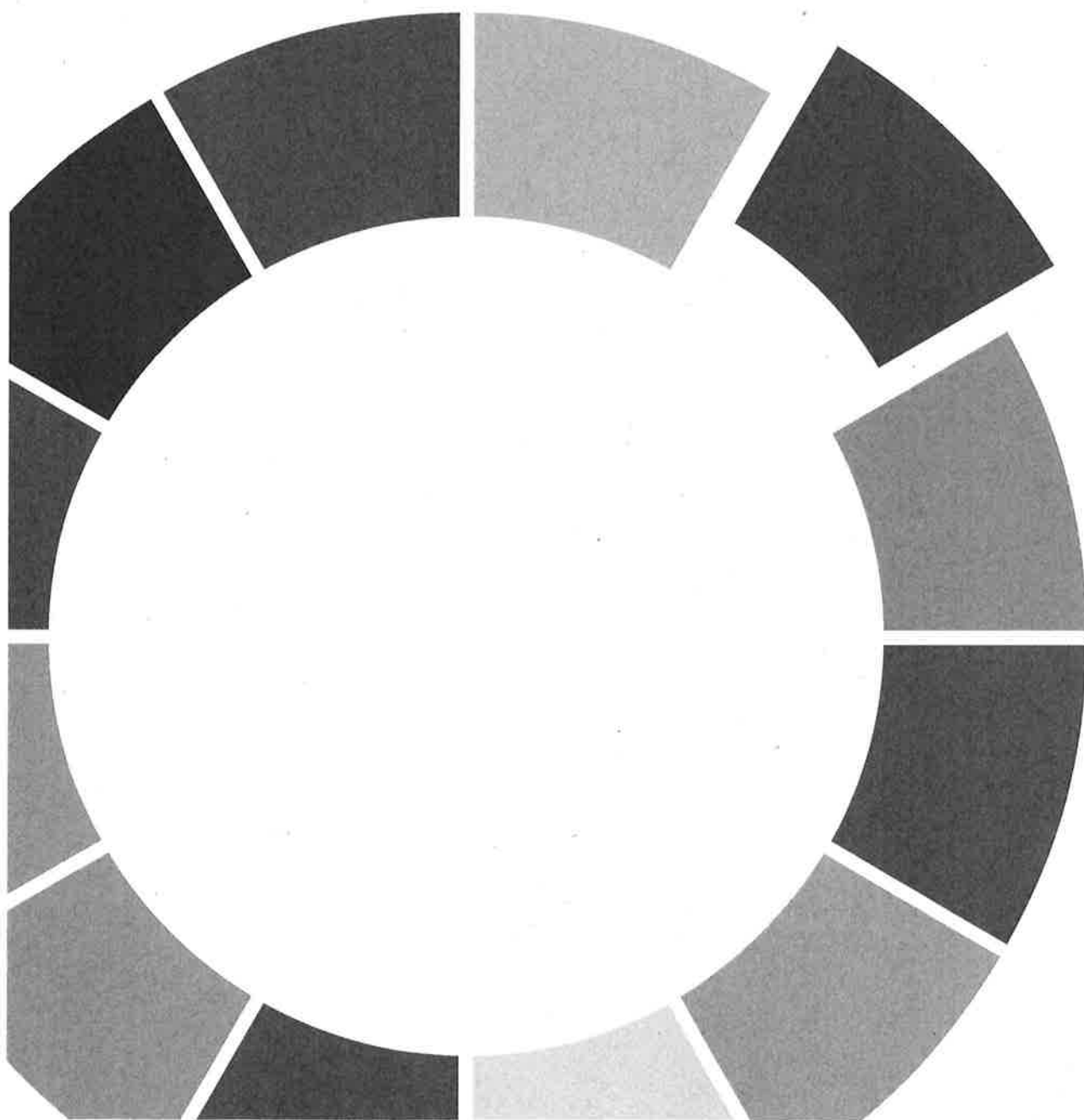


Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014

Part 2 Code of Practice (General Functions)



5. Information, Advice and Assistance

Introduction: aims and scope

293. This chapter provides guidance on section 17 in Part 2 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. Section 17 covers the provision of information, advice and assistance. There are no regulations made under this section of the Act.

