

Policy name:	Compliments, Comments and Complaints Procedure
Policy number:	AUKS07
Issue:	3
Replaces:	2
Related Policies	
Adoption date:	October 2020
Next Review date:	October 2023

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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 nature of the complaint (checking your understanding of the complaint with the person) and pass that information to the service manager ASAP 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 **ASAP**. The Service Manager or the Chief Executive will ensure that an acknowledgement is sent to the complainant by first class post **ASAP**. 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 ASAP. 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 ASAP.

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 the register at each site and added to Charity Log. The register shall be in such form as to enable an analysis of performance against procedure to take place (Appendix 2). 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 and added to Charity Log

Written compliments are to be kept at the service and recorded on Charity Log

12. Comments

Comments and suggestions made verbally should be logged at the service and added to Charity Log

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

The procedures and processes within this policy will be checked on an annual basis as part of the organisational ISO9001:2015 audit process by the Quality Manager.

Appendix 1

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.

Appendix 2

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.....

Appendix 3

Date	Compliment / Comment / Complaint	Nature of Compliment / Comment / Complaint	Date Received	Staff member Initials