**Information and Advice Service: Information for clients**

**What services do we offer?**

Age UK Leeds provides information and advice on a range of issues relating to older people and those who care and support them. We can assist with:

* Benefits and money - Welfare benefits advice for those over (or approaching) state pension age. This includes Attendance Allowance applications, benefit checks and help to complete claim forms.
* Your home - information on staying warm at home, home adaptations and housing options.
* Social care - such as finding a care home or getting some help at home, and how it is funded.
* Local services and support - signposting and information on what is available in the Leeds area and where to begin looking for the services that you need.
* Legal issues - such as wills, Power of Attorney, and how to deal with an estate. Free advice from a solicitor is available by appointment.

**How do we provide help?**

**Information guides and factsheets.** These cover a wide range of subjects affecting older people and those who care or support them. Copies are available on the Age UK national website or can be requested by calling us on 0113 389 3000. <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/services/information-advice/guides-and-factsheets/>

**Telephone advice.** For advice enquiries and information support about local services please call our Information Support Team on 0113 389 3000.

Our opening times are 9 am – 4 pm, Monday – Friday. One of our team will ring you back within 3-5 working days.

Alternatively, you can ring the National Age UK Helpline for telephone advice on the Freephone number 0800 678 1602. Lines are open 8am-7pm, 365 days a year.

Your call to Age UK Leeds advice team may divert to the National Age UK Helpline, if we are not available to answer it.

**E mail advice:** You can contact our Information Services Team at info@ageukleeds.org.uk We will respond to your email within 3-5 working days.

**Support appointment:** At the point of enquiry you will be offered a telephone appointment or an office appointment in our city centre building. If you are not able to have a telephone or office appointment a home visit can be arranged to support you with your enquiry. This may be completed by one of our Advice Workers or one of our Advice Volunteers.

**How do we manage our waiting lists?**

**For Information enquiries** we do not have a waiting list and our Information Officers will aim to deal with your enquiry at point of contact or will take relevant information to discuss with an advisor and respond to you within 3- 5 working days.

**For advice enquiries**, such as support with applying for benefits the Information Officer or Advisor will ask you some specific questions at the point of enquiry to enable us to determine the type of support you require and assist us in ensuring it is allocated to the correct person within the team. We will ask you if there are any key dates or deadlines in relation to your application.

Your enquiry will then be allocated to our waiting list and the person taking your enquiry will explain how long the waiting list is that time. If you don’t wish to go on the waiting list we aim to signpost you to other agencies or government departments.

Please note that our waiting list for a home visit may be longer than that for a telephone or office appointment.

We monitor our waiting lists closely and aim to meet any key dates or deadlines that you have made us aware of at the point of enquiry. If we are unable to meet these we will call you or write to you to make you aware.

For anyone who we have supported to apply for benefits we would offer a follow up benefits check pending the outcome of your initial application. This will be offered at the time we support with the application, recorded as an action on your client action plan, and a follow up action will be recorded on our waiting list as required. We regularly review these actions and may call or write to you to confirm if the follow up check is still required. The letter will clearly state how to contact us if this is required or we will assume it is no longer needed and close the action and your case.

**What happens 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 or debt advice, financial advice or immigration advice. We are also unable to provide advice to mixed aged couples or to those requiring support with working age benefits.

In these cases, we will look to signpost you to another organisation for further help or provide one of our free Age UK Factsheets. Where possible we will give you a selection of organisations to choose from.

When signposting to another organisation we will provide their contact details so that you can contact them yourself. In some cases, we may be able to contact the organisation on your behalf to make a referral. We will always get your permission before referring you to another organisation.

Sometimes when advising you we may reach a point where we do not have the expertise to assist you further. Where possible we will refer you to another service that can help you.

**How our service treats its clients**

We follow 5 key principles when delivering our service:

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

You won’t be charged for any of our information or advice. If we signpost or refer you to another organisation we will tell you if there is a charge for the service.

Age UK Leeds is a charity and we need to raise the money to fund our services. We do welcome donations. If you do wish to donate, please speak to one of our volunteers or staff.

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

We will never recommend a service or provider to you. Where possible we will always provide you with a choice of alternatives and help you make an informed decision. We are not bound by any local or national government policies and will always advise you on what is best for you rather than what is best for the council or the Department of 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 activities and may notify the appropriate authorities.

1. **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 shared with other people that you have given consent for us to share this information with. This may be organisations that we are referring you to or agencies we are dealing with on your behalf, or auditors checking the quality of our advice on behalf of the National Age UK. We won’t share your information or discuss your case with anyone outside our service without your consent unless they have been given authority to act on your behalf by the Court of Protection or Department of Work and Pensions.

We may share information about someone without their consent if:

* We are concerned that someone is at risk of significant harm. In this case we may notify a relevant statutory service such as social services or police. These disclosures will be done following Age UK Leeds’ safeguarding procedures.
* 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

Any data we hold on you is done so in accordance with data protection legislation. We have a statement ‘What we do with your information’ which is available by calling 0113 389 3000. You have a right to view any data we hold on you and request this by writing to Age UK Leeds, Information Governance, Bradbury Building, Mark Lane, Leeds, LS2 8JA.

1. **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 on the circumstances which they find themselves in and we won’t try to influence the decision you make following our advice. Sometimes clients may make a decision that we don’t think is in their best interest. We will tell them if this happens and aim to provide them with enough information and advice to make an informed choice. We will respect whatever decision they then make. The Information and Advice Service operates in compliance with Age UK Leeds Equality Policy. A copy of the policy is available on request from 0113 389 3000.

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

Our office has step free access, ground floor interview facilities, disabled toilet, and a lift to the first floor. We can offer home visits in some cases.

Where clients have difficulties accessing or understanding our information or advice, for example because of a disability or language problem, we will take reasonable steps to provide our service in a manner which is accessible and appropriate to their needs and circumstances.

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

If you would like to make a complaint, compliment or suggestion about our Information and Advice Service please fill in our ‘Tell us what you think’ form. You can request this by ringing 0113 389 3000. Alternatively you can complete a comments box on our website: <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/leeds/about-us/contact-us/>

**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 any changes in your circumstances which may be relevant to your case
* Provide us with information and paperwork that we need for your case

**How you can help us**

Our Information and Advice Team gain satisfaction from our work and helping our clients. We don’t expect any recognition or gifts. There are a number of ways you can support us so we can continue to provide the service:

* Make a donation – by cheque payable to Age UK Leeds, by standing order, by payroll giving, leave a legacy, donate on line. For more details, please visit our website or call 0113 389 3000. Please make it clear when you make your donation if you wish to donate specifically to the Information and Advice Service. If you are a tax payer, please also ask about Gift Aid.
* Volunteer – there are lots of different volunteering opportunities including information and advice volunteers, walk leaders, befrienders. More details are on our website or ring 0113 389 3000 or email volunteer@ageukleeds.org.uk
* Provide a case study of your experience of our information and Advice Service and the difference it has made to you. Contact advice@ageukleeds.org.uk or call 0113 389 3000.
* Provide feedback about our service – either using the form given to you by our adviser or request our ‘Tell us your story’ form from 0113 389 3000.

**Our contact details:**

Office: Bradbury Building, Mark Lane, Leeds, LS2 8JA

Telephone; 0113 389 3000

Website: [www.ageuk.org.uk/leeds/](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/leeds/)

Email: advice@ageukleeds.org.uk or info@ageukleeds.org.uk