Early Intervention & Prevention - Information Advice and Guidance Approach

January 2023

BE BOLD BE BIRMINGHAM

Contents

    i)   Design Principles
    ii)   The Prevention Pathway

    • Fix the basic
    • Raise the standard
    • Set the standard

Introduction

The Early Intervention and Prevention (EI&P) Programme has a vision to:

> "*enable everyone in Birmingham to become, and to be, independent, socially and economically active and resilient citizens, starting from when they are children and continuing throughout their lives*."

Effective and timely Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) is a fundamental enabler of EI&P. It creates a strong and effective 'front door' into the council. It ensures citizens can self serve and access council resources and tools at a time of their choosing and in a way that works for them in their daily lives, without always needing direct contact with the council.

The current structure and provision of IAG across the City often frustrates the citizen, as they get 'bounced' around a largely unstructured system. It is also costly for the council and our partners as vital frontline resources are resolving issues that people could resolve themselves with better content and tools.

Citizens who are able to self serve are more likely to maintain their independence and resilience. By helping to facilitate timely, appropriate self service we aim to drive better outcomes for citizens and limit avoidable demand on targeted and statutory services.

Enabler; something or someone that makes it possible for a particular thing to happen or be done. *(i)*

While IAG is a fundamental enabler of EI&P, it is also key to delivering a good citizen experience (CX). With timely and effective IAG, citizens can have several effortless experiences with the council, without needing to engage them directly. IAG helps shape and drive exceptional CX.

Consistent messaging and content from a recognisable brand will support the development of a trusted, safe, reliable relationship between the council and citizens. IAG should promote the importance of key corporate priorities, such as EI&P, helping drive a noticeable change in citizen perception and understanding of the council.

The council's Customer Service Strategy *(ii)* is being delivered by the Customer Programme. We hope this approach compliments and builds on the Customer Strategy, highlighting the importance of IAG in delivering good citizen experiences. To safeguard the longevity and sustainability of the transformation, we expect the Customer Programme to evolve into CX team or function, with data and insight driving service design, leading to improved CX.

For long term, sustainable IAG, there is a need to influence and build support from other areas of the council – not solely within EI&P. There is an opportunity to use the accelerator projects to demonstrate progress, with the successes hopefully encouraging further support across the council.

BE BOLD BE BIRMINGHAM

Scope

Purpose of the document

This document was developed to improve and modernise the council's provision of IAG and ensure commissioned and non-commissioned partner IAG across the City is not overlooked.

It addresses current pain points experienced by citizens, BCC staff and partners. Whilst also providing a sustainable, long term vision and direction for IAG across EI&P. We expect this to lead into the development of an IAG strategy which we hope will influence and be adopted across the council and the City.

What was the ask?

Review the City's current provision of IAG and develop a sustainable approach for improvements, from the perspective of EI&P.

What was done?

We built on the Strategic Framework and research from the EI&P programme. This research and co-production was focused on homes and money IAG due to the development of the Homes and Money Advice Hubs.

When engaging and researching the provision of IAG in other areas of the council, from the perspective of EI&P, typically the same challenges and issues were found. This document and the approach it details, are the outcome of this work.

Defining IAG

Birmingham's Advice Strategy 2021 - 2024 *(iii)* (also known as Birmingham's IAG Strategic Framework and Recommendations) set out working definitions for IAG, which we have built on for the definitions we are using for the purposes of this approach:

Information: facts or details about somebody or something, often relies on those who access the material interpreting it correctly and acting accordingly.

Advice: an opinion or a suggestion about what somebody should do in a particular situation, relies on the individual to act upon the advice.

Guidance: help, information or advice aimed at resolving a problem or difficulty, especially when given by an authority or experienced body or figure.

BE BOLD BE BIRMINGHAM

Understanding IAG

As part of the EI&P Programme, key enablers have been identified to ensure BCC as an organisation and BCC staff are equipped with the information, tools and support to deliver a seamless citizen journey.

Enablers will support successful delivery of the EI&P Directorate and help embed the new ways of working. The enablers are essential to maximise the impact of the EI&P Directorate on our citizens and communities and enable transformative change within the council.

IAG is a fundamental enabler of EI&P, with an aim to have a single source of truth for citizens and staff that is timely, accurate and relevant to support citizens and facilitate self service.

Other enablers include the Contact Centre, technology, and data. IAG will influence the other enablers listed here because of how it is accessed and used by citizens.

Whether that be on the phone, where the Contact Centre is the key source of IAG or online using BCC's .gov.uk website, where technology advancements can improve accessibility and increase self service opportunities. Finally, how data can be used to proactively provide IAG or better understand a citizen's situation and what IAG is needed to support them effectively when they present face to face.

