



Compliments, Comments & Complaints Procedure

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SECTION 1

Introduction

1. Scope & Objectives

Age UK Salford recognises that the views of our service users, their relatives, friends, advocates, members of staff, or outside agencies whether expressed as compliments, comments or complaints, are the best way we have of knowing if we are delivering an excellent service and to identify any areas for improvement and development.

It is therefore important that people are encouraged to talk to us about whether they are happy with our services. To enable this to happen we are committed to a process that allows people to express their opinions freely and without prejudice.

2. Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is any genuine expression of dissatisfaction with the service we provide. A complaint shall be deemed to have been made where an adverse comment, implication or criticism is received.

3. Definition of a Comment

A comment is any suggestion for improvement to the service we provide.

4. Definition of a Compliment

A compliment is an expression of praise about the service we provide.

SECTION 2 COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

5. Designated Complaints Officer

The Designated Complaints Officer is the Chief Executive. In the event of a complaint against the Chief Executive, the Designated Complaints Officer will be appointed by the Board of Trustees. The role of the Designated Complaints Officer is set out in Appendix 1.

6. Stages in the Procedure

There are three main stages to the procedure:

- the informal stage
- the formal stage; and
- the review stage

Most problems can be resolved, to the complainant's satisfaction, at the informal stage.

If there is a fundamental problem it can be identified and managers alerted. The significance of the formal stage is that other people are openly involved in the discussion and investigation of the complaint.

The purpose of the review is for an independent person to re-examine the previous decision within a specified period and make a recommendation. This person will have power only to recommend a solution and not commit the Organisation in any way. This will be made clear to the person from the outset.

Anyone concerned in handling a complaint is bound by the normal practices of confidentiality at all times.

7. Stage 1 – The Informal Stage

When a verbal complaint is raised with a member of staff or a volunteer and they consider it is within their powers and competence to handle, they shall;

- endeavour to address the issues raised and resolve the matter on the spot and inform or pass a record of it, including action taken, to the service manager.

If, however, they feel the issues raised to be of a more serious nature and requiring handling by someone with more authority, they shall:

- refer the matter to their Manager (who will endeavour to address the issues raised and solve the matter on the spot), or
- record the name and address of the complainant and gist of the complaint (checking your understanding of the complaint with the person) and pass that information to the service manager **without delay** informing the person of the action you have taken and the name of the person to whom the matter is being referred.
- the Manager will record the details in the complaints register.

8. Stage 2 – The Formal Stage

All written complaints shall be considered to be formal complaints, be they in writing from the complainant or from someone (including staff or volunteers) recording the complaint on their behalf.

All such complaints will be passed to the Service Manager or the Chief Executive **without delay**. The Service Manager or the Chief Executive will ensure that an acknowledgement is sent to the complainant by first class post without delay. This acknowledgement will include an explanation of the process for handling the complaint and an indication of how long the investigation is likely to take, including any foreseen delays, e.g. a key person being on leave. Immediately upon receipt, all formal complaints shall be recorded in the Complaints Register.

Investigations should be completed without delay. Where there are delays, the complainant should be kept informed via holding letter(s) not more than 7 days apart unless specific time delays have been identified to them. Only in exceptional circumstances shall the final letter be sent to the complainant more than 28 days after receipt of the complaint. The final letter shall explain the next course of action open to the complainant in the event of their not being satisfied.

9. Stage 3 – The Review

In the event of the complainant not being satisfied with the response under the formal stage, they have the right for the complaint to be reviewed. Usually, a request to have a review should be received by Chairman within 28 days of receipt of the final letter under Stage 2. The Chairman shall acknowledge receipt of the request without delay.

The Chairman may choose to review the complaint personally. Alternatively, he/she may invite an independent person to undertake the review and make recommendations. The final decision, however, rests with the Chairman.

The complainant will be kept fully informed of progress during the period of the review. In normal circumstances, the Chairman's final decision will be sent within 28 days.

10. COMPLAINTS RECORDING, ANALYSIS AND REPORTING

10.1 Complaints Register

All written and verbal complaints shall be recorded in complaints register held at each service. The register shall be in such form as to enable an analysis of performance against procedure to take place (Appendix 3). The service manager shall forward a copy of all complaints received to the Senior Manager chairing the Middle managers Meeting on a six weekly basis who will forward this to the Designated Complaints Officer or his/her nominated person. The register shall be maintained by the Designated Complaints Officer or his/her nominated person.

All correspondence relating to formal complaints, at an appropriate stage, will be passed to the Designated Complaints Officer who will maintain a file of all such complaints received.

Twice annually, the Designated Complaints Officer or his/her nominated person shall undertake an analysis of the complaints received, the outcomes of investigations and action taken. This analysis shall form part of a 6-monthly report to the Board.

10.2 Publicising the Procedure

Managers of service areas are responsible for ensuring their staff, volunteers and users are aware of the procedures existence and how to access it.

