

INFORMATION & ADVICE SERVICE STATEMENT OF SERVICE

The statement below is included on the Information & Advice Service page of the website for Age UK Bromsgrove, Redditch & Wyre Forest. A copy of the statement is displayed on the noticeboard in our reception area and it is available as a printed or electronic document on request from an existing or potential client. A copy of this statement will also be offered to all clients receiving on-going support. Promotional material for I&A services will refer to the statement being available on request.

The statement is reviewed every six months or sooner if there are any changes to the nature of the service (e.g. a change to opening hours). Once updated the new version will replace the previous document in all the above-mentioned locations.

CUSTOMER INFORMATION ABOUT THE INFORMATION & ADVICE SERVICE PROVIDED BY AGE UK BROMSGROVE, REDDITCH AND WYRE FOREST (AGE UK BRWF)

What services do we offer?

Age UK BRWF provides information and advice on a range of issues relating to older people and those who care for and support them. We specialise in:

- welfare benefits advice for those over retirement age, including identifying and calculating benefit entitlement and assistance to complete claim forms
- helping people to 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.

Our service is currently working towards attainment of the Age UK Information & Advice Quality Programme. Our service procedures have been developed in accordance with recognised Advice Sector standards of practice to ensure that our information and advice is accurate and high quality.

HOW CAN YOU ACCESS OUR HELP?

- **Telephone advice.** Call us on 01527 570490 from Monday to Friday between 9am and 4pm. This call will be charged at a local rate. If you ring outside of these hours, or if our adviser is busy, your call will be diverted to our voicemail facility. Our advisers will aim to call you within 5 working days.
- **Drop-In.** You can visit our head office in Bromsgrove (51 Windsor Street) on Monday to Friday 10am to 1pm. Depending on the nature of your enquiry we will either provide an immediate response or suggest a follow-up appointment; as a guide, if your enquiry requires a consultation lasting more than 20 minutes we will suggest that you book an appointment – see below.
- **Office and Outreach appointments.** To arrange an appointment, call our I&A service on 01527 570490. Appointments are booked in advance for enquiries that are complex or lengthy as this enables the adviser to prepare for your visit, ensures that there is adequate time to respond to your enquiry and gives us an opportunity to tell you if there are any important documents that you need to bring along.

Face-to-Face appointments are available in the following locations:

BROMSGROVE: Age UK BRWF head office on Monday to Friday
10:00 – 14:00

- **Home visits.** If you are unable to visit us and your advice cannot be provided over the phone, we will arrange a home visit appointment. To request a home visit, call our Information & Advice service on 01527 570490. We often have a three to four week waiting list for home visits.
When we visit, we will always arrange the time with you in advance and our adviser will carry identification. If you have any concerns about someone turning up at your door who claims to be from Age UK BRWF, please ask them to remain outside and ring us on 01527 570490. We will confirm if the person works or volunteers for Age UK and has an appointment with you.
- **Information guides and factsheets.** These cover a wide range of subjects affecting older people and those who care for and support them. You can collect a copy of most Age UK publications from our head office in Bromsgrove or we are happy to send copies by post or email.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF WE CAN'T PROVIDE THE SERVICE YOU REQUIRE?

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

If we are unable to help you directly, we can provide you with basic information and signpost or refer you to another organisation for further help. Where possible we will give you a selection of organisations to choose from.

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 to request an appointment and provide them with copies of any documents already completed by our service. We will only share your information with a third party if you have given consent to do so.

Sometimes when advising you we will reach a point where we don't have the expertise to pursue your case any further. If this is the case, we will discuss the next actions to be taken and with your consent, we will refer you to another local advice service that can help you.

KEY PRINCIPLES OF THE INFORMATION & ADVICE SERVICE

We follow five key principles when delivering our service.

1. The service is provided free of charge.

Clients will not be charged for any of our information and advice. If we signpost or refer onto another organisation, we will inform you if there is any charge for their service.

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

The information and advice that we provide will always be impartial. We are not bound by local or national government policies and will always advise you on what is best for you rather than what is best for the council, the Department for Work and Pensions, Age UK or any other organisation. Where possible we will provide you with a choice of options to meet your needs and help you make an informed decision.

However, we will never advise someone to do anything illegal or fraudulent and we will immediately stop advising anyone carrying out illegal or fraudulent actions. We may have to notify the appropriate authorities if we become aware of illegal or fraudulent actions being carried out.

3. All information is confidential.

We will only record your information if you have given consent for us to do so. Any information that we keep about you will be stored securely and only viewed by staff and volunteers involved in advising you, or other people that you have consented to share this information with. These may be organisations we are referring your case on

to, agencies we are dealing with on your behalf (such as the DWP or an energy supplier) and external auditors that check the quality and accuracy of our work. We will not 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, or if we have reason to believe that there are grounds for over-riding consent.

