



Talking sense about autism.  
40 Caversham Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 7EB

# Complaints Policy

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Reviewed: July 2021

Next review: July 2022

Version 3.5

## Introduction

As a long standing charity dedicated to helping anyone living with autism, we take any complaints or comments very seriously. We actively ask for verbal and written feedback after any event we run. We use this feedback to better meet the needs of people living with autism in future. We also report feedback to our funders. If a service user wishes to make a complaint or register a concern they should find it easy to do so.

The policy is not designed to apportion blame, to consider the possibility of negligence or to provide compensation. It is NOT part of the staff disciplinary policy.

A record of all complaints are kept up to date, available for funders, and used to shape our service in the future.

## Stage 1

- All oral complaints, no matter how seemingly unimportant, should be taken seriously. There is nothing to be gained by staff adopting a defensive or aggressive attitude.
- Staff should not accept blame, make excuses or blame other staff.
- If the issue cannot be resolved informally, the member of staff should ask the complainant to put their complaint in writing and give them a copy of the complaints procedure.
- Details of the complaint should be recorded and handed to the CEO.

## Stage 2

- When a complaint is received in writing it should be passed on to the CEO who should send an acknowledgment letter within two working days.
- If necessary, further details should be obtained from the complainant.
- If the complaint raises potentially serious matters, legal advice should be sought by the CEO. If legal action is taken at this stage any investigation by the CEO under the complaints procedure should cease immediately.
- Immediately on receipt of the complaint the establishment should launch an investigation and within 28 days should be in a position to provide a full explanation to the complainant, either in writing or by arranging a meeting with the individuals concerned, which, if necessary, may take place remotely (by phone or video conferencing) .
- If a meeting is arranged, the complainant should be advised that they may, if they wish, bring a representative such as an advocate who, if applicable, shall be invited to attend the virtual meeting.
- At the meeting a detailed explanation of the results of the investigation should be given and also an apology if it is deemed appropriate (apologising for what has happened need not be an admission of liability).
- After the meeting, or if the complainant does not want a meeting, a written account of the investigation should be sent to the complainant.
- The outcomes of the investigation and the meeting should be recorded on appropriate documentation and any shortcomings in Autism Berkshire's procedures should be identified and acted upon.
- If the issues are too complex to complete the investigation within 28 days, the complainant should be informed of any delays.

## Stage 3

- The service user has the right to raise the issue with the chair of the charity and the board of trustees.
- If a meeting with the chair is arranged, the complainant should be advised that they may, if they wish, bring a representative such as an advocate who shall, if applicable, be invited to attend the virtual meeting

- At the meeting a detailed explanation of the results of the investigation should be given and also an apology if it is deemed appropriate (apologising for what has happened need not be an admission of liability).
- After the meeting, or if the complainant does not want a meeting, a written account of the investigation should be sent to the complainant.
- The outcomes of the investigation and the meeting should be recorded on appropriate documentation and any shortcomings in Autism Berkshire’s procedures should be identified and acted upon.

### Stage 4

- As a last resort, we will signpost unhappy clients to the Charities Commission if the problems are still unresolved.

### Contact details for stage 2 and 3

<b>Chief Executive Officer</b>	Jane Stanford-Beale Ceo@autismberkshire.org.uk Office 01189 594 594 Mobile 07795 807 249
<b>Chair of Trustees</b>	Richard Flemming richard.flemming.260@gmail.com Mobile 07595477198

### Changes to version

This policy will be formally reviewed every year by the CEO and a nominated trustee. The policy will then be endorsed by the Autism Berkshire Board of Trustees, and the action formally minuted

Approved by the Autism Berkshire Board July 2021

Date	Major or Minor	Reason for change	Change
25/5/17 3.1	Major	Recommendation from Safe and Sound assessment	Clarified meetings at stage 2 and 3

3.1	Major	Recommendation from Safe and Sound assessment	Added in contact details for CEO and Chair
3.2	Minor	Slough Quality Protects	Endorsement of policy by board with a minute
3.3.	Minor	Change of Chair of Trustees	Contact details for Chair of Trustees updated
May 2020 3.4	Minor	Response to Covid-19 pandemic	Added potential to hold stage 2 and 3 meetings virtually
23/07/21 3.5	Minor	Review	Changed date and version number.