

Complaints Policy & Procedure

Approved by Board of Trustees on:	06 September 2018
Review Schedule -	Every 2 years
Last Reviewed	December 2022
Next review due	December 2024
Owner (Responsibility)	Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

Document Description:

Age UK Wiltshire aims to provide high quality services and to be responsive to the wants and needs of its clients.

However, things do go wrong, and this Policy sets out the Complaints Procedure and what clients and their families can expect to happen.

Implementation & Quality Assurance

Implementation is immediate, and this Policy shall stay in force until any alterations are formally agreed.

The Policy will be reviewed every two years by the Board of Trustees, or sooner if legislation, best practice or other circumstances indicate this is necessary.

All aspects of this Policy shall be open to review at any time.

Revision History

Revision date	Summary of Changes	Other Comments
18/10/2021	Added section 5.2 and 5.3 detailing locations where records will be stored and their retention periods.	EP
Dec 2022	Reviewed as part of an overall review of AUKW policies	

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Glossary of Terms

AUKW – Age UK Wiltshire

Board – Board of Trustees, the collective term for all Trustees (see below)

Casual Workers – the paid personnel of the charity with a Terms of Engagement rather than a contract of employment, their terms and conditions differ from those of employees; distinct from employees

CEO – Chief Executive Officer, the most senior paid employee within the charity, accountable to the Board of Trustees

the Charity – Age UK Wiltshire

CharityLog – the database used to record & store details of AUKW clients, staff, volunteers, Trustees and other contacts

Client – an individual in receipt of support from one or more of AUKW services

DBS – Disclosure and Barring Service; used to refer to the check made on an individual to ensure they are suitable to work with vulnerable individuals

Employees – the paid personnel of the charity with a Contract of Employment, whether that be permanent, temporary or fixed term; distinct from Casual Workers

Leadership Team (LT) – comprises the members of the SLT PLUS key members of staff who support the operations and development of the charity.

Senior Leadership Team (SLT) – comprises the CEO and senior managers who are responsible for the strategic development and operations of the charity

Staff – collective term for all paid personnel within the charity irrespective of their contract type; includes both employees and casual workers

Trustees - The people who share ultimate responsibility for governing the charity and directing how it is managed and run. The Trustees are legally responsible for the charity. Trustees are volunteers and are not paid other than reimbursement of expenses.

Volunteers – the unpaid personnel of the charity, volunteers give their time freely and are not obliged to do work for the charity, equally the charity is not obliged to provide them with work, volunteers do not have rights under employment law

Complaints policy statement

- 1.1. Age UK Wiltshire aims to provide high quality services and to be responsive to the wants and needs of service users.
- 1.2. Clients, their families, carers and advocates and those who have requested, or been referred for, a service, have the right to raise concerns, objections or make complaints about the services and responses they receive from Age UK Wiltshire (AUKW). All concerns and complaints from clients or others will be taken seriously, listened to carefully, investigated fully where necessary, and responded to with respect and courtesy.
- 1.3. The purpose of this Policy is to:
 - enable clients to comment on weaknesses and to let AUKW know about things that have gone wrong or have caused concern;
 - improve the quality of services by taking notice of the views of people affected by the services, building on what is good and what needs improving;
 - ensure that AUKW takes users' views seriously and follows up on any problems that are raised;
 - protect the interests of individual clients;
 - enable clients, potential clients and carers to challenge decisions;
 - protect staff and volunteers and enable them to deal with complaints consistently.
- 1.4. A complaint shall mean, a written or oral expression of dissatisfaction or concern relating to the everyday operations of the services and activities provided by Age UK Wiltshire. This dissatisfaction could include the actions of personnel, their failure to act, or delay in taking action, which requires AUKW to account for its conduct.

2. Complaints Procedure

- 2.1. Resolving complaints can be constructive and straight forward if the complaint is handled in an organised and structured way, following the steps as set out in the Procedure. Although staff and volunteers may feel that a complaint is a personal attack on the service they provide, complaints should be an opportunity to learn and improve services.
- 2.2. This Procedure does not cover matters of law or where a police investigation may be involved.
- 2.3. Some concerns or complaints will, by their nature, be easy to resolve immediately to everyone's satisfaction in a relatively informal manner. The complaint or concern should be raised with the member of staff or volunteer providing the service, or the manager of the service concerned.
- 2.4. If a complaint cannot be resolved informally, it should be put in writing, (assistance can be arranged if required), and sent to the relevant Leadership Team manager or

Chief Executive of Age UK Wiltshire. An acknowledgement will be made in writing, an investigation undertaken, and, in most circumstances, a response will be formally made within 14 days of receipt of the complaint.

- 2.5. If the complaint is still unresolved, an appeal can be made in writing to the Chair of the Board of Trustees of Age UK Wiltshire at its offices. A Complaints Sub-committee will be formed within 14 days, comprising of three trustees.
- 2.6. Whatever the complaint, AUKW staff should follow the guidance at Appendix 1 addressing the issue in the following phases:
 - Identification;
 - acknowledgement;
 - recording;
 - investigation;
 - reviewing;
 - monitoring.

