

SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELL-BEING (WALES) ACT

Resource pack for managers:

**‘Better Conversations’ in Information, Advice and Assistance Services**



[**#GetTheAct**](http://www.twitter.com/gettheact)

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Index of training resources

**SECTION 01 – CONTEXT AND INTRODUCTION**

An overview of the resources: who they are for, aims and objectives, and suggestions for getting the most out of them.

**SECTION 02 – HANDOUT**

A handout on the five stages of the conversation.

**SECTION 03 – PRESENTATION**

A presentation aiming to achieve better conversations with people using the Information Advice and Assistance service, including facilitator notes for guidance and preparation. This can also be printed as a handout with space for participants to make notes.

**SECTION 04 – ADDITIONAL MATERIALS**

Useful links for up to date information.

**These resources can be downloaded from the Information and Learning Hub:** [**www.socialcare.wales/hub/home**](http://www.socialcare.wales/hub/home)**. It is expressly prohibited to use any, or all, of this training resource for commercial gain.**

**SECTION 01**

CONTEXT AND INTRODUCTION

Context and introduction

Context

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 provided the basis for a new statutory framework for social care in Wales. The principles of the Act include an emphasis on:

• promoting well-being;

• a preventative approach;

• greater voice and control for the individual; and

• working co-productively with individuals and their families and friends.

The Information, Advice and Assistance service is an important contribution to meeting these principles. In particular, the ‘what matters conversation’ sets the scene for a positive and co-productive relationship with individuals requesting support.

This resource pack is designed to support facilitators to deliver a half day workshop for managers in Information, Advice and Assistance services.

To maximise use of these resources, the facilitator will need an understanding of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act and in particular the role of Information, Advice and Assistance services and the skills to facilitate strategic discussions. The facilitator will also need a good working understanding of what the local arrangements for Information Advice and Assistance services are and how they are organised.

The outcome of this workshop should be used to inform delivery of the skills based training for the frontline workforce.

Aim of training

• Explore the organisational buy-in and implications needed to have ‘better and different conversations’ with our public and professional colleagues.

• Explore the skills required of workers (by sampling exercises).

• Agree a plan for sustaining the necessary change.

Target group

This resource pack is designed for those managing, supporting and being accountable for the Information, Advice and Assistance service.

The resources

These resources include:

• Power-point presentation with trainer’s notes

• Activities and exercises

• A selection of handouts

The facilitator may also select additional handouts and learning materials, for example, local information about the Information, Advice and Assistance service and information from the Social Care Wales Information and Learning Hub.

<https://socialcare.wales/hub/home>

Using the resources

The resources are intended to be used flexibly to respond to local need. The power point presentation and notes are divided into five sections:

1. Introduction and context
2. Vision for the service
3. Good conversations
4. Outcomes
5. Sustainability

We recommend working through all 5 sections, using the slides primarily as the basis for group discussion and action planning. Timings for each section may vary according to local need and progress on developments in Information Advice and Assistance.

Depending on need, the facilitator may wish to draw on additional material from the resource pack for frontline workers.

Evaluation

The facilitator should allow sufficient time to evaluate the workshop focusing on:

• Whether the aims and objectives have been met.

• The actions the manager intends to take following the workshop.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to the following organisations for materials, examples, time and expertise developing this pack:

Achieving Sustainable Change ASC Ltd

Social Services Improvement Agency

Social Care Wales

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Cardiff City Council

Caerphilly County Borough Council

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

Wrexham County Borough Council

**SECTION 02**

**SECTION 02**

HANDOUT

**Handout**

**FIVE STAGES OF THE CONVERSATION**

1. Open engaging questions

2. Active listening

3. Open exploratory questions

4. Information exchange

5. Summary and Actions

**STAGE 1 -** Open, engaging (not leading) questions

For example: “Tell me a bit about what’s happening?”

Rather than a **leading question:** “What’s the problem and how can I help?”

