

**COMPLAINTS & COMMENTS PROCEDURE**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1. Age UK Mid Mersey and Age UK Mid Mersey Trading (from hereon known as “The Organisation”), is committed to offering the best service to our clients as possible and to resolve grievances before they become complaints. The complaints and comments procedure is part of the process of empowering users and protecting their interests. Many clients find it difficult to express worries, problems and concerns and it is, therefore, necessary to ensure that there is a climate which assures people that these will be listened to, taken seriously and responded to speedily and fairly.
- 1.2 Having a complaints and comments procedure is likely to ensure quality when it stems from a recognition of users needs and rights. For this reason it is important that everyone involved in the service, the board members, staff, volunteers and users know about the complaints and comments procedure and are committed to the principle of service quality that it embraces.

**2. PURPOSE**

- 2.1 Some of the benefits of having a complaints and comments procedure are:
  - to enable complaints to be recognised and to provide a procedure for dealing with them;
  - to protect the interests of the users and to enable them to challenge decisions;
  - to improve the quality of service by recognising user rights and needs, and by being responsive to their needs;
  - by providing an additional means of monitoring the service;
  - to protect staff and volunteers from the consequences which might result, if unresolved, in problems escalating;
  - to celebrate the positive impacts that services are having on clients
  - provides valuable feedback.

**3. SCOPE**

- 3.1. This Policy applies to all employees, volunteers, Board of Trustees/Directors, placements and sessional workers of The Organisation.
- 3.2 A separate Complaints Procedure is in operation for the Insurance Service which can be found in the N5.1.15 folder as this is an FSA regulated service this must also be adhered to.
- 3.3 A separate Complaints Procedure is in operation for the Money Advice Service which can be found in the N5.1.15 folder as this is an FSA regulated service this must also be adhered to.

<b>Procedure:</b>	Complaints & Comments	<b>Status:</b>	<b>Approved</b>
<b>Version:</b>	2	<b>Date adopted:</b>	May 10
<b>Page:</b>	1 of 6	<b>Review date:</b>	May 25

**COMPLAINTS & COMMENTS PROCEDURE**

**4. THE DEFINITION OF A COMPLAINT**

4.1 A complaint shall mean:-  
 A written or oral expression of dissatisfaction or concern relating to the everyday operation of The Organisation’s services. This dissatisfaction could include the actions of staff, their failure to act, or delay in taking action which requires the organisation to account for its conduct in respect of the discharge of any of its functions in respect of the complainant or person on whose behalf the complaint is made.

**5. THE DEFINITION OF A COMMENT**

5.1 A comment shall mean:-  
 A letter, telephone call, email, a card or face to face contact with a person which provides another view or observation on the service(s) being provided by the organisation.

**6. PRINCIPLES**

- 6.1 The organisation is committed to the concept of an effective complaints procedure. An organisational leaflet will be displayed in each office with the Central Administration Manager being the point of contact mentioned on the leaflet.
- 6.2 Each complaint will be acknowledged in writing within 7 working days.
- 6.3 At each stage of the procedure the complainant is entitled to have an advocate or friend representing their interests. The advocate will need to show that the complainant has requested their help. At any stage of the procedure the advocate may speak on the complainant’s behalf.
- 6.4 Effective recording and monitoring of complaints will provide useful information about the quality and effectiveness of our services.
- 6.5 Wherever possible, complaints will be dealt with informally by the staff member directly responsible for the service user.
- 6.6 Assistance will be offered, where necessary, in explaining, interpreting or translating this procedure.

**7. THE STAGES IN THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

There are three main stages to the procedure.

- Stage 1 - The informal stage
- Stage 2 - The formal stage

<b>Procedure:</b>	Complaints & Comments	<b>Status:</b>	<b>Approved</b>
<b>Version:</b>	2	<b>Date adopted:</b>	May 10
<b>Page:</b>	2 of 6	<b>Review date:</b>	May 25

**COMPLAINTS & COMMENTS PROCEDURE**

- Stage 3 - The review stage

**7.1 STAGE 1 - THE INFORMAL STAGE**

7.1.1 It is recognised that from time to time misunderstandings may arise on minor matters that will require clarification and explanation. It is the aim of The Organisation to resolve any such matters as quickly and as near to the point of origin as possible. Upon receipt of a complaint a member of the senior management team will respond to you within 7 days.

7.1.2 If the Senior Manager has been unable to resolve the complaint then the complainant can register their grievance to the Chief Executive, in writing, within 7 working days of the decision arrived at in Stage 1 of the procedure.

7.1.3 The Chief Executive will acknowledge receipt of the letter within 5 working days.

**7.2 STAGE 2 – THE FORMAL STAGE**

7.2.1 If the Senior Manager has been unable to resolve the complaint then the complainant can register their grievance to the Chief Executive, in writing, within 7 working days of the decision arrived at in Stage 1 of the procedure.

