



COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURE

This Policy details the procedures and practices adopted by Age UK Solihull in responding to and handling complaints.

Adopted by the Directors/Trustees of Age UK Solihull at the Board of Trustees meeting on

Signed on behalf of the Directors/Trustees

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D Mattocks
Chairman

All Age UK Solihull Policies are subject to an annual desktop review and will be presented to the Board of Trustees for adoption in light of any changes made. Policies may also be reviewed and/or amended in light of contractual requirements.

Initial Date: May 2019
Previously known as 'Compliments and Complaints Policy'.

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Introduction

Age UK Solihull aims to provide a consistently high level of service to people in the Borough of Solihull and, in pursuit of its objectives, seeks to promote public recognition of and confidence in its standards. The Charity's complaints procedure is designed to protect those that the Charity exists to help; to be responsive to the views of everyone concerned with the welfare of people; to assist in the review and improvement of services; and also to provide a fair hearing for anyone against whom a complaint is made.

The Charity acknowledges that there are times when things go wrong from a service user's point of view, and will provide a courteous, sympathetic, fair and swift response. The Chief Executive Officer, Director of Services and Line Managers will be responsible for ensuring that their staff/volunteers are fully conversant with the complaints procedures.

Age UK Solihull delivers services that are commissioned by the Birmingham and Solihull Clinical Commissioning Group (BSOL) as such, complainants have the right to bring their concerns directly to the CCG.

Age UK Solihull delivers services that are commissioned by Solihull Council's Adult Care and Support Department, as such, complainants have the right to bring their concerns directly to Solihull Council. Complaints relating to a Solihull Council commissioned service will follow the 'Adult Care and Support Process for Solihull Council's Contracted Providers when Dealing with Formal Complaints'.

Age UK Solihull has implemented the Accessible Information Standard 2016, to enable all service users to feedback to the Charity.

Utilising Feedback

Age UK Solihull aims to make its procedures for positive and negative feedback simple and effective. Age UK Solihull will utilise both positive and negative feedback to inform the decision making process concerning its services, policies and procedures.

Contact

Service users will always have access to information about how to make a complaint. This may be through a leaflet, a booklet relating to the service they are using or through clear signage. Under the Accessible Information Standard, service users with a disability, impairment or sensory loss will be enabled to make a complaint in a format that meets their needs.

Positive or negative feedback can be made via the website at www.ageuksolihull.org.uk using the 'Contact Us' form, or alternatively by phone on 0121 704 7840, email info@ageuksolihull.org.uk or in writing. Messages can also be left on twitter and Facebook.

A copy of our Complaints Policy can be found on our website.

Overview of the Complaints Process

It is the purpose of the Complaints Process to solve the problem at the earliest possible stage. All complaints will be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt wherever possible. Any complaint will be investigated with a fair, open and honest approach .

Age UK Solihull acknowledges that the swift and effective handling of complaints can empower service users and customers by instilling confidence in them and giving them more influence over the Charity and the way we deliver services. Age UK Solihull understands that people willing to complain are alerting the organisation to a problem, which may have been experienced by others. Complaints are an opportunity to improve services, processes and take on board learning.

Age UK Solihull will ensure that the user-led vision set out in the 'My Expectations' document produced by the Local Government Ombudsman, Healthwatch and the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman is adhered to:

- I feel confident to speak up
- I felt that making my complaint was simple
- I felt listened to and understood
- I felt that my complaint would make a difference
- I would feel confident making a complaint in the future.

Complaints can be made in a way that suits the service user, in writing, by email or verbally. Age UK Solihull can support service users to make complaints and to express themselves verbally or in writing. We would ensure that an employee not directly involved in the service the person is complaining about provides the support required.

Age UK Solihull receives funding from various sources and the handling of a complaint may be different depending on the service being complained about however, Age UK Solihull will make it as simple as possible for service users to be heard and feel able to complain when things go wrong.

First Stage – Informal Complaints Handling and Problem Solving

Age UK Solihull welcomes feedback from people who use our services, it helps us to know at an early stage when we may be doing something well or, where a service or process needs improvement. Feedback enables the Charity to reduce the chances of problems escalating in the longer term because we are unaware the problem exists.

