**AGE UK**

**NORTH CUMBRIA**

**COMMENTS/COMPLIMENTS**

**AND**

**COMPLAINTS**

**POLICY/PROCEDURE**

**Adopted March 2009**

**Reviewed: Jan 2024**

**Next Review: Jan 2025**

**Reg Charity No 1128565**

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**Comments/Compliments and Complaints Policy**

1. **Introduction** 
   1. Age UK North Cumbria are committed to demonstrating respect, inclusion, and transparency across all our services. We believe the perspectives of older people residing within Carlisle and Eden, their representatives, and partner Organisations are a key part of our continuing development. Comments/ compliments and complaints play an integral part in empowering them, ensure their interests are protected, and that we are meeting their needs effectively.
   2. This Policy and accompanying Procedure is therefore open to all clients who receive or request a service from Age UK North Cumbria, their representatives, shoppers, and any partner organisation. For the remainder they will collectively be referred to as Stakeholders.
   3. We acknowledge that there can exist an unequal balance of power between our Stakeholders and the Organisation, as a provider of services. We also understand that many Stakeholders may find it difficult to express worries, problems, or concerns. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure that the working culture within the Organisation reassures them that these will be listened to, taken seriously, and responded to in a timely and fair manner.
   4. Although this policy is not aimed directly at Employees, Trustees, or Volunteers, who should refer to our Grievance Procedure and/or Whistleblowing Policy for details of how to raise their own concerns. The shared "ownership" of the philosophy behind this Policy and Procedure is essential for effective implementation and therefore all Employees, Trustees, or Volunteers should be aware of its contents.
   5. It is important that positive comments and suggestions are also received in an appreciative manner. We must encourage our Stakeholders to tell us what we are doing right, as well as what we are doing wrong.
   6. This Policy and Procedure relates to comments, compliment, or complaints

received about Age UK North Cumbria and its services only.

* 1. Age UK North Cumbria will adhere to the principles and procedures contained within UK legislation, as well as relevant guidance. Taking the following particularly into consideration:
* The Equality Act 2010
* The Mental Capacity Act 2005
* The Human Rights Act 1998
* The Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation 2016
* Charities Act 2011
* Charity Quality Standards
* Age UK Information and Advise Quality Programme
* Advice Quality Standards

1. **Purpose**
   1. This Policy, to be used alongside the accompanying Procedure, is designed to provide the processes and mechanisms in place to resolve reported complaints.
   2. It ensures that there is an open and straightforward procedure in place so Stakeholders know how to make a complaint and how a complaint will be handled.
   3. Ensure that complaints are dealt with consistently, fairly, and sensitively within clear time frames.
   4. To improve the quality of service by recognising Stakeholder’s rights and needs, and by being responsive to their views. Ensuring that complaints are monitored to improve our services.
   5. To protect Employees, Trustees, and Volunteers from the consequences of allowing unresolved problems to escalate.
   6. In implementing this Policy and accompanying Procedure, Age UK North Cumbria will ensure it complies with the spirit and principles of the Age UK North Cumbria Equality and Diversity Policy.

**3. Responsibilities**

* 1. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) has overall responsibility for ensuring

the effective implementation of Age UK North Cumbria’s Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy and this is supported on a day-to-day basis by all Employees, Trustees, Volunteers, and any other individual involved with the Organisation adopting and endorsing these.

**4. Action to be taken**

* 1. It is important for our Employees to establish the difference between a concern being raised and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest possible stage will reduce the likelihood of this developing into a formal complaint.

**4.2** A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction by an individual,

that requires a timely response.

**4.3** A Stakeholder may wish to make a complaint for a variety of

reasons, including if they feel Age UK North Cumbria have:

* Failed to provide a service
* Delivered a service at an unacceptable standard.
* Made a mistake in the way the service was provided
* Failed to act in a proper way, including the conduct of our Trustees, Employees and/or Volunteers.
* Provided an unfair service or discriminated
* Provided erroneous information
* Failed to follow agreed policy and procedure

**4.4** If you have any concerns about our services, please tell one of our team

as soon as possible, so they can quickly understand your concerns and try

to put things right.

**4.5** If you are not happy with the response to your concern and/or you wish to

make a formal complaint please follow the 3-stage process outlined clearly

within the “How to make a Comment, Compliment or Complaint” found in

Appendix 1

**5. Recording**

**5.1** Formal comments, compliments, and complaints without any hard evidence

associated will be recorded on the “Feedback Report Form”(See Appendix 2).

**5.2** By recording all formal comments, compliments, and complaints in a

standardised format ensures transparency in the way Age UK Carlisle and

Eden manages the feedback they receive.

**5.3** The necessity of maintaining detailed written documentation may be viewed

as a burden, but it is invaluable in dealing with concerns in a positive way

for Stakeholders and developing our services in line with their feedback.