7.2.2 The Chief Executive will acknowledge receipt of the letter within 5 working days.

7.2.3 After the complaint has been investigated and a decision arrived at, then the complainant will receive a full written response from the Chief Executive within 14 working days of the letter of complaint being received. Included in the response will be the steps taken to investigate the complaint.

**7.3 STAGE 3 – THE REVIEW STAGE**

7.3.1 If the complainant still remains dissatisfied with the decision arrived at in Stage 2, then he/she has the right to have their complaint heard by the Review Panel. The complainant has 10 working days within which to request a review by the panel and an application must be submitted in writing to the Chairman of the Board of Directors.

7.3.2 The panel will consist of three members of the Board of Directors and will meet within 10 working days of the request being made. The Review Panel will then inform the complainant of their decision in writing within 14 working days of meeting.

7.3.3 The decision of the Review Panel will be final.

<b>Procedure:</b>	Complaints & Comments	<b>Status:</b>	<b>Approved</b>
<b>Version:</b>	2	<b>Date adopted:</b>	May 10
<b>Page:</b>	3 of 6	<b>Review date:</b>	May 25

**COMPLAINTS & COMMENTS PROCEDURE**

**7.4 FLEXIBILITY**

7.4.1 This procedure is intended to be a flexible one and the Organisation acknowledges that there may be occasions when earlier stages of the procedure should be bypassed. Where serious allegations are made, the Chief Executive will need to be involved at the outset.

**7.5 REGISTER OF COMPLAINTS**

7.5.1 A register of complaints will be kept centrally in the Chief Executive' Office. The Senior Management Team will be informed on a quarterly basis of all complaints and The Board of Trustees/Directors will be informed about all complaints which have reached Stage 2, once they are resolved.

**8. COMMENTS**

8.1 The Organisation may receive comments from clients about the services provided (complaints are dealt separately – see Section 7 above) and will also encourage clients to provide feedback about the services they are receiving.

**8.2 What to do when a comment is received from a client**

8.2.1 When a member of staff receives a comment from a client about the services provided or the way the service was perceived by the client, the client should be encouraged to complete a complaints and comments form to formally record their feedback and this should be forwarded to the Senior Management Team.

8.2.2 Examples of feedback include 'thank you' letters, comments about access to the service, waiting times, telephone access. If the feedback has been received orally, the staff member should record the detail in writing on the complaints and comments form.

**8.3 Encouraging feedback from clients**

8.3.1 The Organisation wants to encourage clients to make suggestions and wants to consult with them on proposed changes in methods of service delivery. This is not only good practice but the local authority expects the organisations it funds to actively seek feedback about the services it provides.

8.3.2 The Organisation has the following systems in place to receive feedback from clients:

- Regular evaluations
- On-going openness to receiving feedback from clients

<b>Procedure:</b>	Complaints & Comments	<b>Status:</b>	<b>Approved</b>
<b>Version:</b>	2	<b>Date adopted:</b>	May 10
<b>Page:</b>	4 of 6	<b>Review date:</b>	May 25

## COMPLAINTS & COMMENTS PROCEDURE

- Mystery Shoppers

### 8.3 Using the information

8.4.1 **The Senior Manager of the service** analyses and reviews all of the comments and feedback received by the services. The content of this report will then be used to inform and review the Business Plan.

8.4.2 Comments and complaints that are received are reviewed at least annually at a Senior Manager’s Meeting (and in individual supervision sessions and team meetings, as appropriate) and any recommendations for changes and developments, which are required, are considered by The Senior Management team and the Chief Executive.

### 9. MONITORING/REVIEW

9.1 Overall responsibility for the implementation, monitoring and review of the policy lies with the Board of Trustees/Directors and on a day to day basis with the Chief Executive.

9.2 Age UK Mid Mersey and Age UK Mid Mersey Trading shall review the Complaints and Comments Procedure every 3 years.

Signed (Chair of the Board of Trustees)

..... Date .....

Signed (Chief Executive)

..... Date .....

<b>Procedure:</b> Complaints & Comments	<b>Status:</b> <b>Approved</b>
<b>Version:</b> 2	<b>Date adopted:</b> May 10
<b>Page:</b> 5 of 6	<b>Review date:</b> May 25

**COMPLAINTS & COMMENTS PROCEDURE**

DOCUMENT CONTROL

**Complaints & Comments Procedure**

Revision History

Issue	Status	Date	Author	Description of Changes
1	Closed	May 10	Carol Verey	New Procedure
2	Open	Oct 15	Shelley Brown	Amendments to process for raising a complaint – now all dealt with in first instance by Senior Management Team
2	Open	May 2019	Shelley Brown	No amendments, scheduled review, still fit for purpose
2	Open	May 22	Shelley Brown	No amendments, scheduled review, still fit for purpose