

New set of standards to improve adult social care commissioning

November 4 2014

A new set of standards to help local authorities improve the effectiveness and quality of adult social care commissioning has been launched at the National Children and Adult Services (NCAS) Conference in Manchester.

The standards, drawn up by a team from the Health Services Management Centre (HSMC) and Institute of Local Government Studies (INLOGOV) at the University of Birmingham, will support local authorities in achieving better outcomes following the implementation of the Care Act 2014 next year.

The work was commissioned by the Local Government Association and the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS), funded by the Department of Health. The team was led by Dr Karen Newbigging and included Catherine Mangan, Professor Jon Glasby, Robin Miller and Carol Ward.

Dr Newbigging, Senior Lecturer in Healthcare Policy and Management at the University of Birmingham, said: "The Care Act 2014 has renewed the focus on effective commissioning and places a number of statutory duties on local authorities – in particular, a statutory principle to promote health and wellbeing; the duty to integrate with health, housing and other services; and the duty to promote diversity and quality in the market of care and support providers to ensure they appropriately meet the needs of the whole population.

'This set of standards will provide a route map for local authorities to improve the quality of commissioning in challenging financial times. The focus is very much on what they can do, with their partners, to commission in a way that meets the diverse needs of their local populations.

'There is a strong emphasis in the standards on focusing on what matters most to people – driving up the quality of [social care](#) and commissioning for prevention, building on what local people and communities have to offer. We are now looking forward to feedback on the standards as local authorities and their partners try them out. This has to include people using social care, as well as their carers, advocates and communities, if it is to be meaningful.'

The NCAS launch on 30 October took the form of a roundtable discussion chaired by David Brindle of the Guardian. It was opened by Clenton Farquharson MBE, co-chair of the Think Local, Act Personal partnership, who said the standards would enable commissioners to focus on what matters most: putting people at the centre rather than fitting them into services and listening to people who use services and acting on what they say.

The standards – co-designed with a project steering group coordinated by Think Local, Act Personal – have been created for and with local authorities to support sector-led improvement in the quality of commissioning in adult social care. They have been developed from a literature review of the evidence for effective commissioning in social care, as well as a series of ADASS development events and workshops, which engaged a wide range of stakeholders and identified challenges in commissioning.

Through this process, 12 principles for good commissioning have been identified which underpin the standards. They have been grouped into

four domains to define good commissioning as:

- **Person-centred and outcome-focused:** good commissioning is person-centred and focuses on what people say matters most to them. It empowers people to have choice and control in their lives and over their care and support. The relevant standards cover the quality of experience of people who have used social care services, as well as their families, carers and local communities, and consider the outcomes of social care at both an individual and population level.
- **Inclusive:** the focus of these standards is the quality of the commissioning process in terms of coproduction, positive engagement with all providers, and equality.
- **Well-led:** these standards look at how well-led commissioning is by the council, including how commissioning of social care is supported by the wider organisation.
- **Promoting a vibrant, diverse and sustainable market,** including workforce development and ensuring value for money.

The version of the [standards](#) launched at NCAS was a prototype, which will now be subject to testing by local authorities and their partners. Following this testing and subsequent refinement, they will be widely disseminated for [local authorities](#) in England to adopt to support the implementation of the Care Act in spring 2015.

More information: The full standards document is available to view and download here: [www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/car ...
0180/6686003/ARTICLE](http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/car...0180/6686003/ARTICLE)

Provided by University of Birmingham

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