**6. Our promise**

**6.1** At Age UK North Cumbria we actively encourage feedback from

Stakeholders and therefore have developed the following Stakeholder

promise.

* We’ll make sure you know how to make your voice heard through our Comments, Compliments, and Complaints Policy and Procedure.
* We train our Employees, so they know how to deal with your complaint.
* We will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within three working days.
* We will respond fully within 10 working days for a first-stage complaint, 15 working days for a second-stage complaint and 20 working days for a third-stage complaint.
* We will investigate your complaint thoroughly and without bias.
* We will keep your complaint confidential.
* We will keep you updated on the progress of your complaint.
* We will apologise when we’ve made a mistake, and immediately take steps to fix the problem.
* We will learn lessons from where we’ve gone wrong to make sure we don’t make the same mistakes in the future.

**7. Monitoring and Review**

**7.1** The implementation and effectiveness of this policy will be

monitored, reviewed (no less than annually) and updated to by

the CEO.



**Comments/Compliments and Complaints Procedure**

**Introduction**

This Procedure should be used in conjunction with the Comments/Compliments and Complaints Policy and explains the practical ways Age UK North Cumbria will manage all types of feedback.

This Procedure will provide an outline of the following:

• The principles that govern Comments/Compliments and Complaints within

The Organisation.

• Comments/ Compliments.

• Concerns/ Complaints.

• The process in place.

• The necessity of keeping accurate written records.

• Confidentiality

• Roles and Responsibilities.

• The method by which the Organisation monitors, reviews and maintains

high quality responses to these.

**Principles**

The General principles of a Comments/Compliments and Complaints Procedure are that it:

* Is accessible

Stakeholders should be actively encouraged to provide feedback to the Organisation. Part of this is to ensure that they are fully aware of the processes in place and where they can seek further advice. Age UK North Cumbria therefore should be sensitive to Stakeholder’s individual needs and make consideration to the variety of information provision available and make reasonable adjustments as necessary. The “How to make a Comment, Compliment or Complaint” information sheet (see Appendix 1) is one method of making the process of complaining accessible to all.

* Is understood by Trustees, Employees, and Volunteers

It is important that Trustees, Employees, and Volunteers are fully conversant with the principles, processes and philosophy behind the Comments/Compliments and Complaints Policy and Procedure. This includes issues of confidentiality and what constitutes a complaint. Sufficient training (role dependent) will be provided.

* Provides a prompt and considered response

It is important that Stakeholders of Age UK North Cumbria's Services know what they say is taken seriously, and that the Organisation has listened to them, even if they cannot fully resolve the problem. For this reason, it is important to reply in a timely manner.

* Has a strong solving element?

Most complaints pose problems, often small ones, which can be resolved immediately, by Trustees, Employees and Volunteers. Sometimes these complaints are presented as comments. The objective is not to apportion blame but to resolve the problem; not to find fault with people, but to try and ensure Age UK North Cumbria deliver a quality service.

**Comments/ Compliments**

It is always helpful to hear what people think about our Organisation and the services we provide; this includes when we are doing something well.

Positive comments are welcome because:

* They can help to influence the policy decisions of the Organisation
* They help to maintain the standards of our services
* They can raise issues of real importance and can lead to change for the better.
* They can promote the morale of Employees directly involved as well as the wider team.

Comments and Compliments may be received in a variety of formats. Where a hard copy is available, such as written emails, thank you cards, etc. These should be shared with the Services Director to maintain within the Comments/ Compliments Feedback Folder. If a verbal comment/compliment is received and the Stakeholder is unable/ does not wish to put this in writing themselves, the “Feedback Report Form” (see Appendix 2) can be used to ensure these are still captured. These should be signed off by a Line Manager and again stored within the Comments/ Compliments Feedback Folder.

**Concerns/Complaints**

A Complaint is often couched in terms of a comment or suggestion, or it presents as a problem in the first instance. It is therefore important for our Employees/ Volunteers to establish the difference between a concern being raised and a complaint. This will help ensure that informal concerns are taken seriously at the earliest possible stage, reducing the likelihood of this developing into a more formal complaint.

* Complaints are about individual instances, and policy issues, but not

generalisations

* A Complaint is not a comment or suggestion (which is often positive).
* A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction

Anyone can make a complaint, including users of our services, their representatives, Shoppers, and partner Organisations, collectively referred to as Stakeholders. Any complaints made by paid Employees and Volunteers of Age UK North Cumbria will be dealt with under the terms of their individual contracts of employment, or as laid down in the Grievance Procedure and/or Whistleblowing Policy.

**Process**

It should be made clear to all concerned that the purpose of this Procedure is to solve problems and come to an agreement as quickly as possible, and every effort should be made to ensure that this happens.

