## Policy 24: Dignity and Service User Involvement Policy

**Last updated by:** SH, JM, MP, RS

**Links to policies:** 19

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1. Introduction

a) Age UK York (AUKY) aims to uphold the rights and maintain the personal dignity of older people, within the context of ensuring the health, safety and well-being of those who are increasingly less able to care for themselves or to properly conduct their affairs;

b) To work towards this aim, AUKY has created a Dignity Code which will be followed and adhered to by all AUKY workers.

2. The Dignity Code

a) This Code recognises that certain practices and actions are unacceptable to older people, including but not restricted to:

- Being abusive or disrespectful in any way, ignoring people or assuming they cannot do things for themselves;
- Treating older people as objects or speaking about them in their presence as if they were not there;
- Not respecting the need for privacy;
- Not informing older people of what is happening in a way that they can understand;
- Changing the older person’s environment without their permission;
- Intervening or performing care without consent;
- Using unnecessary medication or restraints;
- Failing to take care of an older person’s personal appearance;
- Not allowing older people to speak for themselves, either directly or through the use of a friend, relative or advocate;
- Refusing treatment on the grounds of age;

b) This Code therefore calls for:

- Respect for individuals to make up their own minds, and for their personal wishes as expressed in ‘living wills’, for implementation when they can no longer express themselves clearly;
- Respect for an individual’s habits, values, particular cultural background and any needs, linguistic or otherwise;
- The use of formal spoken terms of address, unless invited to do otherwise;
- Comfort, consideration, inclusion, participation, stimulation and a sense of purpose in all aspects of care;
- Care to be adapted to the needs of the individual;
- Support for the individual to maintain their hygiene and personal appearance;
- Respect for people’s homes, living space and privacy;
- Concerns to be dealt with thoroughly and the right to complain without fear of retribution;
- The provision of advocacy services where appropriate;

c) AUKY will seek to ensure the protection of older people by offering actions and services including advocacy and other advice and will investigate and if necessary take action where it considers that older people’s dignity, health and wellbeing are threatened in some way;

d) Any AUKY worker should speak to their line manager, supervisor or the Chief Officer or Deputy Chief Officer about any concerns they have about the well-being of older people.
3. Legislation

a) AUKY acknowledges and works within all legislative and health and safety requirements;

b) AUKY takes particular note of legislation regarding:
   - confidentiality including the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) both as regards the records that AUKY itself maintains in the interests of its service provision and in the security of such data;
   - The Equality Act, 2010;
   - The Accessible Information Standard. (See Policy 19 for full details.)

4. Accessibility

a) Questions of access can become more difficult over time;

b) Legislation requires that reasonable adjustments are made to assist with accessibility. These adjustments include, but are not restricted to:
   - Making areas safer, including by moving or removing obstructions such as cables and unnecessary furniture;
   - Making doorways and steps more visible by the use of different paint colours;
   - Ensuring that seating is adjustable and adequately supportive with chair arms and with foot-rests available;
   - Providing adequate lighting and reducing glare;
   - Making hearing and sight aids available including loops and wands for hearing, and large print formats for printed materials;
   - Providing printed materials in locally-used languages;
   - Providing information about BSL signers, although AUKY may not be able to pay for these signers;

c) AUKY encourages user involvement and it is appropriate to invite service users and others with disabilities to review AUKY premises and other work areas with a view to making any recommendations about accessibility;

d) AUKY will also consult local organisations that provide services for people with disabilities to advice on AUKY premises and work areas as regards accessibility;

e) AUKY seeks to encourage a culture of accessibility, welcomes all suggestions about accessibility at any time. Workers and other people connected to AUKY should discuss their thoughts and ideas with their line manager, supervisor or the Deputy Chief Officer.

5. Service user involvement

a) AUKY is committed to the principle of user involvement, seeking to put service users at the heart of its content and delivery of services;

b) AUKY believes that service users have a right to influence the way that support and services are provided, that are meaningful and beneficial to all parties and to help identify the direction it takes. These activities include, but are not restricted to:
   - Planning and delivery of services and activities;
   - Measuring, reviewing and developing services;
   - Gathering and distributing feedback of users' views about AUKY's services;
c) AUKY is committed to:

- Providing services which are friendly, helpful, confidential and responsive to needs;
- Demonstrating that service users deserve recognition, both for themselves and for their involvement with AUKY;
- Being courteous, respectful professional, flexible, honest and helpful;
- Listening attentively to users in order to respond to and provide the service, advice and information which users need and value;
- Inviting feedback from users about the services offered by AUKY so that informed decisions can be made on policies, procedures and the improvement of service quality to users;
- Providing relevant, accurate and up-to-date information when users need it;
- Be clear with users about the level of participation and consultation, how their views will be used and, where applicable, when they will be informed of the results;
- Training and developing volunteers and staff so that they can provide a quality service;
- Monitoring, reviewing and seeking service improvements in all service provision areas;
- Ensuring AUKY is user-friendly and accessible to users;

d) Service users may be able to participate in the following:

- Board membership
- Recruitment of staff and volunteers
- Service design
- Management of services
- Policy development
- Strategic planning
- Service monitoring
- Personal service planning
- Campaigning
- Fundraising
- Local Partnerships
- Income generation

e) There are limits to user participation due to AUKY’s requirements to adhere to legal duties and responsibilities. In such instances, AUKY will clearly give an explanation of actions and/or decisions together with users’ right to appeal or make a complaint;

f) From time to time, individuals who are themselves service users offer themselves as potential volunteers to AUKY;

g) AUKY recognises that volunteering can be a valuable activity for older individuals, offering stimulation, companionship and the chance to broaden horizons;

h) The recruitment process in the Volunteering Policy will be followed in such cases;

i) However, maintaining confidentiality, while always a priority in service provision, may be a particular concern where service users offer themselves as potential volunteers in some areas of service provision. In any question of doubt, the relevant recruitment worker will consult the Chief Officer or Deputy Chief Officer and an offer of volunteering may be declined.