



Age UK Wandsworth

Complaints Policy

Sub-Committee Ownership: Operations & Quality

Ratified by Board: November 2025

Date for review: November 2028

1. About the policy

Age UK Wandsworth aims to provide high quality services which are best suited for older people and their carers. However, we recognise that sometimes things can go wrong. We do need to know when this happens so we can learn from our mistakes and try and improve our services.

This policy is designed to help those who use our services, their friends, family members and others to make their views known to Age UK Wandsworth.

Are you unhappy or angry about:

- The quality or suitability of our services
- The way we provide our services
- Being treated unfairly
- Being given the wrong information
- The conduct of our staff or volunteers
- Experiencing unreasonable delays
- Other problems

Age UK Wandsworth will:

- Take your complaint seriously
- Investigate and deal with complaints fairly
- Arrange for interpreters, if required
- If you are housebound, we will arrange for you to be seen in your home if you wish
- Continue to provide services wherever appropriate or possible both during and after the investigation
- Ensure that your complaint is treated confidentially

2. I wish to make a complaint, what do I do first?

Most problems can be settled quickly and simply by talking them over with a member of staff. Please contact a member of staff, either by telephone, in writing or in person at Age UK Wandsworth offices. If you do not know the name of a member of staff, please direct your complaint to Age UK Wandsworth

If your complaint is regarding a member of the Executive Team e.g. the Director of Operations and Quality then the complaint should be directed to the Chief Executive Officer.

If your complaint is about the Chief Executive Officer, then you should direct your complaint to the Chair of Trustees in writing by post (see address at the foot of the policy) or by emailing chair@ageukwandsworth.org.uk.

3. What if I feel that the matter is still not resolved?).

The Director of Operations and Quality and the Chief Executive Officer reserve the right to delegate the handling of any complaint to another member of staff if they feel it would be more appropriate.

The member of staff will listen to what you have to say. If they are unable to resolve the matter, they will let you know who they are referring your complaint to. This could be the member of staff responsible for the service, their line manager, a member of the Executive Team or the Chief Executive Officer.

If they are then unable to resolve the matter, then the member of staff will refer the matter for investigation.

4. Investigating the matter

If the matter cannot be resolved quickly, it will be referred to the relevant member of staff for further investigation and the Director of Operations and Quality and the Chief Executive Officer will be notified. An acknowledgement of your complaint will be sent to you from either the Director of Operations or the Chief Executive Officer within five working days of receipt of your complaint (please note that our office is closed on Fridays). The Director of Operations and Quality or the Chief Executive Officer will advise you of the name and job title of the person dealing with your complaint.

The Director of Operations and Quality, the Chief Executive Officer or staff member responsible for dealing with your complaint will investigate with the relevant member of staff or volunteer.

The Director of Operations and Quality or the Chief Executive Officer will aim to write to you with an outcome of your complaint within 20 working days.

5. What if I feel that the matter is still not resolved?

If the written response from the Director of Operations and Quality or the Chief Executive Officer does not resolve your complaint, you should write to the Chair of Trustees of Age UK Wandsworth explaining why you feel the matter is not resolved. If you require assistance in doing this, a senior member of staff will be able to help you if you wish. We will endeavour to ensure that your views are written accurately.

Your letter should be written within three weeks' of receiving the initial response to your complaint. Please address your letter to the Chair of Trustees, care of the Age UK Wandsworth office (see address at the foot of the policy) or email chair@ageukwandsworth.org.uk.

The Chair will arrange to telephone you or invite you to a meeting to discuss and try to resolve the matter. If the Chair is unavailable or in the case of a conflict of interest the Chair may delegate to the Vice Chair or another Trustee as appropriate. You can choose whether to attend or not. If you wish to attend, then you can bring a relative or friend with you. You will receive a written reply within 5 working days of the meeting.

6. What if I am still not satisfied?

If you are still not satisfied that your complaint has been resolved, the Chair will set up a small Complaints Committee from the Age UK Wandsworth Board of Trustees. This Complaints Committee will be as objective as possible and will investigate the matter with all parties. One member will discuss the matter with you by telephone or in person. You can have a friend or relative with you if you wish.

The Complaints Committee will make their final decision and send you a written reply within 5 working days of their meeting.

7. Recording and Monitoring complaints

Age UK Wandsworth will keep a record of all complaints made and will regularly monitor and review complaints to ensure that good quality services are provided.

