbeing, Care and Learning: Information and Advice Strategy 2015-2017

*For consultation*



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# 1. Introduction

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Access to high quality, up to date, accurate, timely and effective information and advice helps people to make informed choices.

Good quality information, alongside help with how to navigate complex public services, is fundamental in enabling people to make well informed choices and improve outcomes. Whether it be to help with their parenting role, about personal care and support, or how to maintain independence and wellbeing, if people are supported to make informed choices, there is a higher likelihood of better outcomes and the risk of their needs escalating in the future may be reduced.

This strategy sets out how we will work with partners across the city to create an effective care and support information and advice system for all residents in Newcastle. It has been produced in consideration of a number of national and local policy drivers, including information and advice requirements for local authorities as set out in the Care Act 2014 and The Children and Families Act 2014.

The scope of the strategy ranges from specialist information and advice services, through to universal services at a local and national level, including those that reach out to help vulnerable people overcome barriers to access.

## 2. Our Vision

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We will work together with partners to provide information and advice services which:

- are accessible and timely
- are of high quality, accurate, consistent and up to date
- are easily understood and user friendly – reflecting users’ perceptions and needs, rather than information silos reflecting agency structures
- are effective - supports adults, carers, children and young people in exercising choice and becoming informed consumers of services
- are accessed easily and personalised where appropriate - using digital approaches where possible, but recognising that people may have differing communication needs

- reach out to disadvantaged and vulnerable people to overcome barriers to access

### 3. Definitions

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Information and advice can mean slightly different things to different people. In this Strategy, we are using the definitions taken from the Care and Support Statutory Guidance issued under the Care Act 2014:

**'Information'** means the communication of knowledge and facts

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

### 4. National and local drivers

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#### 4.1 Legislation

##### 4.1.1 The Care Act 2014

The local authority is expected to understand, coordinate and make use of high-quality information resources, and to take an active role in the provision of information and advice. The key duty is to 'establish and maintain an information and advice service'.

The range of topics which must be covered by information and advice are:

- The care and support system locally;
- How to access the care and support available locally;
- The choice of types of care and support;
- How to access independent financial advice on matters relating to care and support;
- How to raise concerns about the safety or wellbeing of an adult with care and support needs.

However, the duty is much broader and extends to such related topics as preventative services and intermediate care; housing and housing-related support for those with care and support needs; health conditions, local health services and Continuing Healthcare arrangements; employment support; the Court of Protection, Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA), deputyships; and support for carers.

The local authority must also support people to make informed, affordable and sustainable financial decisions about their care.

#### 4.1.2 The Children and Families Act 2014

The way we support children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) changed from September 2014, following the introduction of the Children and Families Act 2014.

A key aim of the SEND reforms is that local authorities make sure children, young people and families know what help they can get when a child or young person has SEND.

To support this aim, the Children and Families Act 2014 places a number of duties on local authorities to ensure children, young people and their families are supported. These include:

- The publishing of a Local Offer - an information resource, detailing provision for children with SEND from birth to 25, across education, health and social care;
- Providing a source of independent information, advice and support for children and young people with SEND and parents and carers across education, health and social care delivered through a dedicated and easily identifiable service;
- Establishing arrangements for considering and agreeing what information and advice about education, health and care provision is to be provided, by whom and how it is to be provided. Any arrangements should consider the availability of other non-local authority information services and how they work together.

#### 4.1.3 The Childcare Act 2006

Section 12 of The Childcare Act 2006 places a duty on local authorities to provide information, advice and assistance to parents about childcare in the area. Section 13 places a duty on local authorities to secure the provision of information, advice and training to childcare providers and childcare workers.

From April 2008, in addition to information on childcare, local authorities have been required to provide a range of information (prescribed in the Childcare Act 2006 (Provision of Information to Parents) (England) Regulations 2007) which parents may need to support their children through to their 20th birthday. Local authorities are also required to ensure that the information is made accessible to all parents who might benefit from it.

#### 4.1.4 The Education Act, 2011

The Education Act 2011 removed the duty on local authorities to provide careers advice and guidance services for young people, with the exception of those young people who are 'vulnerable'. Instead, it placed the duty to **'secure access to independent careers guidance'** for their pupils and students upon schools (from September 2012 for pupils aged 14 to age 16), and then from September 2013 upon schools for pupils aged 13-18 and upon Further Education Colleges and Sixth Form Colleges for students aged 16-18.

Local authorities retained their duty to encourage, enable or assist young people's participation in education or training. They are required to assist the most vulnerable young people and those at risk of disengaging with education or work. Local authorities are also expected to have arrangements in place to ensure that 16 and 17 year olds have received an offer of a suitable place in post-16 education or training, and that they are assisted to take up a place. In Newcastle, we have the Connexions service for this work.

