

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR INFORMATION AND ADVICE SERVICES (2012-15)



1. Introduction

1.1 We have a history of commissioning financial inclusion and adult social care-related information and advice and services in Plymouth, driven by the [Income Maximisation Strategy \(2006-9\)](#), the [Financial Inclusion Strategy \(2009-12\)](#) (FIS) and the Adult Social Care Market Position Statement 2011.

This Strategic Framework builds on this work and replaces the FIS from April 2012. It outlines our priorities for the delivery of financial inclusion and adult social care-related information and advice services for the city.

2. Our vision/purpose

2.1 To deliver accessible, consistent and quality information and advice for everyone, enabling them to manage their money, increase their wellbeing, capability, and improve their resilience to future changes

3. Context

3.1 Information and advice services are an essential part of local authority business and contributes to:

- our city vision of the finest, most vibrant waterfront city where an outstanding quality of life is enjoyed by everyone
- our corporate priorities of reducing inequality, raising aspiration, providing value for communities and promoting growth.

3.2 Rapid changes in the welfare state and the impact of the economic climate on income and health means that many more people will be needing one touch information and advice so they can 'help themselves' and become resilient to social and economic change. Against the background of welfare reform, Plymouth's agendas for dealing with child poverty, housing, financial inclusion and worklessness clearly identify universal advice and information as central to making sustainable changes in the lives of those who are most in need of support and guidance. For example the changes in Welfare Benefits that will impact on anyone claiming housing benefit, families with children, older people, young people, and workless people.

3.3 The introduction of Universal Credit means the migration of everyone on Working Tax Credit, Income Support, Housing Benefit/LHA, Child Tax Credit, income based Job Seekers Allowance and income based Employment Support Allowance. These changes are likely to affect more than 51,000 local people and this may increase the number of general enquiries that can be dealt with at the first contact.

This initial response needs to be supported with the option of more intense support for those whose needs are more complex or technical. “There should be help and support at every stage to narrow the gaps and provide second chances”¹.

3.4 An ageing population and increasing numbers of people with disabilities means that the demand for social care information and advice is also likely to increase. National and local policy discusses the importance of advice and information as a key part of local authorities’ universal offer to its citizens. This work also provides an opportunity to investigate the alignment of information and advice commissioning priorities across Adult Social Care, Plymouth City Council and NHS Plymouth.

3.5 The Strategic Framework offers us the opportunity to align disparate information and advice contracts, to align them with the information ‘duty’ as delivered by Children and Young People’s services (Family Information Service) and to make best use of national providers where appropriate. It would also offer a reference point for Plymouth City Council commissioners, providing recommendations about the commissioning and delivery of any information and advice services in the city.

4. Strategic Framework for Information and Advice Services

4.1 Plymouth City Council (Social Inclusion Unit) will:

- a) Review current service provision in light of recent policy and legislation changes
- b) Explore opportunities for better co-ordination of future advice and information services across Plymouth City Council (PCC) departments and NHS Plymouth
- c) PCC will re-model information and advice provision to ensure services meet desired outcomes, as stated below.

5. Outcomes

- Provide timely information and advice to anybody who needs it.
- Identify each individual’s information and advice needs.
- Enable people who ‘can’ to help themselves to national and local services/tools that offer light-touch support to change their situation.
- Provide a central information resource that is easily accessible to all customers and local professionals that offers high quality information and basic levels of advice (Plymouth Online Directory).
- Provide some in-depth support for those who are assessed as ‘in need’ to support them to make positive changes; increasing their capability, confidence and independence.
- Provide reactive services that respond to national changes e.g. welfare benefit changes and changes to care, to prevent people from reaching a crisis.
- Link information and advice services to local innovative projects that will support customers to be socially mobile and contribute to the wider community via, e.g. volunteering and paid work.
- Ensure that resources are targeted to meet the specific needs around demographic and geographical need.

¹ Social Mobility Strategy: opening doors, breaking barriers (2011)

5. Considerations

5.1 We will work collaboratively (internally and across key partners including Health) to shape the future of information and advice, and to ensure the provision of holistic service that is easily accessible to everyone and available both centrally and via outreach into our deprived neighbourhoods. We will remodel provision across all client groups to ensure information and advice is universally accessible, consistent and comprehensive.

5.2 The services commissioned are dependent on need and may be adjusted as needs change.