

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Version: 9th October 2025

Complaints Policy	
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Division	Senior Management Team
For use by	Staff, Volunteers and Trustees
Purpose	To set out the process to be followed when an Adverse Comment or Complaint is received.
Key related documents	Data Protection policy Data Retention policy
Version	9 th October 2025
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DOCUMENT CONTROL			
DATE	EDITS	EDITOR / REVIEWER	CHANGE CONTROLLER / DOCUMENT OWNER
Feb 2018	Re-written	Paula Skelton PA to CEO	CEO
Feb 2018	Revised according to comments agreed at the Board of Trustees meeting held on 22.03.18	Paula Skelton PA to CEO	CEO
Mar 2018	Amended version agreed at the Board of Trustees meeting held on 22.03.18	Paula Skelton PA to CEO	CEO
Oct 2019	Amended in light of downsizing	Hilary MacDonald CEO	Hilary MacDonald CEO
Sept 2022	Amended at 3-year stage: minor amendments re: Head of Operations job title and storage/contact details	Vicky Aitken Head of Operations	Vicky Aitken Head of Operations
March 2025	Reformatted	Jasmine Toombs Head of Corporate Services	Jasmine Toombs Head of Corporate Services
26 th September 2025	Full review	Jasmine Toombs Head of Corporate Services	Jasmine Toombs Head of Corporate Services
9 th October 2025	<i>EDITOR</i> check & review pre-SMT approval	Ann Donkin Chief Executive	Jasmine Toombs Head of Corporate Services

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Age UK Norfolk is committed to the provision of high-quality services and to seeking continuous improvement. We want our service users/customers to be satisfied with the service they receive from us and delivering quality and improvement is at the heart of what we do. We see our complaints process as a positive tool in improving standards, allowing us to learn from people's experiences of our services and we consider feedback from service users/customers as valuable information in helping us put things right when they go wrong.
- 1.2 Our Complaints Policy aims to be fair, clear, transparent and service user/customer focused. We are committed to getting the process right, being open and accountable, acting fairly and proportionately and achieving a satisfactory outcome.

2. COMPLAINTS PROCESS

- 2.1 It is important to us that people using our services are clear about their right to express dissatisfaction or to make a complaint and know how to do so.

- 2.2 There are three distinct stages to the process:

- 2.2.1 **Stage One – Expression of Dissatisfaction, informal approach**

Where an Expression of Dissatisfaction is made it is likely, by its very nature, that this can be resolved immediately, and be to everyone's satisfaction. In these circumstances, the matter should be raised with the manager of the service concerned and documented on Charity Log.

- 2.2.2 **Stage Two – Formal Complaint**

When an Expression of Dissatisfaction is not resolved at Stage One, or a "Complaint" is made, it will be treated as a Formal Complaint, and should be put in writing and sent to:

Chief Executive
Age UK Norfolk
Henderson Business Centre
51 Ivy Road
Norwich, NR5 8BF

E: complaints@ageuknorfolk.org.uk

- 2.2.3 **Stage Three - Appeals**

Where the complainant does not accept the response in Stage Two sufficient, an Appeal may be made. In such circumstances, the complainant

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should write to the Chief Executive of Age UK Norfolk at the address given in 2.2, requesting that their case is heard by an Appeal Panel. The request, which should set out the grounds for their appeal, should be made within 28 days of the date shown on the response letter at Stage Two.

3. MAKING A FORMAL COMPLAINT

3.1 Upon receipt of a formal complaint the Head of Corporate Services will:

- log the complaint in the Complaints Register.
- create a complaints file and assign a unique reference number.
- send a written acknowledgement to the complainant of their complaint.

*This will be sent out within **three working days of receiving the complaint**.*

In the acknowledgement letter, the complainant will be informed of who the investigating officer is and provided with a copy of **Age UK Norfolk's Complaints Policy** for their information.