#### 4.1.5 The Housing Act, 1996 and the Homelessness Act, 2002

These Acts have specific duties including meeting the statutory requirement to provide housing advice. The Homelessness Act 2002 also requires local authorities to produce a [Homelessness Strategy](#) based on a review of homelessness. In Newcastle, the Council leads partners in the delivery of this strategy which outlines our approach to the provision of information and advice to support multi-agency staff to identify the risk of homelessness earlier and to prevent homelessness through non-specialist early interventions. This is part of our Active Inclusion Newcastle partnership approach described below.

## 4.2 Other local mandates

- **Newcastle’s Wellbeing for Life Strategy**, which is concerned with promoting wellbeing, including healthy lifestyles, and improving access to information and opportunities for those with existing long-term conditions.
- Since April 2013, the Council has had responsibility for promoting the **public health** of its communities. Public Health grant is provided to the Council to:
  - improve significantly the health and wellbeing of the local population;
  - carry out health protection and health improvement functions delegated from the Secretary of State;
  - reduce health inequalities across the life course, including within hard to reach groups;
  - ensure the provision of population healthcare advice.
- **Digital by Choice** is a corporate approach which enables and encourages Newcastle City Council customers to carry out transactions online. This applies across the Council but in adult social care may include online options for self-assessment, as well as information.
- **Active Inclusion Newcastle** is a partnership approach that responds to the growth in demand for information, advice and support to promote social and financial inclusion and to reduce the risk of homelessness with reduced resources. This approach is supported by the Council’s Active Inclusion Service which provides governance arrangements, policy and sector leadership that improve the coordination and consistency of information, advice and support in these areas. This helps to maintain the foundations for stability: an income, somewhere to live, financial inclusion and employment opportunities. The statutory [Homelessness Strategy](#) describes this work in terms of homelessness prevention and [Newcastle’s Approach to Financial Inclusion](#) outlines our work which is based on information, advice and support to help residents to understand and manage their finances.

## 5. Current approach

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We already have a range of ways that we provide people with information and advice, including:

- Newcastle City Council staff, such as Community Health and Social Care Direct (the main contact point for adult social care and community health services) and social work, welfare rights, debt advice, housing advice, education, SEND Information Advice and Support Service and the Local Offer, customer service and library teams.
- Voluntary and community sector organisations which either provide information and advice as their main function or have an information and advice service alongside their other activities.
- Schools, the National Probation Service and Community Rehabilitation Companies, the Police, health agencies, Your Homes Newcastle and other statutory partners who play a key role in the provision and delivery of information, advice and support services.
- A model called the 'spectrum of advice' used in the areas of financial inclusion and homelessness prevention. This utilises a tiered approach to differentiate between the roles and knowledge that we would expect multi-agency staff and volunteers to have in key topic areas and provides the relevant support to enable them to do this.
- The First Contact Newcastle multi-agency referral scheme, which is run by the Quality of Life Partnership to enable people aged 50 years and over to access preventative services through a single contact that they are already having with a multi-agency member of frontline staff.
- Parent forums such as the SEND Parent Carer Forum and youth peer mentoring projects which provide peer support, information and advice.

We also have a range of electronic resources for the above agencies to use to support them in their information and advice giving roles and which the public can access directly themselves, including:

- [Newcastle City Council](#) (NCC) website
- [Newcastle Family Services Directory](#) (managed within Education Division, NCC to meet the statutory requirements of the Childcare Duty and SEND Local Offer)
- [Information NOW](#) (Newcastle Older People's Website)

- Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust's [Patient Information Centre](#)
- [Health Signpost Directory](#)

With the exception of the City Council website, the organisations managing the other four websites work together in a partnership known as the 'Information in the City' partnership, with a shared remit to provide local information relating to health, wellbeing, care and families. They coordinate their information content and have a degree of integration to share information updates across the sites.

In addition to the above, there are a range of local and national websites and on line resources and tools which are specific to individual organisations or certain issues, such as the [Community and Family Hubs \(formerly Sure Start\) website](#) which offers help and support for parents of children under five, or [MyEquipmentNewcastle](#) which guides residents through a step-by-step self-assessment to find and buy equipment.

