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|  | **DOCUMENT No**  ISSUE  DATE  FILE REF. | **: AGE UK HHB018**  **: Issue 8**  **: 1st January 2019**  **: AUKH General/Policies** |
| **TITLE: Complaints Procedure and Guidelines** | | |

**SUMMARY**

This document details the procedure and guidelines for dealing with complaints.

**REVIEW**

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| **Next review date** | **January 2020** |

**REVISION HISTORY**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Issue** | **Date** | **Main Changes** | **Changed by** |
| 1 | 4/2003 | First Issue | N Jackson |
| 2 | 10/2010 | Minor changes | N Jackson |
| 3 | 03/01/13 | Added option to inform to the CQC | S Collins |
| 4 | 04/08/14 | Full review | S Trimby |
| 5 | 02/04/15 | Includes Social Media complaints procedure | L McGinty |
| 6 | 18/11/16 | Review – no changes | S Trimby |
| 7 | 01/11/17 | Review – amend reference to Deputy CEO to Director of Services | S Trimby |
| 8 | 01/01/19 | Full review and integration of policies | E Tack |

**APPROVALS**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **AUTHOR:** | Director of Resources | **Signature:** | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
|  | **Name:** | *Hannah Cinamon* |
|  |  |  | |
| **AUTHORISED:** | Chief Executive | **Signature:** | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
|  |  | **Name:** | *Julian Lloyd* |

**RELATED DOCUMENTS**

**Title Issue**

None

**GLOSSARY**

**Abbreviation Full Name**

AGE UK HHB Age UK Hillingdon, Harrow and Brent

CE Chief Executive

Age UK Hillingdon, Harrow and Brent’s primary aim is to improve the lives and wellbeing of older people living within the three boroughs.

Members of the public, stakeholders and clients have the right to expect from AGE UK HHB staff and volunteers a courteous resolution of misunderstandings and a prompt, helpful approach towards dealing with complaints and solving problems.

**DEFINITION OF A COMPLAINT**

For the purposes of this document a complaint is defined as:

*An expressed dissatisfaction with Age UK HHB or with a service provided by AGE UK HHB or the inappropriate action or approach taken by a member of staff or a volunteer.*

A concern or a complaint raised by a member of staff or volunteer will be classified as a grievance. Any complaints arising from a member of staff or volunteer should be dealt with in accordance with AGE UK HHB’s Grievance Policy.

A complaint may be made by:

* Service users
* Carers
* Those refused services
* Advocates of users and carers
* Relatives and carers of users or carers
* A customer
* A member of the public

AGE UK HHB will not investigate any anonymous complaints.

**This document is divided into 4 sections:**

Section 1 Procedure

Section 2 General guidelines for AGE UK HHB staff and volunteers when dealing with a complaint

Section 3 Dealing with complaints arising from online channels

Appendix A Leaflet “Making a Complaint”

**SECTION 1**

**PROCEDURE**

**Time limit:**

A complaint may be made within 12 months of the date on which the events which are the subject of the complaint occurred. However, the Trustees reserve the right to, at their discretion, extend this period and given extenuating circumstances.

**Recording and reporting:**

All complaints, formal, informal and appeals, will be recorded centrally in the complaints log held on SharePoint.

There is a requirement for the investigation of cases, at all stages, to identify any learning and appropriate actions and for these to be recorded in the log.

The Trustees will be informed of any complaint and outcomes at the next Board meeting.

**Complaints may be managed in the following stages:**

**Informal stage** - where the issue can be locally resolved by discussion. The complaint will be managed by a member of staff with the support and guidance of the appropriate Director (i.e. Director of Resources, Director of Finance or Director of Services) and resolved within a maximum of 5 working days.

**Formal stage** - where a formal written complaint is received or when the informal stage does not resolve the matter to the satisfaction of the complainant. A formal complaint will be investigated by the appropriate Director who will provide a formal report to the Chief Executive for consideration. The Chief Executive may request further information. A formal written response will then be provided to the complainant by the Chief Executive. The case will be resolved within a maximum of 15 working days.

**Appeal** - where the formal stage fails to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of the complainant. Further comments from the complainant will be considered and reviewed by the Chief Executive and Trustees. A further written response will be provided to the complainant. This response will be final and resolved normally within a maximum of 25 working days.

**Informal stage:**

In all cases where a complaint arises, every effort should be made by the staff member or volunteer in first contact with the complainant to resolve it quickly and informally. The Line Manager should be informed of any complaints, or misunderstandings made against AGE UK HHB or its staff or volunteers.