294. This code of practice sets out the duties on local authorities in relation to the provision of a service for providing people with:

- information and advice relating to care and support, and assistance in accessing care and support.

295. The information, advice and assistance service **must** include, as a minimum, the publication of information and advice on:

- how the care and support system operates in the local authority area
- the types of care and support available
- how to access the care and support that is available; and
- how to raise concerns about the well-being of a person who appears to have needs for care and support.

296. Local Health Boards, or an NHS Trust providing services in the area of a local authority, **must** provide that local authority with information about the care and support it provides in the local authority's area. Other partner organisations, including third and independent sector organisations, and citizens of Wales, including those in prison, youth detention and bail accommodation, will have an interest in its content and delivery.

The Information, Advice and Assistance Service

297. The information, advice and assistance service is central to the success of the transition to the care and support system under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act. It is an opportunity to change the perception of social care and support services in Wales. It **must** promote early intervention and prevention to ensure that people of all ages can be better supported to achieve their personal outcomes, and explore options for meeting their care and support needs. It should be considered to be a preventative service in its own right through the provision of high quality and timely information, advice and assistance.

298. The information, advice and assistance service will be evidence based, developing its range and focus on the basis of the findings from the population assessment that the local authority will undertake periodically, through its regional partnership arrangements (see chapter 2 Population Assessment). In a reciprocal manner the population assessment process will draw on the information, advice and assistance service to understand what needs people in its locality present with, and what information, advice and assistance they are seeking.
299. The information, advice and assistance service (the service) will be easy to use, welcoming and informative to create a service which reaches people before crisis point and offers early intervention and prevention.

Core Requirements of the Information, Advice and Assistance Service

300. Local authorities **must** provide an information, advice and assistance service which includes the provision of:
- a) a proportionate response to the enquiry and empowers the individual to access early intervention and preventative services
 - b) information on care and support, or support in the case of a carer, that is accurate and up to date, without the need for core data to be recorded in the National Assessment and Eligibility Tool and without an assessment having been undertaken
 - c) advice on care and support, or support in the case of a carer, that is appropriate to the individual, following a proportionate assessment
 - d) advice which is comprehensive, impartial, and in the best interests of the individual having been given by staff who are trained and skilled in the assessment process
 - e) assistance which enables the individual to access the appropriate care and support services, including early intervention and preventative services
 - f) accessible information, advice and assistance on care and support through a variety of media (including online, social media, telephone, face-to-face, outreach, posters and publications)
 - g) accessible information, advice and assistance on care and support matters tailored to meet the needs of different groups (including Welsh, easy read, child friendly versions etc.)
 - h) accessible information, advice and assistance to specific groups including one to one support workers if this is required, for example. deafblind children and adults
 - i) a written or oral response to web-based enquires within three working days
 - j) advocacy support so that individuals can engage and participate fully in decisions that affect them
 - k) local safeguarding protocols that ensure immediate action is taken if an individual's safety is in doubt
 - l) a clear process for staff to follow in the case of an emergency or urgent care and support request
 - m) mechanisms that ensure that consent to share information is obtained when core data is recorded and an assessment is undertaken.

Definitions

Information:

Information will be quality data that provides support to a person to help them make an informed choice about their well-being. This will include information about how the care system works, the availability of preventative well-being services, financial information, information on direct payments, information on charges, and other matters that would enable someone to plan how to meet their care and support needs, or support needs if they were a carer.

Those operating the service should capture information about the nature of the enquiry and which type of service the enquirer was signposted or referred to, for their own management information purposes and to feed in to population needs assessments. **Personal data is not needed**. In this way the person accessing the service for information could remain anonymous for recording purposes.

