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# Swindon Borough Council Information and Advice Policy April 2015

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## **1. Introduction**

The Care Act 2014 sets out the legal framework for the provision of information and advice services relating to care and support for all people in their area. This policy sets out Swindon Borough Council's intentions. It is a combination of statutory requirements of the Care Act and local choices based around the needs of the service and responses to national consultation. The policy has been updated to reflect changing circumstances and business needs, and in particular the requirements of the Care Act 2014.

This updated policy comes into effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015 and replaces all previous policies.

Recognising that inequality, disadvantage and discrimination exist in society, in redrafting this policy Swindon Borough Council accepts their responsibility to ensure that all vulnerable adults regardless of their ethnic origin, religion, language, age, sexuality, gender or disability have equal opportunity to access services and information and that the principles of this policy will be applied equitably.

This policy should be used in conjunction with [www.mycaremysupport.co.uk](http://www.mycaremysupport.co.uk), which provides a wide range of information in relation to care and sources of support and advice.

## **2. Swindon's Key Principles for Information and Advice**

- 2.1. Information and advice will be accessible and open to everyone who may benefit from it. It will be available at the right time in a range of formats and through a range of channels
- 2.2. Involvement is at the heart of Swindon Borough Council's approach. We will base our approach on the needs and views of service users, their carers' service providers and interested organisations. We will use feedback to improve the quality of the service.
- 2.3. Information and advice will be clear and easy to understand
- 2.4. Information will be of high quality, accurate, up to date, avoid unnecessary duplication and consistent with other sources of information and advice
- 2.5. Swindon Borough Council will make every effort to ensure that the information and advice provided is comprehensive, timely and supports informed decision making
- 2.6. Swindon Borough Council will ensure that access to impartial information and advice is available

### 3. The Implications of the Care Act for Information and Advice

The Care Act places a statutory duty on Local Authorities to establish and maintain a service for providing people in their area with information and advice relating to care and support for adults and support for carers. Information and advice is fundamental to enabling people, carers and families to take control of and make well-informed choices about their care and support and how they will fund it. It has a key role in promoting wellbeing through increasing someone's ability to exercise choice and control and is a vital component of preventing or delaying people's need for care and support

The Act requires Local Authorities to have an active role in the provision of information and advice to everyone and across the whole of its area. It must ensure that people know where to go for information and advice and are supported to access it.

The duty to provide information and advice applies to the whole population of the local authority and not just to those with care or support needs or already in the system.

Information and advice must cover how to access information and advice, the choice and types of care and support available and how to access them. It must also include details of how to access independent financial advice on matters relating to the provision of care and support and how to raise concerns about the safety or wellbeing of an adult who has needs for care and support. It should also cover the wide range of care and support related areas including health, housing, prevention of care and support needs, finances and benefits, employment, carers services and benefit, services which might help people remain independent for longer, children's services and transition, sources of independent information, advice and advocacy

The Local Authority must seek to ensure that the information and advice it provides is sufficient to enable adults to make plans for meeting their current or future support needs and understand the financial implications of any decisions they might make.

The information and advice provided must be accessible and available in a variety of formats and through a range of media. It should be appropriate to the needs of the person and provided at the right time, recognising that a person's need for information or advice will vary depending on the circumstances.

#### 4. Definitions of Information and Advice

Throughout this policy, the following definitions will be used:

- Information – the communication of knowledge and facts regarding care and support
- Advice – helping people identify choices and/or providing an opinion or recommending a course of action in relation to care and support.
- Advocacy – supporting a person to understand information, express their needs and wishes, secure their rights, represent their interests and obtain the care and support they need.
- Financial information and advice includes services to help people, plan, prepare and pay for their care.
- Regulated financial advice means advice from an organisation regulated by the financial conduct authority which can extend to individual recommendations about specific financial products
- Independent financial information or advice means information or advice that is provided by a person who is independent of the Local Authority.

#### 5. Information and Advice in Swindon

Following consultation with service users, professionals and providers, the Council has devised a multi-channel approach to delivering its statutory duty to establish and maintain a service for providing people within the borough with information and advice relating to care and support needs. Our approach has on-line, supported and face to face aspects, supported by mass communication and is designed so that a person's information and advice needs are met in a way which is most appropriate for them.

- We have developed a user-friendly web based system, [www.mycaremysupport.co.uk](http://www.mycaremysupport.co.uk) that covers all the advice and information requirements of the act. It is designed to be easy to navigate and directs people to the information most relevant to them through taking people through a series of choices.
- We have commissioned a Swindon Advice and Support Centre (SAAC) that will be managed by the Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB). At SAAC advice and information is provided in a variety of ways
  - The centre provides accommodation for a wide range of voluntary sector organisations. They are able to provide information and advice directly in a variety of formats
  - The centre has computers available for public use so that they can access [www.mycaremysupport.co.uk](http://www.mycaremysupport.co.uk) or other relevant websites directly. If someone needs support to use the computer CAB staff are on hand to provide support
  - CAB staff will provide information and advice directly to members of the public either over the phone or face to face. Meeting rooms are available for confidential discussions.
- Ensuring that frontline staff within the Council and outside are familiar with [www.mycaremysupport.co.uk](http://www.mycaremysupport.co.uk) and can both signpost people to it and use it themselves to access information and advice.

An essential feature of the Council's approach is that wherever a search for information and advice is initiated, the source of the information or advice is through [www.mycaremysupport.co.uk](http://www.mycaremysupport.co.uk). In this way we will ensure that, the information provided is of high quality and consistent.

