Statement of Service

The statement below will be included on Age Cymru West Glamorgan’s website I&A page. A notice showing the statement is pinned to the wall at each office clearly stating that it is available as a printed or electronic document on request from an existing or potential client.

The statement is reviewed at least 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:

* On the Age Cymru West Glamorgan website
* Staff>IAA>Statement of Service for printable copies
* At each office

**Information about Age Cymru West Glamorgan’s Information & Advice Service for its customers**

**What services do we offer?**

Age Cymru West Glamorgan provides information and advice 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 50+, including working out benefit entitlements and offering assistance to complete claim forms. Please note we do not have the capacity to assist with Universal Credit applications.
* 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
* providing advice to people to make complaints or challenge decisions about welfare benefits, social services, health services and energy providers. Please note we are unable to assist with Benefit Appeal Tribunals.

Our service has achieved the national Advice Quality Standard and been assessed as meeting the benchmarks of the Age UK Information & Advice Quality Programme. This ensures we comply with recognised Advice Sector standards of practice and means our information and advice is accurate and high quality.

**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 01792 346344 from Monday to Friday between 10am and 3pm. This call will be charged at a local rate. If you ring outside of opening hours, or if our adviser is busy, your call will be diverted to a voicemail facility where you will be able to leave a message and one of our advisers will ring you back as soon as possible.
* **Office appointments***.*To arrange an appointment at our office you can contact our Advice Line on 01792 346344 Monday to Friday 10am 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 and volunteers’ time and can hopefully avoid you having to wait. Unfortunately, we are currently unable to offer a drop-in service.
* **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 Advice Line on 01792 346344, Monday to Friday 10am to 3pm. We often have a 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 Cymru West Glamorgan, please ask them to remain outside and ring us on 01792 648866. We will confirm if the person works or volunteers for Age Cymru West Glamorgan and has an appointment with you.
* **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 consumer debt advice, financial advice 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.

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. Where possible, 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.

**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 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 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 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.

**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 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 by the Court of Protection or Department for Work and Pensions. You have the right to withdraw consent at any time. Please note this may mean we can no longer assist you with your enquiry.

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 Cymru West Glamorgan’s Data Protection policy. A copy of our data protection policy is available by calling01792 684466.You have a right to view any data we hold on you and can request to view it by contacting us on 01792 648866 and by confirming your request in writing and sending it to Age Cymru West Glamorgan, Unit 10, Cwmdu Industrial Estate, Carmarthen Road, Gendros, Swansea, SA5 8JF.

**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 Cymru West Glamorgan’s Equalities and Diversity Equal Opportunities & Managing Diversity Policy. A copy of the policy is available by request from 01792 648866.

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

Our offices are suitable for people with disabilities with step free access, ground floor interview facilities, accessible toilets and grab rails. Hearing Loops are available by prior appointment. 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 Information & Advice Service operates in compliance with Age Cymru West Glamorgan’s Equal Opportunities & Managing Diversity Policy. A copy of the policy is available by request from 01792 648866.

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

If you would like to compliment or make a suggestion about our Information & Advice service please contact the service manager, Ellen Parker-Jones**,** either in writing at Age Cymru West Glamorgan, Unit 10, Cwmdu Industrial Estate, Carmarthen Road, Gendros, Swansea, SA5 8JF or by emailing:

Ellen.Parker-Jones@agecymruwestglamorgan.org.uk or by telephone on 01792 648866*.*

If you wish to make a complaint, please follow Age Cymru West Glamorgan’s complaints procedure. Please contact the Service Manager Ellen Parker-Jones on 01792 648866 and you will have an opportunity to discuss your complaint.A copy of the full complaint procedure is available by request from 01792 648866

**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

**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. However, there are a number of other ways you can support us so we can continue to provide the service.

* Make a donation – You can donate by calling us on 01792 648866; or you can pop a cheque made payable to Age Cymru West Glamorgan (ACWG) in the post and send it to Age Cymru West Glamorgan, Unit 10, Cwmdu Industrial Estate, Carmarthen Road, Gendros, Swansea, SA5 8JF. If you are a tax payer please ask us about ‘gift aid’.
* Leave a Legacy - If you decide to leave a gift in your will to us, you will be supporting us to make life better for adults across Swansea, Neath, Port Talbot, and Bridgend. Every penny you gift to us helps us to ensure that no one feels vulnerable and alone.
* Volunteer – we have a range of volunteering opportunities including Volunteer Administration Roles, Outreach Volunteers Roles and Volunteer Helper Roles at our Day Centre. For more information please contact 01792 648866 or email [enquiries@agecymruwestglamorgan.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@agecymruwestglamorgan.org.uk)
* Provide a case study of your experience of our Information & Advice service and the difference it has made to you – if you would like to provide a case study please contact our Information and Advice Manager on 01792 648866
* 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 by*

*Information & Advice Manager 1st June 2019*