Where a complaint is dealt with informally, ideally this should be made in writing but a verbal complaint can be dealt with provided the staff member or volunteer ensure that a full record is made, on Charity Log if the complaint relates to a client or volunteer, of the complainant’s details (name and address), the nature of the complaint and any staff or volunteers involved.

The staff member or volunteer dealing with the complaint should keep a record of the date, time, nature of complaint, and a brief summary of the process of resolution and the final outcome and any learning, on Charity Log if appropriate and on the centrally held complaint log.

If, for any reason the complainant does not feel able or willing to talk the problem over with the member of staff or volunteer concerned, then they may request that the matter be referred to the Line Manager or Duty Manager.

Where a complaint can be dealt with at this level, it should be resolved within a maximum of 5 working days. Efforts should be made to keep the complainant in touch with progress and informed of the outcome.

**Formal stage:**

Where a complaint remains unresolved at the Informal stage, or the complainant indicates their wish for their complaint to be dealt with formally, they should be provided with a copy of the leaflet “Making a complaint” shown at Appendix A.

The written complaint (letter, email) should be passed to the Chief Executive (or the Director in their absence) for attention. The Director will acknowledge receipt, within 5 working days, and advise the complainant of the expected timescales for the matter to be investigated, usually no longer than 15 working days.

The investigation will identify any learning and recommend appropriate actions to mitigate a recurrence.

The Director will ensure that the complaint is investigated and a report compiled and provided to the Chief Executive. The Chief Executive will respond in writing to the complainant.

Any learning identified and recommended actions will be raised at the next SMT to ensure an organisational response.

**Appeal stage:**

Should the complainant remain dissatisfied with the Chief Executive response, they may, within 14 days of receipt of the written response from the formal stage, confirm in writing to the Chief Executive that they wish a Complaints Panel of AGE UK HHB Trustees to deal with their complaint. The Chief Executive will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 5 working days of receipt of the letter and set out the process and timescales for the Complaints Panel to investigate the complaint.

The Complaints Panel will comprise of a minimum of 2 AGE UK HHB Trustees.

The panel may receive evidence in writing or in person from the parties involved (this may be via telephone, email or face to face). If the complainant is invited to meet with the panel, they may be accompanied by a friend or independent advocate. All deliberations and decisions will be minuted and these will be made available, upon request, to all parties concerned.

The panel will consider all aspects of the complaint and advise the complainant, in writing, within 25 days, of their decision and any appropriate action taken. Where a delay to the response is considered likely, the complainant will be informed.

A record of the decision of the Complaints Panel will be recorded in the Complaints Log. All additional documentation regarding the complaint will be kept on file by the Chief Executive on SharePoint.

The Chief Executive is responsible for the long-term monitoring of the Complaints Log to determine any trends and report these to the Trustees.

**SECTION 2**

**GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR AGE UK HHB STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS WHEN DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS**

This procedure has been designed to be fair to both clients and AGE UK HHB staff and volunteers. A complaint need not necessarily be directed personally and staff and volunteers need to recognise that occasional misunderstandings are likely to occur when working in daily contact with members of the general public. The public should have access to our leaflet on making a complaint which is attached to this policy as Appendix A.

All AGE UK HHB staff and volunteers represent the organisation and therefore should bear in mind that it is inadvisable to mix personal feelings with the reputation of AGE UK HHB.

The complaints procedure aims to deal with complaints effectively, speedily and with total impartiality and fairness.

AGE UK HHB’s primary aim is to deliver an appropriate and quality service to all service users.

Service users have the right to expect from AGE UK HHB staff and volunteers a courteous resolution of misunderstandings and a prompt, helpful approach towards dealing with complaints and solving problems.

AGE UK HHB has an established set of guidelines for dealing with complaints from clients of its services. All staff and volunteers are expected to be familiar with these guidelines, listed below, and to operate them with sensitivity and caution.

1. Remember that the way in which a complaint is handled can remain in a person’s mind much longer than the complaint itself.
2. Respond immediately; this is vital to take away some of the initial anger or concerns.

Staff and volunteers should inform their Line Manager of any misunderstandings or possible complaints that could be made against them. This will allow the Line Manager to be aware of the situation, should it be necessary to refer to the next stage of the procedure.

