

External Complaints Policy and Procedure

Policy Statement

At Age UK Gloucestershire (AUKG) we are committed to showing respect, inclusion and transparency in all our activities and operations. We want everyone, who we are here to support and who work with us as partners, to feel they can:

- Tell us when they think we have got something wrong.
- Raise issues about the standards of service we provide.
- Make suggestions for how we could do things differently.
- Get a response that shows they have been listened to and that provides clear explanations.

Policy

This Policy is intended for clients, customers, members of the Gloucestershire community, family and carers of clients and their advocates - collectively termed "external stakeholders". For volunteers and employees, who want to raise concerns about their work or employment, or operations at AUKG, it is advisable to refer to the Grievance or Whistleblowing policies.

We recognise there may be occasions when external stakeholders are disappointed by how we have performed and they want to make a formal complaint. This policy explains how we will deal with this. It covers the procedures for external stakeholders to follow if they wish to raise a concern or make a complaint about the service they have received from AUKG or its people or about any of AUKG's activities or operations.

Procedure

If, as an external stakeholder, you wish to make a complaint, please send an email to our Chief Executive Officer at the following email address – ainman-ward@ageukgloucestershire.org.uk

If it is difficult for you to send an email, complaints may be made in writing to addressed to our Chief Executive Officer at our address below:

Age UK Gloucestershire
Henley House
Barnett Way
Barnwood
Gloucester
GL4 3RT

The email or letter should set out the following:

- Your name (if the complaint is personal) or the name of the organisation. If you are writing on behalf of your organisation, please confirm that you are authorised to raise a complaint on their behalf.
- Please give brief details about the circumstances giving rise to your complaint (the subject matter, dates of relevant events and who was involved).
- Please confirm the outcome that you would like to see to resolve your complaint.
- Your contact details.

If the complaint is about the CEO, please email JanLawry@ageukgloucestershire.org.uk or address your complaint by letter marked private and confidential, for the attention of the Chair of the Board of Trustees at AUKG and send to the above address.

The CEO or Chair (as appropriate) will ensure that every effort is made to resolve matters informally through dialogue.

In dealing with complaints, the following principles will apply:

- If you need assistance to bring your complaint, for example BSL or an interpreter, AUKG will take reasonable steps to provide this assistance or to adjust the process to accommodate your needs.
- Complaints will be handled with sensitivity and due regard to confidentiality. However, we may need to disclose details of your complaint either to employees or to advisor or regulator of AUKG in order to investigate and respond to your complaint or to comply with our duties to our regulators.
- If there is a delay in the process, for whatever reason, we will keep you informed.

Formal Resolution Procedure

If matters cannot be resolved through dialogue, the CEO or Chair (as appropriate) will write to you within 7 days to confirm the start of the formal resolution procedure and providing the name and contact details of the appointed investigating officer.

The Chief Executive (or Chair) will appoint an investigating officer who will not normally have line management responsibility for the project or employees involved in the dispute. Typically, this will be a manager from another part of the organisation.

The investigating officer shall investigate the matter expeditiously. If a period longer than 14 days is required, the investigating officer must inform the complainant, giving the reasons why, and providing a date by which the investigation will be concluded.

The investigating officer will write a report for the Chief Executive (or Chair) on the matters relating to the complaint.

Once the investigation is complete, the CEO (or Chair) will write to the complainant, informing them of the results of the investigation and of any actions taken, as fully as possible, taking into account the restrictions of Data Protection regulations, and informing the complainant of their right to appeal the outcome.

Formal Resolution Appeal

If a complainant wishes to appeal the outcome of the formal resolution process, they must write to the Chair of the Board of Trustees with 21 days of receipt of the CEO's written resolution, either by email to: JanLawry@ageukgloucestershire.org.uk or by post addressed to Chair of the Board of Trustees, at the above address, marked private and confidential.

Alternatively, if appropriate, the matter may be referred to a committee of trustees, who have not previously been involved in the complaint (the "complaints" panel).

Please mark your letter or email "Formal Resolution Appeal for the attention of the Chair of the Board of Trustees". Complainants should, ideally, indicate their grounds for appeal. That is, we need to know if you are challenging:

- The reasonableness of the decision.
- Whether new information casts doubt on the validity of any part of the investigation.
- Whether procedural failure or error means that the investigation was, in some way, flawed or unfair, or
- A combination of the above.

The Chair of the Board of Trustees will conduct a review of the investigation to ascertain:

- Whether the investigation has been appropriately undertaken, and
- Whether the outcome was reasonable based on the information available.

The Chair (or Complaints panel, if appropriate) will write to the complainant within 21 days advising on the outcome of their appeal.

The response from the Chair of the Board of Trustee (or Complaints panel, if appropriate) on the Appeal is the end of the formal complaints process.

Complaints about other Organisations

Sometimes, complaints are made to AUKG about another organisation. In such cases, we will explain this to you and will do our best to direct you to the correct channels through which to bring such a complaint. However, it will not generally be appropriate for us to become involved in complaints between you and a third party.

Follow up

If an external complaint is upheld, AUKG will take the appropriate corrective action to ensure higher standards in future. All complaints will be recorded and reviewed periodically by the Board of Trustees.