This first, informal stage is intended to ensure that the service user has every opportunity to express their views through an informal conversation with the member of staff or volunteer providing the service or, through the line manager of that service. Age UK Solihull encourages service users to raise any issues or problems at the time of the interaction with that service without any fear that they will not be listened to or that the support they receive from the Charity will be compromised in any way. If a service user does not feel able to do that then they are encouraged to either:

- Telephone and ask for the manager of the service or the Director of Services
- Complete the 'Contact Us' form on our website
- Contact Age UK Solihull via a direct message on Twitter or Facebook
- Complete a Customer Satisfaction Card

Informal complaints can be made anonymously if the service user prefers this. It is useful to establish early on in the informal stage the outcomes the service user would like to achieve.

All feedback and complaints will be taken seriously and the details of each issue, problem, concern or complaint will be reported to the Senior Management Team in order that the Charity can use that information to develop, monitor and improve services.

It is to be hoped that most complaints can be resolved at the informal stage through informal discussion and that Age UK Solihull is able to show it is responsible and accountable to its service users and that the Charity can take positive steps to resolve problems.

This first stage should ideally be concluded within 5 working days of the receipt of the complaint, the complainant will be kept updated on any progress and will be informed of the final outcome and the difference their complaint has made.

If the problem cannot be resolved as a result of the above, the complainant can take the matter to the second stage.

Second Stage – Formal or Statutory Complaints

Age UK Solihull will treat all complaints with the utmost seriousness whether informal or formal. We welcome complaints in any form and recognise that a formal complaint is often more appropriate for both the service user and the Charity.

Age UK Solihull's services are funded by a range of funders and, the way a formal complaint is processed and handled may be different depending upon the funder. The Charity will always make it easy for a service user to make a complaint and, formal complaints about any service can be directed in writing to the Age UK Solihull Chief Executive Officer, Lower Ground Floor, The Core, Homer Road, Solihull B91 3RG by email to complaints@ageuksolihull.org.uk by telephone on 0121 704 7840 or via our website 'Contact Us' form. Service users also have the right to make a complaint directly to the funder of a service.

Formal complaints about services commissioned by Solihull Council

The services affected:

- The Solihull Community Advice Hubs including
 - Benefits
 - Direct Payments Information and Advice
 - Winter Warmth Campaign
 - Debt*
- Older Peoples Specialist Services including

- Older Peoples Information and Advice Casework
- Linking People Together Service

Complaints or other feedback relating to services provided by Age UK Solihull and commissioned by Solihull Council can be made to Age UK Solihull or Solihull Council directly. The complaint will be handled and processed in the same way.

Solihull Council Performance and Complaints Team can be contacted in writing to the Children's and Adults Complaints Team, The Council House, Solihull, B91 3QB by email candacomplaints@solihull.gov.uk or by telephone on 0121 704 8296.

1. The complaint will be acknowledged within 5 working days
2. If your complaint is made directly to Age UK Solihull, we will inform Solihull Council's Performance and Complaints Team of your complaint and send them a copy. This is done through a secure email portal
3. If your complaint is sent directly to Solihull Council, the Performance and Complaints Team will inform Age UK Solihull's Contract Manager and send a copy of the complaint. This is done through a secure email portal
4. Age UK Solihull's Contract Manager will investigate the complaint and provide a written response to the Council's Performance and Complaints Team within 20 days of receipt of the complaint
5. Solihull Council will review the response and send it and a letter from the 'Responsible Person', for Age UK Solihull commissioned contracts. This is normally the Assistant Director for Commissioning, to the complainant. The letter outlines what a complainant can do if they are not happy with the response to their complaint i.e. respond back to the Council and/or contact the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO).

*Age UK Solihull is an Appointed Representative of Solihull Mind for the purposes of FCA Regulated Debt Advice, Counselling and Adjustment. Complaints about FCA Regulated debt will be investigated in conjunction with Solihull Mind.

Formal complaints about services commissioned by the Birmingham and Solihull Clinical Commissioning Group (BSOL)

The services affected:

- Postural Stability Instruction

Complaints or other feedback relating to the Postural Stability Instruction Service should be made in the first instance to Age UK Solihull's Chief Executive Officer, Lower Ground Floor, The Core, Homer Road, Solihull B91 3RG by email to complaints@ageuksolihull.org.uk by telephone on 0121 704 7840 or via our website 'Contact Us' form.