3. Identification

- 3.1. Any expression of dissatisfaction needs to be investigated, so the first step is to identify the nature of the complaint. For example, Age UK Wiltshire may not have delivered the service which was outlined for delivery, the complainant may feel that the service delivered does not meet their needs, or the actions or the attitude of a member of staff or volunteer may have given rise to the complaint. Many complaints can be resolved at this stage by a simple apology or explanation.

4. Acknowledgement

- 4.1. It is important that the client is kept informed at all stages about the progress of their complaint.

5. Recording

- 5.1. All complaints and the action taken need to be recorded. This also applies to those expressions of dissatisfaction which have been immediately resolved. This will enable Age UK Wiltshire to review all complaints to see if there are trends or similarities that need to be addressed.
- 5.2. A record of the complaint will be stored on CharityLog attached to the client record. Additional records may also be kept on SharePoint under 'HR/ Legacy Lists'.
- 5.3. Records should be kept for the retention period of the client record, however; complaints should be reviewed at the point they would be destroyed and retained for an extended period of time if this is appropriate for the individual case.

6. Investigation

- 6.1. The Age UK Wiltshire Complaints procedure has one informal stage and two formal stages. It is anticipated that the majority of complaints will be resolved within the informal stage. Where any investigation takes place, this needs to be carefully recorded.
- 6.2. As soon as it becomes apparent that there is a potential disciplinary issue, the complainant will be notified that further action regarding the complaint will be suspended until the outcome of the disciplinary proceedings are known.

7. Reviewing

- 7.1. Complaints will be a standing agenda item at each Senior Leadership Team discussion, and consideration will be given to whether there are any implications for service delivery, or if changes to policies and procedures need to be recommended to the Board of Trustees. The Senior Leadership Team will set a future date to monitor any changes made as a result of the complaint.

8. Monitoring

- 8.1. Monitoring shall be undertaken by both the Senior Leadership Team and by the Board of Trustees.
 - The Senior Leadership Team will review the number and type of complaints made on a four-monthly basis.

The Board of Trustees will receive a report to each Board meeting setting out complaints received since the previous meeting, the outcome of any investigation and action taken bi

9. Appendix 1 – Complaints Procedure Guidance for Staff in receipt of complaints

9.1. To be read in conjunction with Appendix 2 Complaints Procedure Flowchart

10. Stage 1 – Informal (Time scale 14 days)

10.1. Either the staff member or the manager of the service will handle the complaint at this stage.

- Check if there have been any previous complaints from the complainant. Is this an ongoing complaint or is there a history of dissatisfaction with the services provided?
- If possible, telephone the complainant and if necessarily make arrangements to visit them. It creates a better relationship if AUKW can go to the complainant rather than asking them to come to the office. Find out what the complaint is about, make detailed notes. It may be necessary to make sketches and take photographs. Remember that if the complaint goes past the informal stage the notes will become part of the formal investigation.
- Identify what outcome the complainant expects. (Note if there is any potential financial liability then consult immediately with the Chief Executive about any insurance implications).
- Interview the staff member / volunteer / organisation who dealt with the complainant or delivered the service to find out the history of the complaint from their perspective.
- Review the complaint comparing the service delivery against the standards set.
- If the complaint is not of such a simple nature that it has been possible to resolve it immediately in discussion with the complainant, a letter of acknowledgement should be sent within 24 hours. This letter needs to include details of the complaint, what action is going to be taken and the timescales of that action.
- If the complainant is not satisfied with the result of the informal investigation, they have 14 days in which to take the complaint to the first formal stage.

11. Stage 2 – Formal (Time scale 14 days)

11.1. The Chief Executive Officer* of Age UK Wiltshire will review the complaint.

- The service manager will collate all the information relevant to the complaint and will brief the Chief Executive Officer*.
- A complaint file will be set up for the case.
- An acknowledgement of the complaint will be sent to the complainant explaining what will happen and the timescales involved.
- The Chief Executive Officer* will carry out a review of the complaint and if necessary, interview the complainant and any staff / volunteers/ partner organisations about issues within the complaint.
- The Chief Executive Officer* will decide on the outcome of the complaint.
- The Chief Executive Officer * will produce a report detailing the complaint, the investigation and the outcomes including any actions to be taken. This will be sent to the complainant.

- If the complainant is not satisfied with the result of the Stage 2 investigation, they have 14 days in which to take the complaint to the next formal stage.

12. Stage 3 – Formal (Time scale 28 days)

12.1. An Appeal panel made up of three trustees from the Board of Trustees of Age UK Wiltshire will review the complaint and the previous outcomes.