3.2 Recordkeeping

3.2.1 All correspondence will be recorded, including but not limited to:

- The complainant's contact details.
- Records of meetings and formal discussions with staff and volunteers as part of the investigation.
- Letters and e-mails from and to the complainant.

3.2.2 Correspondence sent by the charity to the complainant will be by Email or First-Class post.

3.2.3 The Head of Corporate Services is responsible for completing Complaint Log at **Appendix A** (attached at the end of this Policy).

3.2.4 Files will be archived in line with current Data Retention guidelines as laid out in the Data Retention Policy.

3.3 Investigation

3.3.1 The Head of Corporate Services decides who is responsible for investigating a complaint.

3.3.2 Details of the complaint will be passed to the relevant Manager to investigate.

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3.3.3 The Manager (Investigating Officer) will review all relevant documentation and carry out interviews with staff and other relevant parties. These should be documented and include the following:

- who was interviewed and their job title.
- the date that the interview took place.
- who wrote-up the interview notes.

3.3.4 For reasons of confidentiality, the matter will not be discussed with external agencies without the **express consent** of the complainant.

3.3.5 If the relevant Manager is on leave or otherwise absent, it is the responsibility of the Head of Corporate Services to delegate responsibility for investigating the complaint to another manager (who will be the Investigating officer), or where this is not practicable, will undertake the investigation themselves

3.3.6 The Investigating officer will provide a written report of their findings to the Head of Corporate Services at complaints@ageuknorfolk.org.uk

3.3.7 The Head of Corporate Services will draft a response and provide the full complaint file to the Chief Executive for review.

3.3.8 A final response will be provided from the Chief Executive to the complainant within 28 days of the complaint being received.

3.3.9 In exceptional circumstances, or where a complaint is very complex, more time may be needed to undertake the investigation. The complainant will be informed in writing if more time is required to undertake the investigation.

3.4 Timeframes for Making a Complaint

3.4.1 A complaint must be made no later than three months after the date the incident occurred or, if later, the date the incident came to the notice of the complainant.

3.4.2 The time limit will not apply if Age UK Norfolk is satisfied that:

- the complainant can give a good reason for not making the complaint within that time limit, **and**
- despite the delay, it is still possible to investigate the complaint effectively and fairly.

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3.5 Representatives

- 3.5.1 In order to ensure that service users who are unable to make a complaint without help are provided with support in respect of the complaints process, we will accept independent representatives, including friends and family supporting the complainant. In the interests of the service user, complaints received from a representative supporting the complainant will only be accepted under the following conditions, **either**:
- where the service user is unable to complain unaided and has consented, either verbally or in writing; **or**
 - where the service user is unable to complain unaided and cannot give consent because they lack capacity within the meaning of the Mental Capacity Act 2005.
- 3.5.2 The representative must act in the best interest of the complainant and respect the confidentiality of the complaints process.
- 3.5.3 Age UK Norfolk reserves the right not to accept a complaint from a representative if in our opinion, the representative will not act, or is not acting, in the best interests of the complainant and/or will not agree to respect, or is not respecting, the confidentiality of the complaints process.
- 3.5.4 Further information: www.gov.uk/government/collections/mental-capacity-act-making-decisions

4. STAGE THREE: APPEAL PANEL

- 4.1 This stage is used when the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of stage two of the complaints process.
- 4.2 In such circumstances, the complainant should write to the Chief Executive of Age UK Norfolk at the address given below, requesting that their case is heard by an Appeal Panel. The request, which should set out the grounds for their appeal, should be made within 28 days of the date shown on the response letter from the Chief Executive, and be sent to:

