

## Information and Advice Statement of Service

The following Statement of Service is included on the Age UK Barrow and District website via a link on the Information and Advice page and is also displayed in reception.

A copy of the Statement is available to print or sent electronically on request to an existing or potential client.

The statement is reviewed by the Information and Advice Manager every 6 months and is updated on any changes service as required.

### What services do we offer?

Age UK Barrow and District provides Information and Advice on a range of issues relating to older people and those who care for and support them. In particular, we specialise in:

- Welfare Benefits advice for those over retirement age, including working out benefit entitlements and offering assistance to complete claim forms.
- Helping people identify the care and support they need, including help accessing Social Services and advice on how to pay for care and support.
- Advising on housing issues, including help with maintaining a property and advice on the different types of housing for older people who need more support or want to move nearer to family or friends.
- Advising on the services, support, groups, activities and concessions available locally.
- Advising those who are finding it hard to make ends meet or are struggling to pay their bills
- Helping people to make complaints or challenge decisions about welfare benefits, social services, health services and energy providers.

### How do we provide help?

**Information guides and factsheets.** These cover a wide range of subjects affecting older people and those who care for and support them.

Due to the current Covid restrictions all Information and Advice is provided by phone.

Please call **01229 831425** Monday to Friday 9.00am to 4.00pm. This call will be charged at a local rate.

## **What will happen if we can't provide the service you require?**

Sometimes people come to us with problems that we do not have the expertise or knowledge to help with. We are unable to provide consumer debt advice, financial advice or immigration advice.

In these cases we can provide you with basic information and direct you to another organisation for further help. Where possible we will give you a selection of organisations to choose from and we will either signpost or refer you to them.

When signposting, we will give you the organisation's contact information so you can contact them yourself. When referring, we will contact the organisation on your behalf, arrange an appointment and provide them with copies of any documents already completed by our service. We will always get your permission before referring you to another organisation.

Sometimes when advising you we will reach a point where we don't have the expertise to pursue your case any further. We will attempt to refer you to another local advice service that can help you if this happens.

## **How our service treats its clients**

We follow five key principles when delivering our service.

### **1. The service is provided free of charge.**

You won't be charged for any of our Information and Advice. If we signpost or refer you onto another organisation we will tell you if there is any charge for their service. While we provide help free of charge, running the Information and Advice Service is expensive and only some of the money to do this comes from external funding. Any donation you can make will be greatly appreciated. If you wish to donate please ask one of our staff or volunteers about donating to Age UK Barrow and District and Gift Aid.

### **2. The information and advice we provide is independent of any outside influence.**

We will never recommend a service or provider to you, including Age UK's own services. Where possible we will always provide you with a choice of alternatives and help you make an informed decision. We're not bound by local or national government policies and will always advise you on what's best for you rather than

what's best for the council, the Department for Work and Pensions, Age UK or any other organisation. We will never advise someone to do anything illegal or fraudulent. We will immediately stop advising anyone carrying out illegal or fraudulent actions and may notify the appropriate authorities.

### **3. All information is confidential.**

Any information we keep about you is stored securely and only viewed by staff and volunteers involved in advising you or other people that you have allowed us to share this information with. These may be external auditors that check the quality and accuracy of our work, organisations we are referring your case on to and agencies we are dealing with on your behalf (such as the DWP or an energy supplier). We won't share your information or discuss your case with anyone outside of our service without your consent unless they have been given responsibility to act on your behalf by the Court of Protection or Department for Work and Pensions.

You have the right to withdraw consent Please see Age UK Barrow and Districts data protection policy .

We may share information about someone without their consent if:

- \* They insist on taking an illegal or fraudulent course of action
- \* We are contacted by a statutory body about a client who is being investigated for suspected illegal or fraudulent activity
- \* We are concerned that someone involved in a case is at risk of abuse or harm or there is a possibility of abuse or harm to others. In this case we may notify a relevant statutory body, for example social services or the police. These disclosures will be done following Adult Safeguarding' procedures that our staff and volunteers have been trained in.

Any data we hold about you is processed in accordance with data protection legislation and Age UK Barrow and Districts Data Protection policy. A copy of our data protection policy is available on request. You have a right to view any data we hold on you and can request to view it:

## **Clients are treated with fairness, dignity and respect and we expect clients to treat our staff and volunteers in the same way.**

We will not judge anyone based on their age, disability, gender, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex or sexual orientation. We won't judge anyone based upon the circumstances they find themselves in and we won't try to influence the decisions you make following our advice. Sometimes clients will make a decision that we don't think is in their best interest. We will tell them if this happens and aim to provide enough information and

advice to help them make an informed choice. We will respect whatever decision they then make. The Information & Advice Service operates in compliance with Age UK Barrow and District Equalities and Diversity Policy.

## **Our service is as accessible as possible for older people.**

Our offices are suitable for people with disabilities, we have step free access, ground floor interview facilities and disabled toilets. Where clients have difficulties accessing or understanding our information and advice, for example because of a disability or language issue, we will take all reasonable steps to provide our service in a manner that is accessible and appropriate to their needs or circumstances and we will always aim to give you as much time as you need when we see you. The Information & Advice Service operates in compliance with Age UK Barrow and District Equalities and Diversity Policy.

## **How to make a complaint, compliment, or suggestion about our service.**

If you would like to compliment or make a suggestion about our Information & Advice service please contact the Information and Advice Manager, Marie Connor or the Operations Manager, Vickie Martin, either in writing at Age UK Barrow and District, Lakeland House, Abbey Road, Barrow in Furness LA14 1XL or by Telephone on 01229 831425 9.00am to 5.00pm. A copy of the full complaints procedure is available on request.

## **What we expect from our clients**

In return for providing Information and Advice we expect you to:

- Treat our Staff and other clients with courtesy and respect
- Provide us with accurate and truthful information about your circumstances.
- Attend appointments or let us know in advance if you cant.
- Inform us of any change in circumstance which may affect your case.
- Provide us with information or paperwork that we need for your case.
- Not negotiate on your own behalf or respond to information requests that relate to your case without first discussing the matter with us.

## How you can help us

Our Information and Advice Team gain satisfaction from our work and the positive impact we have on our clients. We do not expect any form of recognition or gifts, and whilst chocolates, cakes and biscuits and other thank you gifts are lovely to receive, there are a number of ways you can support us so we can continue to provide the service.

Make a donation. Please make it clear when you donate if you wish to donate specifically to the Information and Advice service. If you are a Tax Payer please ask us about 'Gift Aid'.

Volunteer – Please ask for details.

Provide a case study of your experience with the Information and Advice service and the difference it has made to you.

Campaign for us by writing to your Councillor or MP to tell them how helpful you have found us.

Donate to or Charity Shop.