Advice:

Advice will be a way of working co-productively with a person to explore the options available. This will require staff to undertake a proportionate assessment through a discussion and analysis of the five elements of the National Assessment and Eligibility Tool. It is imperative that the enquirer understands what is available to them, and that they are actively involved in making decisions about what matters to them and the personal outcomes they wish to achieve.

The provision of advice will require the service provider to use the National Assessment and Eligibility Tool to record the assessment. Staff should record as much of the basic personal data for the Core Data set that is appropriate for that assessment, and to record the advice given and outcome of the enquiry.

Assistance:

Assistance, if needed, will follow the provision of information and advice. Assistance will involve another person taking action with the enquirer to access care and support, or a carer to access support.

Responsibility for the activity undertaken is shared between the assistant and the recipient of the assistance. The provision of assistance will also require an assessment and the service to record any additional personal data for the core data set and details of the assistance offered and accepted on the National Assessment and Eligibility Tool. Through the process of offering assistance a proportionate assessment will be undertaken.

301. The service will offer a first point of contact with the care and support system, and for many people this will be their first encounter with social services. Those operating the service **must** make this a positive response. The response **must** be informative, knowledgeable and re-assure the individual that the advice given is in their best interest.
302. There will be other ways that people seek help, but the service **must** be the most public facing way in which individuals, or those that care for them, obtain information and advice about their care and support needs.

What will the service be like for those receiving it?

303. For those using the service they **must** feel like they have reached someone who first and foremost listens to them. People **must** have an opportunity to explain what matters to them, to explore what options are available, and to find the help that they feel is right for them to achieve their personal outcomes.

304. The service will focus on people and their personal outcomes, and especially on early intervention and prevention. It will give individually focused information and advice, signposting to appropriate preventative and well-being service in the community, and provide assistance, where appropriate, to enable people to better help themselves and others.
305. The Social Model of Disability provides a useful point of reference for local authorities designing and developing their information, advice and assistance service. Disability Wales worked co-productively with partners, including Welsh Government, to develop the '*Transforming Social Services – Enabling Wales*' toolkit as a basis for introducing new delivery models. The toolkit is available at:

<http://www.disabilitywales.org/transforming-social-services-toolkit/>
306. Signposting and referring will provide individuals with choices about the support and services available in their locality, an opportunity to talk through the options and be advised on what is most likely to meet the particular care and support needs that the individual has, as well as discussing what resources the individual has available to secure this support. The service is open to everyone, whatever their circumstances, including if they choose to fund their own care.
307. The service should be thought of as a preventative service, offering early intervention through quality information, advice and assistance. However, it **must** also act as a central link to preventative services which are available in the community and promote the opportunity to access these services. These will range from universal services to more targeted support. When appropriate, the Service **must** support people to access these services, referring them or assisting them to make contact, rather than solely offering basic contact.
308. The approach **must** be open, welcoming and simple– seeking to support everyone to find ways to meet their care and support needs, whatever the level of those needs.
309. The approach **must** be proactive – empowering staff to encourage people to seek help earlier and supporting them to help themselves to retain their independence in a proportionate way.
310. The service **must ensure that staff** respond appropriately and promptly where any issues of safeguarding or protection are raised or suspected. The service **must** have a safeguarding protocol in place and staff **must** be fully trained in implementing the protocol.

How will assessment operate within the information, advice and assistance service?

