

Information about Age UK South Lakeland I&A service for its customers

What type of service do we offer?

Age UK South Lakeland can provide information and advice on a range of issues relating to older people, their rights and entitlements, local services and support available to them and those who care for and support them. In particular assistance can be provided for:

- Welfare Benefits and state pension advice, including working out if you are entitled to benefits and assisting people to complete the claim forms.
- Helping people to identify care and support services appropriate to their needs, accessing Social Services and advising on how you can pay for care and support.
- Advising older people on housing issues including the maintenance and up keep of a property and considering different types of housing that might be appropriate as you get older, might need more support or want to move nearer to family.
- Advising older people on the services, support, group, activities and concessions available locally.
- Helping people who are finding it hard to make ends meet, struggling to pay their bills or who have fallen into debt.
- Helping people to make complaints or challenge decisions about welfare benefits, social services, health services and energy providers.

Our service has achieved the national Advice Quality Standard and passed the Age UK I&A Quality Programme ensuring that the service meets recognised Advice Sector standards of practice and that the information and advice we give is of high quality and accurate.

Our service includes:

- **Information guides and factsheets** on a wide range of subjects affecting older people and those who care for and support them
- **Telephone advice** Monday to Friday between 09:00 and 16:30. Please ring us on 01539 728180. This call will be charged at a local rate. If you ring outside of our opening hours or our adviser is busy your call will be diverted to Age UK's national Advice Line. They will either be able to answer your call or will arrange for an adviser from Age UK South Lakeland to call you back.

- **Resource Centre - Kendal.** Our Resource Centre in Kendal is open Monday to Friday between 09:30 and 16:30 and clients can usually see an adviser between 09:30 and 15:30 although on occasion it may be necessary to arrange an appointment at a later date
- **Ulverston Drop-in** runs 09:30 -14:00 on Thursdays, which can be used to make appointments to see a Case support officer or to drop by for any advice
- **Local community Venues** – see 'What's On'.
- **Home visits.** Following a referral into the service we arrange for a case officer to visit the client in their own home to undertake a full compass assessment by way of a guided conversation. The Compass Assessment (Q1) collects data on 5 key domains:
 - a) The area they live
 - b) Their health
 - c) Their financial situation
 - d) Their home and living arrangements
 - e) Their social connectedness

When we visit we will always arrange the time in advance and our adviser will carry identification. If clients have any concerns about someone turning up at the door who claims to be from Age UK South Lakeland, please ask them to remain outside and ring us on 01539 728118. We will confirm if the person works or volunteers for Age UK South Lakeland and has an appointment arranged.

What will happen if we cannot provide the service you require?

Sometimes people will come to us with problems that we do not have the expertise or knowledge to help with or that we do not have the appropriate licence to enable us to provide advice.

We can provide basic information on almost any issue commonly experienced by older people but if you require advice we are unable to assist with we may have to direct you to another organisation. Where possible we will give you a selection of organisations that you can choose from and we will either 'signpost' or 'refer' you to them.

When 'signposting' we will give you the organisation's contact information so that 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 seek your consent before referring you to another organisation.

Sometimes when advising you we will reach a point where we do not have the expertise to pursue your case further. In these circumstances we will refer you onto another local advice service that has the appropriate expertise.

How our service treats its clients

In delivering the service we follow four key principles:

- That the service is provided **free of charge**. You will not be charged for any of the information and advice you receive from this service. If we signpost or refer you onto another organisation we will tell you if there is any charge for their service. While we provide the service 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 that a client can make to help us maintain our service will be greatly accepted. If you wish to donate please ask one of our staff or volunteers about 'gift aid'.
- 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 service. We will always, where possible, provide you with a choice of alternatives and provide you with help to make an informed choice. Our service is not bound by local or national government policies and we will always seek to advise you as to what is in your best interest rather than that of the council, the Department for Work and Pensions, Age UK or any other organisation. However we will not advise a client to take an action that is illegal or fraudulent. If a client insists on pursuing an illegal or fraudulent course of action we will immediately cease to advise them and may notify the appropriate authorities.
- We will treat all of your information as being **confidential**. Any information that we keep about you is stored securely and will only be viewed by information and advice staff and volunteers involved in advising you or third parties that you have consented to us sharing the information with. We will not discuss your case with anyone outside of our service without your consent or if they have been granted responsibility to act on your behalf by the Court of Protection or Department for Work and Pensions. We will seek consent from you before sharing your information with other parties. Common examples of third parties that your information may be shared with, following your consent, are external auditors that check the quality and accuracy of our work, organisations that we are referring your case onto and agencies that we are dealing with on your behalf (for example the DWP or an energy supplier). There are three circumstances in which we may share your information without your consent.

- They are :
 - If a client insists on taking an illegal or fraudulent course of action.
 - If we are contact by a statutory body about a client we have advised who is suspected of taking an illegal or fraudulent action and is being investigated.
 - If we are concerned that an individual, that is involved in a case that we are advising on, is at risk of significant harm. In such cases we may notify a relevant statutory body of our concern, for example social services or the police. Such disclosures will be done following the local agreed 'No Secrets' procedures that our staff and volunteers have been trained in.

- We will always treat our clients with **respect** and expect that our clients will treat our staff and volunteers in the same way. We will not judge our clients based on their age, disability, gender, sexuality, race or religion. We will not judge our clients based upon the circumstance they find themselves in and we will not seek to influence the decisions you make following our advice. Sometimes clients will make a decision that we would generally consider not to be in their best interest, we will inform them of this and aim to provide enough information and advice to help them make an informed choice. We will respect whatever decision they then make. Where clients have difficulties accessing or understanding our information and advice, for example because of a disability or language issue, we will attempt to take all reasonable steps to provide our service in manner that is appropriate to your needs or circumstances and we will always aim to give you as much time as you need when we see you.

***Pam Lewis
Services Manager
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