Many of us are already aware of how effective this opening statement can be and many staff already uses this approach. We are giving people the opportunity to make a qualitative statement rather than a simple information based statement with no context.

**STAGE 2 -** Active listening & the power of reflection

If you are reflecting effectively, you are focussing on someone’s world, their thoughts and their dilemmas as opposed to solely asking questions designed/needed by the system, which may or may not be relevant or meaningful at that time or to that person.

**Making suggestions or offering advice too soon often leads us down a service response road or a ‘sorry but you’re not eligible’ response.**

Active listening and reflection help both you and the individual reach more intuitive understanding of a situation AND it helps develop empathy and start to build trust. You should find yourself reflecting back what you’ve heard at appropriate intervals – this ensures you are not misinterpreting what if importance is being said. You might also ask for some clarity if you’re unsure.

**STAGE 3** **-** Asking questions - some basic rules

• Open, not closed

• Simple, not multiple

• Not leading

• Avoid ‘Why’

• Strategic key questions

*If you’ve been talking at the person for 1 minute….it’s too long!*

**STAGE 4** **-** The information exchange

We need to be mindful that systems require information but be considered when we ask for information. There is nothing worse than knowing the person you’re asking for help is talking from a script; it doesn’t make you feel valued or that the person is genuinely interested in you.

For example:-

• Would you like me to give you a bit more information?

• Could I ask you for a little more information?

**STAGE 5** **–** Summarising

• Focus and summarise key issues

• Include the strengths / skills and motivators you have noticed

• Play back what actions they and you have decided to take

• ‘What next’ should include agreed timescales if appropriate

• Leave the door open for them to come back if things don’t work out.

Create an empowering summary for people – it will often give somebody the belief they can start to take control and make a difference – even if it’s a small step along a much longer journey.

SECTION 03

PRESENTATION

**SLIDE 2:** Introduction to the resources

• Resource pack for managers

• Skills based pack for workers

**Facilitator Notes**

Setting the scene for the trainer.

Work is already underway to consider what such services need to look like and many have already moved to restructure their arrangements. These resources are simply intended to support those on-going developments.

Please use these materials in the way that best suits and supports the organisation move towards outcomes focussed practice.   
  
The trainer to explain to participants this workshop is an important precursor to a skills based workshop with the frontline workforce.

**SLIDE 3**

**Section 1: Our own experience**

**SLIDE 4:** Aims of workshop

• Explore the organisational **buy-in** needed to have ‘better and different conversations’ with our public and professional colleagues.

• Explore the skills required of workers (by sampling exercises).

• Agree plan for sustaining change.

**Facilitator Notes**

The structure of IAA varies according to need across councils, health and 3rd sector organisations. This pack focusses on the **skills** and organisational **buy-in** needed to have ‘better and different conversations’ with our public and professional colleagues.

There is a corresponding workshop pack for the frontline workforce. Discussions at this manager session will inform the workshop for the frontline workforce – in particular the agreed vision for the service.

Essentially this half day’s awareness raising and planning session, is for managers and individuals who have responsibility for: • managing delivery   
• recording, managing and reporting data  
• building relationships with other professional colleagues and organisations  
• supporting workforce development and skills  
• representing members of the public  
• ensuring the experience (pathway) of the individual is as consistent as it can be between disciplines.

**SLIDE 5:** Key questions to explore

i) Are we clear about what the Act says about the 3 elements of Information, Advice and Assistance?  
  
ii) What do we think it means for Information, Advice and Assistance Services within our organisation?   
  
iii) What might be the key changes to our operational, management and quality control aspects need to be?

**Facilitator Notes**

Trainer sets out very briefly what the definitions of Information, Advice and Assistance are within the Act.

The information, advice and assistance service is central to the success of the transition to the care and support system under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act. It is an opportunity to change the perception of social care and support services in Wales. It **must** promote early intervention and prevention to ensure that people of all ages can be better supported to achieve their personal outcomes, and explore options for meeting their care and support needs. It should be considered to be a **preventative service in its own** right through the provision of high quality and timely information, advice and assistance. Refer to the Code of Practice Part 2, section 297.

