



Information and Advice Statement of Service

Who is the Information & Advice Service for?

Age UK Somerset can respond to queries from people over 60 or anyone enquiring on their behalf. This includes friends, family members, carers and professionals.

How to access our service

The Information & Advice phone line is available Monday – Friday 9am – 1pm. We are closed on Bank Holidays, and occasionally for staff training.

By phone: call our Information & Advice line on **01823 345 613**

If our I&A line is busy you will reach a message informing you of the following:

“You have reached Age UK Somerset’s Information and Advice Team.

Our lines are open from 9am to 1pm Monday to Friday.

We are currently experiencing a very high volume of calls.

We are a small team and all of our advisors are currently busy on other calls, please kindly call back later.

Alternatively, please contact Citizens Advice Somerset on 0808 278 7842

If you are calling to request help with completing an Attendance Allowance form, please make sure you have obtained an application form in the first instance, from the Department of Work and Pensions on 0800 731 0122 - before calling us back.

If you do not wish to speak to our Information and Advice Team and would like to speak to another service at Age UK Somerset, please re dial 01823 345610 and pick the appropriate option.

Thank you”

Please understand that we have a very small team of I&A advisers, we will usually have one adviser on duty on a Monday and Friday and a minimum of two advisers on duty Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Due to high call volumes, we do not have a voicemail facility.

Online: via our Online ‘Contact us’ form on our webpage

By post to:

Age UK Somerset, Ash House, Cook Way, Bindon Road, Taunton, Somerset, TA2 6BJ

By Appointment: We welcome visits to our office location above. We advise that you call us in advance of your visit to make sure that someone will be available on the day to see you.

At one of our Outreach Sessions held in your local community: We try to run an outreach session in locations throughout Somerset and North Somerset, when staffing allows.

These are held by a fully trained I&A adviser, where you are able to drop in and see us with any enquiry you may have, we will endeavour to help you there and then. Please check on our website under the section 'I&A on the road' for the locations, days and times for when a local outreach session will be running.

Areas we provide information/advice on

Income and welfare benefits:

Benefit Entitlement Checks; reducing household bills; information on accessing grants. We can offer home visits to help with some benefit applications. We specialise in benefits for people over pension age.

- **Social care:** how to access support from social services or arrange care privately; information on funding care.
- **Housing:** housing options; finding a care home; home adaptations.
- **Local services:** community groups and activities (run by us or other organisations); charities and support services; tradespeople.

Areas we can't help with

We are not able to give regulated advice such as Financial, Debt, Legal and Immigration advice.

If we are not able to help or advise directly, we will always do our best to direct you to someone who can.

Although we can explain your options, we can't make recommendations or decisions for you. We will always provide options for you to be able to make an informed choice.

What you can expect from us

Our service is:

Free: any help you have from our Information & Advice Service is free of charge, including our factsheets and information guides.

Independent: we will explain your options clearly and won't give advice which favours a particular organisation or service. We won't recommend particular traders, including those linked to Age UK or Age UK Somerset.

Non-judgemental: we will treat you with respect regardless of your age, disability, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, family circumstances or life choices.

Confidential: all enquiries are confidential and no information is shared with third parties without consent. All data is stored securely and in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation. In exceptional circumstances we may need to share certain details with other organisations (e.g. adult social services if there is a safeguarding concern) without a client's consent. For more information please see our Data Protection Privacy Notice, Confidentiality Policy and Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults Policy.

Timely: we aim to respond to all enquiries by the next working day, although this may vary in exceptionally busy periods.

What we expect from you

In return for providing information and advice we expect our clients to:

- Treat our staff, volunteers and other clients with **courtesy and respect**.
 - Provide us with **accurate information** about your circumstances.
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Age UK Somerset is an independent local charity and is responsible for raising the funds needed to continue its work.

If you are able to make a donation, it will help us continue to offer this service. Thank you.

Please ask for more information, or go to the website for ways to donate:

<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/somerset/get-involved/donate/>