

COMPLAINTS POLICY

POLICY STATEMENT

AGE UK Bournemouth, Poole & East Dorset (AUKBPED) recognises that users of our services and facilities have the right to expect high quality services. If our services do not appear to meet these standards, then users have the right to complain. Any complaint will be considered using our internal procedures as set out below.

To this end we will regularly review its procedures and standards to ensure that they continue to remain relevant to the twin objectives of quality service and good practice.

It is important that users of our service, their relatives, carers and representatives are given the ability and information with which to make a complaint. They should be given sufficient support to enable them to determine the seriousness of the complaint, which could be about:

- Staff/volunteer conduct
- Standards or the kind of service
- Discrimination
- Provision of inaccurate information
- Poor administration including delays in responding to enquiries; failure to follow agreed policies and unacceptable practice.

In addition, donors/funders should expect their terms and conditions to be adhered to.

PURPOSE

- Protect the interests of the service user
- Improve the quality of services provided by us by responding to the views expressed
- Enable service users, potential service users, and their carers to challenge our way of working
- Protect our staff and volunteers
- Provide a means of monitoring our performance.

All staff, volunteers, and trustees should be familiar with the process, and it should be included within all induction training.

All complaints should be reported to the Chief Officer and details should include the nature of the complaint, the date received, the process followed, actions taken and the outcomes.

HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT

- The person making the complaint should in the first instance complain to the line manager of the service
- If the complaint cannot be or is not dealt with immediately, a written response should be made within 5 working days to the Service Manager
- If the complainant is not satisfied with the response, they should write to the Chief Officer at the main office address
- The Chief Officer will make a written response within 20 working days.

RIGHT TO APPEAL

If the complainant is not satisfied with response, they have the right to appeal.

- They should write to the Chair of Age UK BPED at the main office, requesting a meeting at a mutually convenient time and place
- A meeting will be held with the Chair or an alternative Trustee appointed by the Chair
- A written response will be received within 10 working days of that meeting.

It is important that the complainant is given every help needed, including:

- Assistance in writing the formal complaint
- The opportunity to be accompanied by a friend, advisor or advocate
- An interpreter, including signing
- Ease of access to any meeting. In some circumstances it may be possible to meet at the complainant's own home (lack of mobility, transport, distance, etc.)

RECORDING, REPORTING & LEARNING

Complaints provide valuable customer feedback. One of the aims of the complaints handling procedure is to identify opportunities to improve our services. We must record all complaints in a systematic way so that we can use the complaints data for analysis and management reporting. By recording and using complaints information in this way, we can identify and address the causes of complaints and, where appropriate, identify training opportunities and introduce service improvements

Recording complaints

To collect suitable data it is essential to record all complaints in line with SPSO minimum requirements, as follows:

- The customer's name and address
- The date the complaint was received
- The nature of the complaint
- How the complaint was received
- The service the complaint refers to

- The date the complaint was closed at the first stage
- The date the complaint was escalated to the investigation stage
- Action taken at the investigation stage (where appropriate)
- The date the complaint was closed at the investigation stage
- Action taken

Reporting of complaints

Complaints details are analysed for trend information to ensure we identify service failures and take appropriate action. Regularly reviewing any complaint information helps to inform management of where services need to improve.

Learning from complaints

At the earliest opportunity after the closure of the complaint, the complaint handler should always make sure that the client and staff of the department involved understand the findings of the investigation and any recommendations made. Senior management will review the information gathered from complaints regularly and consider whether our services could be improved or internal policies and procedures updated.

Maintaining confidentiality

Confidentiality is important in complaints handling. It includes maintaining the client's confidentiality and explaining to them the importance of confidentiality generally. We must take into account legal requirements such as General Data Protection Regulations and our confidentiality policy.

Supporting our clients who wish to complain

All members of the community have the right to equal access to our complaints policy and procedure. Some clients may have specific needs that we will seek to address to ensure easy access to our complaints policy and procedure.

We take into account our commitment and responsibilities to equality and this includes making reasonable adjustments to our service to help the customer where appropriate.

Several support and advocacy groups are available to support clients in pursuing a complaint and clients will be signposted to these as appropriate.

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Reviewed by Sarah Lloyd- Chief Executive