

## COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The purpose of this Complaints Procedure is to provide a framework within which complaints can be identified and dealt with promptly, fairly and consistently.

### **General Principles**

We welcome comments from all, and we aim to have no barriers to complaints, suggestions or feedback. All complainants will be treated with the same level of respect and courtesy regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, faith, ability (physical, mental or linguistic), or relationship with the organisation.

We will ensure that the complaints procedure is equally accessible to everyone by providing access to interpreting services where required, and providing appropriate support for those with different needs such as sensory or physical disabilities to enable them to participate in the process.

All complaints will be dealt with in the utmost confidence and in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act (1998) and the Freedom of Information Act.

We will seek to resolve complaints, disputes or conflicts at the earliest stage, and as close to their point of origin, as possible.

### **Complaints Procedure**

#### **Stage 1 (Informal Stage)**

The response to the complaint may take the form of a face to face discussion, a telephone call or a letter. Complaints at this stage may be dealt with by any member of staff, as long as the staff member is sufficiently informed about the area of work or issue under discussion. Where complaints are resolved through discussion, either in person or over the phone, this should normally be followed up by a letter.

Staff should ensure that the complainant is made aware of their rights and options under the complaints procedure.

*NB: Complainants have the right to bypass Stage 1 and go straight to Stage 2 if they wish.*

## **Stage 2 (Formal Stage)**

The complainant and/or their advocate should raise the complaint with the Chief Officer of Age UK Barnet. S/he will carry out an investigation of the complaint, or appoint a Service Manager to do so. The results of this investigation should be recorded in writing.

The Chief Officer will write to the complainant with his/her response to the complaint. This may include a recommendation that an independent person should be sought to conciliate on the matter. If the complainant wishes to take up the option of conciliation, the Chief Officer should seek a suitable independent conciliator.

Once stage 2 has been completed (including conciliation, if appropriate), the Chief Officer should write to the complainant informing them that if they are still dissatisfied, they should write within 28 days to ask for a Review Panel to be set up.

Stage 2 should normally be completed within 28 days. This may be extended to up to 3 months where there is good reason to do so.

## **Stage 3 (Review Panel)**

If a Review Panel is required, it will consist of either two or three people:

- a member of Age UK Barnet's Board of Trustees, who will normally be the Chair of the Panel
- a member of Age UK Barnet's Senior Management Team who has not been involved at any previous stage of the complaint
- an independent person, if appropriate.

The complainant and his/her advocate, friend or supporter (if any) have the right to attend the Panel meeting to present the complaint and answer any questions the Panel may wish to ask. NB: since this Complaints Procedure is not a legal process, Age UK Barnet regards it as inappropriate for the complainant to be accompanied by a legal representative, and will not agree to any such participation.

The Chair of the Review Panel will notify the complainant in writing of the Panel's decision within 14 days of the Panel meeting. The letter will also advise the complainant that the Panel's decision is the final stage of Age UK Barnet's Complaints Procedure, but that if s/he is still dissatisfied s/he may refer the matter to Barnet Adults and Communities, in the case of Barnet-funded services.

Where members of staff are asked to attend a Complaint Review Panel, they should be advised that they may be accompanied by a friend, colleague or trade union representative if they wish.

If the Review Panel is unable to agree on a particular matter, the issue shall be decided by the Chair of the Panel.

## **Training**

Staff and volunteers of Age UK Barnet shall be offered regular training in identifying and responding to complaints, and in responding to aggressive or challenging behaviour.

## **Involvement of Other Agencies**

Sometimes a complaint will involve services provided by, or staff employed by, an organisation other than Age UK Barnet. For example a service user may wish to make a complaint relating to an employee of another organisation who is providing a service on Age UK Barnet premises (e.g. a practitioner operating a clinic at an Age UK Barnet centre).

In these instances, potential complainants should be advised that they should complain to whichever organisation has direct responsibility for the person or matter they are complaining about. Age UK Barnet staff should offer to assist the person in identifying the most appropriate course of action. This may include helping them to obtain the support of an independent advocate.

## **Monitoring and Reporting Complaints**

The member of staff who first receives the complaint, having confirmed if necessary that the person concerned wishes it to be treated as a complaint, should record the details of the complaint and any initial response/action, on a Complaint Record Form (see attached), and forward this to the relevant Service Manager together with copies of any relevant documentation.

The Service Manager should complete a Complaint Monitoring Form (see attached), and forward a copy of this, together with a copy of the Complaint Record Form, to the Chief Officer. Any subsequent developments should be recorded on updates of the Complaint Monitoring Form and forwarded to the Chief Officer.

Service managers are responsible for ensuring information on complaints is included in Monitoring Reports.

The office manager is responsible for collating information on complaints on an organisation-wide basis, and for presenting an annual summary of complaints to the Board.



**Complaint Record Form**

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

To be compiled by member of staff/volunteer first receiving complaint and passed to appropriate Service Manager.

Name of complainant.....

Address of complainant .....

.....

Tel. No. ....

Date complaint received .....

**Service area:**

**Complaints:**

Name of staff/volunteer receiving complaint.....

Please summarise initial response/action:

Complaint Record Form passed to: ..... (Service Manager)

Date.....

**AGE UK BARNET**  
**Complaint Monitoring Form**  
STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL



To be retained by Service Manager in Service Complaints File together with related correspondence, notes, etc.

Name of complainant .....

Date Complaint first received .....

**Progress Log**

Action	Date	Initials
Complaint record form received by service manager		
Record form/monitoring form forwarded to Chief Officer		
Stage 1 completed		
Stage 2 complaint received		
Stage 2 completed		
Stage 3 complaint received		
Complaint Review Panel held		
Panel decision notified to complainant		

**Status report** (Please tick to indicate current status of complaint)

Active	
Awaiting response from complainant	
Resolved	

**Outcome** (Please tick if resolved)

Upheld	
Partly upheld	
Not upheld	

Please give brief details of outcome:

Monitoring Form completed/updated by.....

Date .....

Date Approved: May 2017
Approved by: Trustees
Review Date: 2018