

## Specification for the delivery of Information advice and guidance (IAG) services

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This specification forms part of the contract for the delivery of information advice and guidance (IAG) services for adults on the Isle of Wight, including but not limited to the following areas; housing, welfare and benefits, debt, legal and consumer rights, employment, health and wellbeing, caring and care options. Children's IAG is not included in this procurement but the Provider will have good knowledge of local children's facilities to ensure that signposting and referral links are effective.
- 1.2 This specification is designed to be outcome focused, rather than prescribing how the provider should deliver the services. This is in order to encourage potential providers to come up with flexible and innovative approaches to delivery. However, there are a set of core delivery expectations (see 2. below) covering the aspects of the service, which are required to be in place from the commencement of the contract.
- 1.3 In delivering this contract, providers will show willingness and adaptability in keeping up with trends and responding to changes in IAG developments and service delivery; working constructively with commissioners to plan the introduction, monitoring and evaluation of any agreed new elements of (or changes to) delivery of the service, within a timescale and in a manner to be agreed with the commissioners of the service as part of the contract management process.

### 2. Core delivery expectations

- 2.1 The successful Provider will have completed the implementation of all aspects of the core service by 1<sup>st</sup> July 2019 and be in a position to commence delivery from that date, with the following service elements in place;
  - 2.1.1 The IAG service must be operational with face to face delivery taking place at County Hall.
  - 2.1.2 In addition to the service at County Hall, the Provider must ensure that the service is provided in other localities around the island. As a minimum this will include; Ryde, the Bay area and West Wight. Service delivery may be based in formal settings (e.g. as a minimum Ryde twice a week, the bay once a week and West Wight once a week)) or less formal community venues; but the provider must be able to evidence IAG being delivered regularly and effectively within these settings, to the same standard as at the main hub.
  - 2.1.3 As well as face to face delivery, the Provider will also ensure that the public can also access the IAG service by telephone, as well as online via email, dedicated pages on the council website and via other associated IAG websites.
  - 2.1.4 As part of ensuring an integrated IAG service, delivered alongside and in partnership with council staff the Provider will make all efforts from day one to; provide constructive feedback about joint working arrangements, to respond constructively to feedback from council staff and any other partners involved in the delivery of IAG services and to make themselves available for regular liaison meetings to monitor and manage the practical aspects of partnership delivery.
  - 2.1.5 As part of the implementation of the contract the successful Provider will identify and agree with the Council's Authorised Representative the elements of core delivery activity to be reported on as part of monitoring the contract (see 2.1 in Schedule 2 of the Terms and Conditions).

### **3. Staffing**

- 3.1 The Provider must ensure that all staff responsible for the delivery of the IAG service have the skills, knowledge, capacity and availability to provide a high quality, accessible IAG service from the commencement date, reflecting the community profile; with the provider's staff co-located alongside council staff on the ground floor of County Hall to ensure a full service from day one.
- 3.2 To ensure business continuity in the delivery of Information Advice and Guidance services, in their deployment of staff and volunteers the Provider must ensure that they can provide the appropriate mix of staff and volunteers to enable them to provide a full service on each day of operation, with sufficient cover to allow for periods of training, sickness, annual leave and any other reason for absence.
- 3.3 The Provider must also ensure that their staff team have extensive knowledge of local community assets, organisations and services (including referral routes and protocols) and that all associated IAG websites and directories are populated with this information in order to be able to support the delivery of an effective, comprehensive IAG service for all adults on the Isle of Wight, which achieves the outcomes, set out below.

### **4 Outcomes**

- 4.1 Adults on the Isle of Wight can access high quality, joined up IAG services in the most convenient way for them (e.g. online, in person locally, by phone) which deliver the positive outcomes that residents need.
- 4.2 The Provider's approach ensures that the Information and advice service procured under this contract is delivered in a way which:
  - 4.2.1 a) supports people to better respond to; housing, welfare and benefits, debt, legal and consumer issues, employment, health and wellbeing, caring and care options and other IAG issues
  - b) assists them in avoiding crisis (and where possible the need for formal services)
  - c) empowers people with tools to support them in maximising their independence and developing positive strategies for self-help and financial resilience and
  - d) ensures that the Services are delivered in a manner which is compatible with the duties placed on the Local Authority under the Care Act 2014 (and specifically Section 4 The Duty to Provide information and advice) as well as any other legal frameworks governing the delivery of Information Advice and Guidance services.
- 4.3 The future sustainability of council and independent IAG services will be enhanced through collaborative working, aimed at; reducing cost through greater efficiency in delivery, promoting diversion away from and reducing the need for formal services and avoiding unnecessary referrals/potential service duplication, through the provision of effective information, advice and signposting delivered in partnership with council staff.

### **5 Service Aims**

- 5.1 The services delivered under this contract are aimed at: -
  - 5.1.1 a) Providing a seamless and comprehensive information advice and guidance service for adults; co-located and delivered in partnership with IW council Information advice and guidance staff as part of a 'hub' approach based on the ground floor of County Hall, with an outreach presence across the rest of the island.
  - 5.1.2 b) Ensuring that Isle of Wight residents can access IAG using their preferred method through the provision of online and telephone access to IAG in addition to the face to face provision.
  - 5.1.3 c) Maximising the reach, effectiveness and accessibility of IAG delivery through the delivery and updating of a comprehensive directory of up to date, relevant local community information.

