

Complaints Policy and Procedure

Complaints Policy

Age UK Redbridge, Barking and Havering maintains a culture of continuous improvement at all levels of the organisation. Complaints are viewed as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to put things right for the individual or organisation that has made the complaint.

Definition of a complaint

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of Age UK Redbridge, Barking and Havering.

Where complaints may come from

Complaints may come from beneficiaries of our services or their families/carers, funders, commissioners, members or any other individual or stakeholder involved with or affected by the organisation.

This policy and procedure does not cover complaints from staff who should use Age UK Redbridge, Barking and Havering's grievance procedure.

Our policy is:

- ❖ To provide a complaints procedure which is fair and accessible
 - Beneficiaries of our services are directed to our guidance leaflet "Complaints, Compliments and Comments"
 - All other stakeholders should submit complaints in writing to:
Chief Executive, Age UK Redbridge, Barking & Havering, 4th Floor, 103 Cranbrook Road, Ilford, IG1 4PU
- ❖ To publicise the existence of the policy and procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint
- ❖ To make sure that everyone who works or volunteers for Age UK Redbridge, Barking and Havering knows what to do if they receive a complaint
- ❖ To ensure all complaints are fairly investigated in a timely manner
- ❖ To make sure complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired
- ❖ To gather information which helps us improve what we do:

- Where multiple complaints around the same or similar issues are received we will use an approach of corrective action to determine the root cause of the problem.
- Where a complaint presents an opportunity to learn, we will use our quality improvement plans to ensure improvements are widely adopted.

Confidentiality

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, sharing information only with those who need to know and following any relevant Data Protection or Safeguarding requirement.

Responsibility

The Board of Trustees has overall responsibility for this policy. A summary of complaints is reported annually to the Board of Trustees.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Defining a Complaint

It is for the complainant to determine the nature and the extent of their complaint. By way of example, complaints about any of the following might come from users, carers, relatives/representatives and others who are dissatisfied with the service being provided by Age UK Redbridge, Barking & Havering:

- The quality or the nature of the service
- Refusal of a service
- The conduct of staff or volunteers
- Poor administration
- Discrimination against minority groups
- Provision of inaccurate information
- A failure to provide information
- A failure to follow agreed policies and procedures
- Unreasonable delays in responding to requests for delivery of services, or information.

General

The “Complaints, Compliments and Comments” leaflet should be distributed to all service users as a matter of course. In addition service users should be encouraged to offer their views about any aspect of Age UK Redbridge, Barking & Havering.

Staff/Volunteers should receive complaints in a helpful and courteous manner. It is important that complaints are seen as a useful means of improving performance and not a threat to individual security. In addition, on a purely practical level, problems aired which are listened to sympathetically and responded to immediately, are far less likely to escalate into full-blown complaints.

The complaints folder is available to Trustees, in order to acquaint themselves with the nature and volume of the complaints received which do not progress to Step 3 of the complaints process.

A review of complaints received will be presented to the Board of Trustees annually.

Procedure

Step 1

The Informal Approach

Most complaints can be settled quite simply by discussing the problem with the complainant in a sensitive, empathetic manner. In the first instance, people wishing to complain should be encouraged to discuss the problem with the relevant member of staff / volunteer.

All complaints must be recorded by the service manager in a complaints log book providing the following details:

- a) Subject of the complaint
- b) Any relevant action taken thus far
- c) The name of the complainant
- d) The date on which the complaint was made

The complaints log should be stored giving due consideration to issues of confidentiality.

The staff member who responds to the complaint should sign this to verify its accuracy.

Volunteers and paid staff who receive a complaint must bring the matter to the attention of their line manager.

NB Someone who raises an issue may not always use the word 'complaint'. It is good practice therefore for staff and volunteers to learn to recognise that when someone is unhappy about something or raises an issue, it is, in essence, a complaint, and to deal with it in the manner described above.

On occasions it may not be possible or desirable to settle the complaint locally, or the complainant may not be satisfied with the answer they receive. In this case they should be encouraged to make a more formal complaint by proceeding to Step 2.

Step 2

The Formal Approach

The procedure for making a formal complaint consists of writing a letter to or telephoning the Chief Executive, or in his or her absence, a member of the Senior Management Team stating the nature of the complaint and the action taken so far. On receipt of a complaint, a letter will be forwarded confirming that the matter is under investigation (this letter should be sent within 3 working days wherever possible), and giving a date by which the outcome of this investigation will be made known (this should normally be within 28 days). The details of the complaint should be recorded in the complaints folder by senior manager with evidence of process.

When a Step 1 complaint has progressed to Step 2, the senior manager should note this in the relevant complaints log book.

If the complainant is still unhappy with the reply he or she receives, then they should be encouraged to proceed on to the final stage, the Review Panel.

Step 3

The Review Panel

The Review Panel can be requested by a complainant after receipt of an unsatisfactory outcome to step 2 of this procedure. The complainant must either write to, or telephone, the Chief Executive and request a Review Panel to investigate their complaint. The request for a Review Panel should be recorded in the complaints folder.

The Panel should receive all of the details relevant to this complaint prior to the hearing, including a copy of the relevant section of the complaints folder. The Panel will meet within 28 days of receiving the request for a review, and will hear the complaint, the action taken and responses given in the preceding steps of the complaints process.

The Review Panel should consist of three people, of whom at least one will be an Age UK Redbridge, Barking & Havering Trustee and one other person who is not connected to Age UK Redbridge, Barking & Havering. The complainant should be invited to attend to present their complaint and they should be advised that they are welcome to bring a friend or a relative of their choice to help them or provide moral support.

The Panel should respond to the complainant within 7 days of the hearing giving details of the outcome of their deliberations.

The Panel's decision is final.

Requirements under Domiciliary Care Agencies Regulations 2002

Age UK Redbridge, Barking & Havering is registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) as a Domiciliary Care Agency for the purposes of operating the Home Support Services. In addition to having a written complaints procedure, Regulation 20 of the Domiciliary Care Agencies Regulations 2002 requires we include the address and telephone number of the CQC as part of that procedure. The purpose of this is so that service users, their relatives or representatives are made aware that they can address a complaint direct to the Commission at any stage of the process.

As this regulatory requirement relates currently to only one of our services, rather than include the address and telephone details as part of our complaints leaflet, we will draw service users' attention to this option in the Service Users Guide and in any correspondence relating to any complaint made regarding the Home Support Service.

For the purpose of complaints, the address and telephone number of the Commission is:

Care Quality Commission
CQC London Region
Citygate House
Gallowgate
Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE1 4PA

Tel: 03000 616161