311. An individual may need quick access to an assessment of their care and support needs. Staff working within the service will need to fully understand how to identify when an assessment is required, be trained and skilled to undertake that assessment and ensure it can be undertaken quickly.
312. The assessment will vary from individual to individual in terms of what is required. Staff working within the service **must** recognise the nature and scale of the enquiry and seek to provide a proportionate response. It is only the provision of information that does not require some sort of assessment. If advice and /or assistance are given an assessment of a person's needs will have taken place.
313. The balance between an individual having all their concerns addressed in the first approach to the information, advice and assistance service , and subsequently being referred to others who may have more appropriate knowledge or expertise, **must** be a pragmatic one.
314. People **must** finish their contact with the service with a feeling that they have been dealt with fairly and appropriately. Most importantly they **must** know what the outcome of their contact is, and what, if any, action will subsequently be taken and by whom.
315. Staff working within the service will conduct assessments. Staff will have conducted an assessment when they have explored the five elements of the National Assessment and Eligibility Tool with the individual set out in the code of practice on Part 3. Staff conducting assessments **must** use the National Assessment and Eligibility Tool, however proportionate that approach may be. The requirements of the tool are detailed in the code of practice on Part 3.

Accessibility for everyone

316. The service **must** be easy to access for all people in a variety of ways so that people have a choice about how they use the service and what format is right for them. The local authority **must** ensure that the service will offer support and guidance to people and professionals through a range of media e.g. web, telephone, face to face, outreach, social networks publications.
317. The structural components of the service can vary. Work undertaken by the Social Service Improvement Agency¹¹ in 2014 identified four main models in use across Wales. Whatever model is adopted, local authorities **must** ensure that the service that they put in place is planned and delivered on the basis of the population assessment and that it is accessible for everyone, regardless of age, disability or need.

¹¹ Social Services Improvement Agency, *Provision of Information Advice and Assistance on Social Services and Well-being across Wales*, April 2014 http://www.ssiacymru.org.uk/home.php?page_id=8471

318. Local authorities **must** seek to ensure that information, advice and assistance is offered in a manner which is accessible and suits the needs of their population. The Equality Act 2010 requires that reasonable adjustments are made to ensure that people have equal access to information, advice and assistance services. Local authorities **must** also ensure that people have the appropriate support to enable them to access the service.
319. The service **must** be available through the medium of English and Welsh – many Welsh speakers can only communicate their care needs effectively through the medium of Welsh. For many Welsh speakers, using Welsh is a requirement not an optional extra. The service **must** be mindful of the need to be accessible to all people and **must** align with the principles set out in the Welsh Government strategic framework for Welsh language services in Health, Social Services and Social Care: *More than just words*¹².
320. The local authority **must** ensure that information and advice is accessible in a variety of formats including easy read and material especially for children and young people and others in need of additional support.
321. Local authorities **must** promote and publicise the information, advice and assistance service throughout the locality. The service **must** be advertised in such a way that those across the diverse communities will know what the service can offer and can understand how they can access it.
322. People **must** find it easy to access the service, and be treated with dignity and respect at all times by staff that are well trained to deliver the service. This is particularly relevant for children and young people who will need to feel confident and re-assured this service will provide relevant, accurate and up to date information and advice for them and be accessible in ways that they prefer to use.
323. In all cases, local authorities should involve adult, children and young people and carers to design and implement the information, advice and assistance service in their local area. This way the service will be seen to be owned and valued by the local population.
324. It is imperative all individuals, whatever their accessibility needs, understand what is available to them and they are actively involved in making decisions about what matters to them and how to achieve their personal outcomes. Reasonable adjustments could include the provision of information and advice in accessible formats and /or with communication support to ensure that no-one, who faces challenges, is excluded.
325. Local authorities **must** provide deafblind children and adults with information, advice and assistance in formats and mediums accessible to them and ensure they have access to specifically trained one to one support workers, if this is required.