## 6. Strengthening our approach

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Our approach in Newcastle will aim to achieve the following outcomes:

- To embed an early help and preventative approach within information and advice provision to help maintain independence and wellbeing and prevent emerging issues from escalating
- Making best use of existing services and resources and connecting new services and resources – recognising and building on existing good practice and resources across the Council and our partners
- To improve people's experience of information and advice, in particular to improve consistency and quality across organisations and reduce inappropriate 'hand-offs'
- To build in systems to identify and address issues around quality, accessibility and availability of information, so that continuous improvement is achieved
- To ensure that information provision is accessible and appropriate for its intended audience - making it as easy as possible for people to get information and advice
- All Newcastle Council websites will adhere to a minimum of Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, Level AA standards.

- Enhancing the role that multi-agency frontline staff have to play in giving information and advice by raising awareness about the resources that are available, sharing learning about what works or needs to improve, and facilitating signposting and referrals into services
- Prioritising trigger points in people's lives - redesigning how information and advice is offered at these points to be as effective as possible in improving health and wellbeing

We have set out below our priority areas for 2015-2017 and the practical steps we will take to achieve our desired outcomes.

### Priority 1: Implementing an Information & Advice Framework – empowering more agencies in the provision of information and advice

We will develop an Information & Advice Framework which is **'topic-based'** and differentiates between 'tiers' of information and advice for the topics identified. The Framework will build on the learning and approach adopted by the Active Inclusion Service, which has been successful in its multi-agency approach. The Framework will set out the expected knowledge, role of staff, and support available for staff and volunteers providing information and advice across a range of topic areas - from basic information to specialist advice.

The Framework will help us to develop a cooperative approach to information and advice - creating a shared understanding across agencies in relation to the provision of information and advice for different audiences and topics.

#### **Our Information and Advice Framework Topics**

Our priority **'topic areas'** for our Framework are listed below. These topics are not mutually exclusive and there are dependencies between them. We will work with our partners and our communities to review our topic areas in response to people's needs and to adapt the content, if necessary, to meet the identified needs of specific audiences. We will adopt a phased approach to developing our Framework by prioritising the topics.

#### Topic: Adult Social Care and Support

Covering for example:

- How to raise concerns about the safety or wellbeing of an adult with care and support needs
- The care and support system locally – the choice and type of care and support available in Newcastle
- How to access the care and support available locally
- Low level services and services which prevent, reduce, and delay the need for support, and how to access them.
- How to access independent financial advice on matters relating to care and support
- Informal carers' services and benefits
- Information on lasting Power of Attorney, becoming a deputy and the Court of Protection
- Planning for future care costs
- Housing information and advice
- Information about effective treatment and support for health conditions

#### Topic: Children's Social Care and Support

Covering for example:

- Safeguarding - how to raise concerns about the safety or wellbeing of a child
- Thresholds for children's social care
- Corporate Parenting
- Fostering and Supported Lodgings
- Adoption
- Leaving Care
- Young Carers

#### Topic: Special Educational Needs and Disability (0 – 25 years) (SEND)

Covering for example:

- Education information, advice and support relevant to SEND
- Health information, advice and support relevant to SEND
- Social Care information, advice and support relevant to SEND
- Preparing for Adulthood specific for SEND

#### Topic: Early Help and Family Support

Covering for example:

- What is Early Help and Family Support
- How to access Early Help and Family Support
- Common Assessment Framework
- Early years provision and childcare
- What's on (places to go, things to do)

- Education, employment and skills

#### Topic: Financial Inclusion

Covering for example:

- Affordable credit
- Basic bank accounts
- Benefits
- Budgeting
- Debt
- Digital inclusion
- Energy advice
- Illegal money lending

#### Topic: Homelessness Prevention

Covering for example:

- Help if you are homeless tonight
- Help to keep your home
- Help to find a home

#### Topic: Public Health and Wellbeing

Covering for example:

- Reducing health inequalities
- Health intelligence
- Health protection
- Health improvement
- Health and social care quality
- Information and advice on diet and nutrition, tobacco, alcohol, physical activity, drugs and substance misuse, sexual health, pregnancy and children's health

#### Topic: Employment

Covering for example:

- Training and skills
- Supported employment
- Employment support

#### Topic: Schools and Learning

Covering for example:

- Early education and childcare
- Applying for a school place
- SEND (links to separate SEND Topic)

- Curriculum, services and support for children and young people in school e.g. Bullying, financial grants
- School organisation, including academisation
- Behaviour and attendance
- Safeguarding in education
- Preparation for adulthood e.g. apprenticeships, Connexions, citizenship, volunteering
- Out of school activities – things to do and places to go

The Framework will be developed in partnership with other agencies to create a shared understanding about roles in providing information and advice, the potential opportunities to maximise contacts with residents, and what support organisations may require to enable to them to provide good quality information and advice.

