

FINDING OUT ABOUT ADULT SOCIAL CARE SERVICES FROM THE WORCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL WEBSITE - SUMMARY REPORT

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. WHAT DID WE DO?

Councils have a legal duty to provide information and advice about care and support services in their local area, what is available, how these services work locally and how people can access them¹. We conducted a ‘mystery shopping’ exercise to find out how far Worcestershire County Council’s (WCC) website is answering common questions that older people or their friends and relatives, may have about a service or situation. We appreciate that the website is not the Council’s only source of advice and information. The full report, including the scenarios we looked at, can be found on our website: www.healthwatchworcestershire.co.uk. We will be sending our Report to the Council for their response. We will publish this on our website.



3. WHAT DID WE FIND OUT?

Navigating the site

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

We recommend the Council review the website, with people who will use it, to ensure that it is “user friendly” and will meet people’s needs

Finding ‘Advice’ on the WCC website

The Council has a legal duty to provide advice as well as information. There could be better links from the County Council site to sources of advice, such as the Care Quality Commission (CQC). Our shoppers found the “Worcestershire Care Services Directory” a useful publication. It contains information about care services in Worcestershire and includes checklists to help people consider and choose services. However, it was not easy to find, and links to it are not always in place from relevant sections of 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 webpage.

We recommend that references and links to the CQC, Worcestershire Care Services Directory and to trusted, credible and respected external organisations are added to relevant pages on the WCC website.

¹ 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

Financial information and advice

We did find information about paying for care and support on the County Council's website, but there is an opportunity to better integrate the financial information and to provide links to this on the appropriate web pages. We did not find much information about independent financial advice and how to access it. In most sections on finance and paying for care people are directed to the County Council for further information.

We recommend the Council review how information and advice about financial matters, including information about independent financial advice, is presented on the WCC website.

Duty to assess adults in need

Under the Care Act 2014 the Council has a duty to assess 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 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.



We recommend it is made clear at relevant points on the website that people are entitled to an assessment of need under the Care Act 2014, and that, where appropriate, the Council describe how they will carry out this out.

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 links to information for carers could be added to more places on the County Council site.

We recommend the Council consider where links to information for carers can be usefully added to pages on the website

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.

We recommend the Council includes information about local voluntary, community and faith organisations that provide services for older people on the website.