## **6. Service principles**

- 6.1 A partnership approach and good knowledge of the local community will help to avoid any duplication of service provision and the partners will operate a shared system approach to the delivery of Information Advice and Guidance for people on the Isle of Wight, supported by regular liaison meetings (see 2.1.4 above). Integral to this will be a shared understanding of and commitment to inter-agency referral between partners, with protocols and processes to ensure that a) all IAG issues are dealt with b) the most urgent issues are dealt with first, and c) the overall service operates in the most integrated way possible with no unnecessary additional attendances (except in the case of specialist IAG work such as legal representation or more complex cases) required for people to get the support they need.
- 6.2 The Provider will develop an in depth understanding of the IAG needs of the island and new approaches and areas of support required will be identified through regular analysis of emerging trends, feedback and data from IAG delivery.
- 6.3 In their planning and delivery of the IAG service the Provider will;
  - 6.3.1 a) expand the digital and self-help elements of IAG delivery, encouraging people to utilise IAG resources in a way which maximises their independence and self-reliance and
  - 6.3.2 b) ensure that the IAG provision plays a role in diverting people away from the need for formal statutory service provision; aiming to support them to live independently and resolve their IAG needs without the use of costly public services.
- 6.4 The IAG service will not deliver formal Advocacy services (apart from as part of legal representation) as these services are procured and delivered under separate contract. However, it is likely that some informal advocacy-type work (i.e. more detailed involvement and case support) will be required as part of assisting people with more complex cases. People identified as in need of formal or ongoing advocacy or legal representation will be referred to an appropriate local Advocacy service or the Providers legal representative, respectively.

## **7 Court Advocacy and/or legal representation**

- 7.1 This is a specialist service to be delivered as part of the overall IAG contract, providing legal representation/advocacy in the courts to households facing repossession. The Provider will deliver the service on both a pre-arranged basis and through engaging with defendants at court who have not sought previous advice or advocacy. The successful delivery of the service will contribute towards

the Council's targets to reduce the number of homeless acceptances as well as the number of households requiring temporary accommodation.

- 7.2 In the delivery of the Court Desk Advocacy Service the Provider will ensure that the following elements of the service are carried out in a way which achieves the intended targets referred to in 6.1 above: -
- 7.2.1 The provision of a dedicated caseworker (appropriately qualified and experienced and registered with the Law Society) at all possession hearings being held in the Newport court on the Isle of Wight.
  - 7.2.2 The caseworker will be available to people who attend the court unrepresented and who are not already open cases within the IAG service.
  - 7.2.3 The caseworker will establish what has led to the repossession action being taken and advise on how best to stave off repossession and advocate/provide legal representation for the person in the court proceedings.
  - 7.2.4 The caseworker will then ensure that follow up casework is made available via the IAG service to provide advice and assistance, particularly where dealing with multiple debts, to ensure that no further court action is taken in respect of repossession or debt.
  - 7.2.5 Where necessary and appropriate the caseworker or other IAG representative will refer people to local services and organisations who may be able to assist in the prevention of homelessness.
  - 7.2.6 The IAG will provide statistics and information to the IWC which measures the success of the court desk advocacy.

## **8 Reporting and Monitoring**

- 8.1 Both IW Council and the Provider will identify a named Authorised Representative who will be the key liaison person in relation to the management of this contract.
- 8.2 In order to ensure close oversight of the initial implementation of this contract, monthly meetings will take place between the commissioner and provider Authorised Representatives for the first six months, aimed at managing effective implementation and picking up issues early in order to resolve them. From month seven, contract monitoring meetings will be held quarterly to monitor the performance management requirements of the specification (see schedule 2) report against the Key Performance Indicators and evidence the meeting of outcomes specified in the contract.
- 8.3 The Provider must ensure that all staff are suitably qualified, skilled and supported to enable them to deliver all the specified outcomes and outputs within this specification, including where this includes formal professional advice (see 6 above) with the main IAG operating hours aligned to the Council's core Hub provision in Newport and operating to the same opening hours. In addition, the Provider will be able to evidence the provision of continuous professional development for staff working in the broad and ever changing arena of information advice and guidance.
- 8.4 The Provider is required to have in place a robust and rigorous quality assurance (QA) system that measures the quality of all aspects of the service being delivered. The Provider will also ensure that they regularly review performance

and quality in the delivery of the service in line with their internal QA process in order to be reassured that the service is operating at the highest quality in its performance of the contract.

- 8.5 The Provider must have an easily understood, well-published and accessible procedure to enable people to make a complaint or compliment and for complaints to be investigated. The Provider must be responsive to complaints/compliments and recommendations concerning the provision of their services and make adjustments to provision accordingly.

## **9 Information cycle**

- 9.1 The Provider will utilise systems to enable them to analyse referral, performance trends and other relevant information in order to a) report effectively on key performance indicators and b) understand and anticipate the IAG needs of the island (e.g. where a change in the way Council Tax is collected, the Introduction of Universal Credit or other decisions that may lead to a spike in IAG needs).
- 9.2 The Provider will develop planned approaches to future support requirements based on an intelligent analysis of emerging trends and data from IAG delivery and work collaboratively with partners to share intelligence and ensure that statutory colleagues are briefed on developments in IAG needs for the island population.

## **10. Volume of enquiries**

- 10.1 The volume of IAG delivery is expected to fluctuate based on demand at the time as well as the emerging trends described above. However, as an illustration the Provider will need to deliver an average of around 15000 IAG sessions per year under this contract. The exact core delivery expectations will be agreed with the provider during the mobilisation period (in keeping with 2 above).