The approach will:

- Help us to understand what level of information and advice organisations can provide, and what support we can provide, in relation to each topic area
- Help residents understand what information and advice is available, and how to access this
- Inform commissioning and grant aid delivery
- Build partnerships across the range of providers

We will use our learning from the Active Inclusion Newcastle partnership approach to financial inclusion and homelessness prevention to inform our approach. Appendix 1 gives an example of the 'spectrum of advice' framework for the topic of benefit advice.

## **Priority 2: Working together - providing opportunities for advice agencies to come together**

We will establish Information and Advice partnership groups in order to create opportunities for agencies to come together to:

- raise awareness about the resources that are available
- share expertise and learning across agencies about what works or what needs to improve

- support agencies to remain up to date by providing access to training and resources and for collective responses to policy changes in relation to care and support
- ensure that people in Newcastle receive the information and advice that is appropriate to their needs
- move from signposting to proportionate responses in which all partners can play a role
- make the best use of all of the city's information and advice resources – from providers of basic information through to specialist advice

We will facilitate these opportunities in ways that agencies tell us will benefit them most.

### Priority 3: Workforce Development

Our partnership approach will support multi-agency frontline staff in the crucial role they have in providing information and advice by:

- sharing partnership information resources and training on the priority topic areas to support them to fulfil their expected role in those areas
- providing opportunities to come together to share knowledge and learning about what works or needs to improve
- facilitating pathways and referrals into services for when more specialist advice is needed.

This strategy acknowledges the fact that people don't just access information and advice via formal interactions with staff working in the care and support system. Ensuring that alternative routes, such as health workers, faith groups and volunteers, are included in our approach is just as important. The Framework outlined in Priority 1 will help to shape our plan for maximising the existing contacts that people have by supporting those staff and volunteers to have the knowledge and resources to support them in their information giving roles.

#### **Priority 4: Online information and advice - working with partners to assist people to access information online, and to undertake assessments online, encouraging self-service**

We will continue to work as part of the *Information in the City Partnership* to ensure that information and advice across a range of key websites and online resources remain fit for purpose, are up to date and accurate, and respond to people's information and advice needs.

We will update and continually improve the Council's website and its interface and integration with other digital resources to ensure consistency in the information and advice provided.

We will explore opportunities under the corporate Digital by Choice programme to identify new and innovative ways to enable and empower people, and maximise business efficiency through digital solutions with the Wellbeing Care and Learning Digital Group.

We will maximise on existing developments wherever possible and explore opportunities for alignment with different agendas and agencies, recognising that maintaining good quality information systems can be resource intensive.

We will invest in interactive services that will enable any member of the public to be better informed and access information when they are making choices about adult social care, e.g. online self-assessment, choosing a care home or purchasing care and equipment online.

#### **Priority 5: Health and Wellbeing**

Using the topic based and sharing approaches outlined in Priorities 1, 2 and 3 we will take a multi-agency approach to providing information and advice.

We will work with national and regional services, voluntary groups, and primary care providers to integrate all our information and advice provision.

We will encourage the use of online information e.g. NHS Choices, Information in the City (See Priority 4), to enable people to be better informed and to make better choices.

## **7. Monitoring and Evaluation**

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In establishing our Framework for Information and Advice, we will agree through the Information and Advice partnership groups, and our other partners, the measures that we will use to assess the effectiveness of our information and advice provision.

The quality and efficacy of our information and advice provision will also be measured through feedback from surveys of residents, carers, parents and young people and specific engagements and consultations, as appropriate.

We also recognise that the information and advice provision in response to statutory duties is, or may be, subject to Ofsted or CQC inspection.

## **8. Consultation and review**

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The Strategy is available for comment on the Council's website at <https://letstalknewcastle.co.uk>.

We will continuously review and adapt our approach to information and advice in accordance with the feedback we receive from stakeholders through the Information and Advice Partnership Groups, as well as feedback from residents and other stakeholders.

## Appendix 1: Table for the spectrum of benefit advice

This aims to describe where services/volunteers fit in the spectrum of benefit advice, what advice they are expected to provide and what training and support they require in order to meet those expectations – this does not replace but complements organisations' internal arrangements. There will be some movement between tiers and services can self-select the support that is on offer.

