



Complaints and Compliments Policy

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1 . Introduction

1.1 Age UK Sutton (AUKS) recognises that providing a high standard of service delivery is essential. AUKS welcomes feedback from customers, whether it be positive or to tell us where we haven't met expectations. The proper handling of complaints is therefore one of Age UK Sutton's highest priorities. Staff members are trained to perceive complaints as a valuable source of information about services and processes and that handled in the correct manner can assist in continuous improvement.

1.2 To ensure that this policy meets the support needs across Age UK Sutton's diverse range of customers, it has been written in consideration of the Principles of Good Complaint Handling (Parliamentary And Health Service Ombudsman, 2008)

1.3 Complaints and the complaints process are managed by the Director of Development and Communication.

2 . Aims & Objectives

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To deliver a complaints service that meets Age UK Sutton's service standards
- 2.1.2 To facilitate organisational learning from complaints.

2.2 Objectives

- 2.2.1 To work collaboratively internally, with partner organisations and other agencies where necessary to coordinate comprehensive outcomes to complaints.
- 2.2.2 To facilitate the effective and early resolution of complaints.
- 2.2.3 To use the analysis of complaints to help improve services and reduce the level of complaints.
- 2.2.4 To manage all complaints in an open and accountable way.

3. Compliments

3.1 We value and encourage all kinds of feedback. Anyone who has a relationship with Age UK Sutton can compliment a member of staff, a team or the organisation. Compliments are passed on to staff and their line manager, and are used to identify areas of good practice that Age UK Sutton can learn from and further develop.

3.2 Compliments can be submitted verbally to any member of staff who will record and share this or can be submitted through the Age UK Sutton website Online Contact Form, via email to info@ageuksutton.org.uk or in writing to the Age UK Sutton office.

3.3 Compliments are used to enable service development and as part of individual performance development. Employees receiving compliments will be recognised appropriately as part of the charity's reward and recognition activity.

4. Complaints procedure

4.1 Complaints can arise from a number of issues including:

- 4.1.1 A failure to comply with policy, procedure or standards of service delivery
- 4.1.2 A decision which the complainant believes is not fair or clear to them
- 4.1.3 The behaviour of Age UK Sutton's staff, volunteers, associates, or contractors

4.2 Age UK Sutton operates a complaints process with up to two stages:

- 4.2.1 Stage 1: Internal investigation of complaint. A full written response will be provided to the complainant within 10 working days.
- 4.2.2 If the complaint remains unresolved at Stage 1, it will move to Stage 2.
- 4.2.3 Stage 2: Appeal. Review of Stage 1 decision in response to an appeal made with specific grounds. A full written response will be provided to the complainant within 10 working days

4.3 A complaint can be made in a number of ways to Age UK Sutton:

- In writing via letter or email
- Through the Online Contact Form on the [Age UK Sutton website](#)
- By telephone: 020 8078 0002
- In person to any member of staff
- To our trustees via Age UK Sutton, if you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint response.

4.4 Age UK Sutton has an effective complaints management system in place through the following actions (where these timescales are not practically possible, Age UK Sutton will give reasons and agree new timescales with the complainant.):

- 4.4.1 Ensures that all customers know how to complain.
- 4.4.2 Makes personal contact with complainants, ideally by telephone, to understand their complaint, attempt resolution and update them.
- 4.4.3 Acknowledges all complaints in writing within 2 working days.
- 4.4.4 Responds to stage 1 complaints within 10 working days following receipt of the complaint.
- 4.4.5 Review and respond to stage 2 complaints within 10 working days following receipt of the escalation request.
- 4.4.6 Support vulnerable customers through the complaints process and, where appropriate, refer them to alternative services that may be able to assist them in making their complaint
- 4.4.7 Provide alternative avenues to seek support when the service requested is outside Age UK Sutton's remit where appropriate and where possible.

3.4.8 All complaints are logged on a central register, which is managed by senior management.

5. **External Complaints Resolution Bodies**

5.1 On the rare occasions when Age UK Sutton is unable to conclude its complaints process to the satisfaction of the complainant, they will be advised of their right to approach a designated person such as an MP, Councillor or a recognised resolution body.

5.2 Complainants making complaints relating to services commissioned by the Local or Health Authorities retain their right to complain to these bodies directly at any stage.

5.3 Age UK Sutton respects the rights of customers to complain to these statutory bodies and will work openly with partner agencies to resolve any legitimate concerns that customers raise.

6 . **Persistent or vexatious complaints**

6.1 If a complainant has made unreasonable complaints in the past, we will not assume that their next complaint is unreasonable. Each case will be considered on its merits. All relevant correspondence will be evaluated to consider the circumstances, including:

- 6.1.1 whether a complainant has made persistent or unreasonable demands
- 6.1.2 whether there is a strong likelihood that complaints are being made to intentionally cause harassment, divert resources or to disrupt the proper workings of Age UK Sutton
- 6.1.3 whether the complainant or their representative has been abusive or threatening to staff or has produced excessive correspondence
- 6.1.4 whether the complainant displays vexatious behaviour

7. **Confidentiality**

7.1 Under the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Human Rights Act 1998, all personal and sensitive organisational information, however received, is treated as confidential, including:

- 7.1.1 anything of a personal nature that is not a matter of public record about a customer, member of staff, volunteer or trustee
- 7.1.2 sensitive organisational information.

7.2 We will ensure that the members of staff managing the complaint only involve other agencies and share information with the consent of the individual concerned, unless:

- 7.2.1 Age UK Sutton is required to share information by law
- 7.2.2 The information is necessary for the safeguarding of vulnerable adults or children.

8 . **Monitoring and Reporting**

8.1 Complaints and compliments will be monitored by Age UK Sutton's Senior Management Team and the findings will be regularly shared with our Board of Trustees and delegated subcommittees as part of a documented cycle of reporting. Significant exceptions will be reported immediately.

8.2 In line with best practice recommended by the Principles of Good Complaint Handling (Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, 2008) Age UK Sutton seeks continuous improvement through using feedback and lessons learnt from complaints to improve service design and delivery.

Appendix 1

Legislation, Regulation and Guidance

Government legislation has an impact on how Age UK Sutton can implement its Complaints and Compliments Policy. Listed below are the key regulatory standards and statutory Acts that have been acknowledged.

- The Care Act
- Mental Health Capacity Act 2005
- Equality Act 2010
- Principles of Good Complaint Handling (Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, 2008)