## 6. Who is Information and Advice for?

The Care Act requires Local Authorities to take an active role in ensuring that all adults in Swindon, including carers, who have a need for information and advice about care and support, are able to access it. Examples include

- People wanting to plan for the future care and support needs
- People who may develop care and support needs
- People who have unmet need
- People where an assessment of needs is being considered
- People who are being assessed who must be offered information and advice as part of the assessment process. This applies whether needs are eligible or not.
- People with eligible needs
- Family members with care and support needs
- Adult who are subject to safeguarding concerns

This is a very broad group; it extends much further than people who have an immediate need for care and support. Communication and promotion will be a key part of our approach. We will ensure that the public, professionals and providers are aware of the website and of SAAC, that they know the range of information and advice they cover and are given the opportunity to contribute to further development of the site. Awareness raising amongst frontline staff, both inside and outside the Council will be of paramount importance in ensuring that the information and advice that is useful reaches the people who need it.

The following groups of people will be a key focus of the Council's on-going promotion and communication:

- People wanting to plan for the future care and support needs
- People who may develop care and support needs
- People who have unmet need
- People where an assessment of needs is being considered
- People who are being assessed – they **must** be offered information and advice whether their needs are eligible or not
- People with eligible needs

- Family members with care and support needs
- Adult who are subject to safeguarding concerns
- Carers

## **7. Accessibility of Information and Advice**

The Council will ensure that information and advice is as accessible as possible for all potential users. All products and materials will comply with accessibility guidelines and Government guidance. Reasonable adjustments will be made in line with the Equality Act 2010. The Council's model of supported access to information and advice through Swindon Advice and Support Centre and other face-to-face contacts will be a key component of this. Additionally information and advice will be available in a range of formats and languages

## **8. The Range of Information and Advice**

The information and advice available will cover a wide range of care and support related areas. Providing comprehensive and relevant information and advice is a crucial component of the Council's person centred approach to care and support. It gives control back to the individual and thus supports them to recognise their own strengths. The information provided will include

- The local care and support system: how it works, the assessment process, eligibility, review, how to complain or appeal, independent advocacy, charging arrangements, planning for future care needs.
- How to access the care and support locally including when to request an assessment or a review.
- The choice of care and support: what is available, who runs it and what it costs. This will include prevention and reablement services and wider services that support wellbeing. It will also include information on types of service which enable people to have control over their care such as direct payments and Individual Service Funds.
- How to access independent advice on matters relating to care and support and information to support financial planning such as rights to financial support and likely liabilities.
- How to raise concerns about the safety or wellbeing of an adult with care and support needs (and how to do the same for a carer with support needs). This will include who to tell, what will happen and how the Safeguarding Adults Board works.
- The information and advice should also cover a broad range of services related to wellbeing including:
  - Housing
  - Treatment and support for health conditions
  - Availability and quality of health services
  - Services which might help people remain independent for longer
  - Befriending services

- Intermediate care entitlements
- Benefits
- Employment support
- Children's services and transition
- Carers services and benefits
- Sources of independent information, advice and advocacy
- Court of Protection, power attorney and becoming a deputy
- Understanding and preventing abuse
- Information will be provided for carers. This will include
  - Breaks from caring
  - Health and wellbeing of carers
  - Caring and advice on family relationships
  - Carers' financial and legal issues
  - Caring and employment/education
  - A carer's need for advocacy

## 9. Timing of Information and Advice

The timing of information and advice is crucial. Swindon Borough Council will ensure through its programme of promotion and awareness raising and through building information and advice into its procedures that, people are provided with access to information and advice at the key decision making points. This will mean that people are both supported to make informed decisions, which will have a significant impact on their choices of care and support and empowered to take control and build on their own strengths and capabilities.

Information and advice will be offered at key points of contact with the care and support system. These include

- At first point of contact with the Council
- As part of assessment
- During reablement
- Around and following financial assessment/including as part of deferred payment agreements/personal budgets/direct
- During or following a safeguarding enquiry



- During the care and support planning process/review
- When someone is thinking of moving to another Local Authority
- At points in transition

There are wider opportunities when people have need for information and advice relating to their care and support needs. These may be triggered by specific changes in their circumstances or contact with other professionals. The Council will ensure that through widespread awareness raising and promotion to all relevant parties, that these opportunities are utilised fully.

This will include

- Contact with other Local Authority services
- Bereavement
- Hospital entry and/or discharge
- At the point of diagnosis of specific conditions eg dementia/stroke
- Consideration/review of Continuing Healthcare arrangements
- Take up of power of attorney or applications to the Court of Protection
- Applications or review of disability benefits
- Access to work interviews
- Contact with local support groups or user lead organisations including carers' groups and disabled people's organisations
- Contact with or use of private care and support services
- Change or loss of housing
- Contact with the Criminal Justice system
- Release from prison
- Retirement

## **10. Financial Information and Advice**

Financial information and advice is fundamental to enabling people to make well-informed choices about how best to meet their care and support needs and how they will pay for them. The Council will support people to develop their understanding of how their available resources can be used more flexibly to fund a wider range of care options.

The Council will provide financial information and advice directly through [www.mycaremysupport.co.uk](http://www.mycaremysupport.co.uk) and through its Deferred Payments and Fairer Charging policies. It will also commission the Citizens' Advice Bureau to offer impartial advice and signpost to sources of independent advice from Financial Conduct Authority regulated advisers.

Information and advice will include: care charges, ways to pay, cap on care costs, money management, making informed financial decisions and support to access independent advice