

# **AGE UK EXETER**

## **Controlled Document**

### **Document Name: Complaints Policy**

Document Version Number: 5

Agreed by Risk and Quality Committee on: 12<sup>th</sup> January 2023

Approved by Board of Trustees on: 14<sup>th</sup> February 2023

Review Schedule: Every three years

Next review due: February 2026

Owner (Responsibility): CEO

Pass amendments to: Governance Officer

Revision History: See end of document.

Document Location: [www.ageuk.org.uk/exeter/about-us/policiesandguidelines](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/exeter/about-us/policiesandguidelines)

## **Document Description**

Age UK Exeter aims to provide high quality services and to be responsive to the wants and needs of clients.

However, things do go wrong sometimes, and this policy sets out our complaints procedure and what clients and their families or carers can expect to happen.

## **Implementation & Quality Assurance**

Implementation is immediate and this Policy shall stay in force until any alterations are formally agreed.

The Policy will be reviewed every three years by the Board of Trustees, sooner if legislation, best practice, or other circumstances indicate this is necessary.

All aspects of this Policy shall be open to review at any time. If you have any comments or suggestions on the content of this policy, please contact the CEO on [info@ageukexeter.org.uk](mailto:info@ageukexeter.org.uk)

# **Complaints Policy**

## **Introduction**

Age UK Exeter aims to provide high quality services and to be responsive to the wants and needs of clients.

Clients, their families, carers, and advocates have the right to raise concerns, objections or make complaints about the services and responses they receive from the charity. All concerns and complaints from clients or others will be taken seriously, listened to carefully, investigated fully where necessary, and responded to with respect and courtesy.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- enable clients to comment on weaknesses and to let the charity know about things that have gone wrong or cause concern.
- improve the quality of services by taking notice of the views of people affected by the services, building on what is good and changing what needs improving.
- ensure that the charity takes users' views seriously and will follow up any problems that they bring forward.
- protect the interests of individual clients.
- enable users, potential users, and carers to challenge decisions.
- protect staff and enable them to deal with complaints consistently.

A complaint shall mean, a written or oral expression of dissatisfaction or concern relating to the everyday operations of the services and activities provided by Age UK Exeter. This dissatisfaction could include the actions of the charity's personnel, their failure to act, or delay in acting, which requires the charity to account for its conduct.

This Complaints Policy should not be used by staff who should use the Staff Grievance & Disciplinary Procedures.

If a complaint is made about a member of staff, the Staff Disciplinary Procedures will be followed.

## **The Complaints Procedure**

Age UK Exeter has a readily available, easily accessible complaints, concerns, and suggestions form. This is clearly marked in the reception area of the main building and available online and on request. Staff are always on hand to assist service users, carers, and volunteers and will take the request to make a complaint, concern, or suggestion seriously.

There are three distinct stages to the procedure:

Step 1 – The Informal Approach

Step 2 – The Formal Approach

Step 3 – The Review Committee.

1. In the first instance, some concerns or complaints will, by their nature, be easy to resolve immediately, to everyone's satisfaction. The complaint or concern should be raised with the member of staff or volunteer providing the service or the manager of the service concerned. Most issues will usually be resolved in this way.
2. If the complaint is unresolved, it should be put in writing (assistance can be arranged if required) and sent to the Manager or Chief Executive of Age UK Exeter. An acknowledgement will be made in writing, an investigation undertaken and in most circumstances a response will be formally made within 10 working days of receipt.
3. If the complaint is still unresolved an appeal can be made in writing to the Chair of the Board of Trustees of Age UK Exeter at the charity's offices at The Sycamores, Mount Pleasant Road, Exeter, EX4 7AE. A complaints sub-committee will be formed within 10 working days comprising three trustees of the charity.
4. The committee will consider the complaint and may ask the client, carer, or advocate to meet with them. The complainant may request a personal hearing with the committee and has the right to be supported or represented by a person of their choice.
5. The committee will then seek the views and investigate the actions of the staff of the charity and seek to obtain any other relevant information. The complaints committee will endeavour to reach its decision within 10 working days and notify parties accordingly. Where this proves impracticable, due to the complexity of the case or external factors such as a wait for a key piece of information, the committee will issue an interim or final report within one calendar month.

6. Should the complainant or other interested party be dissatisfied with the decision of the trustees, they can request an appeal. Such an appeal must be based either on the grounds that the procedure followed by the trustees was incorrect, or, because new information has come to light. Should this be the case the complainant may be represented by a person of her or his own choosing. A new complaints sub-committee will be convened to consider any further representations within 10 working days of such a request. The decision of the complaints committee will then be final, and the process concluded.

This procedure does not cover matters of law or where a police investigation may be involved.

Those making a complaint or raising a concern will be given a copy of the Complaints Policy and offered assistance in understanding, interpreting or translating its effective use. Formal complaints i.e. those for which a written reply is required (see paragraph 2 of the procedure), will be recorded and monitored. If the complaint reaches this stage (the formal approach), the service manager should log the details of the complaint on the clients charitylog record (under a new complaints project). Any supporting documents, such as letters, should be uploaded to this electronic record.

Any formal complaints should be reported to the Risk and Quality Committee and the Board of Trustees should receive a report of all complaints annually.

If the complainant is in receipt of a contracted service (day service or enabling) through Devon County Council and the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigations, they (or their carer, relative, representative or advocate) are entitled to contact:

Customer Relations Team  
 Devon County Council  
 Room 120, County Hall  
 Topsham Road  
 Exeter  
 EX2 4QD

Telephone: 0800 212 783

Email: [customer.relations@devon.gov.uk](mailto:customer.relations@devon.gov.uk)

Or they may contact the Commissioner direct.

### Revision History

| Revision date | Summary of Changes                                          | Other Comments |
|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| 20.2.15       | Routine review by the Standards Committee. No major changes |                |

|               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                        |
|---------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| 9.3.15        | Approved by the Board of Trustees                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Next review due February 2017          |
| 25.4.16       | Routine review by the Standards Committee – No changes made                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                        |
| 10.5.16       | Approved by the Board of Trustees                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Next review due May 2018               |
| March 17      | Updated to include DCC contact information.                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                        |
| 24.4.17       | Reviewed by Standards Committee.                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Recommended to the Board for approval. |
| 09.05.17      | Approved by Board of Trustees                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Date of next review May 2019           |
| 15.04.19      | Routine review by Standards Committee. Two sentences added – staff with a complaint should use the Staff Grievance & Disciplinary Procedures and that the staff disciplinary procedure will be followed if a complaint is made about a member of staff. | Recommended to the Board for approval. |
| 14 May 2019   | Reviewed by Board of Trustees                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Approved.<br>Next review due May 2021  |
| 26 April 2021 | Amendments made to change in services and relocation                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                        |
| 04.01.23      | Small amendments to include note on new complaints, concerns, and suggestions form and inclusion of guidance and recording procedures.                                                                                                                  | Approved by Board on 14.02.23          |