

## **1. Your right to complain about Age UK North Tyneside Group services**

Everyone has a right to expect good quality services from Age UK North Tyneside Group and for things to be put right if they go wrong.

We have a robust “Comments, Compliments and Complaints” policy and as an organisation, we welcome feedback and look upon this as an opportunity to learn, adapt, improve and provide better services. A copy of this Policy is available from Customer Services at:

The Bradbury Centre  
13 Saville Street West  
North Shields  
Tyne & Wear  
NE29 6QP

Telephone: 0191 2808484

Email: [enquiries@ageuknorthtyneside.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@ageuknorthtyneside.org.uk)

## **2. Finding out how to make a complaint**

If you wish to make a complaint, you should inform a member of staff or volunteer without delay.

Alternatively, you can contact Customer Services on 0191 280 8484.

## **3. Who can help you make a complaint?**

Complaints do not have to be made by the person receiving services.

- You can complain for a friend or relative if they agree to you acting on their behalf. If you are making a formal complaint, you may find it useful to have their permission in writing
- You can make a complaint on behalf of a deceased relative or friend
- You can complain on behalf of a relative or friend who, within the meaning of the Mental Capacity Act 2005, “lacks the capacity” to complain. If Age UK North Tyneside Group believes you are not acting in that person’s “best interests”, we can refuse to pursue your complaint but we will explain in writing why we believe this to be the case.

#### 4. **Support to help you raise concerns or make a complaint**

You can ask for help and guidance on how to make a complaint by contacting any of the organisations below:-

##### **Local Independent Advocacy Service**

Your local Independent Advocacy Service can be a great source of advice and support. You can contact them direct on 0191 2596662, or by email at [info@iant.org.uk](mailto:info@iant.org.uk). You can also visit their website at [www.iane.org.uk](http://www.iane.org.uk)

##### **Citizens Advice Bureau**

Your local Citizens Advice Bureau can also be a great source of advice and support. You can contact them direct on 0191 2704485 or 0844 4991198 or visit their website at [www.citizensadvice.org.uk/index/getadvice/bureau](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/index/getadvice/bureau)

##### **Healthwatch**

Local Healthwatch may also offer free independent information or advice about how to make a comment about local services. You can contact your Local Healthwatch on 0191 2635321 or by email at [info@healthwatchnorthtyneside.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchnorthtyneside.co.uk). You can also visit their website at [www.healthwatchnorthtyneside.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchnorthtyneside.co.uk)

##### **Different Formats and Languages**

**Text Relay** - If you have problems with your hearing or speech, then you can also contact us via Text Relay. Text Relay is a service run by the Royal National Institute for the Deaf (RNID). It helps deaf, deaf-blind, hard of hearing and speech-impaired people make and receive calls to and from hearing people by.

To make a Text Relay Direct call with a textphone dial '18001' before the full phone number and Text Relay Direct will connect a Text Relay Assistant into the call if needed.

To make a Text Relay Direct call with a standard phone dial '18002' before the full national phone number.

**Relay Assist** - provides the same facilities as the standard 1800X access to Text Relay Direct but with a Text Relay Assistant setting up the call and assisting with the conversation. Please note there is a charge for this service.

To use Relay Assist dial:

- 0870 240 9598 – for textphone users.
- 0870 240 5152 – for standard phone users

**Interpreters** – North Tyneside Council can also put you in touch with an **Interpreting Service** who offer a confidential and impartial service to help overcome the communication barrier between deaf people and hearing people. It is available to any resident of North Tyneside who requires support to communicate with a hearing or deaf person. For more information contact 0191 6432999 or email [interpreters.BSL@northtyneside.gov.uk](mailto:interpreters.BSL@northtyneside.gov.uk)

**Requesting a Language Interpreter** – Newcastle Interpreting Service offer face to face interpreting or telephone interpreting on demand 24/7 365 days per year. You can contact them on 0191 6531002 or by email at [nis@language-empire.com](mailto:nis@language-empire.com).

## 5. Time limits for making a complaint

You should make a complaint as soon as possible. Complaints should normally be made within 1 month of the date of the event that you are complaining about, or as soon as the matter first came to your attention.

The time limit can sometimes be extended (so long as it's still possible to investigate the complaint). An extension might be possible, for instance in situations where it would have been difficult for you to complain earlier, for example, when you were grieving or undergoing trauma.

## 6. Worries about complaining directly to Age UK North Tyneside

If your service is being provided by Age UK North Tyneside Group on behalf of North Tyneside Council, you can discuss your complaint with them by contacting:

Adult Social Care Contact Centre  
North Tyneside Council  
Quadrant  
Silverlink North  
Cobalt Business Park  
North Tyneside  
NE27 0BY

Telephone: 0191 643 2777 / Out of hours: 0191 200 6800

Or if your service is a care service you can contact:

### **Care Quality Commission (CQC)**

The Care Quality Commission is a national organisation independent of Age UK North Tyneside Group and they can be contacted at:-

CQC National Customer Service Centre  
Citygate  
Gallowgate  
Newcastle-upon-Tyne  
NE1 4PA

Telephone: 03000 61 61 61

Email: [enquiries.northeastern@cqc.org.uk](mailto:enquiries.northeastern@cqc.org.uk)

## **7. What to consider before making a complaint**

If you decide to make a complaint, it is important to consider what you want to happen. Are you content with an apology, do you want action to be taken against a member of staff, or do you want a change to the system? Whatever action you are seeking, make this clear.

