

# Information and Advice Strategy: care and support 2021-2026

**For Surrey County Council, local NHS  
organisations and partners**

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Note: We have reviewed our information and advice strategy against the [Think Local Act Personal \(TLAP\)](#) best practice strategy tool to meet the requirements of the Care Act 2014.

## Introduction

The aim of this strategy is to set out how the county council, the NHS and other providers of information and advice in Surrey will work together over the next five years to support residents to be aware of, and understand how to, access information and advice about care and support to help them make informed choices and improve their independence, safety and wellbeing.

Providing the right information and advice at the right time and in the right place is a key part of our approach in Surrey. The coronavirus pandemic has taught us that useful, accurate, impartial, timely, and accessible information and advice from trusted sources has never been more important, especially as navigating the adult social care and health system can be difficult. It also highlighted the wealth of community support available locally and raising awareness of this formed part of our key communications response to the pandemic. As residents experienced long periods of lockdown or shielding, it also created more demand for new services and information such as mental health support, bereavement support, tackling loneliness and isolation.

This refreshed Information and Advice Strategy seeks to continue to develop a strong network of information and advice providers across Surrey. It focuses specifically on the opportunities we want to work together on as a partnership, which will empower people to get consistent, quality and accurate information and support they need wherever they turn to, so that they can make informed choices about their own health and wellbeing as well as those they care for and support.

Our Information and Advice strategy is being sponsored by the Prevention and Wider Determinants of Health Board.

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## How we co-designed the strategy

So many partner organisations play a role in providing information and advice about care and support and have been part of developing our strategy. These include:

- Surrey Heartlands Clinical Commissioning Group
- Frimley Clinical Commissioning Group
- Healthwatch Surrey
- Public Health
- Voluntary, community and faith organisations
- Local borough and district councils
- Independent care providers
- Information and advice providers
- Social prescribing services
- Local resident forums and wider resident participants.

## Key related demographics in Surrey

We need to understand who our residents are, where they are and if they have particular communication or information needs. To do this we have used the

[Vision for Surrey 2030 – evidence base.](#)

Additionally, we have a [Social Index](#) which enables us to understand social, environmental, economic and health outcomes in Surrey at a local level. Using this data can help target particular areas of the county with information and key messages.

## **National context**

Our duties and responsibilities are defined in the [Care Act 2014](#) legislation. The aim of a universal information and advice offer about care and support, is to enable people to better understand how the care and support system works, what services are available locally, and how to access those services.

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 fund it.

Offering information and advice helps to promote people's wellbeing by increasing their ability to exercise choice and control. It is also a vital component of preventing or delaying people's need for care and support and helps residents to navigate and to understand what can, sometimes be, complex care and support options. This can be even more difficult for people who are accessing these services for the first time, usually during or at a crisis point. Hearing about costs of social care at this stage creates added stress and is challenging for residents and professionals supporting them. This is not a local issue. There is low awareness nationally about what social care actually is and that it is not free.

## **Care Act 2014 requirements**

The Care Act 2014 states that 'A local authority must establish and maintain a service for providing people in its area with information and advice relating to care and support for adults and support for carers.'

However, it is a shared responsibility with local health and care agencies, as the council is just one provider of information and advice. Local authorities, working with their partners must use the wider opportunities to provide targeted information and advice at key points in people's contact with care and support, health and other local services. These include, but are not limited to, known 'trigger points' during a person's life and are:

- bereavement
- hospital entry and/or discharge
- diagnosis of health conditions e.g. dementia, stroke or an acquired impairment
- consideration or review of continuing healthcare arrangements
- take up a power of attorney
- applications to Court of Protection
- application for, or review of disability benefits such as attendance allowance, personal independence payments and for carers allowance
- access to work interviews
- contact with local support groups, charities, or user-led organisations including carers, groups and disabled person's organisations
- contact with or use of private care and support services including home care
- change or loss of housing
- contact with the criminal justice system

- admission to or release from prison
- “Guidance Guarantee” in the Pensions Act 2014 or retirement.

Adult social care and health providers also have a statutory duty to meet people’s communication and information support needs through the

[Accessible Information Standard](#).

## Definitions

**Information** is defined as:

- The open and accessible supply of material deemed to be of interest to a particular population. This can either be passively available or actively distributed.

**Advice** is defined as:

- Offering guidance and direction on a particular course of actions which need to be undertaken in order to realise a need, access a service or realise individual entitlements.

## Surrey Context

Demand for information about care and support is high and growing all the time. Between January and March 2021, Adult Social Care alone received over 8,000 enquiries into their Information and Advice Service from residents, carers, families and professionals requesting information and advice about care and support, as well as looking for immediate help.

