FirstStop Local Partners

Service Definition - Housing and Care Options Advice Service

1 Overall aim

To support older people and their families to make informed choices about, and thereby exercise control over, their housing and related care and support options.

2 General

The service will provide free, independent, impartial information, advice and support, delivered both directly and through working with both local and national partners.

The advice, information and support will include the following core elements:

- Staying put
- Moving
- Finance including housing and care related welfare benefits and equity release as well as housing-related debt
- Other local relevant services which enable older people to continue to live independently.

3 Quality Assurance

i) Local FirstStop partners should have, or be working towards, a recognised quality accreditation both in terms of organisational effectiveness and the delivery of advice.

ii) Local FirstStop partners will be responsive to the needs and views of older people and actively seek to involve older people in service development and, where appropriate, in service delivery. Local FirstStop partners will actively seek feedback, both positive and negative, from users of their service and will use such feedback to continually monitor and develop the service.

4 Objectives

i) Information

- to provide information about older people’s housing & care options and sources of related advice and information for older people, volunteers, professionals and other interested parties

ii) Advice

- to provide comprehensive person-centred housing and care information and advice in response to individuals seeking advice about
their housing & care options, and the related financial implications of those choices

iii) Practical support and assistance
- to provide person-centred, individually tailored practical support and assistance to enable users of the service, as far as is practical, to implement their chosen housing & care option

iv) Partnership
- to deliver the above by working in partnership with EAC FirstStop
- to work with EAC FirstStop to develop information on local services which may support older people to implement their chosen housing & care option
- to develop partnerships with other relevant organisations and agencies including local housing and social service authorities, the health sector, and voluntary and community sector organisations, as well as national partners such as Independent Age, Age UK and Foundations in order to facilitate the delivery of a local comprehensive housing and care options advice service.

5 Service Delivery

The model of provision is based on a three level analysis of service user need/ assistance (set out in the diagram below).

Level 1 - Information
This will usually be delivered on a 1: many basis to a local group or at a local event. Information may also be provided on a 1:1 basis by e-mail, letter or phone call. As well as providing older people with general information about their housing & care options, awareness would be raised concerning the
availability of the FirstStop website and telephone helpline and the local advice service.

**Level 2 – Advice**
One-to-one, single contact / intervention or provision of information and advice. These lighter-touch cases would be delivered primarily over the phone or at an advice surgery. They may also be delivered by letter or e-mail. They will typically involve some discussion of personal situation and tailored information provision about the enquirer's housing and care options.

**Level 3 – Casework**
Individually tailored in-depth casework involving 1:1 advice, advocacy and practical assistance to enable the person, as far as practical, to achieve their chosen housing and care outcome. Likely to involve 2< interactions and working in partnership with other agencies to achieve the desired outcome.

**Relationship to the FirstStop national service**
There is an expectation that partnership projects will make referrals to FirstStop Advice and that conversely, FirstStop Advice will refer people who need one to one assistance to local partners.

6 **Anticipated outcomes**
The outcomes delivered by housing and care options advice services, working together with other partners both locally and nationally, are likely to include:

i) older people will be enabled to retain their independence in later life through making informed decisions about their accommodation and care arrangements.

ii) older people will be enabled to maintain good health and avoid accommodation-related acute health problems (eg. falls); will be enabled to delay or avoid unnecessary care home admission; will be enabled to avoid unnecessary delay in returning home after a period of hospitalisation

iii) older people who wish to do so will be supported to downsize to more suitable accommodation

iv) older people who wish to do so will be enabled to release equity safely and financially efficiently through down-sizing or through equity-release products.

iv) more effective use will be made of the supply of family-sized accommodation through supporting older people who wish to do so to move to more appropriately sized accommodation

v) older people will have access to expert advice and services to adapt and repair their homes, improving their safety and quality of life, which will also contribute to the maintenance of the housing stock and to the local economy through increased expenditure on building work.
vi) older people will have access to information about local services and networks which will enable them to remain independent and active in their local community

vii) increased awareness and understanding about housing and care options in later life and where appropriate the training of older people to provide peer-to-peer information will encourage active citizenship and enable greater self reliance.

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