¹² More than just words - Strategic Framework for Welsh Language Services in Health, Social Services and Social Care: <http://gov.wales/consultations/healthsocialcare/words/?lang=en>

Advocacy

326. An individual **must** feel that they are an equal partner in their relationship with professionals. It is open to any individual to invite someone of their choice to support them to participate fully and express their views wishes and feelings. This support can be provided by someone's friends, family or wider support network.
327. Ensuring that everyone is able to participate fully in processes that affect their lives is vital. Some people will also require support to be able to make initial contact. Local authorities **must** consider how best to support individuals to ensure that the service is accessible and that appropriate assistance including advocacy is given.
328. A key role of the service will be to provide individuals with information about the range of advocacy services in their area and to assist them to access it.
329. An individual's need for advocacy **must** be identified from the moment of first contact. Local authorities **must** ensure that staff within the service are suitably skilled to identify individuals who need an advocate and the service takes action to ensure those individuals are supported.
330. The dedicated code of practice on advocacy under Part 10 of the Act sets out the functions when a local authority, in partnership with the individual, **must** reach a judgement on how advocacy could support the determination and delivery of an individual personal outcomes; together with the circumstances when a local authority **must** arrange an independent professional advocate. Professionals and individuals **must** ensure that judgements about the needs for advocacy are integral to the relevant duties under this code.

Safeguarding

331. Where it appears that the needs of the individual are such that there is a duty on the local authority to exercise its function in order to protect and safeguard the person from abuse or neglect or the risk of abuse or neglect (and in the case of a child: harm or the risk of harm) the local authority **must** act on this information immediately and without delay. Local authorities **must** determine whether the needs of the individual require the exercise of any function it has under Part 4 (Care and Supervision) or Part 5 (Protection of Children) of the Children Act 1989 or under this Act and if this is the case the local authority should act on this immediately and without delay.
332. Local authorities **must** therefore reflect these duties and the parallel duties to report suspicions that an adult or child is at risk when designing and developing the information, advice and assistance service to ensure that staff understand and exercise the safeguarding protocol.

Charging for Assistance

333. In line with Part 5 Charging and Financial Assessment, local authorities may apply a flat rate charge for assistance. These charges will go towards meeting the costs of providing the assistance. Local authorities should avoid a situation where the flat rate charge they set discourages take up of assistance, which might therefore inhibit the local authority's ability to achieve the purposes of the information, advice and assistance service under section 17 of the Act.

334. Local authorities **must** not charge for assistance provided to children.

What is available and how to access it

335. The service **must** provide access to relevant, accurate, high quality and timely information, advice and assistance and **must** provide people in the locality with an easy entry point into the care and support system.

336. This will be about ways people can meet their care and support needs, or the care and support needs of others they may care for, both now and in the future. The service **must** provide information and advice on how to raise concerns about the well-being of another person who appears to have care and support needs.

337. The service **must** provide information about the preventative well-being services available in the community, **and** advice on what would be most appropriate for people and their individual circumstances. The service **must** ensure people recognise they have received impartial advice in their best interests. The service will provide assistance to those who need it, to help them access the information and advice. Further information about preventative services is available in chapter 3 of this code of practice.

338. The service is a resource accessible to practitioners, whether they are working for the local authority or another organisation / agency. Staff operating the service will need to recognise the needs of other practitioners and make the information and advice accessible in a format that suits their needs as they in turn seek to assist those they are supporting.

339. If an individual has financial means above the financial limit (as set out in Regulations made under section 69 of the Act), also known as a self-funder, the local authority should ensure they continue to have access to good quality information, advice and assistance that enables them to make informed decisions about their care and support needs. This is particularly true for people making critical decisions about their ability to live independently.

340. The service should make connections with its wider partners to ensure that they are familiar with how the system works and able to report issues and raise concerns e.g. the fire service who come into contact with individuals and families in the course of their preventative work e.g. fire safety checks

341. The service **must** provide information on direct payments, charges for care and support and other information and advice on matters that would enable people to plan for meeting their own care and support needs, or support needs of carers that may arise. Further information about direct payments is available in the Part 4, Code of Practice – Meeting Needs and information about charging is available in Part 5 , Code of Practice - Charging and Financial Assessment.
342. The service **must** be provided to those in the secure estate - although the way in which this is delivered may be subject to the specific requirements of the criminal justice system. Further information on the duties to those in the secure estate is available in the code of practice on part 11.

