

Finding Out About Adult Social Care Services from the Worcestershire County Council Website

Report of 'Mystery Shopping' Exercise

February 2020



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A short summary of this Report will be made available on our website.

Acknowledgment

Healthwatch Worcestershire would like to thank all of the volunteers who gave up their time, acted as “mystery shoppers” and supported this work.

FINDING OUT ABOUT ADULT SOCIAL CARE SERVICES FROM THE WORCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL WEBSITE - REPORT OF MYSTERY SHOPPING EXERCISE

1. ABOUT HEALTHWATCH WORCESTERSHIRE

Healthwatch Worcestershire (HWW) gathers feedback about local publicly funded health and care services and makes recommendations to those who run them about how they could be improved from a patient, service user and carer perspective.

2. WHY THIS WORK?

A key principle of the Care Act 2014 is the responsibility on local authorities to promote the well-being¹ of adults (aged 18+) with care and support needs² and their carers.

Under the Act, Local Authorities have a duty to provide ‘comprehensive information and advice about care and support services in their local area. This is to 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.’³

In 2018 HWW did some work looking at people’s experience of Adult Social Work services. One of the themes that emerged was the need for clear information about adult social care services - what they are, what they can do to help, how to get in contact and what to expect when you do.

Worcestershire County Council (WCC), in its response to us outlined a number of projects that were underway to provide better information to the public. One of these was to develop a range of information factsheets to address specific elements or issues in adult social care. These were to be made available on the website & given to members of the public as part of the ASC service’s involvement with them.

The Council also had underway a full review of their web information. This would: ‘update the content and presentation of key information about the service, echoing much of the content from the fact sheets, adopting an easy to read style and complying with Council standards of accessibility. Key elements of this update will clarify what to expect from the service in terms of who we will work with, when, how quickly and how to make contact’

We appreciate that the website is not the County Council’s only source of advice and information as specified in the Care Act. Other Council services, including

¹ Well-being includes personal dignity, physical and mental health and emotional well-being, protection from abuse and neglect; control over day to day life; participation in work; education, training or recreation; social and economic well-being; domestic, family and personal relationships; suitability of living accommodation and the ‘individuals contribution to society’.

² The Care Act focuses on outcomes rather than definitions of care and support needs but Worcestershire County Council Your Life Your Choice website says ‘you can request the assessment if you are 18 years old and over, and if you have difficulties doing a number of things which may include washing yourself; getting dressed; getting in and out of bed or helping you to stay safe in your own home’

³ Care Act 2014, Factsheet 1: General responsibilities of local authorities: prevention, information and advice, and shaping the market of care and support services, Department of Health and Social Care, April 2016

social work teams, have a role to play in providing people with information and advice.

3. WHAT DID WE DO?

We concentrated on services for older people.

We decided to conduct a ‘mystery shopping’ exercise to find out how far the Council’s website is answering common questions that older people or their friends and relatives, may have about a service or situation.

We devised several scenarios, which reflected the sorts of information that older people, or their friends and relatives might look for on the County Council website to find out. These scenarios covered:

- **Residential Care - relative looking at future options for a parent**
- **Support at Home - older person looking for support at home; relative looking for support for a parent**
- **Extra Care Housing - relative looking at future options for a parent**
- **Carer requiring support for themselves**
- **Older Person looking for information about social activities and transport**
- **Person looking for information for an older friend with visual impairment**

We put together a list of questions and asked our volunteers and team to find the answers to the questions on the website. This is therefore a relatively small scale, qualitative study. Our shoppers had a range of IT skills, most are familiar with navigating websites.

An example of one of the scenarios is included at Appendix One. The remainder will be available on the website or on request

This exercise was designed to test out the process of finding out information. We were interested in how people ‘navigate’ or find their way around the website in order to find the information that they needed.

We devised tables for people to record the process they went through to find the information. We asked them to record:

- the links they used,
- whether the link sent them to additional information on the County Council site or to another organisations website,
- record a brief description of what they found out through each link and whether it answered the question,
- note what other information they would have found useful but wasn’t available on the website
- make an overall assessment of how easy it was to find the answer to the question from the information provided on the website.

An example of the table can be found at Appendix One

We did not set out to review all the information for older people or about Adult Social Care on the WCC website, neither did we open every section of the information provided.

4. OUR OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE WCC WEBSITE

We have identified some common themes that were applicable to more than one scenario and may be applicable across the WCC website as a whole.

These are summarised below.

a. Navigating the site

There is good information on the Worcestershire County Council (WCC) website. However, in many cases our shoppers did not find it easy to navigate their way through the WCC site to find the information that they needed. Our shoppers frequently found that they had to click on numerous links to find the information.

On the WCC website Homepage there are two main headings that were especially relevant to our shoppers. These are:

- ‘Adult Social Care’
- ‘Advice, Care, Health and Support’

Our shoppers found this confusing and were uncertain which heading to follow to find out what they needed to know. A different range of information is available under each of these sections of the website, so choosing the correct route from the WCC Homepage affected the information that our shoppers found. We did note however that the ‘Advice, Care, Health and Support’ landing page provides a link to the ‘Adult Social Care’ section of the website.

As we worked through our scenarios we came across information that we thought should have been included in the ‘Adult Social Care’ section of the website. For example, information about ‘Disabilities’ is found only in the ‘Advice, Care, Health and Support’ section. Conversely there was information about ‘Transport and Travelling’ in the Adult Social Care section that was not available in the ‘Advice, Care, Health and Support’ section.

Some of our shoppers thought that more useful terminology from the WCC Homepage would be ‘Support for Older People and People with Disabilities’, as not everyone will know what Adult Social Care means.

Our shoppers felt that the website would benefit from ‘Frequently Asked Questions’ or flow charts to help people to quickly identify information or navigate their way through the information available.

As a general principle our shoppers thought links to external websites should always open in a new window. This is usually, but not always, the case.



