

Complaints & Feedback Policy

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Scope

This policy relates to feedback about the activities, employees and volunteers of Age UK Somerset (the charity - AUKS).

Introduction

Age UK Somerset (AUKS) is committed to providing high quality services. It is our policy to welcome all feedback, both positive and negative, so that we can improve our services. We regard any complaint as an opportunity to turn a negative experience into a positive one and we recognise the value of dialogue in informing our decisions.

Compliments are valued because:

- It is helpful to hear what people think about our organisation and the services we provide
- Compliments give valuable insights for setting service standards and monitoring quality
- People are encouraged when they are complimented on their work.

If a positive comment is received about any aspect of the organisation we will endeavour to share it with all those involved.

Complaints are valued because:

- Complaints provide us with an opportunity to put things right
- Listening to others is part of being a user-centred organisation
- Complaints give valuable insights for setting higher service standards, monitoring quality and making changes
- Providing users with a way to make their complaint directly to us reduces the likelihood of seeking other ways to express dissatisfaction
- Many of our users are vulnerable for one reason or another. It is imperative that they should feel they can complain, with no recriminations, if they are unhappy with the standard of our service.

Definition of a complaint

- Complaints are usually about individual instances rather than policy issues or generalisations
- A complaint **is not** a comment or suggestion
- A complaint **is** an expression of dissatisfaction

Who can make a complaint?

Anyone can make a complaint, including service users, their family members, carers, volunteers, other service providers, partners or members of the public. The AUKS

complaints procedure summary sheet ('Making a Complaint') is publicly available on the charity's website: www.ageuksomerset.org.uk.

If someone is dissatisfied with any aspect of our activities, they have a right to complain and we commit to dealing with complaints courteously, seriously, efficiently and openly as far as is compatible with our duty of confidentiality to clients.

A complaint can be made about any area of our work, policy or performance; we recognise this could encompass customer services issues, fulfilment of our commitments, staff behaviours amongst other things.

If a complaint is received about the work or conduct of a volunteer, he/she will be informed. If the complaint is upheld support will be given to help correct the activity or conduct that has caused the offence, or support will be given to put his/her case to the Complainant. In some circumstances, the Service Manager will do this on behalf of the volunteer.

The Complaints Procedure

Stage 1: Informal Problem Solving

Initially, the complaint should be made to the staff most directly involved such as the Service Manager/Service Co-Ordinator, who will try to resolve the problem immediately. The purpose is to understand the complaint and to resolve the matter to the Complainant's satisfaction as quickly as possible.

If the Complainant is not satisfied with the result, he/she should be encouraged to make a formal complaint. Staff may offer to put the complaint in writing on the Complainant's behalf.

Stage 2: Formal Complaint

The complaint will be acknowledged within 5 working days from the day the correspondence was received. The complaint will be considered by the Service Manager, in conjunction with the Chief Executive or his/her nominated deputy. They will be responsible for arranging an investigation and in deciding what action should be taken. Advocacy will be arranged if needed. The Complainant will be informed of any decision in writing within 20 working days of the complaint being received. There is scope within the procedure – in exceptional circumstances where a complaint is very complex – to allow more time for the investigation to be undertaken. Every effort will be made to ensure the decision is understood and, if possible, accepted.

The Complainant has a right to appeal if he/she remains dissatisfied with the outcome and the organisation's written response should communicate this to the Complainant.

Stage 3: Appeal

If the Complainant does not agree with the decision/outcome at Stage 2, he/she should appeal within 28 calendar days of receiving the decision. This must be made in writing to the Chief Executive. Receipt of the appeal will be acknowledged within 5 working days from the day the correspondence was received.

The Chief Executive or the nominated deputy will arrange a meeting of a review panel including Trustees, within a further 10 working days, unless a later date is requested by the Complainant.

The purpose of the review panel is to give the Complainant the opportunity to have his/her complaint heard by a group of people who have not been involved at any other stage of the process. The appeal panel will consider documents from Stages 1 and 2 and anything further the Complainant or staff may have submitted. They will then hear what the Complainant has to say and will interview any relevant staff or volunteers. They will consider their recommendation, which shall be communicated to the Complainant at the time if practical and/or confirm in writing within 5 working days. Thereafter, the Chief Executive will communicate to the Complainant what further action will be taken within 20 working days following this (where this has not already been done).

The decision of the panel will be final. An independent adjudicator could be involved if the matter remains unresolved. AUKS will make every effort to comply with their decision, but cannot be legally bound by it.

Privacy Notice

We will use the personal information we collect about complaints and feedback to process the matter, to check on the level of service we provide and to defend any claims against the organisation (legitimate interests purposes).

Complaint records to be retained will include correspondence between the complainant and the Organisation, written records of interviews with personnel, records of investigations and any actions taken as a result.

We will keep personal information contained in complaint files, in line with our retention policy. This means that information relating to a complaint will be retained for 6 years from closure. It will be retained in secure electronic and paper filing systems and access to it will be restricted.

We also compile a complaints log for management information that includes the number of complaints we receive, the nature of complaints and the length of time taken to resolve them, but this is not in a form which identifies anyone.

Feedback correspondence (comments and compliments) will be retained only for the time it takes to manage the feedback, such as thanking the person providing the

feedback, recording the nature of it to inform future processes and passing the feedback to those involved.

You have a right to request a copy of the personal data we hold about you and to ask us to correct any inaccuracies. You also have a right to complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) if you think there is a problem with the way we are handling your data.