Welsh Women's Aid
External Complaints & Comments Policy Document

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1. Purpose & principles

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.

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.

2. Who can use this policy?

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').

What this policy covers:

- Complaints and comments about WWA from WWA members, other external stakeholders and individuals.
- 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 based on any protected characteristics.

This policy does not cover:

- 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.
- Complaints regarding conduct or the quality of service related to a service carrying the WWA National Quality Service Standards accreditation. This should be dealt with under the WWA National Quality Service Standards complaints policy and procedure.
- Complaints or concerns about a safeguarding issue. WWA staff receiving a complaint about an incident or safeguarding issue should follow the WWA Safeguarding Policy.

- 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.

3. 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, 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.
- Dealing with all complaints fairly and transparently.
- Investigating any complaint promptly, and work to put things right as soon as possible, wherever possible adhering to any timeframes agreed.
- Keeping 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.
- Monitoring the outcomes 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.
- Ensuring 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.

- Ensuring 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.

4. Complaint procedures

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 selecting the extension of the HR Manager.

In all cases we will respond within 5 working days.

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.

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 will be advised prior to doing this that, if their complaint is about a member of staff, it may lead to an investigation under WWA's disciplinary process.

5. 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.

6. Unresolved complaint 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.

7. Monitoring complaints & comments

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.

8. Data protection complaints policy

WWA sets our data retention schedule and all other details relating to the processing of your data in relation to any complaint, feedback or comments in our privacy notice below:

This policy outlines how individuals or companies can raise concerns about the way WWA handles personal data and how these concerns will be addressed in line with the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 (DUAA) and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).

WWA is a company registered in England and Wales with company number (07483469) and whose registered office is Pendragon House, Caxton Place, Pentwyn, Cardiff, CF23 8XE. WWA is the data controller of personal information we collect. WWA is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office as a data controller under reference: Z9316525.

Scope:

This policy applies to any personal data we are processing as a data controller. This will include the personal data of the following categories of data subject:

- Prospects, including their representatives and employees
- Clients, including their representatives, employees, and former employees
- Suppliers, including their representatives and employees
- ACAS, Employment Tribunals, the Employment Appeal Tribunal and their representatives

Complaints may relate to:

- Inaccurate or outdated personal information
- Unlawful data sharing
- Failure to respond to a data subject request, including Subject Access Requests (SARs) or Subject Erasure Requests (SERs)
- Excessive data retention
- Inappropriate use of profiling, automated decision making or artificial intelligence
- Breach of data protection rights

How to make a complaint:

For any queries, concerns, or complaints you may have about how WWA collects, uses or stores your personal information, you can contact our team at dataprotection@welshwomensaid.org.uk.

Data protection:

Welsh Women's Aid Pendragon House Caxton Place, Pentwyn, Cardiff CF23 8XE

For ease of the investigation, please kindly provide the following information:

- Full name
- Contact details

- Description of your concerns
- Any supporting evidence

Without the above information, we may not be able to complete a full investigation or contact you for further information or with a response.

If the complaint is made on behalf of someone else, such as a solicitor on behalf of a client, proof of authority to act must be provided.

Identity verification:

To protect personal data, WWA may request ID verification before investigating a complaint.

Links to other websites:

The WWA website contains links to other websites that are not run by us. These websites should have their own privacy and cookie notices for you to read. We do not have any responsibility for how these websites or organisations process your personal information.

Acknowledgement and response times:

Complaints will be acknowledged within 5 working days.

A full response will be provided without undue delay within 30 calendar days, unless complexity requires more time.

If there is likely to be a delay, we will inform the complainant about our progress and ensure that we have a clear record of communication with the complainant.

Investigation process:

The Data Protection Officer (DPO) will review the complaint. Relevant stakeholders at WWA will be consulted as part of the investigation.

If the DPO is directly named in the complaint, the review will instead be undertaken by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or a named Trustee.

The complainant will be informed of the outcome and any remedial actions taken.

Escalation:

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome, they may escalate the matter to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO):

The Information Commissioners Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Tel: 0303 123 1113 (Local Rate) ICO website: www.ico.org.uk

Record keeping:

All complaints and outcomes will be logged securely and retained in line with WWA's existing retention for complaints.