1. Keep the complainant informed of the progress in sorting out the problem. This includes setting out the timescale for the solution at the outset and informing the individual of any delays.
2. Do NOT promise what you cannot achieve, otherwise you will simply aggravate the situation. Empathise, but do not sympathise.
3. Do NOT challenge the complainant or try to win an argument. Your tone should be as neutral as possible. This may help to calm an irate person.
4. Give an opportunity for the individual to vent anger or frustration. This means listening carefully until they have let off steam. Try to remain calm and polite in such circumstances.
5. If you are unable to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion refer to the next stage of the Complaints Procedure. Pass details of the complaint to the Line Manager or Duty Manager.

**SECTION 3**

**DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS ARISING FROM ONLINE CHANNELS SUCH AS WEBSITE, FACEBOOK, TWITTER AND OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA**

With the rise of social media as a communication tool, there is a need for guidelines on dealing with abusive or negative comments posted on our online channels.

Negative, inflammatory or abusive comments will not be tolerated however, they will not be deleted as this can be seen as equally inflammatory. We do not want to be seen to be censoring the ability to express opinion or to voice concerns. Nor do we want to be seen to be ignoring people just because they’re being negative.

Staff responsible for the content of online channels should not enter into a dialogue with any aggrieved supporter but should respond promptly in a conciliatory manner then refer the person to our complaints procedure document. For example, someone posts on Twitter to say they have had a bad experience with a particular person or service. We should simply respond saying something like “We are really sorry to hear about your bad experience. Please rest assured we take all complaints seriously and want to resolve them promptly. Please follow this link to our complaints procedure (Link - Appendix A – Leaflet- Making a Complaint).

If the person continues to try to inflame the situation, issue continued calm responses such as “We will not enter into public dialogue about specific complaints. We would again refer you to our complaints procedure (link) so that we can deal with your complaint efficiently.

The Chief Executive is responsible for ensuring that all staff and volunteers have access to proper training in handling complaints.

Appendix A



**Making a Complaint about a Service**

The aim of Age UK Hillingdon, Harrow and Brent is to deliver an appropriate and quality service to all users of all our services. We hope that you receive a satisfactory service but should you be dissatisfied or have cause for complaint, this leaflet outlines how we will deal with your complaint.

**Tell us what you think**

The best way to resolve a misunderstanding or complaint which you may have regarding our work is for you to discuss it with the person in the organisation with whom you have had contact. This may be either a member of staff or a volunteer.

In all cases the member of staff or volunteer with whom you have contact will make every effort to work towards a quick and informal solution. You will be informed of the procedures used, and the expected timescale of action.

If, for any reason you do not feel able or willing to talk the problem over with the member of staff or volunteer concerned, then you may request that the matter be referred to the Line Manager or Duty Manager.

**What will happen?**

In order to respond quickly and efficiently, the date, time and nature of the complaint are recorded, together with notes on the efforts made to resolve the situation and action taken. This confidential information will only be available to those who are directly involved in the proceedings. At this stage the complaint is dealt with on an informal level and should be resolved within a maximum of five working days.

**Still not entirely satisfied?**

Should the complaint remain unresolved or you wish to make a formal complaint, you must confirm in writing to the Chief Executive that you wish to enter the formal complaint process. The Chief Executive will then arrange for the matter to be investigated and respond to you within 15 working days and provide a full written response within.

**Appeals**

Should you remain dissatisfied, the final stage in our complaints process is for you to request advise the Chief Executive that you wish the matter to be considered by a panel of AGE UK HHB Trustees.

The panel will comprise of a minimum of 2 Trustees. The panel will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 5 working days from receipt of your letter and will also inform you of the timescales for investigating the complaint.

You may be asked to meet and discuss the complaint with a member of the panel or alternatively you may speak by telephone. This will give you an opportunity to place your case. The panel may also receive written information from all parties concerned. Should a meeting take place, you will be invited to have a friend or an independent advocate to accompany you.

All deliberations and decisions will be recorded and these will be made available, upon request, to all parties concerned.

The panel will consider all aspects of the complaint and advise you, in writing, within 25 days of their decision and of any appropriate action to be taken.

The panel’s decision is final.

**We also welcome any compliments you may have about our service which can be sent to the address below:-**

**How to contact us**

Write to us at

Age UK Hillingdon, Harrow and Brent

2 Chapel Court,

126 Church Road

Hayes

UB3 2LW

Or

Email: enquiries@ageukhhb.org.uk

Or

Telephone 020 8756 3040