Surrey also has a high number of individuals and families who will arrange and pay for their own care, and many wouldn’t consider contacting Adult Social Care. We refer to this group as ‘self-funders’. They may, therefore, approach other services, e.g. NHS organisations or charities, for help. It is important that wherever they turn to, providers are able to provide consistent, quality information and advice, explaining about the costs of care and helping them make the right choices for themselves or loved ones, that are financially sustainable.

## Vision for Surrey 2030

After conversations with resident and stakeholders in 2018, Surrey County Council created its [Community Vision for Surrey in 2030](#), which states that “By 2030 we want Surrey to be a uniquely special place where everyone has a great start to life, people live healthy and fulfilling lives, are enabled to achieve their potential and contribute to their community and no-one is left behind.”

Specifically:

- Everyone lives healthy, active and fulfilling lives, and makes good choices about their wellbeing.
- Everyone gets the health and social care support and information they need in the right time and place.

## Adult Social Care Vision

Our vision is to promote people’s independence and wellbeing, through personalised care and support that focuses upon their strengths, the outcomes they want to achieve and enables choice and control.

## Related strategies and reports

A number of related organisational strategies, plans and reports reference the importance of information and advice as an underlying component of people's care journeys. The need to know what support is available, how to access it with the help of family, friends, communities or professionals and the positive impact it can have on people's wellbeing and outcomes cannot be underestimated. These include:

- [Community Vision for Surrey in 2030](#)
- [Surrey Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#)
- [Surrey Heartlands Health and Care Partnership Five Year Plan](#)
- [Frimley Health and Care Five Year Plan](#)
- [Development of integrated care systems](#)
- [Office for National Statistics Internet Users, UK 2020 report](#)
- [Centre for Ageing Better – COVID-19 and the digital divide](#)
- [The Good Things Foundation – Digital Nation 2020](#)
- Adult Social Care Directorate plan 2021-2022
- Physical Disability and Sensory Impairment Strategy 2021
- [Surrey All Age Autism Strategy Framework 2021-2026](#)
- Surrey County Council and NHS Carers Strategy 2021-2024
- Older People's Strategy 2021-2030
- Review of Adult Social Care Front Door and Digital Front Door project
- Tech Enabled Care Discovery Report 2020
- [Surrey Heartlands Health and Care Partnership – Digital Inclusion Programme](#)

## How people currently access information and advice

Surrey County Council, NHS organisations and local councils provide and commission a variety of services that offer information and advice.

In recent years, social prescribing services have been developed across the county in partnership with GPs, local councils, the county council and community, voluntary and faith organisations to help connect people with opportunities in their local community that could help them to improve their health and wellbeing. Recognising that people's health and wellbeing are determined mostly by a range of [social, economic and environmental factors](#), social prescribing seeks to address people's needs in a holistic way. It also aims to support individuals to take greater control of their own health.

Added to which, various other health providers, agencies, national and local organisations, voluntary and community and faith groups throughout Surrey provide information and advice and signposting in a variety of ways for residents to access. There is no shortage of information and advice services and signposting roles operating across Surrey but frequent feedback highlights that local people are still unsure of where to go for help and support, don't understand the boundaries between health and social care services and find the care system overwhelming and difficult to navigate.

The channels available include:

- **Digital channels**

Local and national media, SMS/text messages, talking newspapers, audio leaflets, national websites, local websites such as Surrey Information Point and Healthy

Surrey, e-newsletters and magazines, online tools and apps, online chat/webchat, public awareness campaigns, social media, emails, surveys and consultations, translated materials, information screens, telephone, forums, screen reader accessible.

- **Non digital channels**

Local and national media, leaflets, outside advertising, letters to stakeholders, community newsletters and magazines, public awareness campaigns, face to face conversations, family, friends and neighbours, accessible venues, public events, meetings, roadshows, patient and community groups, resident forums, local charities, community and faith leaders, libraries, post offices, council offices, community hubs, accessible formats, e.g. Braille, Easy Read and large print.

- **Via organisations**

Surrey County Council, GPs, hospitals, pharmacies, social prescribers, NHS, Citizens Advice, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), care home providers, Surrey Fire and Rescue, Surrey Police, voluntary, community and faith sector organisations and others.

Embracing digital technologies allows us to help residents navigate the support available, as well as offering an effective and cost-effective way of residents accessing universal information and advice. However, some residents will still prefer telephone or face to face conversations. We need to ensure that the information and advice provided is useful, accurate, consistent and accessible, whatever its method of delivery and wherever the information is given. This can remove anxiety of not being able to find the information residents need or of people being passed from one provider to another.