The Chief Executive
Age UK Norfolk
Henderson Business Centre

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51 Ivy Road
Norwich
NR5 8BF

Complaints@ageuknorfolk.org.uk

- 4.2 The Appeal Panel will normally consist of three people, including at least two members of Age UK Norfolk's Board of Trustees. An independent panel member may be invited onto the panel. One of the three members of the Appeal Panel will act as Chair of the Appeal Hearing.
- 4.3 The Chief Executive or in their absence, the Head of Corporate Services, will ensure that arrangements are made with all parties for the appeal to be heard. The complainant will be invited to attend and will be informed that if they so wish they can be accompanied by a family member, friend or representative for guidance and support and/or to present their case.
- 4.4 Appeal Hearings will be held whenever possible at Henderson Business Centre, 51 Ivy Road, Norwich, NR5 8BF. If the complainant is unable to attend the venue in person, the meeting will be held virtually via *TEAMS*.
- 4.5 Notes will be taken at the Appeal Hearing which will be printed and placed in the complaint file and Charity Log.
- 4.6 Reasonable expenses will be reimbursed.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 We will use the learning gained from the complaint and the complaint investigation to make any necessary changes and/or improvements to our policies and procedures, sharing relevant points with staff and volunteers within the organisation. At all times, the organisation will endeavour to avoid a repeat of any errors we have made.

6. INTERNAL REPORTING

- 6.1 As part of our corporate reporting and governance scrutiny, details of complaints and adverse comments received by Age UK Norfolk are presented for review by the Board of Trustees in line with the Boards' Meeting Schedule.

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7. CHARITY COMMISSION

- 7.1 As a registered charity, Age UK Norfolk must fulfil the requirements and expectations laid down by charity law, and the Charity Commission can be approached should an individual wish to raise a concern at any time (Age UK Norfolk's Charity Number: 1077097).
- 7.2 Further information about making a complaint can be found at:
www.gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission/about/complaints-procedure

8. SERIAL COMPLAINANTS

- 8.1 Instances of someone making serial complaints will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

9. COMPLAINTS RELATING TO AGE UK NORFOLK'S FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES

- 9.1 Complaints about fundraising undertaken by Age UK Norfolk will be dealt with using the procedures contained in this policy.
- 9.2 The Fundraising Regulator is the independent regulator of charitable fundraising. It was established to strengthen the system of charity regulation and restore public trust in fundraising. One of its key roles is to adjudicate complaints from the public about fundraising practice, where these cannot be resolved by the charities themselves.
- 9.3 The Fundraising Regulator states that:
- "If someone has a concern about fundraising, they should usually first take up their concern with the fundraising organisation. This is because we think it is better to give the organisation an opportunity to respond to complaints before we look at a case."
- 9.4 There is more information on the Fundraising Regulator's website about making a complaint at:
www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk/make-a-complaint/complaints

10. COMPLAINTS AND REFERRING TO EXTERNAL BODIES

- 10.1 There are two organisations that complainants can complain to if they are unsatisfied with Age UK Norfolk services:

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➤ **Norfolk County Council**

If the complaint involves an Age UK Norfolk service which is commissioned by Norfolk County Council (NCC), complainants can complain directly to NCC:

Further information can be found at:

www.norfolk.gov.uk/article/38794/Compliments-and-complaints

➤ **The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman**

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman investigate complaints about adult care services. This is regardless of whether the care is provided by a Council or paid for by the customer/service user privately.

10.2 Please note that the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's says:

"First complain to the organisation involved to give them a chance to put things right. You should go through all stages of their complaint's procedure."

Further information can be found at:

<https://www.lgo.org.uk/make-a-complaint>

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APPENDIX A

COMPLAINT LOG

Unique File Reference Number:

Complainant's name:	
Date complaint made:	
Date complaint received:	
Is the complainant complaining on behalf of someone else?	Yes / No circle as appropriate
Complainant's e-mail address:	
Complainant's telephone number:	
Complainant's full address:	
Investigating Officer:	
Date resolved:	

Briefly describe the nature of the complaint:

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Detail all significant contact (email, telephone calls, letters, visits, etc.)

Date	Type of Contact	Details	Document number	Initials