

Consultation on role of Director of Adult Social Services

Social Care Institute for Excellence response

Annex A: Questions for consultation

Stakeholders are invited to make general comments on the draft guidance, but it would be particularly helpful if responses could focus on the following:

(i) We have issued the Guidance on the Role of the Director of Adult Social Services as best practice guidance. Is statutory guidance necessary? If so, for what reasons?

Statutory guidance is necessary to provide a minimum level of consistency across the country in the remit and accountabilities of the Director of Adult Social Services, so that government and other national organizations like the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) can engage with the postholders systematically.

(ii) Does the guidance, as currently drafted, provide authorities with sufficient flexibility to meet their business needs? If not, what further flexibility would be useful and why (within the legal framework).

The guidance needs to strike the right balance between flexibility about means and clear accountability for outcomes. The cultural change which is part of the Director of Adult Social Services's responsibility cannot be achieved without challenging the status quo.

(iii) Are there groups of people in society with social care needs that are not currently being met? If so, will this guidance facilitate their inclusion?

There are groups whose needs are being met partially, poorly or not at all. SCIE's work with groups who are marginalised by mainstream services gives clear evidence for this. The guidance will not facilitate their fuller inclusion unless the remit for the Director of Adult Social Services to engage directly with service users, carers and service user and carer led organisations is greatly strengthened. It does not take on board the Green Paper messages about choice and control, and retains too strong a provider and commissioner focus

(iv) Our intention is to avoid being prescriptive about the configuration of services, although we believe that the DASS should be a senior local authority officer. Should the DASS normally be directly accountable to the Chief Executive?

Yes, and with access as required to decision-making in other areas of local government provision and expenditure

(v) Is guidance on the role of the DASS useful as a tool for local authorities to facilitate planning the management structure and providing a focus on adult social services?

The Director of Adult Social Services is a strategic leadership role with a remit that stretches well beyond the confines of the local authority's own activities. It must have strong connections to intelligence, performance and quality systems that enable the Director of Adult Social Services and the local authority leadership to deliver the required outcomes and improvements

(vi) We have defined the Role of the DASS as far as possible in terms of the deliverables that should be achieved and avoided being prescriptive about the way that duties should be performed in order to maximise scope for local discretion. Is this the best approach?

This is an acceptable approach, but it requires the Director of Adult Social Services to have access to dedicated staffing, information systems and other resources for their wider strategic responsibilities, over and above their resource and line management structure. Clarity is also needed about the accountabilities of the Director of Adult Social Services, the lead member and the authority as a whole.

(vii) Are there other key deliverables that should be included within the DASS remit?

The Director of Adult Social Services should be responsible for ensuring a level playing field for statutory, private, voluntary/ community and user-led service providers, and for engaging service user and carer stakeholders in developing and implementing a cross-sector local service improvement strategy.

(viii) Does the creation of the DASS post alongside the Director of Children's Services post have implications for the wider social care workforce?

A cross-sector workforce development strategy is required, together with coordinated approaches to labour market and recruitment/retention issues.

(ix) Is guidance on providing a political focus on adult social services helpful to support the development of a clear political focus on the needs of adults with social care needs?

What is required is more than just a political focus, but a concerted strategy to extend the civil and human rights and citizenship opportunities of marginalised groups.

(x) We are proposing that the appointment of a Lead Member should be at the discretion of local authorities. Should this be statutory? If so, for what reasons?

There should be a statutory requirement to demonstrate effective political accountability arrangements for the Director of Adult Social Services's wider remit.

(xi) How well does the lead member model fit with different political structures within local authorities?

No response

(xii) Does the title "Director of Adult Social Services" adequately reflect the remit that we envisage for the postholder, or would an alternative title better reflect the management of modern social care? If so, what should this title be?

No response

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