8. Unreasonable or unreasonably persistent complaints

The procedure below details how Age UK Wandsworth will identify and manage unreasonable or unreasonably persistent complaints i.e. unreasonable behaviour. It sets out how Age UK Wandsworth will deal with complainants that fall within the scope of this definition. Those identified will be treated consistently, honestly and proportionately while ensuring that other service users, staff, volunteers and Age UK Wandsworth as a whole suffer no detriment.

- 8.1 It is considered that all complainants have the right to have their concerns examined in line with our Complaints Policy. In most cases, dealing with complaints will be a straightforward process. However in a minority of cases, the complainant may act in a manner that is deemed unreasonable.
- 8.2 The complainant may act in a way that is considered abusive, unreasonable, unreasonably persistent or vexatious and by doing so it may hinder Age UK Wandsworth's ability to investigate their complaint or the complaints of others, or it may impede the general work of staff at the organisation and prevent them from supporting others. This behaviour may occur at any time before, during or after a complaint has been investigated.
- 8.3 The time spent dealing with all complaints should be proportionate to the nature of the complaint and consistent with the outcome that is being sought being realistic and achievable.

9. How is unreasonable complaint behaviour defined?

- 9.1 It should be noted that raising a complaint about an Age UK Wandsworth service does not in itself constitute unreasonably persistent behaviour and neither do complainants who escalate through all stages of the relevant complaints procedure or those who express criticism about the complaints process itself.
- 9.2 Age UK Wandsworth has adopted the Local Government Ombudsman's definition and the identified characteristics for unreasonable or unreasonably persistent complainants "*For us, unreasonable and unreasonably persistent complainants are those complainants who, because of the nature or frequency of their contacts with an organisation, hinder the organisation's consideration of their, or other people's complaints*".
- 9.3 Examples of unreasonably persistent behaviour:

(This list is not exhaustive, nor does one single characteristic on its own imply that the person will be considered as being in this category)

- Refusing to specify the grounds of a complaint, despite offers of help.
- Refusing to cooperate with the complaints investigation process.
- Refusing to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of Age UK Wandsworth's jurisdiction or within the scope of a complaints procedure.
- Insisting on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice.

- Making unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeking to have them replaced in the complaints investigation process.
- Changing the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds.
- Denying or changing statements the complainant made at an earlier stage.
- Introducing trivial or irrelevant new information at a later stage.
- Raising many detailed but unimportant questions, and insisting they are all answered.
- Submitting falsified documents from themselves or others.
- Adopting a 'scatter gun' approach: pursuing parallel or historic complaints on the same issue with various members of staff and/or organisations.
- Making excessive demands on the time and resources of staff with lengthy phone calls, emails to numerous Age UK Wandsworth staff, or detailed letters every few days, and expecting immediate responses.
- Submitting repeat complaints with minor additions/variations, which the complainant insists make these 'new' complaints.
- Refusing to accept the outcome of the investigation; repeatedly arguing points with no new evidence.
- Electronically recording meetings and conversations without the prior knowledge and consent of the other persons involved.
- Combinations of some or all of these.

9.4 Examples of abusive/and or vexatious complainants

Age UK Wandsworth will take steps to protect its staff from members of the public who are behaving in a way that is considered abusive and/or vexatious. This may include physical or verbal abuse and could include the following (however, this list is not exhaustive):

- Speaking to the member of staff in a derogatory manner that causes offence.
- Swearing, either verbally or in writing, despite being asked to refrain from using such language.
- Using threatening language towards Age UK Wandsworth staff which provokes fear.
- Repeatedly contacting a member of staff regarding the same matter which has already been addressed.

10. Managing unreasonable complainant behaviour

10.1 This policy may be invoked if Age UK Wandsworth considers that a complainant has behaved in a manner which is deemed unreasonable (see above). Age UK Wandsworth may take any actions against a complainant that it considers to be reasonable and proportionate in the circumstances.

10.2 Types of actions Age UK Wandsworth may take:

- Where the complainant tries to reopen an issue that has already been considered through Age UK Wandsworth's Complaints Policy, they will be informed in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.
- Where a decision on the complaint has been made, the complainant should be informed that future correspondence will be read and placed on file, but not acknowledged, unless it contains important new information.