Service users have a right to make your complaint directly to the service commissioner in writing to NHS Birmingham and Solihull Clinical Commissioning Group, Complaints Department, Floor Four, Attwood Green Health Centre, 30 Bath Row, Birmingham, B15 1LZ, by email to bsol.complaints@nhs.net or by telephone on 0121 203 3313

A complaint may also be made to Healthwatch Solihull.

NHS regulations state that a complaint should be made to Age UK Solihull and/or the CCG within 12 months of the date on which the situation being complained about occurred, or within 12 months of the date on which the complainant became aware of the situation. Discretion is used with regard to complaints outside of this timescale if the complainant had good reasons for not making the complaint sooner.

1. The complaint will be acknowledged within 5 working days
2. Age UK Solihull's Contract Manager will investigate the complaint and provide a written response to the complainant within 28 days.
3. If the complainant is not satisfied with the written response they should inform Age UK Solihull of the reasons. The complainant will then be offered the option of moving to the third stage as outlined below.
4. The complainant has a right to take their complaint to the Birmingham and Solihull Clinical Commissioning Group if they are not satisfied.

If the complainant requires an advocate they will be signposted or referred to Solihull Action through Advocacy who are commissioned to provide NHS complaints advocacy.

Formal complaints about services funded by grants or directly by Age UK Solihull

Formal complaints should be directed in writing to the Age UK Solihull Chief Executive Officer, Lower Ground Floor, The Core, Homer Road, Solihull B91 3RG by email to complaints@ageuksolihull.org.uk by telephone on 0121 704 7840 or via our website 'Contact Us' form.

1. The complaint will be acknowledged within 5 working days
2. Age UK Solihull's Chief Executive Officer or Director of Services will investigate the complaint and provide a written response to the complainant within 28 days. If the complaint is about the Chief Executive Officer it should be addressed as Private and Confidential to the Chair of the Board.
3. If the complainant is not satisfied with the written response they should inform Age UK Solihull of the reasons. The complainant will then be offered the option of moving to the third stage as outlined below.

Third Stage – the Complaints Panel

If the complainant wishes to proceed to the third stage, a meeting will be arranged with the Complaints Panel which will consist of the Chairman or Vice-Chairman of Age UK Solihull and two other directors/trustees.

The complainant will be notified, in writing, at least 10 days in advance of the date, time and venue of the meeting and invited to attend. The complainant will be informed that it is acceptable to bring a friend or adviser and every attempt will be made to accommodate any special needs that the complainant has. The meeting can be arranged to take place in the complainant's home or a place of their choosing if they feel more comfortable.

The meeting will be as informal as possible. The complainant will be invited to make a statement about their complaint and their expectations as to how it will be resolved. The Chief Executive Officer or Director of Services will submit the findings of his/her investigations. Other people may be asked to attend to give information, but they will only be present for that part of the meeting relevant to their contribution.

The Complaints Panel will decide whether the complaint is upheld. In addition, it may consider making recommendations to be considered by the Board of Trustees.

The panel must make their decision known to the complainant in writing, once the notes of the panel meeting have been agreed as a true record by all parties, and within 10 working days of the meeting. The written response will include:

- An explanation of how the complaint has been considered
- An explanation based on facts
- The conclusions reached in relation to the complaint which will set out whether the complaint has been upheld or not
- Confirmation of any action needed as a consequence of the complaint which includes an appropriate apology if necessary
- Details of the complainant's right to take their complaint to the relevant Ombudsman.

The complaints procedure will seek to be flexible, taking into account the needs/wishes of the complainant.

All complaints will be dealt with impartially.

Learning from Complaints

Learning from complaints is an invaluable source of information to Age UK Solihull which can be used to drive service improvement.

Following the closure of complaints, Age UK Solihull will complete a learning form, outlining what we have learned from the complaint and what actions we will take.

Consent

Age UK Solihull will always seek the consent of the complainant to speak to any other parties with respect to their complaint. Exceptions to this consent will apply in cases of safeguarding.

Withdrawing a Complaint

A complainant may withdraw their complaint at any time. We may continue to investigate it internally.

Persistent/Unreasonable Complaints or Contact

Age UK Solihull reserves the right to put in place measures, such as limiting contact with the complainant, if the complainant is unreasonable, threatening or abusive to our staff.

