



Complaints Policy

Version 7

1. INTRODUCTION

Age UK Devon aims to provide high quality services and to be responsive to the needs of service users.

Service users, their families, carers and advocates and those who have requested or been referred for a service have the right to raise concerns, objections or make complaints about the services and responses they receive from Age UK Devon. All concerns and complaints from service users, or others, will be taken seriously, listened to carefully, investigated fully where necessary, and responded to with respect and courtesy, and within the time scales as detailed within this policy.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Enable our service users to comment on dissatisfaction and to let us know when things have gone wrong or cause concern.
- Assure service users' that we take their views seriously and follow up any issues raised.
- Protect the interests of individual clients and prevent future complaints from occurring.
- Enable service users, potential users and carers to challenge decisions.
- Protect employees and volunteers and enable Managers to deal with complaints fairly, efficiently and effectively.
- Improve the quality of services by acting on the views of those affected by the services to inform future planning and development.

A complaint can be a written or oral expression of dissatisfaction, or a concern relating to the everyday operations of the services and activities provided by Age UK Devon. This dissatisfaction may include the actions of the Charity's employees and volunteers, their failure to act, or delay in taking action, which requires the Charity to account for its conduct.

Whilst we understand that anyone wishing to make a complaint may be upset or angry, unacceptable behaviour towards our employees or volunteers will not be tolerated. Aggressive or abusive behaviour or unreasonable demands will not be accepted. Any correspondence that is abusive or offensive will not be responded to. The complainant will be advised to re-submit the complaint if they want it to be investigated.

3. The Complaints Procedure

There are three distinct stages to the procedure:

- Step 1 – The Informal Approach
- Step 2 – The Formal Approach
- Step 3 – The Review

Step 1 - The Informal Approach

In the first instance, some comments, concerns or complaints will, by their nature, be easy to resolve immediately, to everyone's satisfaction. The complaint or concern should be raised directly with the manager of the service concerned. Most issues will usually be resolved in this way via telephone, email or letter.

Step 2 - The Formal Approach

If the informal procedure fails to resolve the problem, it should be put in writing and sent to the Chief Executive of Age UK Devon. The complainant should set out what the issue is about and what action they would like to see as a result of their complaint. An acknowledgement will be made in writing within three working days. An investigation will be undertaken and in most circumstances a formal written response will be made within 10 working days of receipt. If there is any variation to this time frame this will be discussed with the complainant and a new response time will be agreed. Written records will be kept about each complaint received.

Step 3 - The Review

1. If the complaint is still unresolved an appeal can be made in writing to the Chair of the Board of Trustees of Age UK Devon at the Charity's offices at 1 Manaton Court, Matford Business Park, Exeter, EX2 8PF. This should be done within thirty (30) working days of receiving the formal written response.
2. The Chair of Trustees and one other Trustee will form a Complaints Panel and will consider the complaint. They may ask the complainant to meet with them. The complainant may request a personal hearing and has the right to be supported or represented by a person of their choice.
3. The Chair of Trustees will seek the views and investigate the actions of the officers of the Charity and seek to obtain any other relevant information. The Chair of Trustees will endeavour to reach a 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 delay in obtaining a key piece of information, the Complaints Panel will issue an interim or final report within one calendar month.

4. 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 their choice. A new Complaints Panel will be convened to consider any further representations within 10 working days of such a request. The decision of the Complaints Panel will then be final and the process concluded.

This procedure does not cover matters of law or where a police investigation may be involved. Complaints relating to our trading/insurance activities will be dealt with under Age UK Enterprises' Complaints Procedure.

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 on the Complaints Database and reported to the Board of Trustees every quarter.

Informal and formal complaints will be discussed with service managers and/or coordinators to ensure that the views of those affected are taken into account when delivering services and activities as detailed within our annual Business Plan.