## **How we have engaged on the refresh of the Information and Advice Strategy**

A series of workshops, surveys and discussions were carried out with residents, stakeholders and information and advice providers. A fuller summary of the findings is available on request. The key themes are detailed below:

- The areas of information and support most sought by residents are:
  - making choices on care and support
  - knowing how health and social care works
  - befriending and social isolation
  - benefits, debt and money advice.
- Information being up-to-date, uncomplicated and reliable is important to residents.
- Information being provided in an accessible and personalised way is equally important.
- Many residents want someone to talk to, discuss their options with, are looking for advice and recommendations. Often residents don't know what they need when they first make contact with an organisation.
- They are not aware of the range of support available and in the first instance turn to specialist support organisations, as well as Surrey County Council/Adult Social Care, the NHS/health provider or family, friends and carers.

- The majority of residents stated that they would now use a digital channel to look for information or support followed by using the telephone.
- Access to digital technology, set up and broadband costs, differing levels of skills needed and the challenges for people attaching documents in online processes are all barriers for people. Security fears were also a common concern, especially scams.
- Often people don't make plans in advance for care. When something then happens unexpectedly, they are unprepared, are emotional and/or stressed and need someone to navigate them through the options.
- Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of information and advice providers indicated that they planned to adopt a blend of virtual support alongside face-to-face delivery methods in the future, whereas prior to the pandemic a larger percentage helped residents by telephone or video call, as well as from their physical base.
- Growing demand, promoting their services, the scale of information and keeping it up-to-date were cited as their biggest challenges currently.

At the resident sessions the majority agreed with the proposed strategy priorities. Some fed back that they would like to see more promotion of the local information and advice provision, more performance monitoring of information and advice services along with accessible contact methods being provided.

## **Our refreshed priorities**

In shaping this strategy, we have been informed by the views of residents and partner organisations which have been gathered through workshops and research.

We have identified four key priorities which are summarised below and create a focus for our planned approach:

- Maintain an effective public information service, signposting residents to local support
- Commit to improving information and advice in health settings and provide greater access to community support
- Work with key agencies to commission and deliver quality information and effective signposting that represents value for money
- Deliver opportunities to increase resident self-service and self-care using digital channels to support people's wellbeing whilst managing demand on services.

## **Our key principles**

We shall adopt and share some key principles:

- Embedding an effective information and advice service in preventative pathways is critical to reducing demand on the local care system.
- There is 'no wrong door' to access information and advice.
- All agencies commit to work together to improve the local offer to residents and invest in gaps and priority areas.
- Agencies acknowledge residents' legal right to receive good information and advice where and when they need it, particularly at key trigger points and in particular environments.



- Agencies must review their own resources and processes in relation to accessible information provision and signposting, and training.

## High level plans

We will work with the NHS, stakeholders, commissioned services as well as a range of voluntary, community and faith organisations and services throughout Surrey to provide a more joined up and co-ordinated approach to providing a universal information and advice service. We will look to avoid unnecessary duplication, promote specialist support, improve referral pathways and accessible information and contact methods.

Specifically, in partnership, we will aim to deliver the following objectives:

- Make information and advice about care and support easier to access particularly at key points in the care pathway e.g. hospital discharge, GP settings, planning long term care, bereavement and in the community.
- Support residents, carers, and their families to access information, advice and guidance to make informed decisions about the care and support they need, whether eligible for social care or not.
- Provide regular promotion of the local community support available to direct people to find support for themselves or others.
- Ensure greater access to key digital skills to improve digital literacy in the community and help people self-serve.
- Ensure that people who require more personalised support or accessible information can access this.
- Map and review information and advice services locally with commissioners to ensure residents have good access to local services where they live.
- Develop and deliver training for health and social care professionals to ensure a consistent quality service for residents, highlighting the benefits of information, advice and guidance in helping people make better decisions and stay independent, safe and well.
- Promote healthier lifestyles and behaviours to help people stay well and independent.

To achieve our four key priorities organisations across the NHS, voluntary, community and faith groups, local councils and independent care providers will have individual plans and commitments to make.

## Evaluation and impact

We are committed to improving the universal information and advice services across Surrey, and will continue to evaluate, review and develop improvements in our communication channels to reach more people. Where we can, we will use the latest digital technologies to support people self-serve online in addition to traditional methods. We shall also seek resident feedback and regular research to ensure that the service learns from residents' experiences and continuously improves.

## For further information

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