## **8. Expressing your concerns or making a complaint**

### **Stage 1 : First try to resolve it informally**

Not all issues have to end up with a formal complaint. Sometimes it is enough to give feedback or leave a comment. We welcome feedback as it will help improve the quality of our services.

If you raise concerns at the time or as soon as possible after an event, it is more likely that things can be put right quickly and satisfactorily. Taking prompt action also prevents a situation from getting worse.

A staff member may be able to respond straight away or within days of an issue being drawn to their attention. A prompt acceptable response – such as an apology from the person concerned, assurance that steps are being taken to prevent something happening again, agreeing a better way to meet your own or a relative's needs or information from someone who is proving difficult to reach – could produce the outcome you want and prevent a situation escalating.

Before you make your complaint, make a note of the relevant events, dates, times, names and conversations, and include all necessary details. Your notes will also help you to remember all the details in the future.

Whether you decide to complain orally or in writing, try to make your explanations as short and clear as possible. Focus on the main issues, and leave out irrelevant details. If you can, talk through what you want to say with someone else, or ask them to read what you've written before you send it. If you complain in writing, keep a copy of everything you post, and make a note of when you sent it.

## **Stage 2 : Making a formal complaint**

If you don't feel like you can solve issues informally, you may want to raise a formal complaint. This could be because you feel your concerns have not been adequately addressed by raising it informally; the seriousness of the issue warrants a wider investigation or the event you wish to complain about is in the past.

If this is the case, then you should write a letter or email us to make a formal complaint:-

Age UK North Tyneside  
Bradbury Centre  
13 Saville Street West  
North Shields  
NE29 6QP

Telephone: 0191 280 8484

Email: [enquiries@ageuknorthtyneside.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@ageuknorthtyneside.org.uk)

You should provide as much information as possible to allow us to investigate your complaint, such as :-

- your name, address and telephone number
- name and contact details of anyone helping you with the complaint
- name and contact details of the provider you wish to complain about
- the factual details of your complaint (listing the main events and when they happened)
- why you think your previous complaint wasn't resolved to your satisfaction, and how this has caused you injustice
- details of the complaints you've already made and the outcome of their investigations
- copies of any relevant documents (it is usually helpful to number these and provide a list)

Don't forget to keep copies of everything you post or email, and make a note of when you send it.

## **9. What to expect when you make a complaint**

Any complaint you make about Age UK North Tyneside Group services will be acknowledged within 48 hours to let you know:

- How the complaint is to be handled
- How long any investigation is likely to take and how long you can expect to wait before you receive a reply
- How your complaint is progressing

- The outcome of any investigation with an explanation of the conclusions reached
- Confirmation that any action required as a result of investigating your complaint has been taken or is proposed to be taken

## 10. Acknowledging and pursuing your complaint

Age UK North Tyneside Group will observe the following basic rules when handling your complaint :-

- Your complaint **will** be acknowledged – orally or in writing **within 48 hours** of receipt
- If you do not send a written complaint, the person you speak to **will** send you a letter or email detailing their understanding of your complaint. This allows you to check they have understood it correctly.
- You will be offered the opportunity to discuss your complaint, at a mutually agreed time, by the person / letter acknowledging your complaint
- If the complaint can be answered without further investigation, we will respond to you within 7 working days
- If an investigation is required, you can expect it to be completed and to receive a response no longer than one month from the date your complaint was received. If we realise that it is going to be longer than that or longer than the timing agreed, you should be told why the delay is occurring and receive a response as soon as possible.

## 11. Investigating and responding to complaints

**When your complaint is acknowledged, you will be offered the opportunity to discuss it and how it might be handled.** This can be a face to face meeting with the complaints manager or a phone call. Here you can :-

- Explain your complaint in your own words
- Outline what answers you are seeking and what you would like to happen if your complaint is upheld
- Hear what can realistically be achieved by investigating your complaint
- Discuss options for taking it forward, agreeing who to involve and deciding what type of investigation is most likely to deliver a satisfactory outcome
- Consider if support from a local independent advocacy service would be helpful
- Develop a plan of action and agree a timescale for completing the investigation and sending a response
- Agree how you would like to be kept informed of developments.

**If you do not want to have this initial discussion**, the Head of Corporate Support will let you know in writing how your complaint is to be managed and the expected timescales for them to investigate and send their response.

The investigation to understand what happened and why will be proportionate, thorough and completed as quickly as possible. One option may be a face-to-face meeting between you and the staff concerned, involving a mediator if necessary.

**At the end of the investigation, you will receive a written response**, by email if you prefer, that includes :-

- An explanation of how the complaint has been considered and the conclusions reached in relation to the specifics of your complaint. It should also tell you of any remedial action, which the complaint specifies or Age UK North Tyneside Group believes should be taken
- Confirmation that Age UK North Tyneside Group is satisfied that any action that needs to be taken as a result of the complaint has been or will be taken
- Details of your right to take your complaint to the Chief Executive if you remain dissatisfied. See Section 12.

## **12. What happens if I am not happy with the outcome of my complaint?**

If you are unhappy with the outcome of your complaint you can refer the matter to the Chief Executive.

Chief Executive  
The Bradbury Centre  
13 Saville Street West  
North Shields  
NE29 6QP  
Tel: 0191 2808484

## **13. Monitoring and reporting on complaints handling**

Age UK North Tyneside Group keeps a record of:-

- Each complaint received, what it was about and the outcome
- All customer complaints are reviewed on a regular basis by the Quality Management Review Committee to ensure that any corrective and correction actions taken are appropriate and effective
- All complaints are reviewed annually and reported to the full Board of Trustees