Everyone in Worcestershire is entitled to receive information, advice and support about the range of help available. This includes the opportunity to have your needs assessed to help you plan and make decisions about your current and future care. You may also be entitled to receive some funding support from Worcestershire County Council to help you.

| | | | |
|--|-----------------------------|---|---|
| Health and wellbeing | Paying for care and support | Support to stay at home | Contact us |
| Carers | Blue Badge | Dementia | Raise a concern about an adult |
| Who is eligible for support? | Support in daily matters | Housing and care homes | Jargon Buster A-Z |
| Activities and events | Bereavement support | Emergency out of hours social work services | Independent advocacy |
| Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) | Power of attorney | Make a compliment, comment or complaint | Personal budgets and direct payments for adults |
| Palliative and end of life care | Protection from harm | Support for adults who are in prison | Transport and travelling |
| Reviews of adult care and support plans | Professionals' area | Adult Social Care Business Plan | |

b. Finding 'Advice' on the WCC website

Under the Care Act the Council has a duty to provide advice as well as information.

The 'Care Quality Commission' (CQC) is responsible for inspecting care providers and inspection reports can be found on their website. Links to the CQC site are not consistently provided from the WCC site. For example, the WCC 'Find a Care Home' page identifies the CQC as a source of advice about choosing care. This information is not included in the 'Arranging Care at Home' webpage.

The CQC website also provides advice about choosing care. Links from the WCC site take you to the CQC Home Page. It would be useful if, at relevant points, links could be provided to the CQC 'Help Choosing Care' pages. More specific information about this is included in the relevant scenario sections below.

The Worcestershire Care Services Directory publication provides information about a wide range of adult social care services in Worcestershire. It is available through an external website - 'Care Choices'. The Directory also includes 'checklists' that can help people to choose their care. These are available in a downloadable format from the 'Care Information' section of the Care Choices website.

All of our shoppers who managed to locate the Worcestershire Care Services Directory found this to be a very useful publication. However, it was not easy to find, and links to it are not always in place from relevant sections of the site.

We did not find any direct links to the Worcestershire Care Services Directory or to the relevant checklists contained within it from the WCC website. Neither did we find a PDF version of the Directory on the WCC website.

The Care Choices website link from the WCC site under the section on 'Find a Care Home' lands on a page that is about care in 'Redditch', rather than Worcestershire. The Care Services Directory that is shown on this page is for Birmingham, not Worcestershire.

The Worcestershire Care Services Directory also includes within it a useful checklist for people interested in purchasing 'Assistive Technology', however there is no reference to the Directory or this advice on these pages of the WCC website.

There is a lot of useful information on the WCC website, which could add to the depth of information that a user can find on a webpage, but links to this are not always made from the relevant section. For example, there is information on the WCC website about 'Deprivation of Liberties Safeguards (DoLS)'. This is available as a heading on the 'Adult Social Care' landing page but is not referenced in the sections on 'Find A Care Home'. There may be other examples of this across the WCC website.

Frequently there are no, or few, links to other trusted, credible and respected organisations that could provide information and advice on the relevant page.

Advice, care, health and support

Information and advice for families, adults and older people

| | | | |
|--|--|--|---|
|  Adult Social Care |  Children and families |  Health and wellbeing |  SEND Local Offer |
| Disabilities | Professionals | Raise a concern about an adult | Refer to Children's Social Care |
| Activities and events | Carers | | |
| End of life care and bereavement | Housing and care homes | | |
| Money and legal | Protection from harm | | |
| Local Health Information (JSNA) | | | |

Can't find what you are looking for?

[Complete an Enquiry Form](#) >

c. Financial information and advice

Under the Care Act the Council must provide information on “where local people can find independent financial advice about care and support and help them to access it”.⁴

We did not find much information on the WCC website about independent financial advice and how to access it. The section on ‘Personal budgets and direct payments for adults’ does reference the Penderels Trust, but in most other sections on finance and paying for care in the Adult Social Care section of the site users are directed to the County Council for further information.

There is a main section on the Adult Social Care landing page taking people to information about ‘Paying for Care and Support’.

Paying for care and support (adults)

If you are assessed as having an eligible care or support need by Worcestershire Adult Services, you will need to have a means tested financial assessment. Here you will find information on the financial assessment and what other support is available.

| | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| Charges for care and support | Deferred payments | Deprivation of assets |
| Financial assessment | Personal budgets and direct payments | Third party top ups – Care and support at home |

Fact sheets

Download: [Direct Payments fact sheet](#)

Download: [Paying for care and support fact sheet](#)

Download: [Paying for residential care fact sheet](#)

Contact

Care Contribution Assessment Team
Telephone: 01905 765761

Our shoppers were often looking for information about paying for care from the relevant pages of the website - for example, ‘Find a Care Home’. These sections do not always provide a link back to the ‘Paying for Care and Support’ landing page.

Shoppers who did find the full WCC Charging Policy found this very lengthy and difficult to navigate. Whilst there is a ‘Paying for Care and Support’ Fact Sheet they proposed that relevant sections of the Policy could be presented as Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), or in some other format that enabled people to access the information more easily.

There is further relevant information (e.g. Power of Attorney, Protecting Your Property) on the WCC website, but this is not included in the ‘Paying for Care’ section, although links are provided from the Adult Social Care Landing Page.

There is an opportunity to better integrate the financial information and advice on the website and to provide links to this on the appropriate web pages.

⁴ Care Act 2014, Factsheet 1: General responsibilities of local authorities: prevention, information and advice, and shaping the market of care and support services, Department of Health and Social Care, April 2016

d. Duty to assess adults in need

Under the Care Act the Council has a duty to assess adults in need⁵. This duty to assess applies to all people who appear to need care and support, regardless of their level of income & savings or whether the local authority thinks their needs will be eligible for care and support. This duty is referenced on the Adult Social Care landing page, however it should be made clear across all of the relevant sections of the WCC website, with links made to the Adult Social Care ‘Contact Us’ page so that the different ways of contacting the Council to obtain information and advice are clear to website users. Information about the approach taken by Adult Social Care (the Three Conversations Model) can also be accessed from this page.

e. Carers

Our shoppers were asked to place themselves in the shoes of relatives and friends looking for information. They noted that often the people searching for information would themselves be carers. They felt that value could be added to some sections by adding a link to information for carers. Specific recommendations are set out in the scenarios below. However, this point may be applicable to other areas of the WCC website that we did not visit.

f. ‘Contact the Adult Social Care team’

At different points on the website ‘Contact Us’ links take you to the WCC Adult Social Care webform, which people can complete online and submit to WCC, or to the WCC ‘Contact the Adult Social Care team’ page.

