

Fylde Borough Council Mid-Year Report

Period covered: 1st April 2022 – 30th September 2022

Compiled by: Zoe Johnston, Information & Advice Service Manager

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General Update

Age UK Lancashire continues to deliver a high quality, confidential Information & Advice service across Lancashire for people aged 65+ and their carers. The support from Fylde Borough Council contributes towards our Information and Advice team via our St Annes office, and face-to-face community delivery in the area.

Two teams contribute towards the Information and Advice (I&A) delivery; our 0300 Call Handling Team and our community focused 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 usually our 0300 number where our call handlers can help immediately with a simple enquiry or triage clients appropriately. In this reporting period, 445 people from Fylde contacted us this way. This route, alongside our internal services acting as referral agents, enabled 72 people to be referred for more detailed advice support.

Since April 2022, 36 Fylde residents received full welfare benefit checks, and we supported 49 clients with completing claim forms. We see an average of 8 clients per week at drop in sessions – these may be given information or signposted to other services, or may result in an appointment being arranged with one of our advisers.

Our Information and Advice service moved to telephone appointments only during the pandemic. Although we have fully opened up other methods of delivery, telephone appointments – rarely used prior to lockdown – proved to be an efficient use of time, and for many clients, a much easier way of receiving help. Because of this, we are continuing to use telephone appointments wherever we can. The method used to deliver our service is agreed with our clients taking their needs into account.

Regardless of the method of service delivery, all clients can expect that their enquiry is fully explored, and they will receive comprehensive advice followed up with a confirmation of advice letter with details of the information and advice we have given and any steps they should take to achieve the desired outcome.

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
- Removing Barriers – supporting veterans

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- Good Day Calls – regular chats and ‘check-ins’ for clients who are lonely and/or isolated (set up in response to Covid-19)
- Art of Isolation and Veterans Art of Isolation projects – encouraging individuals to submit examples of creativity during the pandemic
- 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.

Information & Advice

Age UK Lancashire provides a comprehensive Information & Advice service to clients of pension age and their carers throughout the Fylde area. This is a free, one-to-one service supporting, informing and advising 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.

During appointments we explore topic areas such as welfare benefit entitlements and income maximisation, access to social care and the assessment process, housing options for older people. This year we have expanded our service offer to include information on local and government support schemes relating to the cost of living crisis, in particular any help which may be available for soaring energy costs. We have also taken on a 2 years Scams Prevention and Awareness project. We consider the client’s circumstances on an individual basis and can then tailor our service as needed.

As part of our holistic service we extend our service 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 service 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

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- Community and social care
- Housing options

The 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 other 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 6-month period has identified £1,175,486.09 per annum in unclaimed benefits across the county, with £237,032.22 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 part time adviser, 1 scams awareness officer, 1 part time volunteer, and we have successfully recruited an administration officer (joining us in November 2022) to support the team.

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. Regular meetings are usually held with all the volunteers to update them and provide general support. We make sure they are familiar with the standards, policies and procedures set by the Information and Advice Quality Standard. Training includes Basic Life Support, Safeguarding Adults level one, 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.

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

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training meetings, The Care Act, and General Data Protection Regulation.

Quality

We continue to hold the nationally recognized Age UK Information and Advice Quality Programme (IAQP) which was successfully renewed in April 2021, and the Advice Quality Standard which are rigorous and robust processes to ensure we are delivering a service that meets all their requirements. We are in the process of renewing this accreditation. We also hold the ISO 9001 and the Age UK organisational standard.

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 are hopeful that face to face meetings can resume in August. We continue to refer 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 Freckleton Library, various sheltered accommodations, and other locations as required. Our Scams Awareness project, in particular, is seeing much demand for group awareness sessions.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Case Study – to follow when signed consent received

Appendix B - Profile Data for Fylde 2022 April to September

TOPIC OF ENQUIRY	NUMBER OF ENQUIRIES
Age UK Services	1
Benefits	199
Community Care	20
Consumer	71
Health Conditions	0
Health Services	0
Housing	0
Legal	0
Leisure and Social Activities	1
Residential Care	12
Other money	24
Nationality and Immigration	0
Grand Total	328

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Client feedback

Our clients are issued with a feedback form at the end of their service. The results of these during this reporting period are that:

Your benefit claim was successful – 100 % agreed

Your general wellbeing has improved – 100 % agreed

You feel more independent or less isolated – 100 % agreed

Your knowledge of where to go for advice has increased - 100 % agreed

You were satisfied with the service and would recommend it to others - 100 % agreed

Average score 1-5

Staff were friendly and knowledgeable – 4.9/5

I was treated with respect – 4.8/5

My privacy and confidentiality were ensured - 5/5

The service met my expectations – 4.8/5

I received the service at the right time for me – 4.8/5

How likely are you to recommend our service? – 4.9/5

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Client comments

“Your staff have been great. I could not have managed without this help, First class service, cannot be bettered. Donation to follow”

“Age UK are just an excellent service with plenty of help”

“Everything flowed very well and in a pleasant friendly atmosphere with a lot of willingness and interest in helping me. I feel very happy and pleased with the staff that helped me. God bless them! of course your help has made a big difference. I didn't know anything about Age UK and its functions and I am pleased and happy for all the help, support and guidance that I have been given. Paula's support was great and very helpful in achieving what I wanted. My suggestion is to continue with this beautiful work of helping people who need it”

“The help and advice has gone beyond our expectations, we can only say thank you to all concerned”

“I am now able to manage my life better with the benefits you have helped me gain from DWP and Fylde Borough Council and after my recent bad fall at midnight I have panic buttons and a key safe as the police had to help me get up off the floor.”

“Paula was lovely and made me feel completely at ease whilst discussing sensitive subjects. Paula was very knowledgeable and really helped me to answer questions in a more productive way, I couldn't have managed without her. An extremely professional and efficient service.”

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