Pause to discuss these 3 questions.

**SLIDE 6:** Context for Information, Advice and Assistance

• Responding to a wide range of requests

• Increasing demand and limited time

• Having to identify what matters most to the individual

• Giving the right response

• Feeling safe

• Feeling good about how well you do your job

• Providing IAA face to face or via the phone

**Facilitator Notes**

We talk about our workforce being a resource in themselves. If so, then the conversation we have with the public is itself part of our offer and service to them. Systems should be able to record this conversation as part of a formal IAA response.

Experience shows us that a well thought through conversation is valued and if it is to have its impact maximised, then skilled staff need when necessary, to be given the time to engage and explore issues.

Staff in IAA are responding to a wide range of requests from the public. They respond to people who are often in times of stress and challenge. They play a crucial role in delivering Part 2 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act.

Staff are responding to a wide range of requests, there is increasing demand and limited time. How do we help staff to maximise the potential for each conversation which results in the member of the public or professional enquirer, feeling clearer about the most important issue for them and clearer about their course of action?

Whether we have 5 minutes or 5 hours, skilled listening is vital, skilled staff enable people to clarify their thinking and express what matters most to them.

**SLIDE 7:** 5, 15 or 50 minutes…

Whether we have 5 minutes or 5 hours, skilled listening is vital. Skilled staff enables people to clarify their thinking and express what matters most to them. If we believe this, we need to create environments which allow staff to practise in this way. We win AND the individual and family win.

**Myth:** It does not necessarily need a *significantly longer period of time* to have an empowering / strengths based conversation with somebody.

It can just depend where you start!

**Facilitator Notes**

A few common examples of concerns to delivering outcomes focussed conversations:

* We don’t have the time.
* Our system doesn’t let us record the right info.
* I’m not a counsellor.
* We don’t have the services people want.
* People often don’t know what they want.
* People aren’t interested in having a conversation, they just want what their friend or neighbour has and they want it now.
* I generally know within 30 secs what I’m going to do next.

**SLIDE 8:**

• If we start the conversation with a series of questions, how are we making people feel? : - confused, under pressure, feeling they might fail the ‘assessment’, and that they have to exaggerate the issue in order in to get a service.

• If we start the conversation simply by **listening** and **empathising** and **reflecting**, we can get alongside somebody. People value being heard and then we might for example, go on to ask what if anything happened today to prompt them to pick up the phone.

**Facilitator Notes**

People often come to us at a time of stress or challenge or change in their lives

**SLIDE 9:**

What might be the consequence of continuing to be driven primarily by the idea of eligibility criteria and service led assessments as the basis of our interaction with people who come to us for help?

**Facilitator Notes**

Discuss and use the following prompts:

Significant numbers of people may feel they haven’t been listened to properly, as we fail to empathize with their circumstances and help them think through their issues.

Significant numbers of people may leave possibly dissatisfied and disenchanted with their experience of asking services for help.

We will have a workforce who spends most of their time advising the people who have come to them for help and / or advice, that they have not met the eligibility threshold or that a resource no longer exists in their community; a potentially incredibly demoralising and stressful position for staff.

**SLIDE 10:**

**Section 2: Vision for the service**

**SLIDE 11:** What is the vision for your IAA Service?

• If yes, how do you know?

• If no, what needs to happen so you do?

• Why can or can’t you describe it? And what needs to happen so you can?

• If no, what would help them better understand?

• Do you know what your IAA service looks like or needs to look like?

• Can you describe it to other colleagues?

• Can you describe it to your customers?

• Do other professionals know what you’re trying to do?

• Do other professionals understand the part they need to play?

**Facilitator Notes**

Everyone in the organisation needs to know where they are heading on this and why. If senior managers can’t articulate it to each other or describe it to those outside of the organisation – particularly the public – then you’ll never have an effective service with committed and satisfied staff.