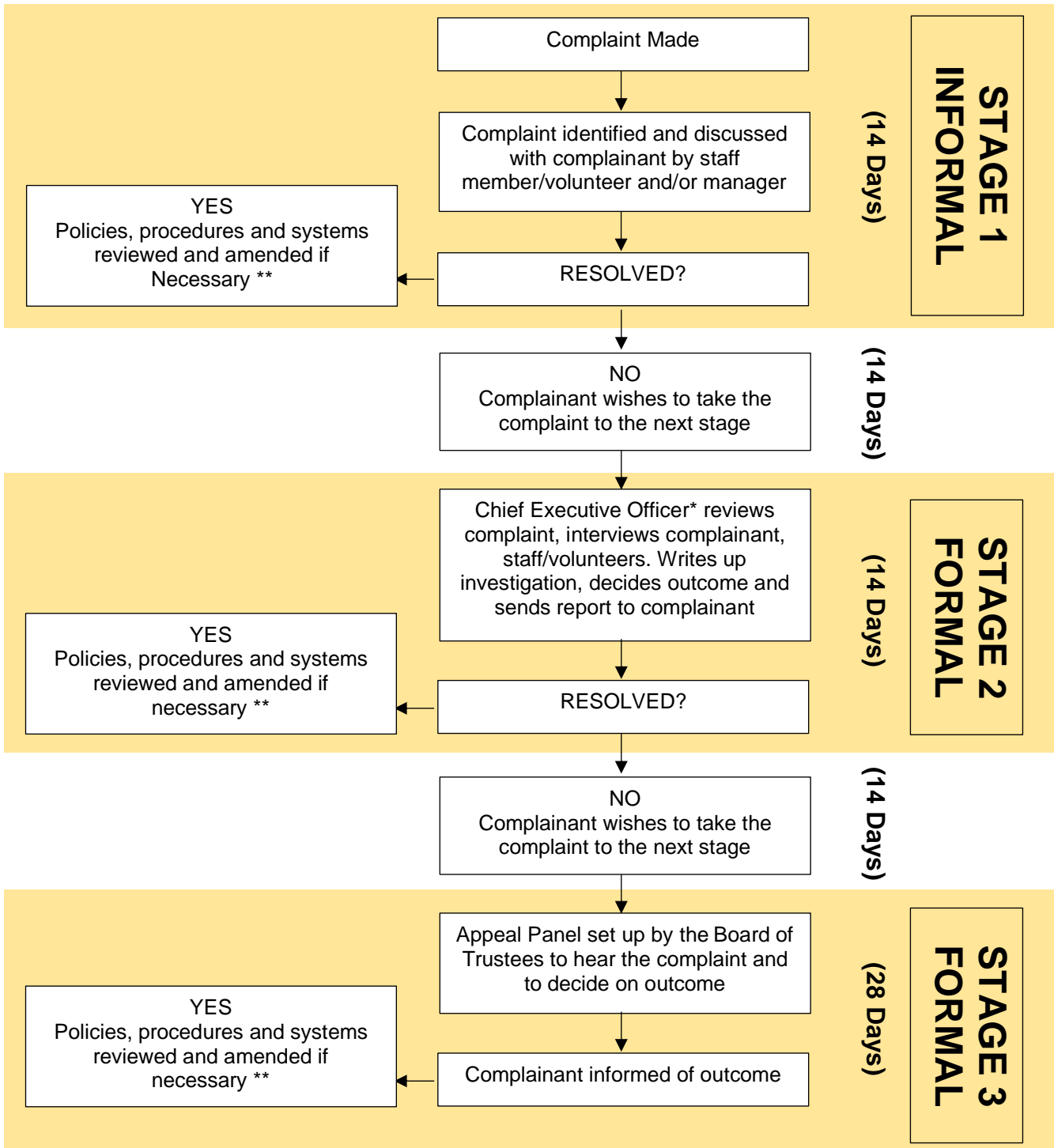
- The Chief Executive Officer* will collate all the information relevant to the complaint and will brief the Appeal panel.
- An acknowledgement of the complaint will be sent to the complainant explaining what will happen and the timescales involved.
- The Appeal Panel will carry out a review of the complaint and, if necessary, interview the complainant and any staff / volunteers/ partner organisations about issues within the complaint.
- The Appeal Panel will decide on the outcome of the complaint.
- The Appeal Panel will produce a report detailing the complaint, the investigation and the outcomes including any actions to be taken. This will be sent to the complainant.

12.2. * If the Chief Executive Officer is absent, the complaint will be dealt with by a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

13. Complaints about the CEO

13.1. If the subject of the complaint is the CEO then the manager receiving the complaint should follow the procedure above and refer the matter to the Chair of the Board of Trustees

14. Appendix 2 – Complaint Procedure Flowchart



* If the Chief Executive Officer is absent the complainant will be dealt with initially by a member of the Senior Leadership team

** Personal details/records shall be deleted as per the Age UK Wiltshire Data Protection Policy

15. Appendix 3 – Complaint Recording Form

Date		Staff name	
Complainant Details			
Title	First name		Surname
Address			
Postcode			
Telephone number		Mobile telephone number	
E-mail:			
Charity log reference:			
Summary of Complaint			
Details (include dates, times and details of people involved if known) and confirm recorded on Charity Log			
Action Agreed with Complainant			
Details of any future meetings			
Date		Time	
Location			
Action to be taken and who it has been reported to.			

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