

Summary of the statutory responsibilities of Local Authorities in relation to adult social care and the statutory role of the DASS

The following is a summary of the guidance issued by the Department of Health in 2006 on the role of the Director of Adult Social Services (DASS).

The statutory responsibilities of Local Authorities in relation to adult social care

- Chief Executives of local authorities with social services responsibilities should ensure that a DASS is in post
- The local authority shall take steps to ensure that the post holder is given the necessary authority, is enabled/given the necessary resources to provide professional leadership (including delivering workforce planning) in social care and deliver the cultural change necessary to implement person-centred services and to promote partnership working, and such other responsibilities as the local authority determines
- The local authority shall ensure that the DASS is made accountable for the delivery of local authority social services functions listed in Schedule 1 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 (as amended), other than those for which the Director of Children's services is responsible.
- Local authorities shall ensure that the DASS is directly accountable to the Chief Executive of the local authority and comparable in terms of seniority, with the Director of Children's Services.
- The Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 (as amended), allows local authorities to jointly appoint a single DASS to cover their local authority areas. The partnership arrangements provided for by the Health Act 1999 also enable joint funding of posts between a local authority and an NHS body.
- A joint appointment of a person to a DASS post and a post in the NHS is therefore possible. Where such a joint appointment occurs the DASS must remain an employee of the local authority for the full range of social services responsibilities. In addition, local authorities may extend the DASS's responsibilities to cover other local authority services and responsibilities (such as leisure, housing, transport and adult education). It is for local authorities themselves to determine whether to utilise/make use of these provisions given their particular circumstances.
- The DASS is a politically restricted statutory chief officer post under Section 2 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (as amended). This means that he or she may not be a Member of the local authority. As is the case with former Directors of Social Services, the appointment of the DASS is not a function of the executive. This means that the full council can take the decision, or may choose to delegate the decision.

The statutory role of the DASS

The DASS's key leadership role is to deliver the local authority's part in:

- Improving preventative services and delivering earlier intervention
- Managing the necessary cultural change to give people greater choice and control over services
- Tackling inequalities and improving access to services
- Increasing support for people with the highest levels of need

There are seven key aspects to be included in the DASS's remit:

- (i) Accountability for assessing local needs and ensuring availability and delivery of a full range of adult social services
- (ii) Professional leadership, including workforce planning
- (iii) Leading the implementation of standards
- (iv) Managing cultural change
- (v) Promoting local access and ownership and driving partnership working
- (vi) Delivering an integrated whole systems approach to supporting communities
- (vii) Promoting social inclusion and wellbeing

Source : ADASS (February 2012)