

## COMPLAINTS, COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

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### 1. POLICY STATEMENT

Age UK Lindsey aims to provide high-quality, responsive and needs led services, promoting the wellbeing of older people 50 and over. In order to ensure this we need to take account of the views and wishes of those we are here to support.

We welcome every opportunity to monitor and improve the services our charity provides and having a '**Complaints, Compliments, Comments and Suggestion Policy**' and a clear procedure for resolving complaints is key to doing this.

This policy sets out the "**Listen, Inform and Respond**" approach that we take to complaints, compliments, comments and suggestions and the procedures we will follow when we receive a complaint from clients of the service, an organisation or a member of the public.

It does **not** address complaints made by staff or volunteers (dealt with through the grievance procedure) nor job applicants (recruitment procedure).

Anybody who wishes to make a formal complaint can do so either in writing by letter or by requesting, or accessing on our website ([www.ageuk.org.uk/lindsey](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/lindsey)) a copy of the '**Making a Complaint**' form or by requesting the form in writing from our Head Office at **Age UK Lindsey, The Old School House, Manor House Street Horncastle. LN9 5HF**

The form should be completed, signed and posted to our Head Office, marked for the attention of the Chief Executive Officer or completed and attached to an e-mail to [info@ageuklindsey.co.uk](mailto:info@ageuklindsey.co.uk)

***Please note only complaints submitted by letter in writing or on the appropriate form will be treated as a formal complaint, investigated and responded to.***

The policy statement should be displayed in all public areas of Age UK Lindsey.

### Compliments About Our Staff and Services

Compliments are valuable, welcome and important and when they are received, either verbally or in writing, they will be recorded.

Compliments enable Age UK Lindsey to:-

- understand that our services are being provided to our clients satisfaction
- provide positive feedback to our staff and volunteers
- influence our charity and services development
- inform our process of quality assurance and provide means of monitoring

## **Comments and Suggestions About Our Services**

Comments and suggestions about our services are valuable, welcome and important, whether they are positive or negative and when they are received, either verbally or in writing, they will be recorded on our '**Compliments, Comments and Suggestions**' form.

Comments and Suggestions enable Age UK Lindsey to:-

- provide information that can lead to improvements in services delivery
- provide positive feedback to our staff and volunteers
- influence our charity and services development
- inform our quality assurance programme and provide means of monitoring

## **Complaining About Our Services**

Age UK Lindsey recognises that there will be times when our Trustees, staff and volunteers make mistakes, or get things wrong.

In order to learn from such mistakes we need to know about them and encourage people to comment or complain. Such comments or complaints will always be taken seriously, recorded and responded to as detailed in the procedure for resolving complaints which accompanies this policy statement.

Complaints enable Age UK Lindsey to:-

- resolve issues raised by a person who is dissatisfied in a timely and effective way
- provide information that can lead to improvements in services delivery
- understand and improve the reputation of the charity and public confidence
- protect the interests of clients, staff and volunteers by having an open and transparent procedure

It is Age UK Lindsey's policy to make our services as relevant, open and accessible to our clients as possible. If we have fallen down in this aim we want to know. Age UK Lindsey will enable and encourage complaints to be made and dealt with formally if necessary. The purpose of the procedure is to resolve disputes between Age UK Lindsey staff and any of the clients who feel aggrieved at their treatment by the staff.

The Trustees of Age UK Lindsey exist to ensure that the service is accountable to the clients; therefore we will investigate each complaint seriously. Where a member of staff is found to have behaved improperly, the Trustees reserve the right to invoke the disciplinary procedure. However, this will be treated as a separate matter from the complaint made by the client.

## **2 THE PROCEDURE FOR RESOLVING COMPLAINTS**

### **Who Can Use This Procedure?**

This procedure is for anyone who comes into contact with Trustees, staff and volunteers from Age UK Lindsey and the services we deliver.

By anyone we mean service users and clients, practitioners, other voluntary sector groups, statutory agencies and any other member of the public.

When someone wishes to register a complaint, the following procedure should be adopted. Where the complaint is against the Chief Executive Officer, the same procedure will be followed, but with the Chair of the Trustees substituting for the Chief Executive Officer's role at all stages.

A complaint will usually be received via email, phone or letter or through the completion of a complaints form or a verbal complaint in person at one of our customer facing points such as an Access Centre or Charity Shop.

When a complaint is received the following procedure will be followed to ensure that we have listened and understood the reason for the complaint;

### **Stage 1 - The Informal Stage**

We hope that the majority of complaints can be resolved informally by speaking directly to the person or person's making the complaint. This can be done either by telephone or in a face to face meeting.

It is therefore important to **listen** carefully and to find out what the person or person's making the complaint want to achieve as a result.

In the first instance the person or person's making the complaint should be invited to speak to the relevant Service Manager who is responsible for the Service area which the complaint has been made about.

Therefore the member of staff or volunteer who the person or persons raise the complaint with in the first instance, should record the complaint on an **Initial Contact Form** for receiving a complaint and **inform** the person or persons making the complaint that it will be forward to the appropriate Service Manager to **respond**, which will be done either by telephone or in a face to face meeting.

If through this telephone conversation or face to face meeting with the Service Manager there can be a resolution to the complaint then the matter will be classed as resolved.