Things to consider:

* Are you signing up to a concept or are you making a change?
* What does IAA look like for the individual using the service?
* How do you allocate services?
* How do you record staff time as a resource?

**SLIDE 12:** Who is impacted upon by the expected developments for IAA?  
How might each stakeholder be impacted upon?

• Elected members

• The public

• Council wide departments

• Senior managers

• Customer services

• Statutory assessment and social work teams

• 3rd sector partners

• Provider services

• Health partners

**Facilitator Notes**

In smaller groups, ask people to discuss each of these groups and why they are important. Take feedback and invite comments from the wider group on people’s thoughts.

**SLIDE 13:** Realising your ambition for IAA: key questions / considerations

• What needs to change and be supported? *Structure, systems, recording outcomes, staff skills base, the ‘conversation’, targets.*

• What are the blocks that need to be addressed or removed to allow staff to operate effectively? What might they need to be replaced with? *Who is responsible for each of the aspects above?*

• What does the relationship with social work teams need to look like? How do we ensure the experience of the interaction for individuals is mirrored across teams *(the experience pathway)?*

**Facilitator Notes**

You may want to come back to these questions at the end of the session and think about how to prioritise your actions / response. Ask yourself what your desired outcomes are as managers.

**SLIDE 14:**

**Section 3: Better conversations**

**SLIDE 15:**

‘Best Outcomes from Best Beginnings’

The principles and approaches of the

Better Conversations Training

**Facilitator Notes**

The chance to look at and understand the fundamental principles of the training that the frontline resource pack teaches.

**SLIDE 16:** Key elements

What are the most important elements of effective communication from your experience?

**Facilitator Notes**

Explore this question in the light of experience. Take general comments and move on to next slide to precis

Remember, this is what we will be talking to your front line staff about.

**SLIDE 17:** Key elements of good conversation

• Showing that you are listening

• Expressing empathy and warmth

• Asking the right questions so there is clarity about concerns

• Showing support by recognition of individuals’ strengths

• Showing patience

• Appearing knowledgeable and effective

**Facilitator Notes**

Here we have the key elements of good communication. If we as managers understand the importance of these key elements, then we will appreciate the importance of our staff **understanding and acknowledging** them within their practice. NB Simply instructing and expecting staff to operate in this way possibly by following a script, will not work as without the context and rationale but doesn’t carry weight and acceptance.

**SLIDE 18:** Relationship based practice

• How we think about someone or something affects what we do about it; we are all influenced by our individual moral code.

***do managers agree?***

• Our approach to the issue therefore affects the outcome.

***do managers agree?***

• As IAA, we are engaged in a **dynamic process** and in any encounter between a worker and an individual, there should always be **two people learning!**

***do managers agree? why and how might that be?***

• The result should be ‘self-empowering’ for the family or individual.

**Facilitator Notes**

3rd bullet – we tend not to think about both people in the conversation as learning. Generally we think of the worker as needing to receive and process information.

But effective reflection and an empathic style can help the individual clarify what it is they are specifically concerned about.

**SLIDE 19:** First point of contact and the emotions our staff manage on a daily basis

• People are most often calling at a time of stress and challenge.

• They may be very clear about what they need and why.

**but**

• They may also be confused, anxious, frightened, angry, frustrated.

• They need **help and time to reflect**, hear themselves talk and start to become clearer.

**Facilitator Notes**

This is the basis for the strengths based conversation rather than starting with the deficit model.

**Focussing our Skills**

* We need to equally notice people for the problems they face, not just the problems they cause.
* We should notice people’s abilities to alter their course.
* We should focus on their hopes and aspirations.
* We should notice wherever possible, the ability people have to offset their own risk and concerns.
* We should notice the strengths of families / groups / units and support what's important to them, building on their resilience.

**SLIDE 20:** Experiencing Behaviour

Change

• Individuals NOT information make decisions.

• If we do decide to act, unless we have made the decision ourselves we may be unlikely to sustain it.

• We all have unique circumstances which feed into our decisions to act…or not.

