

## Leeds Citizens Advice & Law Centre Client Charter

1. Leeds Citizens Advice & Law Centre is a local, registered charity and a member of the Citizens Advice service. We help people to understand and exercise their rights by providing free advice and information services.
2. Many people seek assistance from Leeds Citizens Advice & Law Centre and we are continually striving to improve access and to help more people.
3. The telephone, digital and face to face drop in service operates an assessment/ gateway system, whereby a client will receive a short assessment interview and the assessor will identify the most appropriate way Leeds Citizens Advice & Law Centre can help. The Telephone Service uses a free number as part of Adviceline: 08082787878. We also have an Energy Affordability Helpline which uses a free number: 0800 448 0721.
4. We offer generalist appointments at our City Centre office, and at outreach venues across Leeds. Appointments are accessed through the assessment/ gateway services.
5. We **cannot guarantee** to take on all our clients' cases. We may also have to stop advising you if we consider little likelihood of further progress or further benefit, or if you fail to comply with what we expect of you (see below).
6. **All our services are delivered in accordance with the following principles and values**
  - 6.1. **Free:** we make no charge to clients for our services. If we refer you to another organisation for help, we will do our best to ensure that their services are also free. If another organisation will require payment, we will explain that to you and how to find out the costs involved.
  - 6.2. **Independent and impartial:** we are an independent organisation with no political or religious affiliations and we provide impartial and objective advice services. We receive funding from a number of organisations but whatever the source of our support this does not influence the advice we give to clients.
  - 6.3. **Confidential:** We only ask for the information we need. We always let you decide what you're comfortable telling us, explain why we need it and treat it as confidential. When we record and use your personal information we only access it when we have a good reason and only share what is necessary and relevant and don't sell it to anyone. We handle and store your personal information in line with data protection law. We keep written records to help us provide the best advice we can; you have the right to see your own case records if you wish and we will provide you with a copy if requested. For more information please see our Privacy Policy:-  
<https://citizensadviceleeds.org.uk/privacy-policy-clients/>
  - 6.4. **Access and equality:** we aim to provide services that are accessible to everyone living or working in the Leeds Metropolitan District, regardless of race, colour, sex, gender identity (transgender), disability, nationality, national or ethnic origin, religion or belief,

marital / partnership or family status, caring responsibilities, sexual orientation, age, social class, educational background or employment status.

- 6.5. **Quality:** we aim to deliver services of the highest quality and at all times work in accordance with the quality standards of the national Citizens Advice service, Advice Quality Standards, and Specialist Quality Mark, as appropriate.
- 6.6. **Valuing people:** we value everyone involved with Leeds Citizens Advice & Law Centre, whether as clients, volunteers or employees. All those seeking assistance from Leeds Citizens Advice & Law Centre are treated with respect and we expect the same respect to be shown to our staff and volunteers. Abusive or threatening behaviour will not be tolerated at Leeds Citizens Advice & Law Centre and services may be withdrawn from any client behaving in such ways.

## 7. How to access advice from Leeds Citizens Advice & Law Centre

- 7.1. **Telephone advice:** The telephone service operates an assessment/ gateway system, you will receive a short assessment interview and the assessor will identify the most appropriate way Leeds Citizens Advice & Law Centre can help you. The service uses a free number through Adviceline - 08082787878 (9am-5pm Monday- Friday). We also have an Energy Affordability Helpline which uses a free number: 0800 448 0721 and serves West Yorkshire.
- 7.2. **Digital-** visit our website [www.citizensadviceleeds.org.uk](http://www.citizensadviceleeds.org.uk)
- 7.3. **Drop-in sessions-** call into our City Centre off 9am-1pm on Wednesdays. You will receive a short assessment interview and the assessor will identify the most appropriate way Leeds Citizens Advice & Law Centre can help you.
- 7.4. **Outreach services** are run in many locations across Leeds for people who face additional barriers in accessing advice, such as people experiencing mental health issues or their families.