Advice given			Required from own organisation, AIN Unit and others		
Tier	Expected knowledge	Expected role to:	Training	Information	Support
Tier one: e.g. Customer Service Centre and library staff, receptionists, Housing Support Assistants (Cherry Tree View), frontline staff, care assistants, community organisations, community champions and volunteers, faith groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An understanding that: a lack of income can cause problems; benefit maximisation is important; certain groups of people may be entitled to certain benefits; changes in circumstances may affect benefits; claimant actions or inactions can lead to benefit problems, e.g. sanctions; benefits interrelate; benefit decisions can be challenged</li> <li>• Awareness of where to access information and self-help materials</li> <li>• Awareness of which office deals with which benefit</li> <li>• Awareness that some benefits are claimed online, some are claimed over the phone etc.</li> <li>• Understanding at what level it is appropriate not to advise and when it is appropriate to refer to a service providing a higher level of advice (as described below).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain which office deals with which benefit</li> <li>• Make an appropriate signpost or referral to second or third tier</li> <li>• Basically explain a Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) letter</li> <li>• Explain that time limits are important</li> <li>• Explain that claimants need to follow DWP requirements in order to avoid sanctions and to tell DWP of change in circumstances</li> <li>• Call a benefit office on behalf of client with a change of circumstances</li> <li>• Record a signpost or referral</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training covering: (1) the requirements in the 'expected knowledge' column and (2) particular needs by using consultancy lines.</li> <li>• E-learning by Newcastle City Council Learning Management System (LMS)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leaflets, e.g. 'trigger point conversations', 'Are you worried about money?'</li> <li>• Easy read tips –</li> <li>• Websites, e.g. Information NOW and Newcastle Welfare Rights</li> <li>• Benefit bulletin</li> <li>• Self-help and other basic material</li> <li>• 'Where to get advice in Newcastle' directory</li> <li>• Newcastle Services Directory website</li> <li>• Active Inclusion Newcastle (AIN) Unit resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultancy lines</li> <li>• Attendance at team meetings</li> </ul>

Advice given		Required from own organisation, AIN Unit and others			
Tier	Expected knowledge	Expected role to:	Training	Information	Support
<p>Tier two: e.g. Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) volunteer, Social Worker, supported accommodation worker, tenants association worker, Sure Start worker, health worker, Advocacy Centre North worker.</p> <p>Some in level two may provide more than the expected role but they are not in level three, such as Debt Advisers, Housing Support Officers Voluntary inclusion as 'tier two' in NSD</p>	<p>As for level one plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to recognise all benefits and understand what they are awarded for</li> <li>• Awareness of claim and challenge time limits</li> <li>• Basic understanding of benefits system, e.g. how some benefits interact, welfare reform, difference between means and non means tested benefits, how to avoid and deal with sanctions</li> <li>• Ability to help with initial benefit claims and problems, e.g. a call to initiate a Personal Independence Payment (PIP) claim, find out why a benefit has been stopped or report changed circumstances</li> <li>• Ability to help write or obtain supporting information, e.g. for a PIP or Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) claim</li> </ul>	<p>As for level one, plus :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain what the main benefits are for in general terms</li> <li>• Obtain or provide and write supporting information</li> <li>• Complete a claim form</li> <li>• Record signpost/referrals</li> </ul>	<p>As for level one plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training and briefings, e.g. Newcastle Welfare Rights Service (NWRS) PIP briefings to Social Workers</li> </ul>	<p>As for level one plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professionals' websites, e.g. Carers UK, Disability Rights UK</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultancy lines</li> <li>• Internal supervision</li> <li>• Inclusion in the NSD</li> </ul>

Advice given			Required from own organisation, AIN Unit and others		
Tier	Expected knowledge	Expected role to:	Training	Information	Support
Tier three: e.g. Benefits Advisers, i.e. those listed in 'Where to get advice in Newcastle' and at tier three in NSD	Full and up to date understanding of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benefit rules</li> <li>• Benefits system, from claim through to appeal</li> <li>• How benefits interact</li> <li>• How benefits are calculated</li> <li>• Benefit case law</li> <li>• Where to get expert benefits information, guidance and law</li> <li>• Tribunal representation and further support</li> </ul>	As for levels one and two, plus to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide initial advice</li> <li>• Complete all benefit claims up to appeal representation</li> <li>• Calculate all benefits and use a benefit calculation programme</li> <li>• Record benefit gains and advice activity</li> </ul> Support levels one and two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal training, e.g. CAB</li> <li>• External training, e.g. CPAG</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal and external guidance, e.g. CPAG and CAB</li> <li>• Legislation, annotations and case law</li> <li>• Web resources, e.g. Rightsnet</li> <li>• AIN bi-monthly digest of CPAG Welfare Rights Bulletins and other tier three information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal systems, e.g. 1:1, case file review, data and performance review</li> <li>• National consultancy, e.g. CPAG advisers line AIN handbook updates, Quick Benefit Calculator and other support</li> </ul>