The webform does not provide any information about what response people can expect once the form is submitted. Linking directly to the form does not give people the opportunity to contact Adult Social Care in different ways which may be more appropriate for them, for example by telephone. This information is available on the ‘Contact the Adult Social Care team’ page.

g. Information about organisations and activities for older people

Our shoppers could find very little information on the WCC website on the location of luncheon clubs and social and leisure activities for older people in Worcestershire.

There was also very limited information about the wide range of Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS), community and faith organisations that provide services to older people. In HWW’s view these services contribute to preventing or delaying the development of need for care and support, and therefore information about where to find them should be provided from the County Council’s website.

⁵ Care Act 2014, Factsheet 3, Assessing Need and Determining Eligibility, Department of Health and Social Care, April 2016

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Conduct a review, with people who will use the website, to assess how navigation of the WCC site could be improved to ensure that it is “user friendly” and will meet people’s needs
2. Ensure that relevant information is included in both the ‘Adult Social Care’ & ‘Advice, Care, Health and Support’ sections of the website
3. Consider how Frequently Asked Questions or flow charts can be added to the website to aid navigation, particularly to those areas where the information is complex
4. Assess how opportunities to provide or to access “advice” as well as information can be integrated into relevant sections of the WCC website
5. Include references and links to the Care Quality Commission at appropriate points on the website
6. Include references and links to the Worcestershire Care Services Directory and the information provided within it at appropriate points on the website, including a direct link to the PDF or order form - some more specific points for consideration can be found in the scenarios below.
7. Include links to trusted, credible and respected external organisations who can provide people with information and advice to relevant pages on the WCC website - some more specific points for consideration can be found some of the scenarios below
8. Assess how information and advice about financial matters, including information about independent financial advice is presented on the WCC website.
9. Include links to relevant financial information directly from the appropriate webpage
10. Ensure that it is clear at relevant points on the website that people are entitled to an assessment of need under the Care Act 2014. Describe how the Local Authority will carry out this assessment where appropriate.
11. Assess how links to information for carers can be usefully added to pages on the website
12. Consider whether ‘Contact Us’ links should go to the Adult Social Care Contact Us webpage or whether the Adult Social Care webform can be modified to include response times or telephone contact information.
13. Include information about local voluntary, community and faith organisations that provide services for older people on the website
14. Ensure that links to external websites always open in a new window.

6. THE SCENARIOS

6.1 Residential Care

a. Summary of Scenario

We devised a scenario of a son or daughter looking for information about residential care for their 85yr old Mum, who lives in her own home in Kidderminster which she owns. She does not require nursing care but does have mild dementia, which may deteriorate over time. She is currently in hospital, so there is some time pressure to understand future care options.

Find a care home

To help you to find the right care home, we recommend visiting the Care Quality Commission's website. The Care Quality Commission is an independent regulator of health and social care in England. They keep a list of the care homes and give each care home a rating. You can use the rating information to help you to make a decision about which care home would be suitable for you.

[Care home choices - Worcestershire care directory \(opens in a new window\)](#)

[View the care homes in the Care Quality Commission's website \(opens in a new window\)](#)

Fact sheet

Download: [Paying for residential care: Introducing deferred payment agreements](#)

Contact

Care Contribution Assessment Team
Telephone: 01905 76576
Email: CCAdmin@worcestershire.gov.uk

Share this information

[f](#) [t](#) [+](#) [in](#) [e](#)

b. What We Found Out

We asked our volunteers to find out information about whether their Mum might be eligible for residential care. From the WCC Homepage our shoppers took different routes to finding this information. Some clicked on Adult Social care, others followed the Advice, Care, Health and Support tab, although they found information about Care Homes through this route, they did not find any information about eligibility or assessments. One of our shoppers followed Adult Social Care but then clicked on 'Raise a Concern about an Adult', which led to information about Safeguarding. This illustrates some of the issues experienced by our shoppers navigating the WCC website.

We asked our shoppers to find the answers to a number of questions about paying for residential care. There was different information about this on different parts of the WCC website. Those shoppers who linked to 'Paying for Care and Support' found more information than those who followed links to the 'Find a Care Home' page, where only information about deferred payments was found.

Those who followed 'Paying for Care and Support' found the Councils 'Charging Policy for Care and Support' policy. They found this lengthy and difficult to navigate.

We appreciate that paying for residential care is a complex area. The Care Services Directory does include useful information about this, which could be made available on the WCC website or through direct links to the Care Choices website. There are other credible, trusted external organisations who can also provide

information and advice about this. Links to these organisations could be included on the WCC pages.

We asked our shoppers to answer a number of questions about finding care homes in Kidderminster. Most shoppers navigated to the WCC 'Find a Care Home' page and followed the links to the external 'Care Choices' and 'Care Quality Commission' websites to find information about care homes in Kidderminster.

The Care Choices website only hyperlinks directly to the care home website for those homes with an 'enhanced' listing. For the other homes there is a link to details showing the CQC ratings, from which there are links to the CQC website. The CQC website provides address and telephone numbers of care homes, and sometimes links to the home's website, although not all of these links were available / working when we tried them.

Our shoppers were able to identify from the information presented on both the Care Choices and CQC sites whether the care homes had experience of caring for people living with dementia and could also easily find the CQC ratings of the homes.

However, advice about choosing a care home was more difficult to locate. It took one shopper seven clicks on links from the WCC homepage to get to the CQC webpage 'Useful tips to help you choose care' webpage.

The 'Care Choices' website has a tab on 'Care Information', which extracts a lot of the information included in the Care Services Directory. This includes downloadable checklists about choosing a care home and residential dementia care.

It was difficult for our shoppers to find information about whether the care homes would need to assess the person or what the actual process for admission was.

The contact information from the WCC 'Find a Care Home' page only refers to the WCC Care Contribution Assessment Team and does not include information about how to contact Adult Social Care teams for advice.

