



# **Fylde Borough Council End of Year Report**

**Period covered: 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024**

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## **General Update**

Age UK Lancashire delivers a high quality, confidential Information & Advice service across Lancashire for people of State Pension age and their carers. Funding from Fylde Borough Council contributes towards our Information and Advice team based in our St Annes office on St Georges Road, as well as face-to-face community delivery in the area.

Two teams contribute towards the Information and Advice (I&A) delivery; our 0300 Customer Services Team and our community focussed I&A Team. The I&A Team offer home visits, surgery appointments and telephone support, depending on the needs of the client.

The first point of contact into the service is often our 0300 number where our call handlers can help immediately with a simple enquiry or triage clients appropriately. In this reporting period, 631 contacts were made by people from Fylde this way.

Since April 2023, a total of 316 Fylde residents were referred into the I&A service and went on to receive full welfare benefit checks. We also supported 94 clients with completing claim forms. We continue to see an average of 8-10 clients per week at drop-in sessions – these may be given information or be signposted to other services, or may result in an appointment being arranged with one of our advisers.

Since April in Fylde Borough, we delivered the following services:

- Information & Advice including case work
- Hospital Aftercare – practical support for people discharged from hospital
- Home Help service – providing cleaning, shopping and other errands
- Good Day Calls – regular chats and ‘check-ins’ for clients who are lonely and/or isolated (set up in response to Covid-19)
- Scams Awareness – one-to-one advice sessions to enable client to be able to spot potential scams, deal with scammers, and take action in the event of being scammed.
- Extra Care Register sign-ups for all eligible clients across all services.
- Digital Inclusion – support in setting up and using devices.
- Client focus groups – small groups to discuss issues which are important to older people.

## **Information & Advice**

Age UK Lancashire’s I&A Team provide a free, one-to-one service supporting older people and their carers, often at the most vulnerable times in their life. Our services include signposting and referral to other agencies, providing information and advice, form filling and casework as required.

During appointments we explore topic areas such as welfare benefit entitlements and income maximisation, access to social care and the assessment process, and housing options for older people.

As part of all advice sessions, advisers will look at risk of fuel poverty, entitlement to warm home discount, and whether client is eligible to be signed up to the Extra Care Register. Where appropriate they

will arrange for these measures to be put in place. Since November 2023, 59 Fylde residents have seen signed up to the Extra Care Register.

We are pleased to report that our Scams Prevention and Awareness project has been extended until December 2025. During this reporting period, 32 Fylde residents have received 58 one-to-one scams awareness advice, with follow-up support provided where needed.

Several outreach sessions have also been delivered to promote our full range of services and deliver group awareness talks. This has been done in:

Friends of Ansdell Library

Freckleton Library

Windmill Lodge Care Home

NatWest Bank St Annes

Group at Café Booths St Annes

Ashton Gardens residents' association

St Annes Probus group

The Homestead Lytham sheltered accommodation.

As part of our holistic service, we extend our support to the immediate family and carers of our clients where appropriate.

We support all enquiries that are within our area of expertise and will actively refer to other specialist advice services where appropriate such as Citizen's Advice for debt advice and Welfare Rights for benefit appeals.

Our Customer Services Team is well established, offering older people and their carers a contact point for information or signposting. The team can also refer into our services as required.

Our most common enquiries usually include:

- Welfare Benefits
- Travel and leisure (including Blue Badge applications)
- Local services and activities
- Community and social care
- Housing options

Our Customer Services team have reported a high number of clients requesting support with blue badge applications, as few other organisations offer this support. We recently recruited a volunteer who will

take a small caseload of clients requesting this service, which will be delivered face-to-face from our St Annes office.

In recent months we have noticed an increase in complex housing cases, particularly relating to clients living in park homes who have insecure tenure. We have fed these findings back to our technical advice team at Age UK (National) so they can tailor training and briefings appropriately.

We have also noticed a high number of seemingly incorrect/inconsistent benefit decisions being made, so again this is something we are taking forward through the relevant channels.