The Service Manager will follow up the telephone call or face to face meeting with the person or persons making the complaint by sending a letter outlining the issue and the decisions reached and agreed and the result will be logged with the Administration Manager on our **Complaint Outcome Feedback Form**.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied or the issue cannot be resolved at this informal stage or where it is not possible to use **Stage 1** above (for example if it is not convenient for the person or persons making the complaint to have a face to face meeting), or where the person or persons making the complaint prefers to put it in writing straight away, then the complaint will move to **Stage 2**.

## **Stage 2 – The Formal Stage**

If the person or persons who are making a complaint for any reason feels their complaint has not been satisfactorily resolved at **Stage 1**, the procedure will move to **Stage 2**

At **Stage 2** the complaint will need to be put in writing by the person or person's making the complaint, either by letter or using the '**Making a Complaints' Form** and sent to the **Chief Executive Officer** to deal with.

Any complaint received at **Stage Two** should be acknowledged within **10 working days** of it being received. The acknowledgement will inform the person or person's making the complaint that the complaint will be investigated by the Chief Executive Officer and when the person or person's making the complaint should expect a reply.

The **Chief Executive Officer** will investigate the facts of the case and this will involve a review of any paperwork and speaking with the **Service Manager** if this is a complaint which was originally a complaint at **Stage One**. If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given an opportunity to respond to the **Chief Executive Officer**

The **Chief Executive Officer** will make a reply to the person or persons making the complaint within **20 working days** of the first acknowledgement of the complaint at **Stage 2**.

If this is for whatever reason not possible, for example if the investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a conclusive reply will be given.

If this timeframe is delayed because of holiday or sick leave you will be informed when your complaint is acknowledged.

Whether or not the complaint is upheld, the reply to the complainant will describe the conclusions from the investigation and any action taken as a result of the complaint and the result will be logged with the Administration Manager on our **Complaint Outcome Feedback form**.

If the complaint is about the **Chief Executive Officer** the person or persons making the complaint must write to The Chair of the Age UK Lindsey Board of Trustees who has been designated to handle complaints at this level.

If the person or persons who are making a complaint for any reason feels their complaint has not been satisfactorily resolved at **Stage 2**, the procedure will move to **Stage 3**, which is the final stage of the complaints procedure.

## **Stage 3 – The Final Stage**

Where the matter is not resolved by Stage 2, the Chief Executive Officer should immediately refer the complaint to the **Board of Trustees Complaints Panel** of the Trustees.

Copies of all written correspondence will be sent to the panel members in advance of the meeting. The **Board of Trustees Complaints Panel** will comprise of the Chair of the Trustees, one other Officer of the Trustees and the Chief Executive Officer, unless the complaint is about the Chief Officer, in which case their place will be taken by another officer of the Trustees.

The **Chief Executive Officer** will be responsible for convening the panel. In the absence of the Chief Executive Officer, the other Officer of the Trustees will become the convenor. The complainant will be informed immediately by the Chief Executive Officer, or Chair, that this is being done and that the panel will also be contacting the staff member(s) or volunteers against whom the complaint is made. The panel will review the decision made at Stage 2 and may seek further clarification from any of the parties involved. The panel then makes its decision.

The **Board of Trustees Complaints Panel** will notify the complainant of its reasons and decision within 28 working days of having received notice of the complaint at **Stage 3**. The panel's decision will be final. The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for ensuring records of the meeting are kept and the **Complaint Outcome Feedback Form** is completed.

### **Complaints that cannot be investigated**

We will not be able to follow the above process for any complaint which has been submitted:

- anonymously;
- directly to Board Member/s (i.e. not in line with the process outlined in the procedure document);
- is based on previous complaints that have not been upheld and are not substantively different to the previous complaint;
- is about matters that do not directly relate to the products, services or people of Age UK Lindsey

## **5 RECORDING AND MONITORING COMPLAINTS**

All complaints both **Informal** and **Formal** will be recorded and kept on file.

The **Complaint Outcome Feedback Form** shall be used to do this. All complaints shall be subject to the usual rules of confidentiality.

The **Chief Executive Officer** will make a report once a year to the Board of Trustees summarising the nature of any complaints received and how they were resolved.

## **6 PUBLICISING THE PROCEDURE**

The **Chief Executive Officer** through the **Service Managers** will be responsible for ensuring that the '**Complaints, Compliments, Comments and Suggestion Policy**

**Statement'** is displayed in all customer facing establishments including Access Centres and Charity Shops and on the Age UK Lindsey website to ensure everyone is aware of the procedure for making the complaint.

The **Chief Executive Officer** through the **Service Managers** will also be responsible for ensuring the '**Making a Complaint**' form is available at all outreach sessions and on home visits. (As appropriate).

## **7 ENSURING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROCEDURE.**

The **Complaints, Compliments, Comments and Suggestion Policy and Procedure** will be made available to all Board of Trustee members, staff, volunteers and anyone else who wishes to view the document in its entirety.

Existing and new staff members and volunteers will be introduced to the **Complaints, Compliments, Comments and Suggestion Policy and Procedure** via induction and training.

The **Complaints, Compliments, Comments and Suggestion Policy and Procedure** will be reviewed as per Policy Review Schedule and amendments should be proposed and agreed by the Board of Trustees.