Measuring Performance

343. The information advice and assistance service will support people to access the right information, when they need it, in the way they want it. People will expect to know and understand what care, support and opportunities are available to them and to be able to use this information, advice and assistance to help manage and achieve their well-being.
344. The effectiveness of this service **must** be measured and reported. A performance measurement framework for local authorities is detailed in the code of practice in relation to measuring social services performance. This framework is made up of:
- Quality standards for local authorities that describe the activities of local authorities that contribute to the achievement of personal outcomes, in relation to its social services functions; and
 - Performance measures that will be stated in relation to achieving the quality standards.
345. Standard 1 includes requirements in relation to the information advice and assistance service.
346. Standard 1 states:

*Local authorities **must** work with people who need care and support and carers who need support to define and co-produce personal outcomes that people wish to achieve and will ensure that they measure the impact of the care and support they deliver on people's lives, as well as the achievement of personal outcomes.*

347. In order to achieve Standard 1 in relation to the service, local authorities **must**:

- Work with people as partners to prevent the need for care and support and with other partners to arrange services in a way that prevents or delays people's need for care and support
- work with partners to ensure access to clear and understandable information, advice and assistance to support people to actively manage their well-being and make informed decisions
- ensure decisions made have regard to a person's individual circumstances and treat people with dignity and respect and promote people's human rights
- work with other professionals , including providers, to facilitate and lead a multi-disciplinary plan for care and support.

348. Both qualitative (seeking feedback from those that use the service) and quantitative measures will be used to measure achievement of the quality standards and these are listed in the code in relation to measuring social services performance, issued under section 145 of the Act .

349. The Welsh Government is also reviewing the quality measures associated with advice services across Wales. This may in future be measured through a set of National Service Standards for Wales or a National Quality Standards Framework for Wales. These standards would be applicable to all advice providers, whether these are managed and operated by the statutory services, third sector or independent sector. Local authorities would need to align the information, advice and assistance service to this new quality assurance scheme at the appropriate time.

350. In addition, alignment to the standards within the National Standards and Quality Assurance Framework for Information Services for Young People is recommended.

<http://www.promo-cymru.org/resources-2/national-standards-quality-assurance-framework>

Recording Information

351. Local authorities **must** record data from their service for the following purposes:

Monitoring Performance

The recording of information is important to support service performance and improvement. Recording the information exchange (calls and web logs) can be analysed to provide a better understanding of the nature of the enquiry and the customer profiles. Management data will also assist in the audit and inspection of the Service and, for this purpose, local authorities should consider obtaining feedback from service users.

Planning Services

It is important for local authorities to record information about the nature of enquiries and responses, as well as the type of information and advice offered by their service to support the population needs assessment and planning of preventative well-being services (see chapter 2 of this code).

Service Improvements

Recording personal data when advice and assistance are provided so that an individual does not have to repeat the same information if they access a service again or proceed through the care and support system. This will also make the system more efficient.

Personal Information

352. When information is offered a record of the enquiry **must** be made but personal data does not need to be collected/ recorded.

353. When advice is offered the assessor **must** record as much personal data in the core data set as possible and record the nature and outcome of the enquiry. Recording **must** be done using the National Assessment and Eligibility Tool, albeit in a manner proportionate to the enquiry. The obligation to complete the core data set in its entirety is only required to be met when an individual's need are deemed to be eligible and a care and support plan, or support plan in respect of a carer, is required.

354. Using the National Assessment and Eligibility Tool to record personal data will enable staff to identify quickly if the enquirer has a care and support plan in place or has received information, advice or assistance previously. In addition, it will enable any future enquiries about the same person to be progressed quickly and avoid repeating personal information at each point of contact.

