



# **Fylde Borough Council Annual Report**

**Period covered: 1st April 2022 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023**

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## General Update

Age UK Lancashire continues to deliver a high quality, confidential Information & Advice service across Lancashire for people of State Pension age and their carers. Support from Fylde Borough Council contributes towards our Information and Advice team based in our St Annes office, as well as 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 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 usually our 0300 number where our call handlers can help immediately with a simple enquiry or triage clients appropriately. In this reporting period, 1080 people from Fylde contacted us this way. This route, alongside our internal services acting as referral agents, enabled 117 people to be referred for more detailed advice support.

Since April 2022, 40 Fylde residents received full welfare benefit checks, and we supported 74 clients with completing claim forms. We continue to 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 covid-19 pandemic. This 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
- 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 year 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
- 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 £2,612,754.15 per annum in unclaimed benefits across the county, with £420,186.15 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, one part time administrator, and we have recently recruited a volunteer who will also be based in the Fylde office.

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 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 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. We have outreach sessions planned for St Annes Library and have offered our services to Ansdell Library and Lytham Library. We are currently focusing these sessions on cost of living support, though of course we welcome all enquiries. Our Scams Awareness project, in particular, is seeing much demand for group awareness sessions.

At Age UK Lancashire we aim to celebrate the diversity of older people, staff and volunteers and to support everyone to overcome the barriers to their full inclusion and participation in society. Our recent Equality and Diversity and Inclusivity Survey has informed future work to increase staff understanding of neurodiversity and increase confidence in use of positive language relating to race. 17% of respondents had disability. The survey highlighted useful areas of development for the organisation to focus on, including diversity within the workforce and attracting employee’s representative of the Lancashire communities.

**Appendices**

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

Appendix B - Profile Data for Fylde April 2022 – March 2023

TOPIC OF ENQUIRY	NUMBER OF ENQUIRIES
Age UK Services	2
Benefits	315
Community Care	38
Consumer	124
Health Conditions	2
Health Services	0
Housing	2
Legal	0
Leisure and Social Activities	1
Residential Care	22
Other money	37
Nationality and Immigration	0
Grand Total	549

### **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 – 75 % agreed

You feel more independent or less isolated – 67 % agreed

Your knowledge of where to go for advice has increased - 75 % agreed

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

### **Average score 1-5**

Staff were friendly and knowledgeable – 5/5

I was treated with respect – 5/5

My privacy and confidentiality were ensured - 5/5

The service met my expectations – 5/5

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

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

### **Client comments**

“Please excuse the delay in answering. Paula was more than helpful and has made me aware of other services eg scams prevention awareness. I have also been able to point someone else in the right direction.”

“I found Paula so very helpful. She is very kind, considerate and efficient in her position. Excellent!”

“I have today been advised that I am entitled to Attendance Allowance. I should like to thank Age UK for the excellent assistance they've given me, particularly Paula Fisher who has been a great help and support.”

“Thank you for all your help. When we needed help and advice you and your staff have been most helpful. “

“I just want to say how kind and helpful Zoe was and to say thank you for all the information you have sent me.”

“Fantastic, couldn't ask for anything more and recommend to everybody.”

“Paula was extremely helpful and cut through a load of potentially confusing stuff. Thank you.”