- Limiting the complainant to one type of contact (e.g. telephone, letter, email, etc.)
- Placing limits on the number and duration of contacts with staff per week or month
- Requiring contact to take place with a named member of staff and informing the complainant that if they do not keep to these arrangements, any further correspondence that does not highlight any significantly new matters will not necessarily be acknowledge and responded to but will be kept on file.
- Assigning one staff member to read the complainant's correspondence, in order to ensure appropriate action is taken.
- Offering a restricted time slot for necessary calls to specified dates and times.
- Requiring any face-to-face contacts to take place in the presence of a witness and in a suitable location.
- Refusing access to one or all services, in the case of clients.
- Refusing access to volunteering opportunities, in the case of existing or potential volunteers.

11. Matters to take into account before taking action

11.1 Before taking a decision to invoke this policy consideration should be given to whether any further action is necessary, such as:

- Consideration about whether it is appropriate to convene a meeting with the complainant and a senior staff member in order to seek a mutually agreeable resolution.
- If it is known or suspected that the complainant has any special needs, then consider offering an independent advocate who may assist the complainant with their communication with Age UK Wandsworth.
- Where more than one service is being contacted by the complainant, agree a cross departmental approach and the Chief Executive Officer should designate a lead staff member to co-ordinate Age UK Wandsworth's response.

11.2 Staff must be satisfied before taking any action as defined by this policy that the complainant's individual circumstances have been taken into account, including such issues as age, disability, gender, race and religion or belief.

12. Imposing restrictions

12.1 In the first instance the member of staff dealing with the complaint, in consultation with the Director of Operations and Quality or the Chief Executive Officer, will communicate to the complainant either by phone or in writing to explain why this behaviour is causing concern and ask them to change this behaviour. They will explain what actions Age UK Wandsworth may take if the behaviour does not change.

12.2 If the complainant continues with the unreasonable behaviour, the Director of Operations and Quality or the Chief Executive Officer may consult with the senior staff member about whether it is necessary to take appropriate action by invoking this policy.

12.3 When the decision has been taken to apply this policy to a complainant, a senior staff member will contact then complainant in writing (and/or as appropriate) to explain:

- why this decision has been taken
- what action Age UK Wandsworth will be taking
- the duration of that action

- 12.4 Any restriction that is imposed on the complainant's contact with Age UK Wandsworth will be appropriate and proportionate and the complainant will be advised of the period of time the restriction will be in place for, either a set period or permanently.
- 12.5 If the complainant continues to behave in a way which is deemed unacceptable, then the Director of Operations and Quality or the Chief Executive Officer may decide to refuse all contact with the complainant and cease any investigation into his or her complaint.
- 12.6 Where the behaviour is so extreme or it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of staff, Age UK Wandsworth will consider other options, for example, reporting the matter to the Police or Wandsworth Council's safeguarding team, or taking legal action. In such cases, Age UK Wandsworth may not give the complainant warning of that action.

13. New complaints from those who have been treated as being abusive, vexatious and/or unreasonably persistent complainants

- 13.1 Any new complaints received from complainants who have come under this policy will be treated on their merits.

14. Review periods

- 14.1 The senior staff member in the investigation process, in conjunction with the Director of Operations and Quality or the Chief Executive, will review any temporary restrictions which are imposed upon a complainant after six months within the period during which the policy is to apply.
- 14.2 Should the decision to be taken to extend the period of restriction, the complainant will be advised in writing how Age UK Wandsworth plans to go about this and that the decision to restrict contact will be put in place for either a further specified period (e.g. six months) or on a permanent basis. The outcome of any subsequent review will be communicated to the complainant, outlining if the restrictions will continue to apply and if so why.
- 14.3 If at the end of the restricted period it is considered that the complainant's behaviour is no longer deemed to be unreasonable, Age UK Wandsworth will confirm this in writing advising that the restrictions have now been lifted.

15. Record Keeping

- 15.1 The Chief Executive will keep a record of all complainants who have been treated as being unreasonably persistent, abusive and/or vexatious, in accordance with this policy. This will include details of why the policy was invoked, what restrictions were imposed and for what period of time.
- 15.2 Anonymised information will be reported in the complaints annual report.

16. To contact us

Please write to:
Age UK Wandsworth
549 Old York Road
Wandsworth
London
SW18 1TQ

Or telephone: 020 8877 8940

Or email: info@ageukwandsworth.org.uk

NOTE: This Complaints Policy will not apply if you explicitly indicate an intention to take legal action in respect of the complaint.