355. Staff operating the service **must** be trained and skilled in undertaking assessments and have a good understanding of the National Assessment and Eligibility Tool so that an enquiry can be processed quickly.
356. Further details about the National Assessment and Eligibility tool is available in the codes of practice relating to Parts 3 of the Act on assessing the needs of individuals and Part 4 on meeting needs.
357. When personal information is captured in the core data set within the National Assessment and Eligibility Tool, the consent of the individual to share their information with relevant partners **must** be sought.
358. Local authorities **must** work in partnership with NHS partners to ensure that any personally identifiable information should be shared within the principles of the Wales Accord on Sharing Personally Identifiable Information (WASPI). All Local Health Boards, NHS Trusts, and local authorities in Wales are signatories to this protocol and a link is attached at:

<http://www.waspi.org/>

Governance Arrangements

Regional partnership working

359. The information, advice and assistance service should offer an integrated health and social care approach. The service **must** signpost or refer individuals efficiently to ensure that they receive the right response to achieve their personal outcomes.
360. Part 9 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act covers co-operation and partnership. The purpose of Part 9 is to ensure that local authorities and Local Health Boards work effectively together, along with other partners, to plan and ensure the delivery of integrated services to meet the needs of people in their local area. The regulations will require the establishment of regional partnership boards.
361. The regional partnership boards have a key role to play in relation to bringing together health and social care partners to determine where the integrated provision of services, care and support will be most beneficial to people within their region. Regional partnership boards will need to ensure that information, advice and assistance is offered across the region in a manner which is accessible and suits the needs of their population. Local authorities should lead on agreeing, with regional partners, what service components should be developed on a national, regional and local basis.

362. Each local authority will be part of a regional partnership board and **must** take its lead from the board on how to design, plan and develop the model for the information, advice and assistance service that will ensure people find information easy to access even if they are wanting information and/or advice about care and support in another area of Wales. This will be of direct relevance to those who may be living close to the boundaries of the neighbouring local authority, and for individuals who may be approaching the service on behalf of someone else who lives in a different area.
363. Local authorities working in partnership through the regional partnership board **should** produce a communications strategy to promote their information, advice and assistance service. Local authorities **should** lead the process, but develop the communication strategy jointly with partners. The strategy should consider the different target audiences and how to reach them, with priority given to the most vulnerable.

Population needs assessment

364. The regional partnership boards will also be responsible for ensuring the partnership bodies work effectively together to respond to the population assessment carried out in section 14 of the Act.
365. Local authorities **must** use information gathered through the population needs assessment to design, develop and continually improve the information, advice and assistance service. This will ensure that the service is appropriately designed and accessible to different client groups within the locality, and consider what aspects of the service are best provided at a national, regional or local level.
366. Local authorities **must** consider and apply the Care and Support (Population Assessments) (Wales) Regulations 2015 and chapter 2 of this code of practice on Population Assessment.

Duty on health partners

367. Local Health Boards and/or NHS Trusts **must** provide local authorities, within the regional collaborative, with information about the care and support it provides in the area. This information should be relevant and accurate and provided in a format which is agreed and accessible to the information, advice and assistance service.

Third party providers

368. If elements of the service are delivered through a third party the duty remains on the local authority and delivery of the service **must** be monitored closely. In all cases, feedback from people who have used the service **must** be collected and contribute to service improvement.

Accountability

369. The Director of Social Services has overall responsibility for the information, advice and assistance service. The Director **must** report annually to the Council on the delivery, performance, and risk, as well as plans for improvement of the whole range of social services functions. This report should include setting out the progress made by the information, advice and assistance service and its effectiveness in allowing people to achieve their personal outcomes.

Information, Advice and Assistance to those in the secure estate

370. Local authorities **must** have regard to the code on adults and children in prison, youth detention accommodation and bail accommodation under Part 11 of the Act. Local authorities are responsible for providing information, advice and assistance to those adults in prison, youth detention accommodation and bail accommodation where these establishments fall within their boundaries. They **must** work together with the relevant agencies and establishments to identify how this service will operate.

371. For adults the responsibility falls to the local authority in which the prison is located. For children and young people in youth detention accommodation or Youth Offending Institutions, these responsibilities fall to their home local authorities where they were living prior to sentence or on remand.