Our I&A service can usually be accessed by calling in to the Age UK Lancashire office in St George's Rd, St Anne's, by telephone, email, letter, referral from external community services or via one of Age UK Lancashire's other services. Home visits are occasionally provided for people unable to access the office, complex cases and lengthy form-filling. Our telephone and email service operates Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm (via our 0300 303 1234 number) with an out of hours answerphone facility which gives the customer the option of ringing the Age UK National Advice Line for support out of hours (open 8am-7pm, 365 days per year).

The service works in partnership with a number of local key partners, including the Department for Work and Pensions, Welfare Rights, Pension Wise, Disability Information, Community Mental Health Team, Extensive Care Team, New Fylde Housing, Fylde CA, Care & Repair, Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service, Hospital Discharge Team, Trinity Hospice, Social Services, Stroke Association, Alzheimer's Association, Parkinson's Society, Alzheimer's Society and Lytham Hospital Dementia services.

The service provided by Age UK Lancashire during this 12-month period has identified £2,881,325.86 per annum in unclaimed benefits across the county, with £385,924.80 of that figure being for Fylde residents of State Pension age. This money is most often spent in the local economy.

### **Further Background**

Our countywide I&A team currently consists of 2 full time advisers, 1 scams awareness officer, and 2 part time administrators.

Age UK Lancashire has a comprehensive mandatory training plan for both staff and volunteers. We have invested in a high-quality online training resource via ME Learning which enables many more staff and volunteers to access up-to-date training and undertake courses at their convenience. Mandatory training includes Basic Life Support, Safeguarding Adults levels one and two, Safeguarding Children level one, Dementia Awareness, Information Governance, Mental Capacity Act, and Fire Safety Awareness. We have recently updated our mandatory training to include LGBTQ Awareness, PREVENT, and Infection Control, as well as further training on safeguarding adults who may be at risk of self-harm. During this reporting period, the I&A team have all attended training relating to consent, GDPR and mental capacity.

The Information and Advice staff also undertake training on Pension Age Welfare benefits, Social/Community Care, Housing, Charity Log (in house Database), Information & Advice Quality Program training meetings, The Care Act, and General Data Protection Regulation.

## Quality

In October, we received confirmation that we have been successful in renewing our Quality of Advice Standard accreditation (formerly IAQP) and have been scored as offering a 'good' standard of service. standard of service.

## Promotion and Engagement

We continue to support the Older People's Forum and the FAB group and we keep in contact with the social groups in the area. We participate in fortnightly Dementia Hub zoom meetings, and we continue to signpost people to Just Good Friends in St Annes, Lancashire Carers, Carers Count and Alzheimer's Singing For The Brain.

The team have delivered group awareness talks at various locations. These sessions are tailored to the group's requirements, and can include scams awareness, government cost of living support, energy efficiency and information about our services.

We have also started to deliver focus group sessions in the Fylde area. The first group of sessions has been focused on Digital Inclusion. The aim is to be able to provide user-led services which reflect the needs of our client groups.

TOPIC OF ENQUIRY	NUMBER OF ENQUIRIES
Age UK Services	3
Benefits	316
Community Care	78
Consumer	164
Health Conditions	7
Health Services	0
Housing	15
Legal	0
Leisure and Social Activities	3
Residential Care	0
Other money	35
Nationality and Immigration	0

### **Client feedback**

We have recently updated the way we gather client information. Our standard feedback form now asks:

How well did the service meet your needs?

Did you feel involved in the discussion about the service you received?

How likely would you be to recommend us to family and friends?

How likely would you be to use any of our services again?

We are pleased to report that 100% clients who completed a form, scored us as 'good' on all questions.

### **Client comments from feedback received**

"Professional and friendly service, clearly explained, excellent result."

"The lady I dealt with was extremely helpful and didn't rush me."

"You treated my call with great empathy and eased my anxiety and helped me immensely."

"Most niggling worries have disappeared, and I can't thank you enough."

"Your support is still ongoing."

"You helped me very much."