* It is normal good practice to endeavour to resolve small queries to the satisfaction of all parties involved as soon as possible. This should be done at the point of an initial concern being raised.
* It is important to listen carefully and to find out what the Stakeholder wants to achieve, as a result of raising the concern.
* A record of the discussion should be completed on the Feedback Report Form (see Appendix 2) and provided to their Line Manager for sign off.
* This record should be stored within the Complaints Folder maintained by the Chief Executive Officer.

We understand that not all concerns will be/ can be resolved in an informal manner at this stage and therefore, the following process applies where a formal complaint has been raised:

* + - If the problem cannot be solved immediately the complainant should be advised of the “How to make a Comment, Compliment or Complaint guide” (Appendix 1) and assisted where necessary, this may be through the support of an independent Organisation and the Stakeholder should be informed of their rights surrounding this.
    - To formalise the Complaint, it will need to be put in writing either handwritten or electronically, either by the complainant themselves or someone else on their behalf.
    - All complaints received should be handled initially by the relevant department’s Line Manager. This is referred to as Stage One in the “How to make a Comment, Compliment or Complaint guide” (Appendix 1)
    - A record of the complaint should be completed on the Feedback Report Form (see Appendix 2) and provided to the Services Director for sign off.
    - This record should be stored within the Complaints Folder maintained by the Chief Executive Officer.
    - If the complainant or the matter for complaint are subject to a contractual agreement with an outside Organisation, then they too must be informed of the complaint and given the opportunity for their own investigation.
    - A full investigation of the complaint will be undertaken, taking on board the views of all parties involved. The complainant will be informed of the outcome of the investigation.
    - If the complainant is not happy with the response received at Stage One, then they can follow the steps for Stage Two and Stage Three.

**Confidentiality**

We will manage all complaints sensitively and in line with our Confidentially Policy and Data Protection Policy.

Occasionally statistical Information will be produced relating to the complaints received and the way in which they have been handled to the board of Trustees. This will predominantly be used to influence policy decisions and improve service provision and delivery.

All statistical information presented in this manner will not contain any identifying data, ensuring full anonymity of the complainants is maintained.

**Roles and Responsibilities**

Employees / Volunteers responsibilities

* Age UK North Cumbria relies on all Employees and Volunteers to handle comments, compliments, and concerns in a professional manner.
* All Employees/ Volunteers should partake in mandatory training relevant to their role.
* If any Employee/ Volunteer receives a concern, it is vital that they do not ignore this and that attempts to resolve any issue are made at this first point.
* All Employees should discuss the circumstances of the concern raised with their Line Manager and record them on the “Feedback Report Form” (Appendix 2).
* An Employee should seek assistance/guidance from their Line Manager if they do not feel best equipped to deal with the concern.

**Line Managers and Service Director responsibilities**

* Ensure that all their Employees/ Volunteers have received relevant training for their role.
* Ensure that their team members are familiar with Age UK North Cumbria’s Comments/Compliments and Complaints Policy and Procedures, Whistle Blowing Policy, Grievance Procedure, and Disciplinary Procedures.
* Deal with formal complaints made at Stage One (Line Managers) and Stage Two (Service Director).
* Make/update a record of the complaint on the “Feedback Report Form” (Appendix 2) and ensure that these alongside any relevant documentation are stored securely within the Complaints Folder.
* Keep the CEO updated on the progress of formal complaints.
* Line Managers/ Service Director should seek assistance/ guidance from the CEO if they do not feel best equipped to deal with the complaint.

**CEO responsibilities**

* Provide support for Employees/Volunteers/ Line Managers
* Oversee any specialist training requirements for Age UK North Cumbria Employee’s, Trustees and Volunteers.
* Keep the board of trustees of any incidents of concerns.
* Deal with all formal complaints reaching Stage three.
* Update the record of the complaint on the “Feedback Report Form” (Appendix 2).

• Ensure that all complaints are stored securely, monitored, and analysed, in line with Age UK North Cumbria policy.

• Review Age UK North Cumbria’s Comments, Compliments and Complaints Procedure and Policy annually and update them when necessary.

**Trustee responsibilities**

* Make use of the Policy and Procedure when responding to any complaints surpassing Stage Three.
* Update the record of the complaint on the “Feedback Report Form” (Appendix 2).
* Age UK North Cumbria Trustees have overall responsibility for ensuring that serious incidents are reported to The Charity Commission. A serious incident is an adverse event, whether actual or alleged, which results in or risks significant:

1. harm to the Organisation’s Beneficiaries, Employees, Volunteers, or any other individuals who come into contact with our Organisation.

2. loss of the Organisation’s money or assets

3. Damage to the Organisation’s property

4. Harm to the Organisation’s work or reputation

**Monitoring and Review**

The implementation and effectiveness of this Procedure will be monitored, reviewed (no less than annually) by the CEO and any updates disseminated appropriately.

