



# Information and Advice Strategy for Kingston 2017...

## A. Strategic Context and scope

### 1.1 Overview:

This version of the Information and Advice Strategy for Kingston is an evolution and development of previous strategies which began with the Community Legal Services Partnership work (CLSP) over 15 years ago. The current version takes account of changes to the operating environment and includes provision to support the effective delivery of statutory obligations under the Care Act 2014.

The key delivery mechanism for our aims and objectives is our network of providers which has been in operation for over 10 years and is called kiaa (Kingston Information and Advice Alliance). This is a cross sector network with members from voluntary, statutory and private sectors and is well established with mutual referral systems, online information and advice for local people and a Single Front Door (SFD) to all agencies supported by Citizens Advice Kingston under contract to RBK. The SFD operates in line with protocols established in relation to the Universal Credit partnership project and makes sure that people have a single point of access for help from the agency best suited to assist them. The underlying principle of this is that diversity of supply of quality information and advice provides the best outcomes for local people and that together we value the 'wrap around' provision that comes from agencies working with specific client groups. This is the most effective and efficient use of resources as well as the best way to meet user's needs. It also remains open to people to contact agencies directly, in the traditional way.

The Advice Kingston service is established under contract to RBK from 1st April 2017 and is delivered by Citizens Advice Kingston which runs the kiaa network. The kiaa aims are to deliver, by working together - better services for clients; more funding opportunities; a stronger campaigning voice and these principles are fundamental to this strategy.

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### 1.2 Purpose of the strategy

The purpose will be to :

- Deliver better outcomes for people in Kingston through cost effective, high quality and accessible local information and advice services across all sectors
- Develop sustainable provision to 'wrap around' underpin and link with specialist provision locally
- Highlight the crucial role of advice in early intervention and prevention services whatever the client group
- Identify need, priorities, gaps in provision
- Identify and agree appropriate funding sources and develop partnerships for delivery
- Maintain and develop effective partnerships to develop capacity to meet challenges and changes in service delivery and in the funding environment

### 1.4 Related strategies:

Our Information and Advice strategy will be relevant to the following high level strategies and plans:<sup>1</sup>

- Kingston Plan
- Active and Supportive Communities Strategy
- Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy
- Carers Strategy
- ASC Transformation Programme
- Kingston Digital Inclusion Strategy
- Suicide Prevention Strategy
- Housing Strategy
- Resilience plans
- Domestic Violence and Sexual Abuse prevention strategy
- Mental Health Strategy
- Suicide Prevention Strategy
- Better Lives project
- Refugees and Asylum Seeker's Strategy

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<sup>1</sup> see appendix for more detail of how information and advice needs are referenced in these related strategies.

### 1.5 Key Strategic Partners

The Kingston Information and Advice strategy will be delivered through partnership working in the Borough. Key delivery partners will be:

- kiaa member agencies
- Adult Social Care
- Clinical Commissioning Group
- Public Health
- Housing
- Children's services
- Healthwatch
- Revenues and Benefits

### 1.6 Consultation and engagement:

In developing the Kingston Information and Advice strategy, we have made use of feedback from users surveys, CAK Annual Meeting report, kiaa members events. This strategy will be regularly reviewed and updated in light of feedback from local people, service providers and funders.

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## B. Where are we now?

### 2. Needs analysis

2.1 Previous analysis has shown that there is generally high demand for support on welfare benefits issues, housing and debt. With the withdrawal of Legal Aid for social welfare law categories this has increased with demand outstripping supply.

2.2 Changes since the last analysis have included Welfare Reform and the introduction of the Care Act. These changes have increased individual's need for information and advice about money issues (including how to pay for social care services) and how to combat fuel and food poverty. The legislative changes have also resulted in more

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housing problems.

2.3 There are now more sources of help in relation to debt problems as several online services can now be accessed and various other online self help materials are available.