In November 2021, Birmingham's Advice Strategy 2021 - 2024 (also known as Birmingham's IAG Strategic Framework and Recommendations) was published. We have used this important work as the basis of our research and have built on the findings and recommendations to develop this approach.

Using the Strategic Framework and our own research and engagement, we identified the following problems with the council's current IAG:

1. It can be difficult to navigate and find relevant information
2. Self service is rarely possible
3. Outdated, inaccurate information
4. Lack of pragmatic support or tools
5. No consistency or single source of truth

With the implications of these findings being:

- Generating avoidable demand
- Potential duplication of effort
- Growing distrust in the council

These are the key pain points and their impacts that we hope this approach will resolve.

BE BOLD BE BIRMINGHAM

Our Vision

The vision for this approach aligns to that of the EI&P programme, to:

"enable everyone in Birmingham to become, and to be, independent, socially and economically active and resilient citizens, starting from when they are children and continuing throughout their lives."

To deliver against this vision the council must improve it's IAG offer to support citizens to be more resilient and more engaged in their communities. This will ensure IAG enables rather than currently restricting EI&P activities.

Improved technology will ensure citizens can access an extensive, free knowledge base, facilitating self service with this digital first provision. This will be supported by a network of community hubs packed with the same IAG that is available digitally, ensuring the engagement channel does not determine a citizen's experience.

In the context of the prevention pathway, shown on the next page with Diagram A, timely and easy to locate IAG is essential to maintaining an effective universal offer.
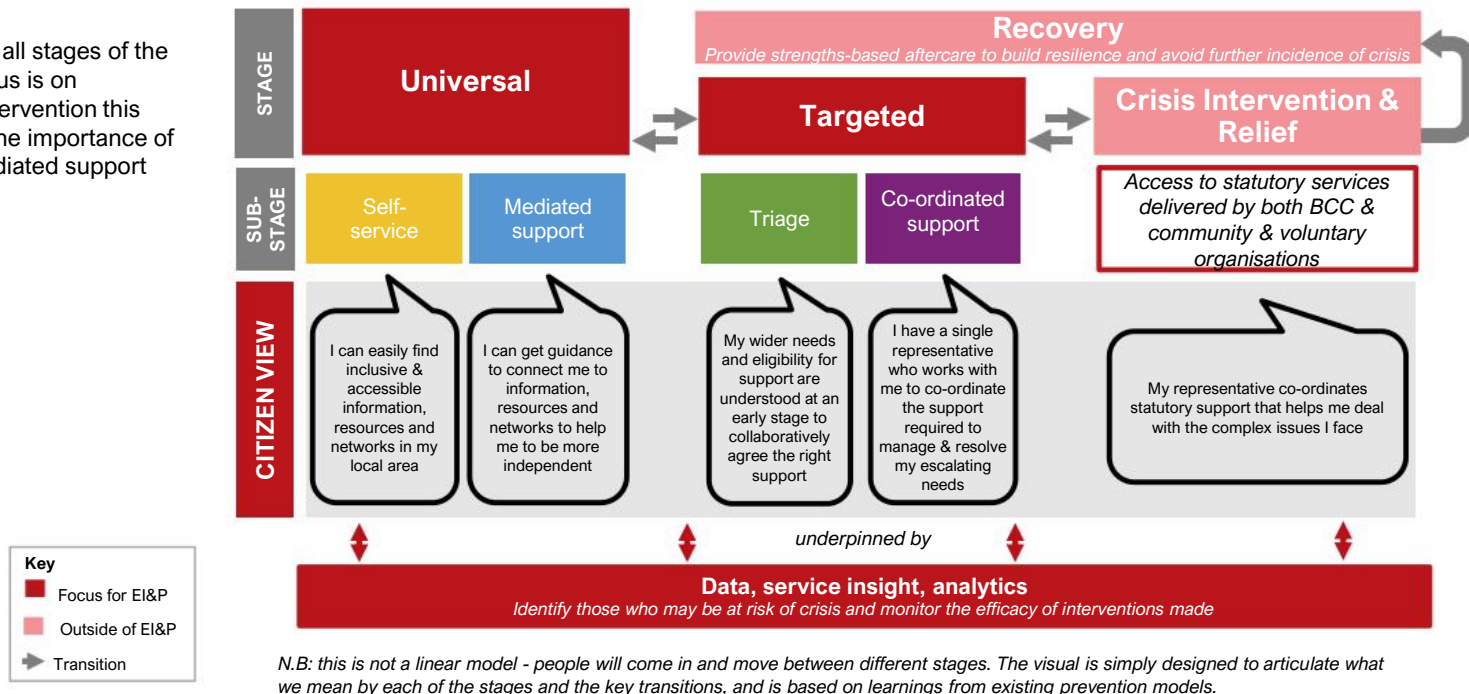
Our Vision – Design Principles

The design principles for IAG build on and align to those of the EI&P and the Customer Service Programmes. They also support the commitments set out in the Customer Charter (iv).