**Facilitator Notes**

Bullet 1 – ergo ------ and therefore keep people safe.

**SLIDE 21:** Imagine

Something you feel you need to tackle, for example:

• Work / life balance

• Eating

• Exercise

• Parenting

• Relationship with a friend

• Supporting elderly parents

• Drink less wine

**Facilitator Notes**

Ask people to take a brief moment to think of something they really want to change and that they often think about doing.

Ask them to make a commitment now to seriously do something about their issue this weekend.

Imagine we have come back together in a week’s time. How many of us do you think will not have been able to keep their promise? Why might that be? A bad day, other priorities, put off for another week?

What is needed is an understanding that as humans when placed under pressure to respond to another person’s direction or suggestions we are highly unlikely to follow through.

So in our heads the issue becomes less important, because we are less confident we can do something about it and we are not ready to change.

**SLIDE 22:** Empathy and openness

Evidence based practice, experience and research show us that adopting an empathetic approach during our conversations result in:-

• less resistance

**and**

• more disclosure

**Facilitator Notes**

Displaying empathy leads to openness a critical position to get to if we are to identify as far as possible what’s going on for an individual and resolve or start to resolve the issue / s with them - but from an acknowledgement of their strengths and abilities.

**SLIDE 23:** Much of the frontline training focuses on understanding the key elements of a good conversation

• Listening

• Exploring

• Reflecting

• Focussing

• Summarising

**Facilitator Notes**

Understanding the ‘principles’ of effective communication.

* Listen and express empathy
* Explore concerns and aspirations
* Expect natural defensiveness
* Support the persons sense of their abilities
* Avoid arguments and confrontation

Time should be spent ensuring staff understand the ‘why’ as well as the ‘how’ as experience shows that with that understanding comes the desire and confidence over time to successfully apply the learning.

**SLIDE 24:** Effective practitioners

**Do**

• Make a commitment

• Stay calm and purposeful

• Stay focussed on the most important issues

• Acknowledge the challenge and feelings

• Build on the strengths

• Explore individual’s hopes and aspirations

• Respect individual’s skills, knowledge and expertise

**Try to avoid**

• Rescuing, advising, telling or ‘doing to’ rather than ‘with’.

**Facilitator Notes**

IAA staff are particularly geared up to respond fairly swiftly with advice or diving in with a possible solution.

Not disastrous you might rightly say, but not helpful if we need to help somebody think through things for themselves with reflections and open questions when appropriate.

Make a link to the section in the skills pack for practitioners on ‘Referrals’. Useful for managers to understand the possible limitations of the initial conversation and when to refer on (from the practitioner point of view).

**SLIDE 25:** 5 stages of the conversation

1. Open engaging questions

2. Active listening

3. Open exploratory questions

4. Information exchange

5. Summary and Actions

**Facilitator Notes**

In their workshop, staff are given the opportunity to start to practice working through each of these following stages.

**SLIDE 26:**

**Section 4: Outcomes**

**SLIDE 27:**

• What are outcomes?

• How do we introduce and maintain a focus on outcomes in our organisation?

**Facilitator Notes**

Be clear about the difference between a personal and a service outcome.

Both can be equally important, but we need to understand the difference and be able to describe it to workers who will be asked to record it.

Ask people to suggest what the difference might be?

**SLIDE 28:**

A personal outcome is about the impact of the intervention for an individual.

**i.e. for personal outcomes think impact.**

e.g. “I feel better about myself because I can wash myself safely and don’t have to rely on others.”

e.g. “I need to know my kids sleep safely at night.”

**Facilitator Notes**

1st - outcome from a 84 year old man struggling to feel ‘that I’m not on the scrap heap’ and just a burden to everyone.

2nd – outcome for a mother putting her life back together having experienced domestic violence and about to be rehoused. Being rehoused is not the personal outcome.

**SLIDE 29:**

A service outcome is often about the delivery of the service to an individual.

e.g. 84 year old man successfully supported to live at home independently through fitting of necessary adaptations.

e.g. Woman and children safely rehoused and supported through resettlement programme.