Unreasonable behaviour may include the following:

- Ignoring documented evidence to concentrate on conspiracy theories
- Persistence in pursuing an issue when the procedures have been exhausted
- Failing to identify the issues for investigation despite reasonable attempts to assist them to do so
- Making excessive demands in terms of visits, calls or letters/emails that consumes a disproportionate amount of resources.

Monitoring

Complaints will be reported to the Board as part of the normal Risk Register reporting and the Chief Executive Officer will report all compliments received in her CEO report to the Board.

Complaints will be reported to commissioners as per the Contract or Service Level Agreement signed.

Serious Incidents will be reported as per the Contract or Service Level Agreement held with the funder.

Age UK Solihull will monitor complaints for trends and theme and take appropriate action where identified.



Age UK Solihull Complaints Procedure

Age UK Solihull believes that those using its services should find it easy to make a complaint and/or register a concern. It is our policy to welcome complaints and look upon them as an opportunity to learn, adapt, improve and provide better services. This leaflet is intended to ensure that complaints are dealt with properly and that all complaints or comments by service users are taken seriously and will be acted upon in an open, fair and honest manner.

When dealing with complaints it is not our intention to apportion blame, consider the possibility of negligence or to provide compensation.

Services we provide to you will not be affected by because you have made a complaint.

If you require assistance and/or support to make a complaint or express concerns we can provide you with an appropriate person to support you.

If you wish to make a complaint or express concerns about any Age UK Solihull services, in the first instance you may speak to the member of staff or volunteer concerned or ask to speak to the manager of the service as we may be able to resolve your complaint informally. You have the right to make a formal complaint. Formal complaints should be directed in writing to the Age UK Solihull Chief Executive Officer, Lower Ground Floor, The Core, Homer Road, Solihull B91 3RG by email to complaints@ageuksolihull.org.uk by telephone on 0121 704 7840 or via our website 'Contact Us' form.

If a service delivered by Age UK Solihull is funded and/or commissioned by Solihull Council or the Birmingham and Solihull Clinical Commissioning Group you have a right to make your complaint directly to them.

Solihull Council Performance and Complaints Team can be contacted in writing to the Children's and Adults Complaints Team, The Council House, Solihull, B91 3QB by email candacomplaints@solihull.gov.uk or by telephone on 0121 704 8296.

NHS Birmingham and Solihull Clinical Commissioning Group, Complaints Department, Floor Four, Attwood Green Health Centre, 30 Bath Row, Birmingham, B15 1LZ, by email to bsol.complaints@nhs.net or by telephone on 0121 203 3313

If you make a complaint it will be acknowledged within 5 working days and any written response provided within 28 days. We will keep you fully updated on the progress of your complaint.

You can request this information in formats suitable to meet your communication and/or information needs if you have a disability, impairment or sensory loss.



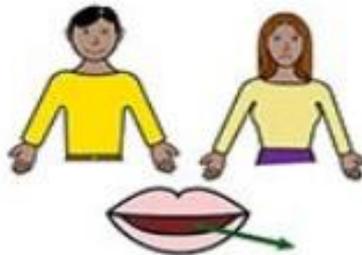
Have your say about the Community Advice Hubs

Compliment



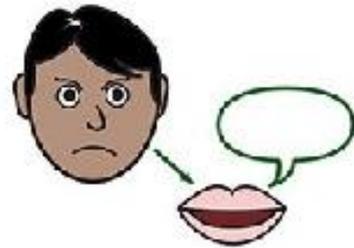
A compliment is when you let someone know that things have gone well

Comment



A comment is when you let someone know your ideas about the service

Complaint

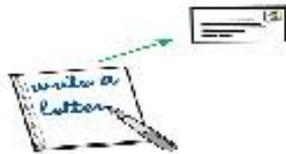


A complaint is when you let someone know when you are upset about the service

How?



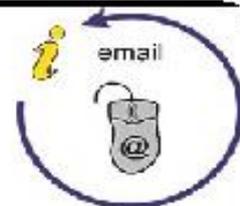
Talk to a member of staff or a volunteer



Write a letter or fill in a card



Make a phone call



Email us or go to our website

The Community Advice Hubs are delivered by Age UK Solihull

Tel : 0121 705 3588 Email : admin@solihullcommunityhub.org.uk Web : www.ageuksolihull.org.uk