- **Citizens placed at the centre** for all design considerations
- With a **digital-first approach**, become an **effective front door** to allow citizens to **self navigate and self serve** by ensuring IAG is easy to locate, across all channels
- **Content strategy** and **governance** is **applied universally**, across all channels and council services
- **Help people to help themselves** with **intuitive, interactive tools** that **facilitate independence** and **build resilience**
- **Consistent, high quality IAG** supported by **modern tools** and **technology** such as a shared knowledge repository, single asset register and BRUM account 2.0

BE BOLD BE BIRMINGHAM

Our Vision – The Prevention Pathway

Diagram A – The Prevention Pathway

IAG is important across all stages of the pathway, but as our focus is on prevention and early intervention this approach emphasises the importance of the self service and mediated support sub-stages.

STAGE

Universal

Recovery
Provide strengths-based aftercare to build resilience and avoid further incidence of crisis

Targeted

Crisis Intervention & Relief

SUB-STAGE

Self-service

Mediated support

Triage

Co-ordinated support

Access to statutory services delivered by both BCC & community & voluntary organisations

CITIZEN VIEW

I can easily find inclusive & accessible information, resources and networks in my local area

I can get guidance to connect me to information, resources and networks to help me to be more independent

My wider needs and eligibility for support are understood at an early stage to collaboratively agree the right support

I have a single representative who works with me to co-ordinate the support required to manage & resolve my escalating needs

My representative co-ordinates statutory support that helps me deal with the complex issues I face

underpinned by

Data, service insight, analytics
Identify those who may be at risk of crisis and monitor the efficacy of interventions made

Key
Focus for EI&P
Outside of EI&P
Transition

N.B: this is not a linear model - people will come in and move between different stages. The visual is simply designed to articulate what we mean by each of the stages and the key transitions, and is based on learnings from existing prevention models.

Our Proposed Approach

Our proposed approach to deliver the IAG vision is closely aligned to the EI&P Programme design principles, notably taking a digital first approach (wherever possible), with citizens placed at the centre of design considerations, to facilitate self service with interactive tools that ensure high-quality consistent services that support resilient and independent citizens.

Our phased approach, aligns to those used in the Customer Programme. This is due to the role IAG plays in the citizen's experience. It is also in recognition of the significant role the programme will have delivering key elements of this approach.

1 - Fix the basics; accurate, accessible and consistent
To be successful we will:
- work with citizens to improve content and self service opportunities, making quicker decisions for them
- minimise the effort required by providing quick and easy to find IAG
- reduce the need for citizens to contact us by facilitating self service with accessible, action focused, logically structured and pragmatic IAG.

2 – Raise the standard; digitally enabled front door
To be successful we will:
- have a digitally enabled front door, citizens will only have to tell us or ask us once
- put citizens first, recognising requests of the council can be stressful and consume citizen's discretionary time, we hope to ensure no time or effort is wasted when engaging the council
- have an omni-channel experience which reserves the human touch for high impact moments such as targeted interventions, support in emergencies, or when digital isn't convenient or possible, these are opportunities to build positive personal connections
- use data and insight to take a proactive approach to the provision of IAG and ensure continuous improvement

3 – Set the standard; differentiated by digital and a trusted brand
To be successful we will:
- have an integrated, digital omni-channel experience, with feedback sought constantly to facilitate continuous improvement
- be seen by citizens as safe and secure, with a citizen centric self-orientation, always putting the citizen first
- be trusted with citizens confident of a credible IAG experience, with high certainty of a positive outcome.

BE BOLD BE BIRMINGHAM

Fix the basics

By **fixing the basics** IAG will be more **accurate, accessible and consistent** for all citizens.

We will identify and fix the most pressing issues, as we start to modernise the IAG provision to facilitate self service. With adherence to content strategy and governance frameworks we will ensure consistency across all channels.

Accurate and consistent

We will update existing content and use jargon-free communication across all channels and touchpoints, that citizens understand. Static PDFs will be removed from the .gov.uk website, where possible, as they become outdated. Content shall be structured using the 'inverted pyramid' approach, with information presented in descending order of importance so the citizen can read the most crucial details quickly.