372. Local authorities **must** consider how to provide information, advice and assistance to those in the secure estate, ensuring that it is accessible both in terms of information content and delivery of service. The service and the provision and accessibility of preventative and well-being services needs to be seen as a means of supporting those individuals while they are in the secure estate and in preparation for their release and resettlement.

373. Local authorities should ensure that the information, advice and assistance service is linked into the provision of information and advice and the provisions for resettlement of prisoners under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and that a comprehensive and integrated service is developed.

Delivery models

374. The service will build over time through the cycle of information provided through the population needs assessments and customer feedback.

375. Local authorities **must** make links with other information and advice services at a local, regional and national level, particularly those that are publicly funded, such as the family information service.

376. All efforts should be made to reduce duplication and ensure the information and advice is offered by the most appropriate and skilled staff. Local authorities **must** ensure that they take account of what other information, advice and assistance services are available when designing and developing their service. Other information and advice services should not be duplicated and should either be integrated with the information, advice and assistance service or easily accessible via the service. Local authorities, working with their regional partners, **must** ensure that extant advice services and helplines, such as MEIC and the family information service, are linked and used effectively to develop reliable coverage for all people.
377. There will be some aspects of the service which may be more appropriate to design and deliver at a national level. For example, a single point of online access would ensure consist access for the public and avoid duplication of national information. This is more accessible for the citizen and a more economic and efficient method of delivery.
378. The information, advice and assistance service **must** be underpinned by an accurate and up to date directory of services. Local authorities **must** consider how this is managed and resourced to ensure it is maintained with information about local services that are correct at point of access. Local authorities should consider how to approach the maintenance of the directory with their partners at a regional and national level.
379. Whilst the service **must** offer a consistent service regardless of where a person lives the individual **must** feel like they can easily access local information and advice.

Availability of the service

380. The service is not an emergency service and therefore there is no expectation that it would require a staffed resource 24/7. However, a 9-5 staffed service may not be sufficient and local authorities should identify what the needs of the population are and keep this under review. The existence of an easily accessible website should mean that people are able to source information and advice themselves out of hours and should expect to receive a response to their queries within three working days.
381. There will be times when people contact the service and do in fact need an emergency response either from the local authority or another partner organisation. The service needs to be able to respond quickly by transferring or re-routing the enquirer to the correct service. Protocols to enable this to happen need to be in place and regularly reviewed.

Complaints

382. All local authorities are required to put in place an arrangement for responding to complaints about any aspect of their social services functions. Where an individual is dissatisfied or concerned with the service that they have received from the information, advice and assistance service, they are able to make a complaint using the local authority social services complaints procedure.
383. Local authorities **must** put in place arrangements for making information about their complaints process available to the public, including via the information, advice and assistance service
384. The Welsh Government has recently issued new complaints guidance: *A guide to handling complaints and representations by local authority social service* which was effective from 1 August 2014. A link to this can be found at:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/health/socialcare/complaints/?lang=en>

Workforce implications

385. Local authorities **must** establish a team which reflects a mix of skills and experience from a range of professionals and sectors. Local authorities **must** ensure that those that are deafblind are able to access specially trained one-to-one support workers for those people they assess as requiring one.
386. Local authorities **must** develop a workforce training plan which should cover front line staff working within the information, advice and assistance service and the wider workforce. The individual training plans for staff within the service should be regularly reviewed and maintained.
387. Staff **must** have received training in the National Assessment and Eligibility Tool and **must** be able to determine the need for family, friends or other individuals to advocate on the individual's behalf.
388. It is important that this training is offered to staff working in partner organisations to ensure that the integrated holistic approach to the care and support system is communicated through a wide range of professionals. Local authorities should also consider access rights for the wider workforce delivering information, advice and assistance.

Transition

389. Local authorities **must** offer an information, advice and assistance service from April 2016 however it is recognised that the development of the full service described in this code will be incremental. It is expected that the full service will be in place by April 2017.

