

COMPLAINTS, COMPLIMENTS, CONCERNS & COMMENTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

1. APPROVAL AND VERSION

Version	Date	Nature of Changes	Approved by
01	Dec 2013	Original	Katherine Shearer (CEO)
02	Aug 2017	Separation of Procedure from Policy	
03	Aug 2018	Review	SLT
04	Feb 2020	Review	SLT
05	Feb 2021	Review	SLT
06	May 2023	Review	SLT
07	May 2025	Review	SLT

2. WRITTEN AND AMENDED BY

Version	Date	WRITTEN OR AMENDED BY (NAME AND JOB TITLE)
01	Dec 2013	Gene Goodchild (Head of Support Services)
02	Aug 2017	Barry Lyden Head of Home Care and Day Services
03	Aug 2018	Helen Mills CEO
04	Feb 2020	Amy Whyte (Head of Charitable Services)
05	Feb 2021	Amy Whyte (Head of Charitable Services)
06	May 2023	Amy Whyte (Chief Executive)

3. IMPLEMENTATION BY

Version	Date	IMPLEMENTED BY
01	Dec 2013	Katherine Shearer (CEO)
02	Sept 2017	Senior Leadership Team
03	Sept 2018	Senior Leadership Team

04	Feb 2020	Senior Leadership Team
05	Feb 2021	Senior Leadership Team
06	May 2023	Senior Leadership Team

4. DATE EFFECTIVE: May 2025

Please note: If the review date below has passed this policy/procedure may no longer be current and you should check with your line manager for the most up to date version.

5. REVIEW DATE: May 2027

6. SUMMARY

6.1 Age UK Northumberland (AUKN) values its reputation and is committed to maintaining the highest possible ethical standards in all its activities. AUKN is committed to working in an ethical and honest manner, acting professionally, fairly, and with integrity in all business dealings and relationships. AUKN has agreed that all of its activities should be based upon a set of agreed values that are set out in the organisational Execution Roadmap; in addition one of the underpinning organisational principles is “to be the trusted provider of choice for older people, in delivering flexible, accessible and equitable services that meet the needs of our local community” and as part of achieving this it is the ethos of AUKN to ensure individuals have the facility to voice their views on the services provided by the organisation. This will enable the organisation to improve its services on an ongoing basis.

7. SCOPE

7.1 This policy applies to AUKN, its Employees, Trustees, Volunteers and anyone who uses its services.

8. REFERENCES TO DOCUMENTS AND ROLES

The following documents are referenced in this document:

- Execution Roadmap

The following roles are referenced in this policy:

- Employee
- Trustee
- Volunteer
- Service User and their family
- Commissioners
- Purchasers

- Senior Leadership Team
- Board of Trustees
- Head of Service

9. DEFINITIONS

10. RESPONSIBILITIES

10.01. The Senior Leadership Team are responsible for ensuring that this policy and procedure is followed and that any problems in following it are brought to the attention of the Board of Trustees. The final decision on the response to be made to any complaint will be made by the Senior Leadership Team under delegated authority from the Board of Trustees.

10.2 All employees, Trustees and volunteers are equally responsible for the implementation of this policy.

11. NON COMPLIANCE

Failure to observe this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Failure to observe this policy may result in an employee or volunteer including trustee incurring personal criminal liability.

12. POLICY DETAILS

12.1 This policy will be implemented in such a way to ensure that service users who use or who are hoping to use the organisation's services are able to question the way they have been treated, the quality of the service provided to them, or the decisions that have been made about them;

12.2 This policy will be implemented in such a way as to ensure that the channels for representations are effectively open for all those who come into contact with the organisation, and in particular the most vulnerable service user ensuring that compliments, comments, comments and complaints are dealt with sensitively and fairly;

12.3 AUKN will ensure that where possible wrongs are put right; problems are resolved quickly, thoroughly and at as low a level as possible in the organisation, whilst ensuring that service users with unresolved complaints are able to have them investigated by people independent of the matter complained about;

12.4 AUKN will ensure that the organisation learns from the representation made to it, ensuring best practice by learning from the things we do well as well as the things that go wrong;

- 12.5 This policy is for representations about the manner in which Age UK Northumberland has dealt with service users, potential service users, families, carers, commissioners and purchasers of services. It is also open to people complaining on behalf of service users (ensuring that GDPR is adhered to). Where there is doubt as to whether a person making representations has a sufficient interest in the welfare of the person and on whose behalf they are made these should always be referred to the appropriate Head of Service. The guiding principle in making a decision will be that a person will be regarded as eligible to make representations on behalf of another person unless there is good reason to believe that the action being sought is contrary to the wishes of that second person. It will not be possible to invoke this procedure if a complaint is made anonymously. However, all anonymous complaints about the organisation should be recorded and reported to the Head of Service to decide if any steps should be taken to investigate them.

13. TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

- 13.1 All Employees, Trustees and Volunteers should know that It is the ethos of AUKN to ensure individuals have the facility to voice their views on the services provided by the organisation and is committed to working in an ethical and honest manner, acting professionally, fairly, and with integrity in all business. All new employees, Trustees and volunteers will be required to read and understand this policy during their induction and this will be refreshed on a regular basis.

14. HOW TO COMPLAIN

- 14.1 If possible staff should encourage service users to take their complaint up with the person responsible for the service they want to complain about. The service user will be asked if they are happy to have their complaint dealt with informally. This will give the service user the opportunity to resolve the problem as soon as possible. If the complaint is of a more serious nature the service user may wish to have the matter dealt with formally from the start and they can request to proceed directly to stage 2.

If the service user is receiving a service under contract from a Commissioner they should be made aware that they can complain through the Commissioners own complaints procedure.

If the service is in relation to Home Care then the service user should be informed that they have the option of contacting the Care Quality Commission at any stage should they so wish.

15. PROCEDURE DETAILS

15.1 The First Stage

The organisation will attempt to deal with any initial concerns informally and as quickly as possible. It will not be necessary for the complainant to put their complaint in writing as it is hoped that most concerns will be resolved at this stage. The appropriate person will complete the **Informal Complaints Monitoring Form** which will be sent to the Head of Service for monitoring purposes.

At this stage, the Senior Manager responsible for Compliments, Comments, Concerns and Complaints may decide that Age UK Northumberland need to undertake an internal investigation irrespective of whether the complaint is resolved at this stage.

15.2 The Second Stage

If the service user is still dissatisfied, the Head of Service will nominate an investigating officer within the organisation who will investigate the complaint and report back to the service user. It is best at this stage if the complaint is put in writing and the organisation should assist in this process where necessary. Wherever possible the written complaint should include details of what the complainant feels went wrong and what he or she would like the organisation to do to put things right. The 2nd stage procedure outlined below should be followed:

Any formal complaints will be passed to the Head of Service who will acknowledge the complaint within 3 working days. This correspondence will where possible confirm the name and contact number of the investigating officer.

An investigating officer will be appointed to investigate the complaint. The complaint will be investigated within 28 working days and the complainant will be kept informed of progress on a regular basis. If for any reason this timescale cannot be met then the service user will be advised of this and given a valid reason why.

Once the investigation has been completed the complainant will receive a written reply outlining the findings of the investigation and the action to be taken. They will receive a **Review Request Form** that they can complete if they still remain unhappy with how their complaint was investigated.

On completion of the investigation the **Formal Complaints Monitoring Form** will be completed by the investigating officer and placed on the service user

and employee personal file. A copy will be sent to the Head of Service for monitoring purposes.

15.3 The Third Stage

If the service user is still unhappy with the outcome of their complaint the Head of Service will undertake a review of the investigation. A response in writing will be provided to the complainant within 14 working days. On completion of the investigation the Head of Service will complete the **Complaints Review Form** for monitoring purposes.

16. MONITORING AND REVIEWING

- 16.1 The Head of Service will monitor all complaints on a continuous basis to ascertain if changes are necessary. It is likely that some changes will be needed immediately and others will be processed within the quality assurance framework. All the data collected in relation to complaints will be processed together with compliments and comments. An analysis of the data will be provided for Senior Managers and the Board of Trustees. The findings will be fed into the corporate quality assurance system which will inform practice within the different departments of the organisation.

17. COMPLIMENTS AND COMMENTS

Any compliments received will be passed to the staff members concerned and a copy held on their personal file. A copy will also be sent to the Head of Service for monitoring purposes.

Any comments received will be passed to the appropriate manager for consideration and if appropriate correspondence will be entered into with the service user.

Should any member of staff require further clarification on this procedure, they should speak in the first instance with their line manager or the HR department.