2.4 Previous assessment of need concluded that Welfare Benefits, Housing and Debt are often interlinked so provision needs to be coordinated for these topics. Also that Employment support is scarce, particularly a lack of representation at Tribunals. Whilst consumer advice demand is high, provision is robust through the national Consumer Advice line service. Family issues support has dropped significantly with the withdrawal of Legal Aid and also legislative changes which now require mediation prior to Court action. Community Care provision is more important now than previously due to legislative changes and there are very few providers locally. Advice on Education issues, Mental Health problems and Discrimination are also very low. Whilst there is little provision locally for immigration advice, demand for this has in Kingston has traditionally been lower than in other London boroughs- however issues of residency entitlement are likely to increase with the withdrawal from the European Union and therefore need in this area should be monitored with a view to establishing provision.

### 3.Provision

3.1 There are over 70 members of the kias network and this covers agencies and individuals in the voluntary, statutory and private sector. This means that there can be robust coordination of local information and advice services and that communications between providers can be quickly and easily effected via the network's online communication channels..

3.2 The recognised quality mark for advice services is the Advice Quality Standard and several of the key providers hold this qualification ( CAK, RAK, KCAH and Staywell)

3.3 Online referral systems were established through the Advisers Working Together project which was BIG Lottery funded. The referral system uses the kias website (now incorporated into the CAK website) as an online portal to all member agencies and provides a quick and efficient way for agencies to refer clients to partners who are best

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suited to assist the client. This system is well used and is being expanded as and when agencies seek to use the online referral process.

3.4 Online self help materials and an online submission facility have also been provided through the kiaa 'One Click' website (incorporated into the main CAK website) which was also set up by the AWT project. This provision is in addition to and does not duplicate or replicate direct access by clients to individual agencies for support which is recognised as essential in making sure that clients have the choice of a range of access methods to local and relevant services. This is important as quick easy and appropriate access will result in clients seeking support in a timely manner and this can avoid escalation of problems with consequential negative impacts for the client and the community. The self help materials are reviewed and extended as and when required by members of kiaa and come from a range of nationally accredited sources such as Citizens Advice, Shelter, Gov.uk, Age Uk etc..

3.5 The online systems are managed by CAK and onward referral decisions are made using an agreed protocol for work allocation. These systems provide the Single Front Door to all local providers of information and advice.

3.6 From our assessment of local information and advice services our improvement goals are:

- enhanced communications within the kiaa network
- continued development of engagement with statutory partners in the kiaa network

3.9 We believe that the following ongoing developments are exceptionally important and relevant and will be key building blocks of our strategy:

- kiaa network, providing diversity of provision and 'wrap around' services
- self-help materials
- online submissions from clients
- online referrals between agencies
- agency specific provision – especially face to face work for those who need it
- sharing resources such as training and communications

### 4. Quality of provision in Kingston:

4.1 There is a tradition of quality service provision in Kingston with agencies holding relevant quality marks such as the current Advice Quality Standard. The kiaa network seeks to support agencies to obtain and retain this quality marking. One of the objectives of the network is to maintain quality standards in local service provision. The Care Act 2014 gives a responsibility to ensure that local information and advice is of high quality - eg clear, comprehensive, consistent, accurate and up to date) We note that some smaller groups do not hold this or similar qualifications and this could be addressed through infrastructure support from KVA for example.

### 5. Joining things up:

5.1 It is noted that the kiaa network is well established locally and provides for good mutual referrals and mutual support for front line staff. This is to be commended and it is agreed that such provision should be consolidated and developed further so that gaps and overlaps are avoided. This will secure the best services for local people and also make sure that the most effective use is made of scarce resources. It is recognised that there may be challenges to this cooperative way of working due to the Commissioning process which may lead to competition. Guidance from infrastructure support agencies such as Kingston Voluntary Action and Advice Services Alliance will be sought if problems arise due to competition locally.