The messaging in all content and across all channels will be consistent and concise. This consistency will be facilitated by a single content strategy and governance procedures for all publications, as designed by the Customer Programme.

Accessible

By providing the appropriate information and, if required, appropriate contact number, we will reduce the number of online forms for information requests or a call-back.

We will ensure IAG is easy to locate, not buried and only found with prior knowledge of council structures.

Adhering to content strategy and governance frameworks will ensure central government web design principles are followed, in turn ensuring web accessibility is high. The 'inverted pyramid' approach to content structure will help navigability, whilst also increasing keyword prominence to improve search engine optimisation (SEO) and the internal search function of the .gov.uk website.

Areas of focus will include:
- Prioritised web content reviewed and updated, reduce the number of online forms and static PDFs to make self service possible
- Support service delivery with 'how to' videos, step by step guides and if required, physical copy (leaflets, booklets, posters)
- Support the development of a shared knowledge base and asset register for specific enquiries, developed with BCC staff
- Build on the current BCC brand, taking feedback from citizens

Successfully **fixing the basics** means:
- An increase in web traffic to actionable IAG hosted on the .gov.uk website
- A decrease in the number of single query enquiry types to council front-line officers

BE BOLD BE BIRMINGHAM

Raise the standard

By **raising the standard** IAG will be more **accurate**, **consistent** and **accessible through a digital front door**.

A modernised provision of IAG will allow citizen's to self serve more frequently, with jargon-free messaging, consistent across all channels. The aim is for the council to be seen as a trusted source, with the .gov.uk website used by staff, partners and citizens for triage and treatment.

Digitally enabled front door
A digitally enabled and intuitive 'front door' will start to facilitate effortless interactions for citizens and help them get the information they need to be able to help themselves. We shall be considerate of behavioural insights, attempting to nudge citizens to encourage positive behaviour changes.

A digitally enabled front door provides options to support a diverse range of citizen needs, for example:
- Those experiencing physical or mental disability with British Sign Language, captions or text relay calls
- Content written for citizens with low literacy and reading skills level
- Those with limited English language proficiency can access translation services
- Digitally excluded are supported by physical hubs located in the community, where there will be public devices, device banks, data banks and digital skills programmes.

Areas of focus will include:
- Continue reviewing and updating web content, supporting the development of the website as a knowledge repository
- Support the implementation of technology improvements that allow citizens to self serve, for example a single asset register, triage questions, embed budgeting and income maximisation tools
- Provide a voice for citizens, ensuring their perspective is considered to improve accessibility for a range of needs
- Ensuring consistent structure and language are used to make IAG easier to find, with keywords prominent for SEO

Successfully **raising the standard** means:
- An increase in citizens self-serving using .gov.uk content or resources
- A decrease in the duplication of effort *e.g. number of asset registers, repeat presentations to front-line officers*

BE BOLD BE BIRMINGHAM

Set the standard

By **setting the standard** the provision of IAG will be **differentiated by our digital offer** with the council seen as a **trusted brand**.

Technology advancements will be used to shape the proactive contact and support offer.

Differentiated by our digital offer

With a highly flexible multi-channel provision of IAG, that utilises a variety of digital channels including text messaging, webchat, WhatsApp, telephony, virtual calls and emails. Sign, translation and audio services (automated and human) will be available across multiple channels; website, leaflets, letters, text messages and face-to-face to ensure true accessibility for all.

Modern technology will be leveraged to improve citizen experiences. Examples could include artificial intelligence (AI) powered chatbots or triage tools and an enhanced BRUM account '2.0'. Embedded analytics will review data and citizen behaviour to identify issues, make proactive offers of IAG and push insights for continuous improvement.

Trusted brand

The .gov.uk website will be used as a single source of truth, forming part of a highly flexible multi-channel offer, and include both knowledge repository and asset register. Citizens are aware of and utilise the IAG from BCC. They trust the content and commit to guidance.

Areas of focus will include:
- Technology implementation to develop a highly flexible multi-channel provision
- Promote the use of AI technology; chatbots powered by accurate and well maintained knowledge repository, predictive analytics to make proactive offers of support and create support plans
- Building an online community regularly providing feedback on and raising awareness of IAG provision
- Ensuring commissioned IAG contracts are aligned to the same timeframes, fit on the prevention pathway and deliver to consistent outcomes and success metrics
- Monitoring how the council is seen as a trusted brand with the .gov.uk website used as the source of truth, forming part of an accurate knowledge repository
- Starting to align, integrate and influence other advice strategies and content across wider council

Successfully **setting the standard** means:
- An increase in citizen feedback and satisfaction
- An increase in the number of human experiences that include holistic, strengths-based conversations
- A decrease in citizen complaints for delayed or outdated support
- A decrease in demand on statutory services