The information in this section does not differentiate between care homes and care homes with nursing. Our shoppers did not find information about hospital social workers, Continuing Health Care funding or the NHS Nursing Care Contribution.

c. Points for Consideration

1. Provide an explanation of care and nursing homes and the distinctions between them
2. Provide links to the CQC 'Useful tips to help you choose care' page.
3. Provide a downloadable copy, or links to, the Care Choices website:
 - Care Home checklist
 - Residential dementia care checklist
4. Provide a PDF or direct link to the Worcestershire Care Services Directory or order form, from the WCC webpage
5. Change the link to 'Care Choices' external website so that it opens on the 'Worcestershire' page. This would have the effect of making the

Worcestershire Care Services Directory publication more visible on the webpage

6. Include further information about Nursing Homes - link to information about Continuing Health Care and NHS Nursing Care Contribution
7. Include links to the 'Paying for Care and Support' section of the website on this page
8. Consider presenting the relevant information relating to care homes contained within the Charging Policy in a Frequently Asked Questions format, with links to the relevant Appendices. Include the relevant sections on this page
9. Consider including the information in the Care Services Directory about paying for residential care
10. Consider which other credible, external organisations who provide advice and information about finding and paying for care could be included on this page
11. Consider including a link to information for Carers
12. Provide a link to the Adult Social Care Contact Us page and inform people that the teams can be contacted for advice
13. Inform people that if they are in a hospital setting, they can contact the hospital social worker for advice
14. External Organisations - there are a number of credible, trustworthy external organisations that provide advice and support for people looking for residential care. Links to these could be included on the page

6.2 Person Looking for Care at Home

- For themselves

a. Summary of Scenario

77-year old man who lives alone in their own home, which they own, in Worcester. He does not have family nearby. He is finding it difficult to manage at home and feels that he needs help getting washed and dressed. He also need help with shopping and preparing meals. He is also struggling to manage housework and gardening. He has savings of £37,000. He is not sure if he will be expected to contribute to the cost of his care. He has heard that the Council might be able to help but is not sure how.

Support to stay at home

Do you need just a little help?

In order to stay living in your home independently, or help your relative stay in their own home if they are elderly or have a disability it may be that you need just a little support from others.

This could be for a range of tasks including meals on wheels, washing, dressing, shopping, cleaning or general help around the home.

In Worcestershire, there is a wide range of products and services that can help support you to stay at home, in the way that you want.

Adapting your home

Arranging care at home

Assistive technology

Concerns about your ability to cope at home

Extra Care housing

Falls prevention

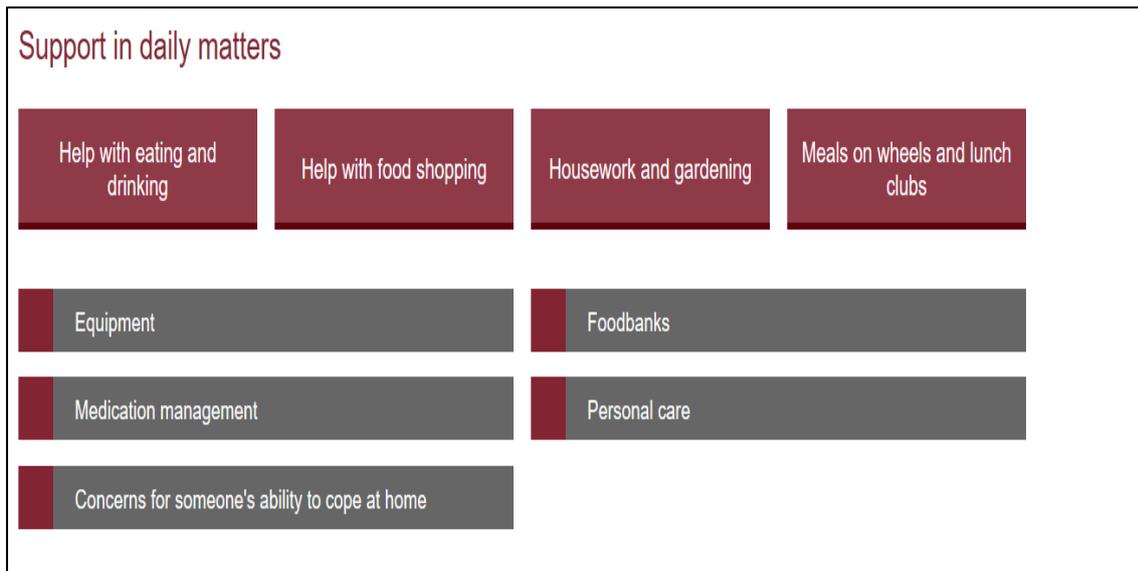
Support in daily matters

Transport and travelling

b. What we found out

We asked our shoppers to find out what services might be available to help. Our shoppers took different routes from the WCC Home Page in order to find the answer to this question. One shopper clicked on 'Adult Social Care', another on 'Advice, Care, Help and Support' and another on the 'A-Z of services' from the WCC website Home Page

Clicking on the 'Adult Social Care' landing page brought people to a range of relevant information. Different shoppers again chose different routes. Selecting either the 'Support to Stay at Home' heading, the heading 'Support in Daily Matters'.



Both routes eventually took people to the 'Arranging Care at Home' screen. An extract from the webpage is shown below.

Arranging care at home

If you have been assessed as needing care at home (domiciliary care)

and you are eligible for funding for example you have funds of less than £23,250, our social workers will arrange for your care through our Brokerage Team.

If you have not been assessed as needing care at home (domiciliary care)

and you are eligible for funding for example you have funds of less than £23,250, contact the Adult Social Care team via the [online contact form \(opens in a new window\)](#). Read more information about [who is eligible for support](#).

If you are not eligible for funding

for example, you have funds of over £23,250 and are self-funding, you can choose to find your own care at home independently.

You also have the option to access our **Brokerage Service** to search for care and support to meet your needs in the same way as those who are funded. You don't need to have had a financial assessment to access the service.

The Brokerage Service

The Brokerage Team will search over 100 providers who have contracts with the Council to provide care for people in their own homes and we will offer the best matches for your needs. The types of care that the Brokerage Team can arrange for you include:

- food shopping
- housework
- personal care (dressing, bathing etc)
- help with managing finances
- accessing the community
- help with medication
- help with eating and drinking

For a simple one-off charge this service can help you make informed choices about the different options offered by providers, including the cost of that care, to meet your care needs.

The Brokerage Service is a fast and reliable service which means you get the care you need as quickly as possible, without the hassle of negotiating costs with numerous providers.

