



Complaints Policy and Procedure

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Approved by:	Board of Trustees
Policy Owner:	Charity Lead and Board of Trustees
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1. Statement of Intent

Autism Angels is committed to providing a high-quality, compassionate and responsive service to children, young people, families, schools, local authorities and partner agencies. We recognise that concerns and complaints are valuable opportunities to improve our services, strengthen relationships and ensure that we continue to provide safe, therapeutic and effective support.

We aim to resolve concerns quickly, fairly and respectfully, and to ensure that anyone raising a concern or complaint is treated with dignity, listened to carefully and kept informed throughout the process.

This policy applies to complaints made by parents, carers, young people, schools, local authorities, commissioners, professionals, volunteers, members of the public and any other individual accessing or affected by Autism Angels services. It also includes complaints made in relation to the processing of personal data.

2. Difference Between a Concern and a Complaint

A concern

A concern may be defined as:

“An expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurance or clarification is sought.”

Concerns are often resolved quickly through discussion with a member of the Autism Angels team.

A complaint

A complaint may be defined as:

“An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about actions taken or a lack of action by Autism Angels, its staff, volunteers or trustees.”

Where a concern cannot be resolved informally, it may become a formal complaint.

3. Principles of Our Complaints Procedure

Autism Angels will ensure that complaints are:

- Taken seriously.
- Handled fairly and impartially.
- Investigated appropriately.
- Resolved as quickly as possible.
- Used as an opportunity for learning and service improvement.
- Managed confidentially and in accordance with UK GDPR and safeguarding requirements.

No individual will be treated unfavourably because they have made a complaint in good faith.

4. Accessibility and Support

Autism Angels recognises that many of the children, young people and families we support are neurodivergent and may communicate in different ways.

Reasonable adjustments will be made wherever possible to ensure that the complaints process is accessible.

5. Informal Resolution (Stage 1)

We encourage concerns to be raised as soon as possible with the member of the Autism Angels Team or with:

Sarah Kekoa (Charity Lead)

Or

Katharine Hammond (Office)

Most concerns can be resolved through discussion, clarification or practical action without the need for a formal complaint.

Where appropriate, Autism Angels will aim to acknowledge informal concerns within **5 working days** and seek to resolve them promptly.

6. Formal Complaint (Stage 2)

If the concern cannot be resolved informally, a formal complaint may be made.

Formal complaints should ideally be made in writing, although Autism Angels will provide support to anyone who is unable to submit a written complaint.



The complaint should include:

- The complainant's name and contact details.
- A clear description of the complaint.
- The relevant dates or events.
- Any steps already taken to resolve the matter.
- The outcome being sought.

Formal complaints should be sent to:

Sarah Kekoa

Founder and Charity Manager

Autism Angels

Email: info@autismangels.co.uk

7. Complaints About Staff or Volunteers

Complaints concerning a member of staff or a volunteer should be made directly to **Sarah Kekoa**.

Where appropriate, the staff member or volunteer concerned will be informed of the complaint and given an opportunity to respond as part of the investigation.

8. Complaints About the Registered Manager or Founder

Complaints involving or concerning **Sarah Kekoa** should be addressed to the **Trustees** via the Autism Angels office.

Correspondence should be clearly marked:

Private and Confidential – For the Attention of the Trustees

The Trustees will appoint an appropriate person to investigate the complaint independently.

9. Acknowledgement and Investigation

Autism Angels will:

- Acknowledge receipt of a formal complaint within **5 working days**.
- Conduct a fair and proportionate investigation.
- Gather relevant information and evidence.



- Speak with individuals involved where appropriate.
- Keep the complainant informed if additional time is required.

We aim to provide a full written response within **one calendar month of receipt** of the complaint.

Where the investigation is particularly complex, we may require additional time. In such cases, the complainant will be informed of:

- The reason for the delay.
- The progress of the investigation.
- The revised expected timescale.

10. Possible Outcomes

Following investigation, Autism Angels may:

- Uphold the complaint in full.
- Uphold the complaint in part.
- Not uphold the complaint.

The written outcome may include:

- a summary of the complaint;
- the scope of the investigation;
- the evidence considered (for example, records, correspondence, observations or discussions with relevant individuals);
- the findings of the investigation;
- the conclusion reached and the reasons for that conclusion; and
- any actions that Autism Angels will take as a result of the complaint.

11. Final Response

The response issued following the formal investigation will constitute Autism Angels' final internal response.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied after receiving the final response, they may seek independent advice or raise concerns with the relevant commissioning local authority, regulatory body, or the Charity Commission where appropriate.

12. Complaints Relating to Safeguarding



Complaints that raise concerns about the safety or welfare of a child or vulnerable person will be dealt with under the **Autism Angels Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy**.

Safeguarding concerns will be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and, where appropriate, to the relevant local authority children's social care services or other safeguarding agencies.

The complaints procedure may be suspended where necessary to avoid compromising safeguarding or statutory investigations.

13. Anonymous Complaints

Autism Angels will not normally investigate anonymous complaints.

However, the Charity Manager and/or Trustees may decide to investigate an anonymous complaint where:

- The allegations are serious.
 - There is a potential safeguarding concern.
 - There is a significant health and safety issue.
 - There is evidence suggesting a systemic problem.
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14. Time Limits

Complaints should normally be raised within **three months** of:

- The incident occurring; or
- The last of a series of related incidents.

Complaints submitted outside this period may still be considered where there are **exceptional circumstances**, including but not limited to illness, disability, trauma or other significant factors affecting the complainant's ability to raise the matter sooner. Complaints relating to the processing of personal data will also be considered outside of this time frame.

15. Record Keeping

Autism Angels will maintain a confidential record of formal complaints including:

- The complaint received.
- Correspondence.

- Investigation notes.
- Evidence considered.
- The outcome.
- Any actions taken.
- Lessons learned.

Complaint records will be retained in accordance with the Autism Angels Data Protection and Records Management Guidelines.

16. Confidentiality

All complaints will be handled sensitively and confidentially.

Information will only be shared with those who need it in order to investigate and resolve the complaint.

Confidentiality may not be maintained where:

- A safeguarding concern arises.
 - A criminal offence may have been committed.
 - Disclosure is required by law.
 - There is a significant risk of harm to a child or adult.
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17. Vexatious, Persistent or Unreasonable Complaints

Autism Angels recognises that complainants may become frustrated or distressed.

However, where a complainant's behaviour becomes unreasonable, abusive, threatening, or places a disproportionate burden on the organisation, Autism Angels may:

- Limit the method of communication.
- Require communication through a single point of contact.
- Decline to respond to repetitive issues already addressed.
- End correspondence where appropriate.

Any such decision will be made fairly, proportionately and, where possible, authorised by the Trustees.

18. Withdrawal of a Complaint



If a complainant wishes to withdraw their complaint, Autism Angels will ask them to confirm this in writing or by email.

Where a complaint raises safeguarding, legal or regulatory concerns, Autism Angels may continue to investigate the matter even if the complaint is withdrawn.

19. Learning from Complaints

Autism Angels is committed to continuous improvement.

The Charity Manager and Trustees will review complaints periodically to identify:

- Patterns or recurring issues.
 - Training needs.
 - Policy improvements.
 - Operational changes.
 - Opportunities to improve the experience of children, young people and families.
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20. External Advice

If a complainant remains dissatisfied after completing Autism Angels' internal complaints process, they may seek independent advice or raise concerns with the relevant commissioning local authority, regulatory body or the Charity Commission where appropriate.

Approved by: Board of Trustees

Review Date: July 2027