

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

1. Introduction

As an organisation, Age UK Surrey needs to be aware of its customers'/users' needs. Organisations develop complaints procedures to handle complaints and concerns from their customers expeditiously. Part of this process will arise from customer satisfaction surveys.

If handled the right way, a complaints procedure enables staff and directors to monitor and improve performance and relationships with the public – our users and customers.

The purpose of Age UK Surrey's Complaints Procedure is to:

- protect the interests of individual service users
- improve continuously the quality of services provided by this organisation by being responsive to the views of people affected by its services
- enable users, potential users and carers to challenge what may appear to be arbitrary decisions
- protect staff and volunteers from the, possibly unfair, consequences of an arbitrary response when dealing with complaints on an ad hoc basis
- provide an additional means of monitoring the performance of this organisation
- provide a key knowledge-base to improve future policy and decision making.
- maintain a customer care philosophy within the organisation.

2. Complaints Procedure

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about Age UK Surrey's actions, or lack of action, the standard of service, or where a concern has been previously raised with the charity and was not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant.

The key element is that a complaint should be resolved, as far as possible, at source and the complainant encouraged to discuss his/her complaint. It is incumbent upon all staff to try to help and ascertain whether there may have been a misunderstanding.

2.1 Receiving an initial complaint – Stage 1

Any member of staff receiving a complaint is authorised, in the first instance, to seek to resolve it as quickly as possible and is expected to handle it in a polite, sympathetic and understanding way.

All complaints, whether made orally or in writing, are to be recorded on the Complaints Form and must be acknowledged within five working days of being made. The complainant must be contacted and told who is looking into the complaint, what action is being taken and when a reply can be expected. When a complaint has been resolved the result should also be recorded on the Complaints Form. All Complaints Forms and associated papers are to be dealt with, and retained, under confidential cover by the Deputy Chief Executive.

2.2 Receiving a further complaint – Stage 2

Where the complaint is sufficiently serious for the member of staff to feel unable to handle it himself/herself and/or if the complainant is not satisfied by the handling of the complaint, the matter should be referred to the Line Manager who should follow the procedure above.

2.3 Complaint to the CEO – Stage 3

If the complainant is still not satisfied with the outcome of his/her complaint, the matter should be referred to the Chief Executive.

If attending an appointment to discuss the complaint with the Chief Executive, the complainant may bring another person as support.

The Chief Executive is obliged to put a decision, in writing, to the complainant within twenty-eight days.

2.4 Final appeal to the Board Chair

If the complainant remains unsatisfied, they should contact the Chair who will investigate the complaints procedure and report to the complainant within 15 days of having received the appeal. The Chair's decision is final.

2.5 Complaint regarding the CEO

In the event of a complaint regarding the CEO, the Chair will appoint a Trustee to consider the complaint. If the complainant is still not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint, the matter should be referred to the Chair. The Chair's decision is final.

3. Complaints about Other Organisations

Complaints about the National Health Service, or other statutory authorities should not be dealt with by Age UK Surrey, but referred to the authority concerned.

Complaints about another Age UK member organisation should be referred to the Chief Executive, who would refer the matter back to the organisation concerned. Age UK Surrey would, however, monitor the progress of such complaints and advise the member organisation concerned about good practice where it does not have procedures in place.

4. Review of Complaints

All complaints about activities within the charity are reported to the Quality Management Committee which meets four times per year. The Chief Executive makes a report on complaints to the Finance & General Purposes Committee at every meeting. Feedback from complaints is considered at Senior Team meetings and used in service reviews and planning.

5. Compliments and Suggestions

All compliments/comments and/or suggestions about Age UK Surrey are to be recorded in a special "Comments/Suggestions Book" kept in Reception for consideration by the Chief Executive.

Review

This procedure will be reviewed every three years.

| Issue | Date agreed by Board of Age UK Surrey | Reviewed |
|--------------|--|-----------------|
| 2 | 5 th April 2011 | April 2014 |
| 3 | 17 th July 2014 | |
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