The service includes:

- a search of our contracted providers (over 100), all of whom are registered with the Care Quality Commission, within three working days – results are normally returned within 24 hours
- professional help and advice from qualified social workers to enable you to make an informed decision on the providers most suitable for your care needs

The cost per search is £76.80. If you choose to arrange your own care we can supply a Care Directory, free of charge.

This page provided differentiated information for people who had and had not been assessed as needing care at home.

It should be noted that under the Care Act 2014 Local Authorities also have a duty to assess adults in need. The Department of Health Factsheet 3 about the Care Act says:

“An assessment is how the local authority decides whether a person needs care and support to help them live their day to day life⁶.

This duty to assess applies to all people who appear to need care and support, regardless of their level of income & savings or whether the local authority thinks their needs will be eligible for care and support.

⁶ Department of Health, Factsheet 3, The Care Act - Assessing Needs and Determining Eligibility

The wording on this page does not make this entitlement clear. The wording under the title '*If you have not been assessed as needing care at home (domiciliary care)*' appears to link the assessment for needing care at home to the persons level of income and to the eligibility criteria. This wording should be reviewed.

The page provides information for people not eligible for funding. This states '*If you are not eligible for funding, for example, you have funds of over £23,250 and are self-funding, you can choose to find your own care at home independently.*

However, there is no information about how you might do this, other than through the use of the WCC Brokerage Service.

The Care Choices website provides information about Home Care agencies in Worcestershire. The 'Worcestershire Care Services Directory' also provides this information within the publication.

There is no advice about what to look for when arranging your own care. Advice is available on the on the CQC website. A checklist about this is available on the Care Choices website and in the Worcestershire Care Services Directory.

There is detailed information about the WCC Brokerage Services, what it provides, how to access it and, in a further section not shown in the picture, how to contact the service and pay the £76.80 charge for the service directly from the website.

The page provides a link directly to the online Adult Social Care Contact Form. However, a link to the 'Contact the Adult Social Care team' page would provide more information about different ways of getting in touch and information about response times.

Some of our shoppers from the 'Adult Social Care' landing page clicked on the heading 'Support in Daily Matters'. They found useful information about a range of subjects. Some, but not all, of the sections contained a link to external organisations. Much of the information however was descriptive, without providing further links or information about how to access the support described. For example, the Meals on Wheels and Luncheon clubs section provides a brief explanation about what these are, but no links to further information about how you might find these services. The 'Eating and Drinking' page contains a link to the WRVS service re Meals on Wheels, but this is not included on the Meals on Wheels page. We understand that this service may no longer be available in Worcestershire. There was also no link back to the 'Arranging Care' webpage from this page, although most of the sections did included this link.

For a Relative

a. Summary of Scenario

The mystery shoppers were given the same scenario as above, except that they were the son or daughter of the man described. They lived in Cumbria and were concerned about their father. They were unsure what services are available in Worcestershire and if they might be expected to contribute to the cost of any care their father might need.

b. What we found out.

Our shoppers would have welcomed a heading on the 'Adult Social Care' landing page such as 'Looking for support for someone else', and being taken to advice and contact details for Adult Social Care.

In the 'Support to Stay at Home' section there is a link to 'Concerns about your ability to cope at home'. This provides some information for people with concerns about somebody else.

Our shoppers thought it should be clearer that family members could contact Adult Social Care for advice. They also suggested that people accessing this information may be carers and therefore links to information for carers on the WCC website would be useful.

Our shoppers did not find it easy to access information about whether they might have to contribute to the cost of their father's care at home from the Arranging Care at Home webpage, although information 'Third Party Top Ups - Care and Support at Home' is available on the 'Paying for Care' section of the website, but no link to this is provided.

Neither did they find it easy to find information about the actual services that could help their father or advice about what to look for when choosing services, other than by using the Brokerage Team service, for which there is a charge.

c. Points for Consideration

In the Support to Stay at Home section: -

'Arranging Care at Home' page:

1. Review the wording relating to assessments for needing care at home to ensure that it makes it clear that people are entitled to an assessment under the Care Act regardless of their level of income and of whether or not the Authority thinks their needs will be eligible for care and support.
2. Provide links to the CQC website, where information about home care agencies in Worcestershire can be found, along with the CQC rating of the service
3. Provide links to the CQC Choosing Social Care 'Useful tips to help you choose care' page.
4. Include the advice contained in the Worcestershire Care Services Directory about care in your own home on the WCC website, or provide links to this information on the 'Care Choices' website
5. In particular provide a downloadable copy, or links to, the Home Care Agency checklist
6. Provide a PDF or a direct link to the Worcestershire Care Services Directory or order form
7. Provide links to the Care Choices website, where information about home care agencies Worcestershire can be found
8. Retain the information about the Brokerage Service
9. Include further information about, or a link to information about paying for care at home

10. Include the WCC Factsheets relating to Paying for Care and Support on this page. Include a sentence with links to the page where the Councils full Charging Policy for Care and Support can be found.
11. Consider presenting the relevant information contained within the Charging Policy in a Frequently Asked Questions format, with links to the relevant Appendices. Include the relevant sections on this page.
12. Consider how information about Continuing Health Care funding can be included in this section

On the 'Support in Daily Matters' section:

13. Review the information within the 'Support in Daily Matters' section, and include wherever possible links to trusted and credible external organisations that can provide the service required or can signpost to this information

On the 'Concerns about your ability to care at home' page

14. Make it clear that Adult Social Care can be contacted for advice by people with concerns about someone else.
15. Include links to information for 'Carers', 'Paying for Care and Support' and 'Money and Legal' on this page

6.3 Extra Care Housing

a. Summary of Scenario

Daughter has offered to look into future housing options for her 85yr old Mum who lives alone in her own home in Bromsgrove. Her Mum is relatively well and still has mental capacity. She is interested in Extra Care Housing, but the daughter will need to be persuaded that Extra Care will offer sufficient support to enable her mother to continue to live independently as she gets older and potentially requires more support.

b. What We Found Out

Our shoppers were easily able to find information about Extra Care Housing by following links to 'Housing and Care Homes' from either the 'Adult Social Care' landing page or from the 'Advice, Care, Health and Support' landing page. From here there was another heading: 'Extra Care Housing', this page provided sufficient information or links to information to answer the questions in our scenario about Extra Care Housing. The page also contained links to Videos and a Fact Sheet on Extra Care Housing.

