COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURE

POLICY

1. WHAT IS A COMPLAINT?

A written or oral expression of dissatisfaction or concern relating to the everyday operations of the services and activities provided by Age UK Blackburn with Darwen. This dissatisfaction could include the actions of the organisation's personnel,* their failure to act, or delay in taking action which requires the organisation to account for its conduct.

2. PRINCIPLES

2.1 Age UK Blackburn with Darwen is committed to the concept of an effective complaints and suggestions procedure, as a key element of our continuous improvement.

2.2 Age UK Blackburn with Darwen believes that a complaint is free feedback and presents a key opportunity to make improvements in its service provision. It is not a time to become defensive or to block this opportunity.

2.2 The organisation recognises that there are different levels of feedback and dissatisfaction some of which it is appropriate to deal with and resolve informally, and some of which should be dealt with formally. This will depend on the seriousness of the issue, the wishes of the complainant, and the level of any material loss or distress. All feedback whether dealt with formally or informally should be used to improve service and practice.

2.3 All feedback whether dealt with formally or informally will be recorded along with the actions taken to improve.

2.4 Effective recording and monitoring of complaints will provide useful information about the quality and effectiveness of our services, and areas for improvement and development which are considered quarterly by the senior management team. Each complaint is signed off by the Chief Executive and the Board of Trustees receive an annual report of all complaints received, and the action taken to resolve them and improve service provision.

2.5 Assistance will be offered, where necessary, in understanding, interpreting or translating this procedure and using it effectively.

3. SCOPE

This policy and procedure covers all the services, activities and personnel of Age UK Blackburn with Darwen the Charity and any subsidiary companies.

4. THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

*For this purpose personnel are defined as staff, volunteers, trustees, trainees and students.

At each stage of the procedure the complainant is entitled to have an advocate representing their interests. The advocate will need to show that the complainant has requested their help. At any stage of the procedure the advocate may speak on the complainant's behalf.

4.1 Informal Complaints/Feedback

Informal complaints and feedback will usually concern minor matters or issues which require explanation or clarification; or it may be that the complainant does not want to make a formal complaint but wishes to raise an issue to improve things for the future.
It is the aim of Age UK Blackburn with Darwen to resolve any such matters as quickly and as near to the point of origin as possible. If the complaint is about an individual then a discussion will take place between the complainant and the individual and/or their manager. If the complaint is about a service then a discussion will take place between the complainant and the service manager. If the matter is resolved a record will be kept of action taken including action to improve practice, using the Feedback Record form.

4.2 Formal Complaint

The formal complaints procedure will take the form of 3 stages:-

Stage 1

If the complaint cannot be resolved at the Informal Stage then the matter will be treated as a formal complaint. In the first instance the complaint will be passed to the line manager of the person or service involved. The line manager will fully investigate the matter and interview all parties concerned and will reach a decision within 5 working days of the complaint becoming formal. The complainant will be informed of this decision in writing. This will include the decision arrived at, details of the steps taken to investigate, any action taken to improve practice and reference to the second stage of the procedure. A record will be kept of the information gathered and the decision made. This stage may be delegated by the senior manager to another senior manager as long as the complaint is not about them.

Stage 2

If the line manager has been unable to resolve the complaint satisfactorily, then the complainant can refer the matter to the Senior Manager. This must be done in writing, within 5 working days of the decision arrived at Stage 1 of the procedure. The Senior Manager will acknowledge the letter in writing within five working days of receipt.

The Senior Manager will investigate the complaint and provide the complainant with a full written response within 15 working days of receipt. This will include the decision arrived at, details of the steps taken to investigate, any action taken to improve practice and reference to the third and final stage of the procedure. A record will be kept of the information gathered and the decision made.

4.3 Stage 3 - Review by a Panel

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the decision arrived at, at Stage 2, then they have the right to have their complaint heard by the Review Panel.

The complainant has 10 working days within which to request a review by the Panel and an application must be submitted in writing to the Chairman of the Board of Trustees. The Panel will consist of three members of the Board of Trustees. The Panel will meet to discuss the complaint within 10 working days of the request being made. The Review Panel will then

inform the complainant of their decision in writing within 10 working days of their meeting. The decision of the Review Panel will be final.

4.4 This procedure is intended to be a flexible one and Age UK Blackburn with Darwen acknowledges that there may be occasions when earlier stages of the procedure should be bypassed. Where serious allegations are made, the appropriate senior manager should be involved at the outset or where the complaint is about a senior manager, the procedure should start at the appropriate stage.

4.5 At all stages the terms 'in writing' and 'their written response' includes email communication.

4.6 Working days refers to organisational working days.

4.7 If your complaint relates to the organisation's fundraising and you remain dissatisfied with our response, you can contact the Fundraising Regulator at www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk or call 0300 999 3407.

5. COMPLAINTS RECEIVED THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

5.1 Complaints or negative comments received via our social media accounts will be acknowledged within 48 hours by the Head of Business Development or staff member monitoring social media accounts in their absence and whenever possible the complaint will be taken offline to be dealt with as per the procedure above.

6. CORRECTIVE ACTIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS

The organisation is committed to a process of continuous improvement and as such wishes to use complaints to support this.

Once a complaint has been dealt with the senior manager will consider if it has resulted in any corrective actions or opportunities for improvement for the organisation's activities, processes, policies or training. These will be recorded as part of the complaint file, and in the organisation's Corrective Action Log.

7. RECORDING & MONITORING

7.1 For formal complaints all paperwork including copies of letters and emails and details of any investigations will be held on file in line with our Record Retention list as part of our Confidentiality, Data & Record Management Policy and in line with current Data Protection regulations. Further information can be found at https://www.ageuk.org.uk/blackburnwithdarwen/about-us

7.2 All records kept will be processed in accordance with Data Protection regulations, in relation to timescales, security, storage and retention.

7.3 It is recognised that there will be occasions where a complaint is only made anonymously. The organisation is committed to taking constructive action based on these complaints. All such complaints should be reported to a senior manager who will direct as to appropriate action. In addition all such complaints will be recorded using the Complaints Record including details of any action taken.

7.4 Complaints are reviewed on a quarterly basis by the Quality & Risk Management group who will consider issues relating to trends, themes, required service improvement and equality and diversity monitoring. In addition the Board receive an annual report of all complaints.

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https://ageukbwd.sharepoint.com/sites/FS-PoliciesRestricted/Shared Documents/Complaints Policy & Procedure.docx