**Facilitator Notes**

1st - outcome from a 84 year old man struggling to feel ‘that I’m not on the scrap heap’ and just a burden to everyone. The drive from his family was to be safely moved to a residential home where they felt he would be safer – but not what he wanted (he wasn’t prepared initially to accept help either but the social worker brokered agreement which persuaded him to accept help.

2nd – service outcome for a mother putting her life back together having experienced domestic violence is about being rehoused appropriately with her family.

**SLIDE 30:** IAA outcomes checklist

Remember personal outcomes have to be:

• Realistic

• Achievable

• Described through actions

• Impacting

• Sustainable

**Facilitator Notes**

They have to be clearly linked to the point and scope of the intervention.

If they are not realistic or achievable then you leave the individual and their family with continued sets of circumstances which are challenging and unsatisfactory.

**SLIDE 31:** Suggested checklist

• Individual will discuss more with family members.

• Individual will gather more information and ring again.

• Individual will think about things a bit more before deciding on any action.

• Individual will contact a suggested service following signposting from frontline staff.

• Frontline will offer further contact.

• Frontline will offer / access more specialist advice.

• Frontline will refer into the organisation or another service for specialist help.

**Facilitator Notes**

What might a good outcomes focussed case record look like? Familiarise yourself with the next slide before showing it so you can help managers get to some of the answers.

**SLIDE 32:** Developmental considerations to measuring outcomes

An approach to measuring outcomes needs to:

• evidence the impact of the approach;

• support the conversation, rather than drive or hinder it;

• be easy to understand and use;

• enable local analysis of quality and satisfaction;

• align with existing or developing management processes;

• apply to all client groups; and

• be described as far as possible in the language of the individual.

**Facilitator Notes**

**Why:**

As part of the implementation of the Act, you will need to demonstrate that you have started to record outcomes linked to your service.

Link to National Outcomes Framework.

**SLIDE 33:** Possible measures of success

**Short term**

• Level of stated satisfaction (person)

• Level of perceived satisfaction (worker)

**Medium term**

• Numbers of complaints / compliments

• Numbers of appropriate referrals onto other services

• Reduced number of NFA visits at SW assessment

**Longer term**

• Partner agency feedback

• Worker satisfaction surveys

• Public satisfaction surveys

**Facilitator Notes**

Discussion in small groups – people will have views on this. Ask how these measures compare with what is gathered and measured now. Are these a helpful fit?

Take feedback and open up discussion.

**SLIDE 34:**

**Section 5: Sustainability**

**SLIDE 35:** Sustainability

Things to consider…

• Is your approach to IAA understood throughout the department? Do you have corporate support for a different way of working?

• Consider whether your system drives or supports practice. What needs to change?

• Before training, plan follow-up sessions that can maintain the momentum of the approach e.g. front-line session once a week (peer support space where a positive case can be brought and discussed – learning from each other).

• Your team leader needs to be fully up-to-speed and able to support staff who get ‘stuck’.

• Relationship between IAA and specialist teams needs to be agreed. A strengths led approach should be continued by specialist teams, giving consistency of experience to the individual.

**Facilitator Notes**

This is a key slide.

No matter how much you invest in the training and skills development of the front line, unless you consider and address issues of sustainability and what you and your organisation has to change in order support this approach to it is likely to ultimately fail. Check list of key issues that need your attention.

Discussion - set up practitioner groups / action learning sets?

**SLIDE 36:** Next Steps

Where do you need to start and with what or whom?

Finally - making a commitment

What I will notice myself doing?

What I will notice others doing?

**SECTION 04**

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

Useful links

**Information and Learning Hub**

<https://socialcare.wales/hub/home>

**Codes of practice and statutory guidance**

<https://socialcare.wales/hub/sswbact-codes>

**Technical briefings**

<https://socialcare.wales/hub/sswbact-technical>

**National assessment and eligibility tool**

<https://socialcare.wales/hub/sswbact-assessment-tool>