### 6. Becoming more efficient:

6.1 It is noted that we need to deliver maximum value for the investment of resources in information and advice provision and that online support in the form of self help materials and submission and referral systems go a long way to meet this need. However, it is always possible to deliver further improvements and this strategy will focus on future developments which will deliver efficiencies. Our key idea for this is to consolidate the work of kiaa and to make sure that it is adequately funded so that it is a secure platform for our future services

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### 7. Evidencing success:

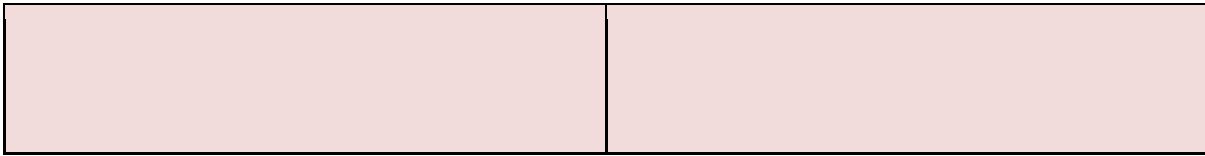
7.1 The kiaa network has already devised a shared recording system to log outcomes of advice which can supplement individual agency systems and help to demonstrate the impact and benefit of the work being done locally. We intend to build on this and to further develop our evidence base to support future developments of our service provision. We are particularly interested in developing more opportunities for local people to tell us about the services they have received, what has worked well and what needs further development. We may use the 'Think Local/Act Personal' approach to identify success which focusses on 'I' statements such as 'I can access easy to understand information' etc.

7.2 The following table shows our SWOT analysis for information and advice services (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats)

<p><b>Strengths</b>            Shared working            RBK and VCS partnerships eg Welfare Reform team            kiaa            communications            local knowledge            local expertise and recognition            trust            diversity of supply (user choice)*</p>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b>            IT info sharing challenges            communications            lack of variety in delivery - possible digital barriers            duplication*            assumptions about how things are done leading to not challenging</p>
<p><b>Opportunities</b>            Greater campaigning strength            partnerships            growth (controlled)            VCS deliver more as Statutory providers deliver less            develop and share platforms            less duplication of effort            show impact            creation of new services and opportunities</p>	<p><b>Threats</b>            Lack of trust sometimes            budget constraints            overall effects of legislative changes            legislation            shared local authority services            outsourcing            RBK staffing structures and locations changing            creation of new services and opportunities</p>



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\* there was an interesting discussion about duplication. There was a question about where the line was drawn, and by whom, on duplication/choice. There was agreement that often the best information and advice services come from agencies that are known to individuals and who can offer 'wrap around' services and support. Not all clients need this, so a generalist comprehensive information and advice service such as Citizens Advice is needed in addition to services provided to specific client groups. It was agreed that supporting and maintaining diversity of provision will be the fundamental principle for our local strategy.

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## C. Where do we need to get to?:

8.1 We aim to provide information and advice services which demonstrate:

- **Choice/personalisation:** people should be able to choose how/where they access advice and advice should fit their particular circumstances
- **Partnership** working; across organisations , services etc
- **Comprehensive** services - people mostly have complex, inter related problems and need 'joined up' services at the earliest stage
- **Early access** to timely advice on a wide range of subjects to avoid legal problems arising
- **High quality** - so people have problems resolved well and experience information and advice as easy to understand, accessible, timely , comprehensive and accurate.
- **Efficiency** - maximising the potential of the internet, streamlining the processes for producing information, reducing duplication. pooling resources, and making the most of our informal assets whilst recognising that there will also be a continuing need for face to face services

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- **Joined up working** with an effective referral network involving all agencies
- **Inclusive** of all agencies: importance of gateway organisations and providers of other forms of advice
- **Aligning** with local, regional and national requirements and funding opportunities but prioritising what's needed for Kingston - tying in with local authority priorities and plans

# 9. Our vision, approach and priorities:

## 9.1 Our Vision:

We will make sure that local people receive high quality and impartial information advice and advocacy services which enable them to optimise their health and wellbeing.

