

Complaints Procedure

Principles

This procedure is principally concerned with complaints made against Age UK Torbay staff, trustees or volunteers.

The opportunity to make a complaint or grievance is an essential right for all those who use the services provided by Age UK Torbay. Complaints can be a valuable way of evaluating and improving our services and of ensuring they are responsive to the needs and preferences of users.

Age UK's complaints procedure is intended to be speedy, effective and easily understandable. To ensure fairness, any investigation required will be carried out by someone who was not directly involved with the incident relating to the complaint.

Age UK Torbay recognises that making a complaint can be difficult and stressful for the person making the complaint. Appropriate assistance will be offered to the complainant.

A complaint can also be stressful for a person against whom a complaint is made and that person may also need assistance and support. Any member of staff or volunteer against whom a complaint is made will be given the fullest opportunity to answer any criticisms.

Every effort will be made to try and resolve any problem as soon as possible with the person concerned. If it is necessary to take the matter further it will be done in line with the procedure described below.

Age UK Torbay will respect the confidentiality of both the complainant and any person complained about, subject to the provisions of the Age UK Torbay Confidentiality Policy. This states that, if a complaint is to be properly investigated and action taken as a result of the complaint, it may not always be possible to avoid a breach of confidentiality. The permission of the complainant will be sought for this but when the welfare of the complainant or other people is seriously at risk it may be necessary to breach confidentiality even if that permission is withheld.

The outcome of all complaints and investigations will be reported in confidence to the Board of Trustees and in writing to the complainant.

Age UK Torbay will make efforts to ensure that every user of its services is aware that this procedure exists. The procedure is described below. Copies of this procedure will be available on request at all Age UK Torbay services and projects.

What is the purpose of the principles and procedure?

- To protect the interests of individual service users.
- To improve the quality of service we provide by responding to the views of people affected.
- To enable service users, potential users and their carers to challenge our way of working.
- To protect our staff and volunteers.
- To provide a means of monitoring our performance.

All staff, volunteers, and trustees should be familiar with the process and it should be included in all induction training.

All complaints should be fully recorded on the complaints sheet and passed to the Chief Officer. The Chief Officer holds a complaints log book and all complaints files.

How is a complaint dealt with?

The complaint procedure is in three stages:

Stage 1

Informal discussion with the person concerned. The Service Manager may be asked to help to resolve the complaint informally.

If an informal complaint is made in writing, an initial response will be provided within 3 working days, and in most cases a full reply to the complaint provided within 10 working days of the receipt of the complaint.

Stage 2

A formal complaint in writing should be sent as follows:

Complaint against a member of staff or volunteer: to the Chief Officer
Complaint against the Chief Officer: to the Chair
Complaint against a trustee: to the Chair
Complaint against the Chair: to the Chief Officer, for the attention of the trustees

The person who receives the complaint will carry out an investigation, or, where appropriate, appoint someone else to do so. The investigator will report the results in writing within three weeks to the complainant and the relevant members of staff.

If the complainant or the person about whom the complaint is made is unhappy with the results of this they can then ask for the complaint to be referred to the third Stage. The request should be made in writing to the Chair of Age UK Torbay at 12 Dendy Road, Paignton TQ4 5DB

Stage 3

On receiving the complaint the Chair will consult with another trustee to decide whether the complaint should proceed to this level. If they decide it should not, the Chair will write to the complainant explaining why. If they deem that it should, the Chair will set up a panel to consider the complaint. The panel will generally consist of three people, one of whom will be a service user. These will usually all be trustees, but the Chair may replace one or more of the trustees with people independent of Age UK Torbay if appropriate. The panel will aim to meet within 28 days, although this may take longer in complicated cases.

The panel will invite to the meeting the complainant and the person or persons against whom the complaint has been made. Any such person may be accompanied to the meeting by a friend or supporter, or by an independent advocate.

The panel will report their decision and any recommendations in writing to the complainant and to any persons against whom the complaint was made within 21 days. The decision of the Panel will be final

Comments and suggestions

Age UK Torbay hopes that complaints and concerns can always be resolved through the stages 1 - 3 of the procedure above. However, we welcome comments and suggestions that can help us improve our services.

Approved by Board of Trustees: July 2017

Next Review: July 2020