

# Fylde Borough Council Annual Report

Period covered: 1st April 2020 – 31st March 2021

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## General Update

Age UK Lancashire (AUKL) is the leading organisation in the county providing support & services to enable vulnerable people and their carers to live independently in the way they choose. We promote & facilitate social inclusion and improve health and wellbeing through a variety of delivery models. These can include group and peer activities, befriending and mentoring and one-to-one tailored and person-centred support. Services vary across areas according to local need.

The Covid-19 pandemic has created new challenges for Age UK Lancashire, as with all businesses and organisations across the globe, and we saw first-hand the impact on older people in our community who were often vulnerable and in many cases isolated. The national lockdown in March 2020 meant working practices and delivery methods had to be reviewed urgently and new practices put in place to ensure our clients remained supported during these difficult times. This has meant a switch to more telephone and email work being carried out instead of face to face contact with clients. As national lockdown rules continue to ease over the next few weeks and months, we hope to resume face to face office appointments and home visits as soon as possible, though the safety of our clients and staff remain our number one priority.

Since April in Fylde Borough we delivered the following services:

- Information & Advice including case work
- Hospital Aftercare – practical support for people discharged from hospital
- Befriending scheme – offering social visits and contact with volunteers
- Home Help service – providing cleaning, shopping and other errands
- Removing Barriers – supporting veterans
- Age of Opportunity – supporting people aged 50+ back into employment
- Support at Home – shopping, prescription collections, errands and domestic support
- 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

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## Information & Advice

Age UK Lancashire provides a comprehensive Information & Advice service to clients over the age of 65 years 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. There has been decreased demand for the home-visiting element of our service which supports older people who are housebound. This was expected as those who are housebound due to illness or disability are also likely to be medically vulnerable and therefore were in the 'shielded' group for the earlier stages of lockdown. We have used other methods of delivering our services to enable clients to claim their welfare benefit entitlements using both staff and trained volunteers. We achieved this by carrying out telephone appointments, exploring easements with DWP and Lancashire County Council and liaising with family members and through other support already in place for the client.

Our organisation also invested in a Digital Inclusion Coordinator to support with clients who may be able to benefit from use of IT. In addition we secured a number of tablets which we have been able to loan to clients to help them remain connected to family and friends, in some cases with the support of our Digital Inclusion Officer, or other support staff. We have provided tablets, mobile wifi and credit to 6 Fylde district residents, all delivered to the door. These services have also proved valuable in helping clients to access on line grocery shopping.

In the reporting period 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021, we received 375 calls via our Customer Services team from 225 Fylde residents. Though many of these calls were for information and signposting, more in depth advice was provided to 118. During those appointments we explored 257 topic areas.

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 Advice Line 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)

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- 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. As the office is not yet open to the public due to Covid-19 restrictions, information is visible in the office windows advising clients how they can contact us by telephone. Home visits are usually provided for people unable to access the office, complex cases and lengthy form-filling, though as previously mentioned, we are not currently offering home visits. 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 over £2,205,447.70 per annum in unclaimed benefits across the county, with £242,319.07 of that figure being for Fylde residents of State Pension age. This money is most often spent in the local economy.

### **Further Background**

Our Fylde based adviser will retire in April and so we are currently recruiting to the post. The service manager is covering provision whilst we are in that process. We are also recruiting a part time senior administrator for the service. We aim to be able to offer office-based appointments and home visits for those clients who are unable to come to us. At this time, we are only offering a telephone advice service for the safety of our staff and clients, and in line with government guidelines.

Prior to March 2020 we were also supported by three Information & Advice volunteers undertaking home visits and completing welfare benefit claim forms, particularly Attendance Allowance. We had one volunteer who supports older people to complete online blue badge applications in the office and one Meet and Greet volunteer who helps by offering a reception service to visitors to the office by signposting, providing information or actively referring the client's enquiry to an appropriate service. One of these volunteers continued to carry out duties from home, but the nature of the role, as well as

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confidentiality issues have meant that other volunteers are not currently carrying out their roles. Sadly, one of our volunteers recently passed away following a short illness and two others have decided not to return as they wish to prioritise family time. We are in regular contact with our other volunteers and are hoping they will resume their duties in the coming months. In addition, we aim to recruit additional volunteers to support the Information & Advice service in Fylde office over the next year.

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) 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..

We are not currently attending any 'in person' events for safety reasons.

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### Campaigns

Age UK Lancashire has supported the following national campaigns:

- Care In Crisis
- Winter Warmth and Winter Health
- Painful Journeys
- Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness
- Switched off, saving the free TV license for older people
- Campaign with Ed Balls raising awareness of social care systems and costs, particularly relating to dementia
- Digital Inclusion
- Work with Good Things Foundation to provide on line training through Learn My Way

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**Appendices**

Appendix A – Case Study

Case studies will follow when we are able to obtain signatures from clients for data sharing beyond the pandemic. Case studies are complete and in line with client consent.

Appendix B - Profile Data for Fylde 2020-21 Q1-4

TOPIC OF ENQUIRY	NUMBER OF ENQUIRIES
Age UK Services	4
Benefits	189
Community Care	11
Consumer	10
Health Conditions	4
Health Services	1
Housing	7
Legal	6
Leisure and Social Activities	3
Residential Care	2
Travel	19
Nationality and Immigration	1
Grand Total	257

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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 - 78.57 % agreed

Your general wellbeing has improved - 57.14 % agreed

You feel more independent or less isolated - 60.71 % agreed

Your knowledge of where to go for advice has increased - 82.14 % 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 out of 5

I was treated with respect – 5 out of 5

My privacy and confidentiality were ensured - 4.9 out of 5

The service met my expectations – 5 out of 5

I received the service at the right time for me - 4.9 out of 5

How likely are you to recommend our service? - 4.9 out of 5

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**Client comments**

“No complaints with any part of the service i received. Would highly recommend Age UK to family & friends.”

“I feel this way because of the professionalism of your wonderful staff. Thank you very much.”

“All my questions were dealt with promptly and I felt satisfied everything was clearly pointed out.”

“The staff and services at Age UK Lancashire 7 St Georges Road are exceptional. I was treated with respect and good help. Thank you.”

“All very good and helpful staff, made her feel welcome. Amazing service thank you.”

“I did not know which way to turn at the time. I turned the right way. Thank you.”

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