



FACTSHEET 1

General responsibilities of local authorities: prevention, information and advice, and shaping the market of care and support services

"Information, information, information – without it, how can people be truly at the heart of decisions? Information should be available to all regardless of how their care is paid for. There are some things that should be universal – information is one" (Public response to the Caring for our future engagement)

This factsheet describes how the Care Act and supporting guidance place a series of new duties and responsibilities on local authorities about care and support for adults.

What role do local authorities play in care and support?

Under the Care Act, local authorities will take on new functions. This is to make sure that people who live in their areas:

- receive services that prevent their care needs from becoming more serious, or delay the impact of their needs;
- can get the information and advice they need to make good decisions about care and support;
- have a range of high-quality care providers to choose from.

How will the Act help prevent people developing care and support needs?

The Care Act will help to improve people's independence and wellbeing. It makes clear that local authorities must arrange services that help prevent or delay people deteriorating such that they would need ongoing care and support.

Local authorities will have to consider various factors:

- what services, facilities and resources are already available in the area (for example local voluntary and community
- groups), and how these might help local people;

- identifying people in the local area who might have care and support needs that are not being met;
- identifying carers in the area who might have support needs that are not being met.

In taking on this role, local authorities will work with their communities to get the support that helps to keep people well and independent. This should include identifying the local support and resources available, and helping people to access them.

Local authorities should also provide a range of services which are aimed at reducing needs and helping people regain skills, for instance after a spell in hospital. They should work with other partners, like the NHS, to think about what types of service local people may need now and in the future.

How will the Act improve information and advice?

Local authorities will need to provide comprehensive information and advice about care and support services in their local area. This will help people to understand how care and support services work locally, the care and funding options available, and how people can access care and support services.

The Act clearly sets out that they must provide information on:

- what types of care and support are available – e.g. specialised dementia care, befriending services,

- reablement, personal assistance, residential care etc.;
- the range of care and support services available to local people, i.e. what local providers offer certain types of services;
- what process local people need to use to get care and support that is available;
- where local people can find independent financial advice about care and support and help them to access it;
- how people can raise concerns about the safety or wellbeing of someone who has care and support needs.

Local authorities must also help people to benefit from independent financial advice, so that they can get support to plan and prepare for the future costs of care.

All information and advice must be provided in formats that help people to understand, regardless of their needs. This may include a range of different types of information, and include working with partners to provide information on different services together.

How will the Act improve the range and quality of services available?

The Care Act requires local authorities to help develop a market that delivers a wide range of sustainable high-quality care and support services that will be available to their communities.

When buying and arranging services, local authorities must consider how they might affect an individual's wellbeing. This makes it clear that local authorities should think about whether their approaches to buying and arranging services undermine the wellbeing of people receiving those services (such as through inappropriately short home visits in some cases).

Local authorities should also work with local providers, to help each other understand what services are likely to be needed in the future, and what new types of support should be developed. To do this, authorities should engage with local people

about their needs and wishes. Local authorities should publish information on how they plan to do this.

A wider range of good quality services will give people more control and help them to make more personalised choices over their care. They should therefore get better care that works for them.

How do I comment on the proposals?

We have published guidance for local authorities that sets out how they should carry out their responsibilities under the Care Act. This guidance is open for discussion and we want to receive your comments to make it right.

More information, including how to comment, is available at:

www.careandsupportregs.dh.gov.uk