**Appendix 1**

**How to make a** **Comment, Compliment or Complaint**

Tell us what you think -you can contact us in the following ways:

* **By phone on**: 01228 536673
* **By writing to:** AGE UK North Cumbria

20 Spencer Street

Carlisle,

CA1 1BG

* **In person**: at the address above
* **By using our “Client Feedback Form – All Services”**
* **By sending an e-mail** to [Admin@ageuknorthcumbria.org.uk](mailto:Admin@ageuknorthcumbria.org.uk)
* **On our website**- [www.ageuk.org.uk/carlisleandeden](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/carlisleandeden)

We welcome **all** feedback

**Comments**

We would like to hear from you if you have a suggestion on how we can improve our service. You can fill in the form at the back of this leaflet or tell a member of our team.

**Compliments**

If you are happy with any part of the service, you have received please tell us. You may write to us, fill in the form at the back of this leaflet or tell any member of our team.

**Complaints**

We aim to provide the best possible service to customers. However, if we get it wrong, we want to know about it and will try to put things right as quickly as possible.

**Our aim**

We take complaints very seriously. While we try to provide a good service, we know that sometimes things go wrong. We have developed a complaints procedure in response to this. We aim to sort out complaints quickly and fairly and we will try to sort out any mistake or misunderstanding straight away. Sometimes it may take a little longer, but we will tell you how long it will take.

**What we learn from complaints**

We keep records of all the complaints we receive and monitor them regularly.

This helps us to:

* Identify areas of service where we need to make changes and improvements; and
* Make sure we are dealing with complaints effectively and consistently.

**What should I do if I am not happy with one of your services?**

If you think we have broken our promises, or you feel we’ve made a mistake, we take that very seriously and have set out the steps to take below:

***Stage one***

The people who can best deal with a complaint are those who provide the service. You should write to the Service’s Line Manager. We can usually sort out mistakes and misunderstandings quickly and informally at this stage.

We will acknowledge your complaint in three working days. We will investigate your complaint and we will respond within 10 working days. If we cannot do this, we will let you know when you can expect a reply. Our response will include details of who to complain to if you are not happy with the response at stage one.

**What should I do if I am not happy with this response?** Take your complaint to stage two.

***Stage two***

If you are not happy with the Line Manager’s reply, you can complain to the Deputy CEO. It is best to let the Deputy CEO know which parts of our response at Stage One you are not happy with. We will investigate your complaint, and the Deputy CEO will respond to you within 15 working days. An investigation may take longer than this but if it does, we will always explain the reasoning why and let you know when you can expect a full reply. Our response will include details of who to complain to if you are not happy with the response at stage two.

**What should I do if I’m still not happy?** Take your complaint to stage three.

***Stage three***

If you’re still not happy, you can contact the Chief Executive Officer. They are independent of the service you are complaining about and can carry out a full review of your complaint. It will help the investigation if you explain why you are not satisfied and what you expect from a further review. The Chief Executive Officer will reply within 20 working days. They will let you know if there are any delays.

**What if I am still not happy?**

If you are not satisfied with the way we have handled your complaint, you can contact the Board of Trustees. You can complain to the Board of Trustees at any time, but they will usually refer your complaint back to us if you have not used our complaints procedure.

You can contact the Board of Trustees at the address provided on Page 1.

You have the right to seek independent support from an alternative Information and Advice Organisation.

**Client Feedback Form**

**All Services**

Having recently received help or assistance from Age UK North Cumbria, we would be grateful if you could take the time to complete the below Client Feedback form. This will help us to monitor and develop all our services to ensure they are meeting your needs.

**1. How did you hear about Age UK North Cumbria?   
  
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**2. How did you initially contact Age UK North Cumbria?**Telephone ….

Letter ….

In Person ….

Other ….

**3. Please circle which services you would like to provide feedback for?**

**Information and Advice Well@Home Home Support**

**Social Engagements Shops Rolling on**

**Handyperson Other**

**4. Please tell us what you thought of the service you received from Age UK North Cumbria?**

Very Poor Poor Average Good Excellent

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**5. Would you use our services again or recommend them to others?**

Yes ….

No ….

**11. Please tell us what improvements could have been made to the service to suit your needs.**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
  
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**12. Has the help you received from Age UK North Cumbria improved your quality of life?**

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**13. Please leave any other comments or feedback in the area below.**

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**Appendix 2**

**Feedback Report Form**

|  |
| --- |
| Name and position of person completing the form: |
| Date of completion: |
| Type of Feedback given (comment, compliment, or complaint): |
| Please describe the basis of the comment, compliment, or complaint here |
| Remedial Action taken so far: |

Signature: …………………………………………………………………………………………

Date: …………………………………………………………………………………………………

Line Manager’s Signature: ……………………………………………………………………

Date: ………………………………………………………………………………