However, our shopper assumed that WCC ran the Extra Care Schemes in Worcestershire, as there was no information on the page to the contrary.

Although Housing Schemes in the County are listed the names of the schemes are not hyperlinked to specific information about that setting. Our shoppers would have found more information about each setting useful, specifically information about the actual location of the schemes and the support that is available at each setting, along with more information about costs.

c. Points for Consideration:

1. Make clear that Extra Care Housing schemes are not directly run by WCC
2. Where possible hyperlink name of the Extra Care schemes in Worcestershire to trusted and reliable sources of online information

6.4 Carer Requiring Support for Themselves

a. Summary of Scenario

A 57-year-old living in Malvern, who looks after their 97-year old mother who lives 3 miles away. The carer is visiting their Mum daily and looks after her day to day needs (including shopping, meals, personal care and housework) and also her medical and other affairs. Caring responsibilities are impacting the carers physical and mental health, but her Mum refuses support from anyone other than family members and refuses to pay for help with her care. The carer wants to know what support may be available for them. They have had to give up work to care for their Mum.

Carers

Under the Care Act 2014, the Council has a duty to provide information, advice and support; this is to make sure that Carers' well-being is promoted by helping them to reduce their support needs through maintaining independence and good health, and promoting well-being. All partners work with carers to identify the resources already available to them in their family and community networks and put support in place to complement these where necessary.

Who is a carer?

You are a Carer if you are 18 years old or older and you look after:

- an adult (18 years and older) who is ill, disabled or frail and cannot manage without your help; or
- a person who is perhaps a relative or friend, whether or not they live with you

[Breaks for carers](#) [Support for carers](#) [Support for young carers](#)

[Accessing support as a Carer for an adult](#) [Planning for the future](#)

Downloads

Download: [Carers fact sheet](#)

Download: [Download: Worcestershire Carers Strategy](#)

Contacts

Adult Contact Team
Telephone: 01905 768053

Worcestershire Association of Carers (opens in a new window)
Telephone: 0300 012 4272

Stroke Association (opens in a new window)
Telephone: 0303 3033 100

b. What We Found Out

Our shoppers again used differing routes from the WCC Home page to navigate to information for Carers, which was available from both the 'Adult Social Care' and 'Advice, care, health and support' landing pages.

The various pages in the 'Carers' section of the website provided most of the answers to the questions in our scenario. In the 'Support for Carers' section our shoppers found information about eligibility for a Council assessment. There were also links to other, external organisations that provided information and support for carers in Worcestershire. However, our shoppers did not pick up that information about legal and financial advice can be found on the Worcestershire

Association of Carers website. Some further brief description of the range of support available from the Integrate Carers Hub may be useful.

It was also noted that the heading on the Carers landing page ‘Planning for the Future’ provided useful information for carers of people with a learning disability, but not for people caring for young adults with physical disabilities or for carers thinking about the impact of caring on their own future. The title was seen as ambiguous.

c. Points for Consideration

1. Consider whether the information on the WCC site makes clear the range of advice for carers that is available through the Integrated Carers Hub & Worcestershire Association of Carers
2. Consider either renaming or extending the information available under the heading ‘Planning for the Future’

6.5 Older Person looking for information about Social Activities and Transport

a. Summary of Scenario

An 80-year-old living alone in Worcester. They used to have a more active social life but don’t go out as often now. This is partly because they are no longer able to drive and so need transport to attend activities. They are beginning to feel a bit low and lonely and decide to look for information about leisure and social activities for older people in Worcester and whether transport may be available.

b. What We Found Out

Our shoppers had a lot of difficulty in finding information about activities for older people in Worcester.

They took different routes to finding information.

From the WCC Homepage one clicked on the link to ‘Your Area’. Entering a Worcester postcode returned a number of results, there was a title Leisure and Culture, however they did not find any information about local clubs, groups and activities.

They went back to the WCC Home Page and tried Community, Volunteering and Act Local. Following a link to ‘Countryside and Leisure’ they found information about Health Walks, including options for Worcester. As this was not the type of activity they were interested in they went back to the WCC Home Page and clicked on ‘Advice, Care, Health and Support’. They found the heading ‘Activities and Events’. They then followed a heading ‘Community Clubs’.

From this page they downloaded a 3-page PDF which contained information about clubs in Worcestershire (not specifically for older people). The document is divided into sections Physical Activity (1 group listed in Worcester), Social Groups (2 groups listed in Worcester), Singing Groups (1 group listed in Worcester) and Activity Groups (no groups listed in Worcester). There were details of who to contact for all the groups, and who the group was open to. There was no

information about whether there was a charge to attend, or about the potential for transport.

This shopper did not find any information about local organisations for older people or links to other websites that could offer more information about social and leisure activities.

They also did not find any information about loneliness or isolation. There is some information available on the WCC website following the path: Health & Wellbeing/ Mental Health/ Loneliness & Isolation. This is not easy to find.

Another shopper used the ‘Advice, Care, Health and Support’ route. After a few false starts they found the heading ‘Activities and Events’. A further heading took them to the information about Community Clubs described above.



The ‘Activities and Events’ landing page contained a heading ‘Day Opportunities for Adults’. This page described types of activities; such as day centres, community-based group activities, one to one support from home (possibly including transport) available for people with disabilities. It was not clear to our shopper if this information could be used by older people with disabilities. The page does not contain any links to WCC Adult Social Care Contact information or any links to external providers of these services.

We also carried out a generic search for ‘Activities for Older People’ using the search box on the WCC Homepage. The first two results directed us back to the ‘Day Opportunities’ page, described above.

We tried looking under the WCC A-Z of services under ‘O’ for Older People. We were not linked to any information or services for Older People.

There was no information about Transport from the ‘Advice, Care Help and Support’ landing page. Our shopper went back to the WCC Home Page and used the ‘Travel & Roads’ link to find a heading about ‘Community Transport’. This page contains links to an external website which provides information about community transport schemes in Worcestershire.

There is a heading ‘Transport and Travelling’ on the ‘Adult Social Care’ landing page. However, on opening up these pages we did not find information about or links to the ‘Community Transport’ section of the WCC site.

