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**Statement of Services for Information and Advice**

Age UK Carlisle and Eden provides information and advice on a range of issues relating to older people and those who care for them. In particular, we specialise in:

◾ welfare benefits advice for those over 50 years of 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 challenge decisions about welfare benefits, social services, health services and energy providers.

The only time that clients will be denied this service is where there is a conflict of interest or the client’s own behaviour means that Age UK CE needs to consider removing the right to the service. This will always be discussed with the Services Manager and the Chief Executive Officer, prior to any action being taken.

**How do we provide help?**

• Information guides and factsheets are available, which cover a wide range of subjects affecting older people and those who care for and support them.

• Telephone advice. Call us on 01228 536673 or 01228 633331, Monday to Friday between 9am and 4.30pm. This call will be charged at a local rate. If you contact 01228 633331 outside of working hours or the phone line is busy, a message can be left and your call will be returned as soon as possible.

• Office appointments. To arrange an appointment at our office you can either call or drop into our office, where someone will listen to your query, and if further support needs are identified, your details will be taken to enable a Caseworker to contact you at a later date to arrange an appointment. We make every effort to contact you within 5 working days.

 Our office opening hours are Monday to Friday 9am – 4pm. Arranging an appointment in advance lets us better prepare for your visit and gives us an opportunity to tell you if there are any important documents we need you to bring along.

• Home visits. If it would be difficult for you to visit us, we are happy to visit you at home for certain types of advice that can’t be provided over the phone. For example, we regularly visit people to complete welfare benefit application forms. We do often have a waiting list for home visits of around 3 – 4 weeks but will endeavour to arrange a visit as soon as possible.

When we visit we will always arrange the time with you in advance, and our advisor will carry identification. If you have any concerns about someone turning up at your door who claims to be from Age UK Carlisle and Eden, please ask them to remain outside and call us on 01228 536673. We will confirm if the person works for or volunteers for Age UK Carlisle and Eden and has an appointment with you. If you would like to arrange a home visit, please contact our office on 01228 536673 or 01228 633331, Monday to Friday 9.00am to 4.30pm.

**Change in service**

Clients and local partners will be notified as soon as practicable if there are any changes to this service, including our opening hours, whether short or long term.

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

Sometimes people come to us or we identify problems that we do not have the expertise or knowledge to help with. For example, we are unable to provide debt, financial 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.

**How our service treats its clients**

We follow five key principles when delivering our service.

**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.

**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. 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.

**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 Department of Work and Pensions (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 and evidence of this will be required. You have the right to withdraw your consent at any point by contacting 01228 536673.

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 undertaken following Age UK Carlisle and Eden’s Safeguarding policy (copies available by request from 01228 536673).

Any data we hold about you is processed in accordance with data protection legislation and Age UK Carlisle and Eden’s GDPR Data Protection policy and you have a right to request to view any data we hold on you. A copy of our policy and privacy notice can be requested by calling 01228 536673. 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 won’t 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 and Advice Service operates in compliance with Age UK Carlisle and Eden’s Equalities and Diversity Policy. A copy of the policy is available by request from 01228 536673.

**Our service is as accessible as possible for older people -** Our offices are suitable for people with disabilities and have step free access, ground floor/ lift accessible interview facilities, disabled toilets, and hearing loops available on request.

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.

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

If you would like to compliment or make a suggestion about our Information and Advice service please contact the Services Manager, Becky Graham, either in writing at 20 Spencer Street, Carlisle, CA1 1BG or by telephone on 01228 536673.

If you wish to make a complaint, please follow Age UK Carlisle and Eden’s complaints procedure. A copy of the full complaints procedure is available from our Website https://www.ageuk.org.uk/carlisleandeden.

**What we ask of 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 can’t, if possible

• inform us of changes in your circumstances which may be relevant to 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 it with us.

• notify us of the outcome of welfare benefit applications we have assisted you

 with

**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 don’t expect any further form of recognition or gifts. And while thank you gifts are lovely to receive, there are a number of other ways you can support us so we can continue to provide the service.

Make a donation by either cash or a cheque made payable to Age UK Carlisle and Eden. And if you are a tax payer please ask us about ‘gift aid’.

Become a Volunteer with us, we have opportunities within our Information and Advice Service, Day Care, Shops and befriending.

Donate to, or buy from, our local charity shops at Carlisle, Brampton, Kirkby Stephen and Alston.

Join in with our activities. Age UK Carlisle and Eden provides a range of activities for older people, including Day Centres and Lunch Clubs.

Tell others about our service and recommend us to your friends.

Provide feedback of our service to help us develop.

**Review**

The Services Manager is responsible for monitoring adherence to this statement via day-to-day support and supervision of Caseworkers and Volunteers.

Services Manager – Becky Graham

Chief Executive - Alison Ambrose