

Standard Operating Procedure Complaints & Comments Policy & Procedure

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Welsh Women's Aid Internal

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Director of Business Development and Operations

Author

HR Manager

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1.0 Purpose

This policy sets out how Welsh Women's Aid (WWA) stakeholders, including WWA members, those who use our services, individuals and other organisations, can submit a complaint or feedback a comment to WWA, and how WWA will manage the complaint or comment.

2.0 Principles

WWA seeks to provide high quality services that meet the needs of our stakeholders whilst being delivered within the scope of our charitable objects, in line with our strategic plan and funder requirements, and in compliance with relevant occupational standards and accreditation frameworks.

3.0 Who can use this policy?

Our members are violence against women specialist service providers in Wales.

Our service users include those contacting the Live Fear Free Helpline, and those engaging in our survivor or community engagement projects.

We also work with members of the public who choose to fundraise for us (our 'supporters'), other third sector organisations and private sector companies who support our aims and objectives (our 'organisational supporters').

4.0 What this policy covers

- 1. Complaints and comments about WWA from WWA members, other stakeholders and individuals**
- 2. Complaints and comments about WWA from anyone who has used services provided by WWA**

This includes complaints and comments relating to discrimination or unfair treatment on the basis of race or religion.

This policy does not cover:

- 3. Complaints from a WWA member of staff about another staff member**

WWA staff members should use the Grievance Procedure to raise a complaint about the behaviour of another colleague.

4. Complaints regarding conduct or the quality of service related to a service carrying the WWA National Quality Service Standards.

This should be dealt with under the WWA National Quality Service Standards complaints policy and procedure

5. Complaints or concerns about a safeguarding issue

WWA staff receiving a complaint about an incident or safeguarding issue should follow the WWA Safeguarding Policy.

6. Complaints or concerns about any serious accident or injury sustained by the service user either within or outside of the service location

This should be dealt with under the WWA Health and Safety Policy

5.0 Our commitment

WWA welcomes feedback about the service they have received, the services WWA provides or feedback about experiences of contact with WWA. This will enable us not only to deal with the specific issue but also help us to continually improve on the quality of services we offer.

As such:

1. We encourage WWA service users, members and other stakeholders to give feedback on any comments or complaints about our services. This helps to ensure the services we provide are of the expected quality, allows us to improve our practice or approach, and to ensure service users' needs are appropriately met.

We commit to:

- Ensuring this policy is easily accessible by publicising this policy externally via our website and ensuring that staff are familiar with how to access it.
 - Ensuring the policy and the complaints process is accessible to those whose first language is not English, including providing translated information, interpretation and information in alternative formats wherever necessary in order to meet the needs of the diverse communities we serve.
 - Providing comments/suggestions boxes in all our premises which are open to the public.
 - Encouraging service users and project participants to complete a feedback form after receiving support.
 - Ensuring evaluations are carried out after all WWA formal events including workshops, training sessions, and conferences attended.
2. We will deal with all complaints fairly and transparently.

3. We will investigate any complaint promptly, and work to put things right as soon as possible, wherever possible adhering to any timeframes agreed.
4. We keep a record of all comments and complaints in our central log. Complaints will be monitored by the relevant manager and will be reported on to the Senior Management team on a monthly basis, or sooner where necessary.
5. We monitor the outcome of complaints and any actions taken as a result of a complaint or comment being raised, in order to ensure the process is transparent and there is accountability.
6. We ensure that anyone accessing WWA services has easy access on how to feedback their complaints or comments, and that no service user is disadvantaged or treated less favourably as a result of complaining or feeding back a comment. Service users will be offered support they need in order to make their views known.
7. We will ensure that service users, staff or the organisation as a whole do not suffer detriment from persons making vexatious complaints. In such circumstances WWA's legal advisors will take the necessary steps to protect staff and the charity.

6.0 Procedures

1. Complaints from someone who uses WWA services and other stakeholders

Anyone who is unhappy with the service they have received, or any other aspect of their experience of their contact with WWA is able to raise a complaint.

2. How to complain

This can be done by contacting a member of staff or asking to speak with the project lead.

You can complain verbally or put your complaint in writing. We can help you do this. We can also provide additional support for those whose first language is not English and will take steps to ensure the integrity of the process will be maintained when using translation facilities.

Staff from member services can contact their key lead, or the person who manages the service/project they are engaged with. Should they not feel comfortable discussing their concerns with their key worker or project lead, the complaint can go to someone more senior by:

- Emailing HR@welshwomensaid.org.uk
- By letter, marked for the attention of the HR Manager, Welsh Women's, Aid, Pendragon House, Caxton Place, Pentwyn, CF23 8XE (marked as private and confidential)
- Phoning 02920 541 551 and ask to leave a message for the HR Manager.

Other stakeholders including WWA members, individuals or other stakeholders can also contact WWA by:

- Emailing HR@welshwomensaid.org.uk
- Writing to the HR Manager, Welsh Women's Aid, Pendragon House, Caxton Place, Pentwyn, CF23 8XE (marked as private and confidential)

In all cases we will respond within 5 working days.

3. What to include when submitting a complaint

A complaint should provide as much detail as possible about:

- What the problem is
- What the complainant would consider a satisfactory resolution to the complaint

The attached form (appendix 5.3) can be used to provide specific details, so that the

If the complaint is about a Senior Manager, Director or CEO, a more senior manager or member of the Board of Trustees must lead on resolving the complaint.