Our shoppers experienced considerable frustration trying to find relevant information about both activities and transport. One went to the WCC 'Contact Us' information from the website Home Page intending to initiate a webchat to ask where information about activities for older people could be found. However, the wait time was 17 minutes and they abandoned their search.

c. Points for Consideration

1. Consider how information about social and leisure activities for older people can be accessed from the WCC website
2. Consider how older people, and others who may be experiencing loneliness and isolation, can be linked to the 'Loneliness & Isolation' page from other relevant sections of the WCC website
3. Update the 'Transport and Travel' page in the 'Adult Social Care' section to include information about Community Transport in Worcestershire
4. Consider where to include information about 'Transport and Travel', in the 'Advice, Care Help and Support', perhaps in the 'Support in Daily Matters' section

6.6 Help for older person with visual impairment

a. Summary of Scenario

A 90-year-old with later stage macular degeneration causing partial sight. They are living in sheltered housing in Evesham but are becoming frailer. They have a carer twice a week for housework and shopping, however they are having accidents whilst cooking, and struggling with personal care, loneliness and socialising. Their friend decides to go on to the WCC website to see what services may be available to help people with visual impairments.

Vision impairment

Sight loss is caused by a variety of different conditions, or may be caused by infection or trauma. Some of the more common conditions are Glaucoma, Macular Degeneration, Diabetic Retinopathy, and Retinitis Pigmentosa. It may be present at birth or childhood or maybe acquired later in life. Sight loss affects individuals in a variety of ways; you may be struggling to cope emotionally and with many aspects of your daily life including getting out and about safely, accessing information, cooking, cleaning and employment. The additional difficulties you experience daily may lead to increased frustration, isolation and depression.

Where to get help?

If you have concerns about your sight an eye examination with an optometrist (optician) is essential to ensure your eyes are healthy. It is advisable, even if you do not experience any problems, to have an eye check every 2 years. In some circumstances you may need a test more frequently and your optometrist will advise you if this is the case.

Where you already have a diagnosed sight loss and your sight is worsening either contact your ophthalmology department, if you are still seeing a consultant ophthalmologist or visit your GP for a re-referral.

If you suffer sudden sight loss, visual disturbance, distortion or injury to the eye go to the Accident and Emergency Unit of your local hospital.

The Sensory Impairment Service provides free rehabilitation training, helping you learn/relearn and manage everyday tasks such as cooking and cleaning; learning skills to get around with greater safety and independence; learn skills if you are a new parent and generally helping you manage your daily life with greater independence. If you have a diagnosed sight loss and need support coping, Specialist workers from the Sensory Impairment Service will work with you to identify suitable advice, information, communication methods, voluntary services, equipment communication methods including using a computer, apps for phones and support that will promote your independence and wellbeing. They may provide additional equipment on long term loan or advise you on equipment you can purchase.

The Access Centre

Worcestershire County Council, Adult Services, Access Service PO Box 585, Worcester WR4 4AD

Tel: 01905 788053 Fax:01905788058

Text/sms 07939572850 (Deaf/ Hard of Hearing only)

Email: socialcare@worcestershire.gov.uk

The Sensory Impairment service direct

Duty Worker available on Monday to Thursday 1pm-5pm. Friday 1pm – 4:30 pm

Tel: 01905 785707 Text/SMS 07947486043 (Deaf/ Hard of Hearing only)

Email: sensoryimpairmentteam@worcestershire.gov.uk

Registration

When your consultant ophthalmologist decides your sight meets the requirement for registration either as sight impaired or severely sight impaired they may issue a certificate of visual impairment (CVI). A copy will be sent to yourselves and to the Sensory Impairment Service where a worker will complete registration with you to reflect your visual impairment, helpful/essential in accessing some additional benefits.

Low vision aids

You may be able to access a low vision assessment and obtain on long term loan magnifiers and additional lighting to help with many tasks, either by asking your ophthalmologist for a referral to the hospital low vision service, or by contacting the local voluntary organisations [Sight Concern Worcestershire](#) (opens in a new window) and [Redditch Association for the Blind](#) (opens in a new window). If you are unable to access these services a worker from the Sensory Impairment Service can provide a low vision assessment and advise you on a suitable magnifier for you to purchase.

Useful links

[GOV.UK - Access to Work](#) (opens in a new window) - Access to Work is a Government organisation offering an assessment to obtain advice and sometimes funding that will enable you to access additional support or specialist equipment to support your employment.

[Royal National Institute of Blind People \(RNIB\)](#) (opens in a new window) - RNIB raises awareness of sight problems, and how to prevent sight loss, and they campaign for better services and a more inclusive society

b. What We Found Out

There is some information for people with visual impairments on the WCC website. It can be found by following 'Advice, Care, Help and Support' and clicking on the heading 'Disabilities' and then on the heading 'Vision Impairment'.

There is not a link to the 'Disabilities' section of the website from the 'Adult Social Care' landing page.

Under the heading 'Where to Get Help' the page contains various relevant information. This includes information about the WCC Sensory Impairment Service. It briefly describes the work of the team, and what the specialist workers in it can do to help.

A heading The Access Centre provides contact details for Adult Social Care. However, it is not clear what benefit using this information could provide (in our scenario the shoppers did not know that this is where they could find out more information about help at home for example).

Contact details are separately provided for the Sensory Impairment team, which is useful for people wanting to access the team directly.

Further down the page there is a heading 'Low Vision Aids'. This section contains links to both the Sight Concern Worcestershire website and the Redditch Association for the Blind. These links are provided in the context of low vision aids.

Our shoppers visited these websites and found a great deal of relevant and useful information. However, the links to these organisations are not included under the titles of 'Where to Get Help' or 'Useful Links' on the page, so could be missed by people who do not go to the information about low vision aids.

c. Points for Consideration

1. Provide a link to the information about 'Disabilities' from the 'Adult Social Care' landing page.
2. Explain when, in the context of Vision Impairment, it may be useful for people to contact the Adult Social Care Access Centre rather than the Sensory Impairment Team
3. Include links to relevant VCS organisations in the Useful Links section of the webpage.

