***Statement of Service***

Age Cymru Gwynedd a Môn provide a free, confidential information and advice service for older people, their carers and families living in Gwynedd and Anglesey.

We can offer information and/or advice on a wide range of issues. This includes:

* Welfare benefits advice for people aged over 50, including benefit entitlement checks and offering assistance to complete any claim forms required.
* For those we have completed the original application with and have been turned down, we can assist with completing a mandatory consideration letter as well as accompanying people to tribunals in order to fight unsatisfactory decisions.
* Helping people identify the care and support they need, including help accessing Social Services and other advice agencies as well as advising on other services we may be able to assist with.
* Advising on the services, support, groups, activities and concessions available locally
* Helping people to make complaints or challenge decisions about welfare benefits, social services, health services and energy providers.
* Assist people with applying for disabled parking badges.

***How do we provide help?***

* **Information guides and factsheets.** These cover a wide range of subjects affecting older people and their carers as well as family members.
* **Telephone advice.** A telephone advice line is available 9am-5pm Monday to Thursday and 9am-4.30 Friday on 01286 685919.
* **Appointments**.

We offer an appointment service at our office as well as various locations in Gwynedd and Anglesey, this service is offered by appointment only.

* **Home visits**. If it would be difficult for you to visit us, we will 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. However, home visits are expensive and time consuming so we will ask you about alternative ways we could help.

***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 debt advice, financial advice or immigration advice.

In these cases we can provide you with 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 and arrange an appointment. We will always get your permission before referring you to another organisation.

You won’t be charged for any of our information and advice. 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.

**The information and advice we provide is independent.**

We will never recommend a service or provider to you, including our 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 Cymru Gwynedd a Môn or any other organisation.

**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 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 significant harm. In this case we may notify a relevant statutory body, for example social services or the police. These disclosures will be done following safeguarding procedures that our staff and volunteers have been trained in.

Any data we hold on you is done so in accordance with data protection legislation. You have a right to view any data we hold on you and can make a request in writing to Age Cymru Gwynedd a Môn.

**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, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity or religion.  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.

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

Our offices are suitable for people with disabilities. We can also offer information and advice in Welsh where requested. 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 our office in writing or call 01286 685919.

If you wish to make a complaint, please follow Age Cymru Gwynedd a Môn’s complaints procedure. A copy of the full complaints procedure is available on request or on our website.

***What we expect 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.
* Inform us off the applications outcome.

***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. However if you would like to support us so we can continue to provide the service, there are a number of ways you can do so:

* Make a donation – If you would like to make a donation, please contact your nearest office
* Volunteer – We have a number of volunteering opportunities available. Contact your nearest office for more information
* Provide a case study of your experience of our Information and Advice service and the difference it has made to you
* Campaign for us by writing to your councillor, AM or MP to tell them how helpful you found us
* Tell others about our service and recommend us to your friends.