Managers, staff and volunteers shall receive training (during induction training for new starters) in complaint handling, when to refer on complaints and the philosophy behind the procedure.

10.3 Procedure Review

The Designated Complaints Officer or his/her nominated person shall effect an annual review of this procedure and recommend changes as necessary.

11. Compliments

Verbal compliments are to be logged at each service in the compliments book.

Written compliments are to be kept at the service and copies sent to the Quality Assurance Manager with the full name and address, where available, of the person giving the compliment.

The Quality Assurance Manager will add the details of the compliment onto the compliments log.

12. Comments

Comments and suggestions made verbally should be logged at the service and passed to the Quality Assurance Manager with full name and address of person making the comment

The Quality Assurance Manager will log the comment in the comments log.

The Quality Assurance Manager will send an acknowledgement letter to the person making the comment within 10 days.

The Service Manager will advise the Quality Assurance Manager of the actions taken for any comment that is taken forward.

The Quality Assurance Manager will write to the person making the comment to advise of any action to be taken. The Quality Assurance Manager will update the comments log with the action.

SECTION 3

RESOLVING CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS (TRADING)

13. INTRODUCTION

No matter how well a business is run, from time to time there will be a complaint from a customer. It is important that all staff know how to deal with the complaint and, if possible, resolve the problem before it gets large enough to lose the customer.

Research carried out in many organisations has shown that if a complaint is dealt with in a way that exceeds the customer's expectation, the customer's loyalty is often improved.

Remember: It does not matter what you think – it is what the customer perceives.

A complaint is rarely a personal attack, but rather an issue about the product or service given. Therefore, never take what is said personally, if you do, you may start to defend your action rather than solve the problem.

14. STEPS TO TAKE IN ORDER TO RESOLVE COMPLAINTS

Try to get the customer into a quiet area away from the main operation and other customers, but do not insist if they wish to stay where they are.

Listen very closely to the customer, never offering a solution until you are sure what the problem is.

Apologise that the customer has felt upset enough to complain. You should not admit liability for a problem until you have investigated, so your apology should always concentrate on the customer's feelings.

Repeat back to the customer what you think you have understood in your own words to ensure you have the correct facts.

If the solution is within your responsibility/authority - **do it**
or

if not, explain to the customer that you cannot take that decision and explain the steps you intend to take.

When the resolution has been agreed, thank the customer for bringing the issue to your attention and allowing you to resolve it.

Check that the customer is satisfied and will remain with the organisation giving you another chance to prove you can get it right. Keep a note of the customer's name, address and complaint so that extra care can be taken next time you meet with them. Make sure this information is passed on to colleagues who may deal with this customer in the future.

Discuss the reasons for the problem and its resolution with staff afterwards to ensure that you all learn from the experience and look for ways of preventing similar problems happening again.

Record all complaints – on the specified format (see Appendix 3) use the resultant information to identify:

- whether additional training is needed
- whether there are trends arising; and/or
- whether there are products/service that cause specific problems

If training is needed or trends arising draw-up and implement an action plan without delay.

If the complaint is regarding the product or service provided by the insurers details of the complaint should be forwarded to:

The Complaints Manager
Age Concern Enterprises
Linhay House
Linhay Business Park
Ashburton
Devon TQ13 7UP

THE ROLE OF THE DESIGNATED COMPLAINTS OFFICER

General

The Designated Complaints Officer or nominated person is responsible for ensuring the full implementation of Age UK Salford's approved complaints procedure.

The Designated Complaints Officer is expected to take a lead in encouraging a positive approach to the handling of complaints.

The Designated Complaints Officer must ensure the publicising of the procedure and guidelines so that those who may make a complaint and those who may receive a complaint feel confident in what they are doing.

Specific

The Designated Complaints Officer is responsible for:

- ensuring the Organisation has an approved complaints procedure
- monitoring the implementation of the procedure
- maintaining a register of complaints, and
- presenting at least two reports each year to the Board, analysing the complaints received, the outcomes of investigations, and the actions taken, one of these reports to carry the outcome of the annual review of the procedure and any recommended changes.

COMPLAINTS RECORD (TRADING)

Policyholder's/Customer Details

Name

Address

Postcode

Tel No

Description of Complaint (please tick)

Document not received

Poor Service

Staff manner

Bad Advice

Delay

Price of Product

Incorrect Information

Renewal Not Received

Lack of Acknowledgement

Other (*please state below*)

Call Not Returned

.....

.....

.....

Action Taken

Date	Action	Spoke To

COMPLAINTS LOG

Name of Service.....

Date complaint received and by whom.....

Date complaint acknowledged.....

Complainants Name, Address & Tel No.....

Summary of complaint.....

Reply sent by.....

Date(s) of response(s) including interim.....

Outcome including recommended change(s) to Service.....