7. CONCLUSION

The "user experiences" submitted by our mystery shoppers demonstrated that although useful, relevant information can be retrieved from the WCC website the process of accessing that information is not necessarily seamless or user friendly.

Ease of navigation directly (& swiftly) to appropriate information for the user is an important factor for the target audience. Vulnerable adults (who may be potential service users) and the friends, relatives and carers acting on their behalf, are likely to be attempting to find solutions / information / advice in stressful circumstances. A lack of familiarity or facility with IT; variable availability of internet services (especially in rural areas); pressure to find answers and people's capacity (physical, cognitive or sensory) could contribute to poor outcomes in using the WCC website.

Whilst there is always a balance on a website between brevity and detail our work suggests that there are opportunities to better link information across the different sections of the website and to add further detail to some key areas relating to adult social care.

The Care Act clearly states that the Local Authority must provide information on the range of care and support services available to local people, i.e. what local

providers offer certain types of services⁷. There is a lack of this type of information on some sections of the website, for example there is little specific information about local Voluntary and Community Sector, community and faith organisations that provides services such as luncheon clubs, or leisure & social activities for older people.

Under the Care Act Local Authorities must provide information on “where local people can find independent financial advice about care and support and help them to access it”. Whilst there is information about charging policy we did not find much information about where people can find financial advice on the WCC website.

Suggestions to improve usability and equality of access have been identified in the recommendations and through the points for consideration within the Report.

⁷ Care Act 2014, Factsheet 1: General responsibilities of local authorities: prevention, information and advice, and shaping the market of care and support services, Department of Health and Social Care, April 2016

APPENDIX ONE - EXAMPLE SCENARIO AND RECORDING SHEET

SCENARIO

CARE AT HOME - CARER

Your father is 77 years old and live alone in his home in Worcester, which he owns. You live in Cumbria and cannot get to see your father as often as you would like. You are concerned that your father is finding it difficult to manage at home. In your view he needs help getting washed and dressed in the morning. You think he also needs help with shopping and preparing meals. You are concerned that he cannot manage housework and gardening.

Your father has savings of £37,000. You are not sure if he will be expected to contribute to the cost of any care he might need.

You are also unsure whether you, as a family member might be expected to contribute to the costs of any care he might need.

You have heard that the Council might be able to help, but you are not sure what it is that they do or what they could offer. You have access to the internet and decide to go onto the WCC website to answer the following questions.

1. What Council services might be available to help my father?
2. How do I ask the Council for help on his behalf?
3. What is the time frame for the Council to respond to my enquiry?
4. Who from the Council will contact me?
5. Might my father have to pay for the help that the Council might give him?
6. Might I have to pay or contribute to the cost of my father's care?
7. Is there information on the Council website about other organisations (either private or voluntary) who might be able to help me? (e.g. Home Care agencies or services from Voluntary organisations?)
8. Is there any advice about the sorts of things I should check or ask an agency about before I or my father use their services?
9. Does it say how to get in touch with these services?
10. Can I click on links to get in touch with an organisation I am interested in contacting?

(SEE BELOW FOR INSTRUCTIONS ON RECORDING)

USE THE TABLES BELOW TO RECORD IF / HOW YOU FOUND OUT THE ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS.

A link is clicking on a highlighted word or phrase to take you to the next webpage / information source. Record the heading for each link that you open as you work your way across the table (Link One to Link Two to Link Three). For EACH Link that you open answer ALL the questions below it by working down the table.

| THIS IS THE QUESTION THAT YOU ARE TRYING TO ANSWER | | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|--|--|
| | Link One | Link Two | Link Three | Link Four | Link Five |
| <p>From WCC Homepage I clicked on the heading</p> <p>Did you:</p> <p>1. Stay on the WCC site?</p> <p>2. Go to an external website?</p> <p>Did the link open in new window? Yes or No</p> | <p>Insert heading ..</p> <p>WRITE THE HEADING THAT YOU CLICKED ON FROM THE WCC HOMEPAGE HERE</p> <p>WRITE WCC IF STILL ON THE WCC WEBSITE OR EXTENAL IF TAKEN ON TO ANOTHER SITE</p> <p>DOES A NEW WINDOW OR 'TAB' OPEN ALONGSIDE THE WCC WEBSITE ON YOUR COMPUTER? RECORD YES OR NO</p> | <p>From this heading I cliked on the heading</p> <p>This is the next heading you cliked on to try to answer the question</p> <p>ANSWER ALL THE QUESTIONS IN THIS BOX AND BELOW ABOUT THIS LINK</p> | <p>From this heading I cliked on the heading</p> <p>This is the next heading you cliked on to try to answer the question</p> <p>ANSWER ALL THE QUESTIONS IN THIS BOX AND BELOW ABOUT THIS LINK</p> | <p>From this heading I cliked on the heading</p> <p>as before</p> | <p>From this heading I cliked on the heading</p> <p>as before</p> |
| <p>What I found out was (brief description, if you didn't find the information please leave blank)</p> | <p>A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF WHAT YOU FOUND OUT, e.g. EXPLANATORY TEXT; LIST OF SERVICES; LINK TO ANOTHER PAGE; LINK TO ANOTHER WEBSITE ETC. IF YOU DIDN'T FIND THE INFORMATION LEAVE THIS BOX BLANK</p> | | | | |
| <p>Did the information answer the question? (State Yes or No)</p> | <p>IF YES THE QUESTION IS ANSWERED YOU WILL STOP HERE</p> <p>IF NO/PARTIALLY WHERE DID YOU GO NEXT ON THE WEBSITE (RECORD AT THE TOP OF THE NEXT COLUMN?)</p> | | | | |
| <p>Was there information that you would have found useful but wasn't available on the website?</p> | <p>RECORD ANY INFORMATION THAT YOU WOULD HAVE FOUND HELPFUL / EXPECTED TO FIND</p> | | | | |
| <p>OVERALL :- How easy did you find it to answer this question from the information provided on the website: Very easy, Easy, Quite Easy, Neither Easy or Difficult , Quite Difficult. Difficult, Very Difficult. AT THE END CHOOSE ONE OPTION TO DESCRIBE HOW EASY IT WAS TO FIND THE INFORMATION. IF YOU HAVE ANY COMMENTS OR NOTES PLEASE RECORD HERE.</p> | | | | | |