## 8. Feedback (suggestions and complaints)

- 8.1. We always try to get it right. However, if you are dissatisfied with our service please tell us either by telling a member of staff or by writing to Leeds Citizens Advice & Law Centre, Oxford House, Oxford Row, Leeds, LS13BE. Please try to tell us as much as you can about your complaint or suggestion and what you would like to happen next. We will try to resolve your complaint informally in the first instance; if you are not happy with the outcome we will escalate the formal complaints procedure.
- 8.2. We also welcome positive feedback and/or suggestions about how we can improve our services.

## 9. Unacceptable client conduct

- 9.1. All those seeking assistance from Leeds Citizens Advice & Law Centre are treated with respect and we expect the same respect to be shown to our staff and volunteers. Abusive or threatening behaviour will not be tolerated at Leeds Citizens Advice & Law Centre
- 9.2. Abuse includes physical, verbal or written behaviour or language that may cause staff or volunteers to feel afraid, threatened or abused. We consider threats, personal verbal abuse, derogatory remarks, intimidation and rudeness to be unacceptable.
- 9.3. Leeds Citizens Advice & Law Centre operates a **zero tolerance procedure** and a zero tolerance statement is displayed in public areas.

## 10. Unreasonable demands and contact

- 10.1. A demand is unacceptable when it impacts substantially and unreasonably on the work of the office. Such demands can take up an excessive amount of staff / volunteer time and in doing so, disadvantage other clients. For example:
  - repeatedly demanding responses within an unreasonable timescale;
  - insisting on speaking to a particular person when that is not possible;
  - asking for further advice because the client disagrees with the advice already given, although it is correct;
  - an unreasonable number of repeated calls, visits or emails.

## 11. How we deal with unacceptable conduct/unreasonable demands

- 11.1. **Aggressive, abusive or unreasonable behaviour**
- 11.2. We will explain that the behaviour is not acceptable. If it continues we will end the interview and ask the client to leave or we will terminate the telephone call/ webchat.
- 11.3. Staff/volunteers will inform their supervisor/ line manager of the incident.
- 11.4. The manager will review the incident, and if the behaviour is deemed unacceptable the manager will write to the client and advise them their behaviour was not acceptable and if it continues Leeds Citizens Advice & Law Centre services may be withdrawn.
- 11.5. In cases where the unacceptable behaviour continues, we will withdraw services from the client. The Chief Executive will write to the client and inform them of this decision.
- 11.6. Clients who make unreasonable demands of the service will be informed of the level of service/contact Leeds Citizens Advice & Law Centre is willing to provide. If the client persists in their unreasonable demands the process described at 11.4 and 11.5 will be followed.

## 12. Review of policy

- 12.1 Leeds Citizens Advice & Law Centre complaint handling policies and procedures are reviewed annually. Necessary changes that are identified in the interim period will be made as required.

## Appendix 1

Leeds Citizens Advice & Law Centre is a charity with limited resources and demand for our services is extremely high. We prioritise appointments based on urgency, complexity and client needs. Failure to attend an appointment by a client means time wasted by our advisers that could have been used to help someone in need.

### **1. If you are going to be late for your appointment**

If you are going to be late please telephone 0113 2433339 as soon as you can. If you are going to be a few minutes late we will try to keep your appointment available.

However, if you are going to be more than 15 minutes late it is likely that we will need to reschedule it for another day (if there are appointments available).

### **2. If you cannot attend your appointment**

If you are not able to attend your appointment, please telephone 0113 2433339 as soon as you can. This will allow us to give your "slot" to someone else.

If it is your first cancelled appointment then we will try and give you another appointment as soon as possible.

### **3. If you miss TWO or more appointments**

If you have already missed two appointments we hope that you will make every effort to attend a third appointment. Please be aware that if you fail to attend a third appointment then we will assume that you no longer need our help.

If you subsequently contact us, it is unlikely that we will be able to offer you another appointment. You would need to access our telephone or drop in services.

### **4. If you miss THREE OR MORE appointments**

If you consistently fail to attend our appointments, then we may decide that we will not offer you any more pre- booked appointments. We will tell you if we make this decision, in writing.

### **5. If you continually refuse our advice**

If you continually ignore the advice that we have given, then we may decide not to offer you advice appointments in the future. This action will only be taken in the most serious of circumstances and we will always notify you in writing if we intend to do this.