

**Age UK Sunderland**

**Compliments, Suggestions, Concerns or Complaints Policy & Procedure  
(Help us to help you)**

**April 2019**

## Contents

1. Document control.....	3
2. Purpose.....	4
3. Principles.....	4-5
4. Accessing information about how to share a compliment or suggestion or raise a concern or complaint.....	5
5. The Procedure.....	6
6. How compliments, suggestions, concerns or complaints inform future planning.....	5
7. Why complain.....	5
8. Dealing with concerns or complaints.....	6
9. What happens next.....	6-7
10. What to do if the complainant are still unhappy.....	7

## 1. Document control

Version	Final draft date	Author	Changes	Date approved by Board
1.0	NA	SMT	NA	November 2017
1.1	January 2018	SMT	NA	January 2018
1.2	December 2018	SMT		
1.3	March 2019	SMT	Front cover 'Help us to help you' added Contents page updated 8.5' If this timescale cannot met a holding letter will be sent' added to line 2. 9.1 'Where possible' added to line 5. 9.3 text deleted	28/02/2019 by Staffing Sub
1.4	April 2019	SMT	9.1 `with a minimum of two Trustees1` added	04/04/2019

## **2. Purpose**

2.1 Age UK Sunderland strives to provide high quality services and activities for all older people throughout the City of Sunderland. We want individuals to be satisfied with our services and any compliments, suggestions, concerns or complaints are helpful to us. We want to know when things are going well, as well as when things go wrong.

2.2 Age UK Sunderland considers every encounter between staff and clients, carers and partners to be an opportunity to learn from people's experiences of its services. This learning should be used to continuously improve the quality of these experiences as well as our services and so increase the organisation's accountability to those it serves.

2.3 This policy clarifies how someone may share a compliment, suggestion, concern or complaint with Age UK Sunderland. This policy also lays out the procedures the organisation will use to help resolve concerns and complaints when they are received.

## **3. Principles**

### **3.1 Value people's choices.**

Whilst Age UK Sunderland aims to treat every compliment, suggestion, concern or complaint seriously, whether informally or formally made. It recognises that many people value the choice of whether the organisation uses an informal (discussion with local staff) or formal route to address the matters they have raised. It is important to allow for this flexibility in designing person-centred ways of resolving people's concerns and complaints.

### **3.2 Upholding people's rights.**

Age UK Sunderland further recognises that raising a concern or complaint about its staff or services and having it dealt with thoroughly and respectfully is an important right of individuals.

### **3.3 Acting with integrity.**

Age UK Sunderland processes and duties will aim to reflect these principles by effective handling of concerns and complaints by:

- Getting it right
- Being client focused
- Being open and accountable
- Acting fairly and proportionately
- Putting things right
- Seeking continuous improvement

### **3.4 Being open and honest.**

Age UK Sunderland expects all investigations into concerns and complaints to be transparent. Where mistakes have been made or things have not gone well, responsibility will be taken and a genuine apology given. Early meetings to discuss and address concerns in person are encouraged and an agreement will be gained regarding how best to remain in ongoing communication with those who have raised concerns.

### **3.5 Maintaining confidentiality.**

Information provided by those sharing a compliment or suggestion or raising a concern or complaint will be recorded on our data base carefully and securely by the person who first receives it. All staff have a duty to adhere to Age UK Sunderland guidelines and policies on confidentiality and data protection in line with GDPR and correct permissions should be sought before information is passed on to other parties.

### **3.6 Offering compassion and credibility.**

It is very important that the accounts given by clients, carers and others, of their experiences of Age UK Sunderland services are taken seriously and given credibility as people's real experiences. Those raising concerns or complaints should always be treated with respect, empathy and compassion. At the same time, staff members who are involved in a complaint should be given support and their own experiences taken seriously. The purpose of the complaints procedure is not to apportion blame, but to investigate situations fairly so everyone can learn from what has taken place and to achieve a resolution.

## **4. Accessing information about how to share a compliment or suggestion or raise a concern or complaint.**

4.1 Information on how to raise or share a compliment, suggestion, concern or complaint is given in the Age UK Sunderland 'Help us to Help You'. The leaflet is downloadable from Age UK Sunderland's website.

4.2 A free copy of the leaflet can be sent out to individuals on request by contacting us on 0191 5141131.

4.3 As part of Age UK Sunderland's staff induction all staff receive a copy of the compliments, suggestions, concerns or complaints policy and procedures. This is to ensure staff understand the process and if required make it accessible to those they support.

## 5. The Procedure

### How to make a compliment, suggestion, concern or complaint about a service from Age UK Sunderland?

5.1 Individuals can do this verbally, by email, telephone, letter, card, to a member of staff or volunteer or by completing the form provided appendix 1.

### 6. How compliments, suggestions, concerns or complaints inform future planning?

6.1 All compliments, suggestions, concerns or complaints will be input into Age UK Sunderland's Charity Log data base by individual staff and outcomes are also recorded. Reports are then generated and analysed on a quarterly basis. Findings are fed up to Senior Management to inform service improvements and planning.

6.2 Information received from individuals will be held securely for one year then destroyed in line with GDPR.

### 7. Why complain?

7.1 Age UK Sunderland know sometimes things can go wrong - mistakes can be made, people may be unhelpful or insensitive, there may be actions or comments which are unacceptable. When these things happen Age UK Sunderland want to know about them.

### 8. Dealing with concerns or complaints

8.1 Age UK Sunderland staff are encouraged to try to resolve a problem quickly. Whenever possible the complainant should discuss their concern with a member of staff or a volunteer.

8.2 If individuals are unhappy about doing this, or are dissatisfied with the outcome after they have spoken with an Age UK Sunderland member of staff or volunteer – individuals can make a complaint to the **Complaints Officer**.

The **Complaints Officer** is the Director of Age UK Sunderland.

### 9. What happens next?

9.1 The complainant or a person of their choice, can write down their complaint using the form provided appendix 1 or via the website.

9.2 If an individual makes a complaint it will be investigated thoroughly. Once a written complaint is received the complainant will receive written acknowledgement within 7 days.

9.3 If a complaint in relation to an employee turns out to be well-founded a full investigation will be undertaken in line with the organisations disciplinary policy and procedures.

9.4 The investigation may take time and is likely to involve the complainant discussing their complaint with the Complaints Officer. If a meeting is necessary, the complainant should be accompanied by someone to support or represent them.

9.5 Age UK Sunderland will try to complete the investigation and write to the complainant with the outcome within 28 working days of receiving the complaint. If this timescale cannot be met a holding letter will be sent.

## **10. What to do next if the complainant are still unhappy.**

10.1 If the complainant does not agree with the Complaints Officer's decision they can ask for the matter to be considered by a **Review Panel** with a minimum of two Trustees. The Review Panel will consist of members of Age UK Sunderland's Board of Trustees. There will be a hearing of the complaint at which the complainant and their representative should be present. Where it is possible the Review Panel will decide within 24 hours what recommendations to make about the complaint.

10.2 Age UK Sunderland want individuals to feel comfortable raising a concern or complaint and will ensure all complaints are dealt with fairly.

*Approved by the Board of Age UK Sunderland on 04.04.19  
For review 2022*