BE BOLD BE BIRMINGHAM

Action Plan

Date / Time	March 2023		Sept' 2023	March 2024
Customer / IAG Phase	Fix the basics; Accurate, accessible and consistent		Raise the standard; Digitally enabled front door	Set the standard; Differentiated by digital and trusted
EI&P Phase	Phase 0 - Pilot	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Overview	Identify and fix the most pressing issues. Modernise IAG provision to facilitate self service and ensure consistency across all channels.		Begin to be trusted source, .gov.uk website is used by staff, partner and citizens for triage and treatment.	Align, integrate and influence other advice strategies and content across wider council.
Activities	**Web content & structure** Content reviewed and updated so that it is jargon free, consistent and considerate of prevention pathway. All content produced adheres to consistent content strategy and governance across all channels, and prioritises EI&P and other corporate priorities. Self service is made probable by reduced use of online forms and static PDFs, warning for external site links, prominent keywords ensure IAG is easy to find, tools embedded within website, some triage to build citizen profiles, behaviour nudges.		**Web content & structure** Review and update content as services and capabilities brought into EI&P. Redesign and implement new citizen journeys. Adhere to consistent structure and language with keywords prominent for SEO.	**Web content & structure** Influence non EI&P content, build an online community who advocate IAG. Technology improvements continue to facilitate seamless, effortless experiences.
	Digital improvements Produce a single asset register with BCC staff and partner organisations, forming part of a shared knowledge base (with the website), becoming the single source of truth available to all staff, partners and eventually citizens.		**Digital improvements** Support a range of citizen accessibility needs. Product improvements for asset register and website to improve functionality and ease of use e.g. self serve tools, automation.	**Digital improvement** AI powered chatbot implemented. Support the development of data sharing agreements and improve opportunities to capture data to build citizen profiles and inform behavioural insights.
	Service delivery Capture and support service requirements, such as 'how to' videos, step by step guides, must also identify demand for physical copy. Develop BCC brand with citizen research and design, building on customer charter.		**Service delivery** Continue to support service delivery, e.g. learning and development. Nurture brand as it becomes known as source of truth.	**Service delivery** Monitor trusted and respected council brand.
	Commissioning Complete an IAG commissioning audit and test value of a BCC accreditation scheme.		**Commissioning** Plan to align commissioning cycles and success metrics, where possible.	**Commissioning** Commissioned IAG aligns to the same timeframes, fit on the prevention pathway and deliver to consistent outcomes and success metrics.

Governance and Accountability

Strategic Oversight

The EI&P Programme is responsible for, and committed to, ensuring that Birmingham's vision for IAG becomes a reality. Given the importance of IAG on citizen experience, the Customer Programme are crucial to delivery and we welcome their additional guidance and support.

Strategic Assurance

The Customer Programme and sub-group of the Financial Inclusion Partnership focused on IAG, chaired by Mike Davis, will seek assurance together, and through their respective governance structures, on the development and implementation of the action plan.

Monitoring Progress

As the EI&P Programme becomes a Directorate, they will continue to report progress to Partnership Steering Group & Programme Board who will oversee implementation of the Strategy.

IAG is one element of citizen experience. The governance reflects the key role citizens have in the delivery and implementation of this approach. Community research, engagement and testing throughout will ensure citizen's are placed at the centre of all design considerations. We will use existing citizen panels and public forums to co-design and test ideas. These bodies will have an active role monitoring progress and providing constructive challenge throughout.

Equality Duty

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010) requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities.

As such, our approach has and will continue to be informed by the latest available intelligence when determining key actions associated with the delivery of our vision.

Customer Programme

At the time of writing, the Customer Programme are in the final stages of developing a Web Content Strategy and Web Content Governance Approach. We will support their development and are keen to be involved in any pilot opportunities to help shape both the strategy and governance procedures, such as testing the 'inverted pyramid' approach to structure content.

Both the strategy and governance need to be replicated across all other channels that content is produced and published. This will ensure consistent messaging and procedures are followed prior to being made publicly available.

References

i Definitions developed from https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/

ii Customer Service Strategy Our Customer Service Strategy | Birmingham City Council

iii Birmingham's Advice Strategy 2021 - 2024 or Birmingham's IAG Strategic Framework and Recommendations

iv Customer Charter Our Customer Charter | Birmingham City Council

BE BOLD BE BIRMINGHAM

BE BOLD BE BIRMINGHAM

BIRMINGHAM
2022
commonwealth
games

PROUD
HOST
CITY

Birmingham
City Council