## 9.2 Our approach:

services will be personalised, preventative, accessible, relevant, high quality, with diversity of provider

## 9.3 Our priorities

Based on the assessment and analysis of local need and provision we identify the following issues as priorities for our community:

### 9.3.1 Subjects:

welfare benefits, housing, debt management, money management, combating fuel and food poverty, funding for care services, welfare reform

### 9.3.2 Access:

We will continue to offer a range of methods to access information and advice services including, but not limited to, internet provision, telephone support, face to face , in particular:

- better online access and greater skills in the community to use the internet portals

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- mapping of existing provision
- continued development of self help materials online using the One Click website
- continued provision of online submissions using the One Click website
- continued support for kiaa and development to make sure that all local information and advice providers are involved so that clients get the best possible services as agencies are supported to meet quality standards
- greater understanding of what services agencies provide

### 9.3.3 Vulnerable groups:

we will specifically improve access to information and advice for the following groups who have been identified as vulnerable : Black and Minority Ethnic communities, disabled people, refugees, homeless people, those who misuse substances, those who experience domestic abuse, those with mental health problems, older people, those living in poverty

## D. How we will improve people's experience:

10.1 We will devise an action plan for development of local services which is based on feedback from local people about their experiences. this will include:

- local people reporting that they find it easy to get information and advice
- satisfaction with online materials
- information and advice helping to resolve issues at an early stage
- information and advice helping people to plan ahead and avoid problems
- people understanding how social care is funded and what their contribution will be
- information being accessible, comprehensive and of good quality

## 11. Action plan to deliver the strategy-

Objective	Activities
Influencing local strategies	representation of kiaa on range of strategy working groups, to make sure information and advice recognised as critical to the local community in preventing and addressing problems promotional materials widely circulated
Understand what agencies do	info held online and up to date front line staff meetings communication systems working well outcomes logged and shared
Maintain diversity of provision	mapping of provision forming working partnerships bidding in partnership shared training
Variety of channels of access	work to maintain: online self help materials online submissions and referrals phone access drop in services and appointments
Campaigning for change in policies that affect people's lives	sharing information about the impact of services local and national campaigns to improve policies

### 11.1 . Barriers to the effective implementation of the Strategy

The following elements were identified as possible barriers to implementing the strategy:

- lack of awareness of what agencies provide
- digital exclusion

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- lack of provision - eg interpreting services/immigration advice/benefit appeals support
- data sharing restrictions

We also agreed that we could work together to overcome some of these barriers by continuing to use the kiaa network, having goodwill and trust between agencies, sharing ideas and information more effectively, having front line staff meetings, using data to develop services, having co located multi agency hubs and strong communications systems.

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## E. How will we Measure Success?

12. Whilst it is necessary to review and publish information about the effectiveness of local information and advice services so that we can demonstrate value for money and quality provision, there are some challenges in such measurement. It is recognised for instance that preventative work is particularly difficult to measure. However, good work has been done already through the kiaa AWT project which has set out agreed outcomes for information and advice services and also devised a quick and easy logging system for agencies to use. This can be one element of our measurement plans. At our kiaa event the following measures were noted: positive feedback from clients, internal and external audits, harmonious relationships, new clients from harder to reach groups. It was also noted that higher client volumes might indicate success for some agencies - ie more people accessing services being a good thing and for some agencies it might reflect a negative aspect ie fewer clients needing services would be preferable. It was therefore agreed that careful consideration needs to be given to analysing data collected with a view to measuring success. It was also agreed that we need to make sure we use the data we collect so that time is not wasted on data collection which could have been spent on service delivery

# Definition of Terms (as agreed by kiaa members):

**Information** is data given to individuals. For instance, a leaflet about services available or a particular problem and how to resolve it.

**Advice** is the application of such data to an individual's circumstances. For instance, our information system shows that you can make a claim at the court, on the basis of the details you have given me about your situation.

**Legal advice** is data applied to an individual's situation which involves a legal point . For instance, this information shows that you can be pursued by the landlord for rent arrears and, under the legislation, if you do not pay then you could lose your home by the landlord taking you to court.

# Membership of kiaa ( Kingston Information and Advice Alliance)

for a full list of members, please see our website : <http://www.kiaa.org.uk/agencies-involved/>