**Advice & Information Service Statement of Service**

The statement below will be included on Age UK Redbridge, Barking & Havering’s website under the Advice & Information Service page. A notice showing the statement is pinned to the wall in all reception areas clearly stating that it is available as a printed or electronic document on request for Advice & Information clients. A copy of this statement will also be issued to all clients receiving on-going casework support. A copy of this statement will also be kept in all Interview Rooms.

The statement will be reviewed every six months and updated 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:

**Information about Age UK Redbridge, Barking & Havering’s Advice & Information Service**

What services do we offer?

Age UK Redbridge, Barking & Havering provides and Advice and Information 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: Benefit Checks to check benefit entitlements and assistance to complete claim forms

•  **Community Care** - Helping older people and their carers identify the care and support they need, including help accessing Social Services Care Needs Assessments and advice on how to pay for care and support. Accessing Carers Assessment for the carer.

• **Housing -** 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. Advice on grants available for disabled facilities, home renovation, grants. Home Safety checks etc

• **Leisure & Transport** - Advising on local services, support, groups, activities and concessions available locally. Assistance to complete applications for Blue Badge, Congestion Charge Exemption Form, Taxi Card, Mobility Card Schemes, Dial a Ride & Disable Parking Bay.

• **Money** - advising those who are finding it hard to make ends meet or are struggling to pay their bills. **WE ARE NOT ABLE TO PROVIDE DEBT ADVICE BUT CAN SIGNPOST OR REFER YOU TO AN APPROPRIATE ORGANISATION.**

We can offer support to carry out Tariff Checks to see if you are able to save money on utility bills, ensure you are on the utility companies Priority Register. **WE ARE UNABLE TO MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS OF UTILITY COMPANIES**

We can provide support access grants from various charitable trusts.

• **Complaints** – Advising people to make complaints or challenge decisions about Care Needs Assessments, Health services, energy providers etc

**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

• Telephone advice. Call us on 020 8220 6000 from Monday to Friday between 9am and 3pm. If you ring outside of opening hours, or if our Advice & Information Workers are busy or out of the office we shall take your details on a referral form or your call will be diverted to the Advice & Information Workers voicemail where you can leave a message with your contact details and nature of your enquiry.

• Office appointments are available. To arrange an appointment at our office you can call our Advice & Information Service. A referral will be taken and an Advice Worker or the Administrator will call you to book an appointment for Monday to Friday 9am to 3pm

Arranging an appointment in advance lets us prepare for your visit and gives us an opportunity to tell you if there are any important documents we need you to bring along. This means we make the best use of our staff’s time and can hopefully avoid people having to wait in the office for an appointment

• 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. If you would like to arrange a home visit, please contact our Information and Advice Service, Monday to Friday 9am to 3pm. We often have a two to three 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 Redbridge, Barking & Havering, please ask them to remain outside and ring us on 020 8220 6000. We will confirm if the person works or volunteers for Age UK Redbridge, Barking & Havering and has an appointment with you.

**.** Video Calls have also been made available to support clients needing advice and support through the pandemic and we shall continue to offer this to those clients who prefer this option.

**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 Legal, Consumer debt advice, Financial or Immigration advice.

In these cases we can provide you with basic information and direct you to another suitable Quality Marked 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. This most commonly happens when there is a need to challenge a welfare benefit decision. We will 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 will not be charged for any of our Advice & Information. 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 Gift Aid.

1. ***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/ Age CO’s Trading & Products. 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.

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 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 will not 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 at any point.

*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 Redbridge, Barking & Havering’s Data Protection policy. A copy of our data protection policy is available for you to look at upon request. You have a right to view any data we hold on you and can request to view it.

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, 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 Redbridge, Barking & Havering’s Equalities and Diversity Policy

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

Our offices are suitable for people with disabilities, we are based on the 4th Floor but there is a lift available. Disabled Toilets are located on the 3rd Floor accessible via a lift.

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 Advice & Information Service operates in compliance with Age UK Redbridge, Barking & Havering’s Equalities and Diversity Policy.

**Compliments & Complaints**

If you would like to compliment or make a suggestion about our Advice & Information Service, please contact the Service Manager, Priti Mistry, either in writing at Age UK Redbridge, Barking & Havering, 4th Floor, 103 Cranbrook Road, Ilford, IG1 4PU or by telephone on 020 8220 6000

If you wish to make a complaint, please follow Age UK Redbridge, Barking & Havering’s complaints procedure. Complaints can be sent to Age UK Redbridge, Barking & Havering, 103 Cranbrook Road, Ilford, IG1 4PU or by telephone on 020 8220 6000

***What we ask of our clients***

In return for providing information & 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 or of any correspondence with time deadlines.

**How you can help us**

Our Information & 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. 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 – Please make it clear when you make your donation if you wish to donate specifically to the Information & Advice service. And if you are a tax payer please ask us about ‘gift aid’.

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

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

Signed:

Senior Manager: Chief Officer:

Date: Date: