

Age UK York Information & Advice Statement of Service

The statement below will be included on Age UK York website I&A page with a statement saying it can be made as a printed or electronic document on request from an existing or potential client. This statement will also be offered to all clients receiving on-going casework support.

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:

Information about Age UK York Information & Advice Service for our Clients

What services do we offer?

Age UK York 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 over retirement age, including working out benefit entitlements and offering assistance to complete claim forms
- 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 information 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
- Referring or signposting to other appropriate organisations as required
- advising those who are finding it hard to make ends meet or are struggling to pay their bills and looking into any possible grants are available
- helping people to make complaints or challenge decisions about welfare benefits, social services, health services and energy providers.

Standards and Quality

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 01904 634061 from Monday to Friday between 9.30am and 3.00pm. This call will be charged at a local rate. If you ring outside of opening hours, or if our adviser is busy, you can leave a message. Our information and advice team aims to make an initial call back to you within three

working days, sometimes sooner. In times of exceptional workload, our answerphone message will be updated with information on the response time.

- **Office appointments.** Unfortunately we have very limited confidential office space and are unable to offer this type of appointment unless there are exceptional circumstances. In these instances we will need advance notice to make suitable arrangements.
- **Local community venues.** We are extending our outreach work to have a broad reach across the City. Outreach is advertised on our website, Live Well York website and you can also contact our Information Line on 01904 634061 for these details.
- **Home visits.** For certain types of advice we offer home visits, for example, we regularly visit people to complete welfare benefit application forms when doing this over the phone is more difficult, e.g for those who have difficulty hearing, or memory problems. However, we will ask you about alternative ways we can help as home visits are time consuming. Our Benefits Team will discuss these options with you when they make contact. We would also discuss any concerns regarding Covid 19. 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 York please ask them to remain outside and ring us on 01904 634061. We will confirm if the person works or volunteers for Age UK York 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 and we are not legally trained, although we have knowledge of the law for certain areas such as welfare benefits and social care which we advise on on a regular basis and receive training and updates to do this.

In areas where we don't have the knowledge or expertise we can refer or signpost you to a relevant organisation for further help. Where possible we will give you a selection of organisations to choose from.

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 we will ask you whether we can 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 or resource to pursue your case any further. This may happen 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

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. Any data we hold about you is processed in accordance with data protection legislation and Age UK York Data Protection policy. There are occasions where external auditors ask to check the quality and accuracy of our work, and we may also need to pass on your details to other organisations we are referring your case on to, or 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 – we are happy to provide you with our policies on confidentiality and data protection at any time. Please ask.

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 (safeguarding). 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.

You have a right to view any data we hold on you and can request to view it by contacting our service.

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 UK York Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy. We are happy to provide you with a copy of this on request.

Accessibility

We are available to talk to face to face through our outreach work (contact our Information Team or website for details), and home visits, or by telephone, e mail or via our website. We can access an interpreter via City of York Council with prior notice.

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 UK York's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

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

We welcome complaints, compliments and suggestions. You can contact Age UK York by letter, phone, e mail or our website to do this. We also have a complaints, compliments and feedback policy which is available on our website or upon request. We treat any complaints seriously and these will be dealt with in accordance with our policy and as quickly as possible.

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
- inform us if you, or a member of your household, has symptoms of Covid 19 when a member of staff or volunteer is due to see you face to face

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. And 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 to Age UK York, and if you are a tax payer please ask us about 'gift aid'.
- Volunteer – we have many volunteering opportunities at Age UK York and our Volunteer Manager can discuss these with you.
- Provide a case study of your experience of our Information & Advice service and the difference it has made to you – this will inspire others to contact Age UK York and may make us more attractive to potential funders.
- Campaign for us by writing to your councillor or MP to tell them how helpful you found us. From time to time we run local and national campaigns.
- Donate to, or buy from, our charity shop(s) – you can check our website or contact our Information Team to find out where these are.
- Purchase a service or product from us. The Age UK Group offers a wide range of products and services specially designed for people in later life. For more information, please call 0800 169 18 19.
- Join Age UK's weekly lottery and have the opportunity to win up to £25,000 while also financially supporting our charitable work – for more information contact 0800 8496070.
- Tell others about our service and recommend us to your friends.

Contact Information:

Age UK York, St. Edmund's House, Margaret Street, York, YO10 4UX
Telephone: 01904 634061 between 9.30am and 3.00pm, Monday to Friday
Website: www.ageukyork.org.uk
E mail: firstcall@ageukyork.org.uk