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 made in accordance with 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 BRWF's Privacy Policy. A copy of our privacy policy is available on our website at <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/brwf/privacy-policy/> or by calling 01527 570490.

- You have a right to view any data we hold on you and can request to view it by contacting our Data Protection Officer on the above number.
- You have the right to withdraw consent at any time.

4. 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 make judgements about you based on your age, disability, gender, relationships, race, religious and cultural beliefs, political beliefs, sex, sexual orientation, or the circumstances that you are in. We will aim to provide enough information or advice to enable you to make informed choices and we will not seek to influence your decisions.

The Information & Advice Service operates in compliance with Age UK BRWF's Equalities and Diversity Policy. A copy of the policy is available at <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/brwf/> or on request by calling 01527 570490.

5. Our service is as accessible as possible for older people.

Our Information & Advice service is provided in venues that are suitable for people with disabilities, using ground floor rooms whenever possible or with a lift that can accommodate a wheelchair. Disabled toilet facilities are available at all our venues.

If you 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 your needs or circumstances. Through our appointments system we aim to give you as much time as necessary to assist with your enquiry.

What We Ask of Our Clients

So that we can fully help you with your enquiry, we ask you to:

- treat our staff and other clients with courtesy and respect
- attend appointments or try to let us know in advance if you cannot attend
- provide us with accurate and truthful information about your circumstances, including copies of information or paperwork where applicable
- inform us of changes in your circumstances which may be relevant to your case
- keep us informed of any correspondence or contact you receive from other agencies in relation to your case
- notify us of the outcome of welfare benefit or housing applications we have assisted you with

HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT, COMPLIMENT OR SUGGESTION

We welcome feedback about the Information & Advice Service, whether it is positive or negative. Raising issues with the I&A team gives us the opportunity to review how we provide the service and to make improvements.

Feedback can be given to any member of the I&A team in person, by telephone, email or letter to any member of the I&A Team. However, if you would prefer to give feedback directly to the manager, the Service Manager's name is Trudy Pavitt.

- Address your letter to Trudy Pavitt, I&A Service Manager, 51 Windsor Street, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, B60 2BJ
- Send an email to enquiries@ageukbrwf.org.uk
- Telephone 01527 570490.

Making a Complaint

If you wish to make a complaint, please follow Age UK BRWF's complaints procedure - a copy of the full Complaints Policy and Procedure is available on our website at <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/brwf/> or by request from 01527 570490.

At the first stage any negative feedback, adverse comments, concerns or complaints will be treated informally – clients should telephone or email the I&A service as above to bring any issues to our attention.

If the matter cannot be resolved, the complaint should be made formally in writing using the Complaints and Compliments Form or as a written letter or email marked as 'Formal Complaint' (Stage 2). This should be addressed to the Chief Executive Officer – Amanda Allen. Formal complaints will be responded to in accordance with the Complaints Policy.

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, sharing information with only those who need to know, and we will follow appropriate Data Protection requirements.

HOW YOU CAN HELP US

The Information & Advice Service is free of charge and we do not expect any form of recognition or gifts. However, running the Information and Advice Service is expensive and only some of the money to do this comes from external funding. If you would like to support us in continuing to provide the service, there are several ways that you can do so:

- **Donate by cash or cheque.** You can make a cash donation at any of our I&A venues; or post a cheque (made payable to Age UK Bromsgrove, Redditch & Wyre Forest) to The Information & Advice Service, Age UK, 51 Windsor Street, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, B60 2bJ.
Please specify when you make your donation if you wish to donate specifically to the Information & Advice service. And if you are a taxpayer please ask us about 'Gift Aid'.
- **Make an online donation** – visit our website for details of how to do this.
<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/brwf/get-involved/donate/>
- **Donate items to, or buy from, one of our charity shops**
 - Providence Road, Sidemoor, Bromsgrove
 - High Street, Bromsgrove Town Centre
 - Golden Cross Lane, Catshill, Bromsgrove
 - New Road, Rubery
 - Matchborough Way, Redditch
 - Mason Road, Headless Cross, Redditch
 - Lickhill Road, Stourport-on-Severn
- Provide feedback about your experience of our Information & Advice service and the difference it has made to you. We may ask you to participate in satisfaction surveys and/or case studies to evidence the impact of our service.
- Tell others about our service and recommend us to your friends
- Volunteer for us – we have a variety of volunteering roles to suit your skills and experience including fundraising, befriending, administration and retail. Please contact us on 01527 570490 or send an email to enquiries@ageukbrwf.org.uk for further information
- Support us in local and national campaigns by writing to your councillor or MP. You will find information about current campaigns on the website of Age UK national
<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/get-involved/volunteer/campaign-with-us/>

Document created by Trudy Pavitt
Information & Advice Service Manager
01-06-2022