If a complaint relates to the conduct of a particular member of staff this will trigger an investigation by management as per the WWA disciplinary process. They should be advised prior to doing this that if it is about a member of staff it may lead to an investigation under the disciplinary process.

4. Requests for service (informal complaint)

If the complaint or comment is a request for a service, which it appears can be rectified simply, without conflict and within the boundaries of the staff members' delegated authority, this will be discussed and agreed with the service user making the complaint or comment. It will be logged in the Complaints and Comments Log and reported to their line manager.

Such cases can be situations where a service user is requesting access to a particular service rather than making a complaint, however all complaints or comments must be recorded in the relevant log, with the action take and resolution.

If the WWA staff member, within the boundaries of their delegated authority, can resolve the complaint they should attempt to do so at the earliest opportunity.

5. Formal complaint

In cases where the complaint or comment is regarding a more serious issue, such as an allegation of misconduct by the service, including complaints relating to unfair treatment on the basis of any protected characteristic, this is classed as a formal complaint and not a request for a service.

If the complaint is about the project lead or associated senior manager, someone more senior will lead on resolving the complaint.

Any complaint relating to discrimination will be escalated to a senior manager for investigation.

6. How your complaint will be handled

Anyone WWA member of staff following up a complaint will adhere to the following guidelines:

- Record accurate information.
- Ask for the complainant's views about how they would like the complaint resolved.
- Ensure that complainants are able to communicate in their preferred language and method of communication by providing external translators who will be bound by a confidentiality agreement.
- Set clear timescales for when a response can be made to resolve the complaint and let the complainant know. The initial complaint should be responded to within a maximum of 5 working days and the complaint resolved as soon as possible thereafter. Where the issue raised is complex then a suitable timescale should be agreed as early on as possible.
- Regardless of the outcome of the complaint, WWA will respond to the complainant in writing to let them know the outcome. It may also be appropriate to meet with the complainant to discuss the outcome with them. This will help to ensure the complainant understands the reason that action has been taken/not taken and strive to find an acceptable resolution.
- If an investigation finds the complaint is the result of poor service or an error by WWA, this should be rectified immediately, and an apology issued.
- If an investigation finds the complaint is considered unjustified, this should be put in writing including the reasons why the complaint was not upheld.

7. If a complaint remains unresolved (requesting a review)

If it has not been possible to achieve a resolution to the complaint that is satisfactory to both parties, the complainant can ask for a review of their complaint to take place.

If the initial complaint was made to a non-managerial member of staff but remains unresolved, the line manager or a senior manager must review it. If the line manager or a senior manager has already been involved previously, the CEO must review the complaint.

The information they will need to consider the complaint is:

- What the problem is
- What actions have been taken to resolve the problem
- Why the complainant remains dissatisfied
- What the complainant would consider a satisfactory resolution to the complaint

Once the complaint has been considered, the decision must be explained to them in writing and

communicated verbally if needed, in an accessible and understandable format, including reasons and what the next steps are if they remain unsatisfied. The service user should be offered the same support as described above in discussing and responding to the decision about the complaint.

Timescales for completing this review should be no more than 28 days from the complainant requesting a review to provide a written outcome. If this is not possible then other timescales will be agreed at the outset.

8. Monitoring complaints and comments - using feedback to improve services

Any member of staff who receives a complaint or comment is required to report the complaint or comment to their manager, who will pass the information onto the Senior Management team to record it on the issues log, including updates until the issue is resolved.

The content of this record will be fed into the following systems and processes:

- Annual business planning, particularly in terms of:
 - Identifying and prioritising changes and improvements to existing services
 - Reviews of policies and procedures
- The complaints log will also be reported to:
- WWA Senior Management Team
- WWA Board of Trustees
- The relevant service commissioner as agreed in the contract agreement

A summary of suggested improvements will be shared with any related service user participation groups, to review service user complaints and outcomes or improvements made.

7.0 Data Protection

WWA sets our data retention schedule and all other details relating to the processing of your data in relation to any complaint, feedback or comment you make in Appendix 2: WWA Complaints & Comments Privacy Notice.

8.0 Appendices

1. WWA Complaints Privacy Notice

Data Protection Privacy Notice

Some of the information submitted as part of this complaint is personal data under the UK GDPR 2021 and Data Protection Act 2018.

The information you provide will be stored securely in line with the WWA Confidentiality Data Protection and Sharing Information policy. For a copy of the WWA Privacy statement please visit our website:

<https://welshwomensaid.org.uk/privacy/>.

Your data will be collected to process and respond to your complaint logged with Welsh Women's Aid. It will also be used to review practices, policies and will be included in internal reports.

By submitting a complaint, you are consenting to us collecting your data

Once your complaint is resolved we will hold the details on file until the end of the following financial year, following which any identifying details (e.g. contact details or your name) will be removed and the information you provide will be stored anonymously for reporting, monitoring and evaluation purposes for a period of up to six years, after which the anonymous data will be deleted.

Please note that the anonymous statistical data will be retained for legitimate interests (e.g. reports) so cannot be forgotten.

If you have any questions about how the data is held or you wish to request the removal of your personal data, please contact us via dataprotection@welshwomensaid.org.uk.