

JOB DESCRIPTION

Job Title	Senior Adviser (Welfare Benefits and Housing)
Reporting to	Advice and Support Manager
Line Manages	N/A
Department	Services
DBS check Requirement	Basic
Location	Avonmore Road, London, W14 8RR (with hybrid working) or Homebased (with regular travel to London)

JOB PURPOSE

This role supports the delivery and continuous improvement of our Advice and Support service by providing specialist welfare benefits and housing advice; helping Advisers with day to day enquiries relating to Housing and Welfare Benefits and delivering internal and external training. The post holder ensures compliance with quality systems to maintain the Advice Quality Standard, carrying out file review and other quality checks of advice given and providing development feedback for colleagues.

The Advice and Support service operates alongside Independent Age's Helpline, providing live transfer of calls as a duty service, as well as an appointments and casework service. The service is delivered by telephone, email, letter, and webchat and is targeted at older people in or facing financial hardship in England, Scotland and Wales. We give information, advice and support relating to Welfare Benefits, Social Care, Housing and connections into the community as well as other issues.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Quality Assurance

- Supervise the day-to-day work of the Advice and Support duty service, being available to discuss cases and mentoring Advisers to develop their skills and practice.
- Complete comprehensive file reviews and other quality checks across Welfare Benefits, Housing and appropriate generalist topics. Ensure Advisers receive appropriate feedback in a timely manner and that this feedback is actioned promptly in line with our quality standards.
- Quality check a sample of public information checks undertaken by Advisers, and keep a portfolio of information checks undertaken personally to maintain current practice.
- Carry out checks on information produced for the public on topics related to later life, including quality checking Advisers' information checks, and suggesting additional content.
- Develop and establish an effective reflective practice system with the advice team, which will be used to learn and develop collectively.

Training:

- Work with the Advice and Support Managers to ensure training and development needs across the Service are met appropriately.
- Work with the Information and Advice Development Manager to design and deliver external training to a variety of audiences both online and in person in the UK as needed.
- Develop training resources to provide both internal and external non-advice colleagues with knowledge to enable them to spot potential entitlements and give basic advice on Welfare Benefits and Housing.
- Regularly provide feedback to the Advice and Support Managers about any trends and development needs arising in the team from file reviews or day to day supervision.
- Give talks and presentations as required to groups and/or audiences, internally and externally.

Advice

- Support Advisers with complex enquiries relating to welfare benefits or housing.
- Provide detailed rights-based advice for people throughout Britain aged over 65, their carers, and support networks. This will include:
 - complex situations relating to welfare benefits
 - housing issues affecting older people including for example, housing options, adaptations, homelessness and disrepair.
 - a range of other issues relating to later life including generalist level advice on Social Care.
- Take a person-centred approach, working alongside the individual to identify their priorities and concerns, connecting them with relevant internal or external services/groups.
- Provide short term follow up/casework support if the individual using the service requires it.
- Maintain up to date case records and monitoring information in line with our AQS quality assurance processes and our internal reporting framework.

Safeguarding

- Maintain knowledge around safeguarding and attend all relevant training.
- Provide guidance to Advisers around safeguarding and welfare concerns, in line with our safeguarding policy and procedure.
- Identify and act upon any safeguarding concerns in line with the safeguarding policy and procedure.
- Record safeguarding concerns and actions taken on Salesforce immediately after the call, escalating any concerns in line with our safeguarding policy and procedure.

Maintain and share expertise

- Horizon scanning and participating in external discussion forums to understand the changing environment and how this may impact the team's work.
- Share knowledge of caselaw, policy and practice changes with colleagues in services and policy and influencing.
- Undertake any research or training required to ensure we can provide accurate information and advice across England, Scotland and Wales.
- Pilot new and innovative means of providing advice as the service develops.

Collaboration

- Collect and share evidence of the issues affecting older people including case studies, stories, statistics, and anecdotal evidence.
- Encourage services colleagues to collect and share evidence of issues affecting older people with relevant departments.
- Attend cross organisational and external meetings to support Independent Age's policy, influencing and media work and fundraising.
- Carry out checks on information produced for the public on a wide range of topics related to later life, to ensure accuracy and thoroughness.
- Provide briefings on advice topic areas to relevant staff across the charity.
- Work proactively within the team, suggesting service improvements, sharing responsibilities, and taking the lead on areas of development work for the team.
- Provide reports on call volumes, advice topics and other data as required.

General Responsibilities

- Model and embed Independent Age's values and behaviours.
- Embrace diversity and share in our commitment to equality of opportunity and to eliminating discrimination. Proactively champion equity, diversity and inclusion in every aspect of the role.
- Share in our commitment to promoting welfare and safeguarding adults at risk of harm and any children or young people connected with them that we may come into contact with through our work.
- Ensure that information is obtained, used and stored in accordance with our Data Protection and Confidentiality policy.
- Undertake any other duties commensurate with the level of the role.

How we work

At Independent Age, we live by our values and EDI principles.

Our Values are that we are:

Purpose-driven - the experience, needs and views of older people are central to everything we do

Compassionate - we listen, care and take action

Expert - our work is evidence-based and solution-focused

Collaborative - we work in partnership to maximise our impact

Accountable - we work with integrity and transparency

Inclusive - we value diversity and always treat everyone fairly with dignity and respect

To put our EDI Principles into practice, we will:

- proactively challenge ageism and other forms of discrimination throughout our work.
- celebrate and champion diversity within and outside our charity and create a culture where everyone knows that they belong.
- develop leaders at every level to act as role models and champions for each other and encourage all staff to embrace these principles and apply them in their work.
- deliver equity of opportunity for our staff, volunteers and the people who use our services whether they have a protected characteristic or not.
- ensure our strategy, policies and actions are integral to our annual planning processes to ensure that we deliver our goals and that our values are central to their delivery.
- commit to setting target indicators for diversity and regularly review progress.
- collect data to enable us to track our progress.
- be publicly accountable and transparent about our progress.

- use our influence to proactively champion the principles

PERSON SPECIFICATION

Knowledge and experience

- Understanding of how a holistic advice service works, combining rights-based advice with support.
- Experience of delivering specialist level welfare benefits and housing advice to members of the public, including assisting with reconsiderations and appeals.
- Experience of working within an advice supervision framework such as the AQS, including supervising the day-to-day work of volunteer and/or paid advisers and carrying out quality checks/file reviews.
- A demonstrable passion for, and affinity with, our cause.

Skills and attributes

- Excellent verbal and written communication skills including the ability to translate complex issues into clear, focused, and understandable language for a range of audiences.
- Coaching and mentoring skills to enable others to develop and perform at their best.
- Ability to give constructive feedback, verbally and in writing and understanding of how to support others to develop their practice.
- Strong telephone and digital skills including the ability to quickly establish and build rapport in a remote setting, listen effectively, manage call time and record key details.
- Excellent attention to detail with the ability to accurately proofread and edit written material.
- Strong time management and organisation skills shown through the ability to work at pace, prioritise a number of concurrent tasks and meet strict deadlines.
- Ability to plan, prepare and deliver a program of engaging and informative training aimed at a range of audiences.
- Good IT skills including Microsoft Office packages and confident use of video technology and databases.
- The ability and willingness to develop knowledge and advice skills in other areas of law.
- A demonstrable commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.

Ideally you will also have:

- Good generalist knowledge of a range of issues affecting older people including Social Care, Health Services, Housing, End of Life, Bereavement, and Loneliness.
- Familiarity with the Advice Quality Standard is desirable but not essential.
- Experience of using Salesforce database.