



Standard Operating Procedure

Complaints Feedback and Comments Policy & Procedure

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Welsh Women's Aid Internal

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1. Purpose

This policy and procedure sets out how Welsh Women's Aid (WWA) will manage and respond to complaints, feedback and comments from service users, members and other stakeholders, and other individuals, about WWA services and how these will be used to improve the range and quality of services we provide. It also sets out how individuals or agencies can take up matters they think are unsatisfactory about the service received from WWA.

2. Introduction

WWA policies set out a framework of principles within which the particular area of work will be carried out. This includes the organisation's broad style and approach to the issue, including any aims and guiding principles.

3. Aims and Principles

WWA seeks to provide a responsive service, to meet the needs of members, service users, stakeholders and other organisations, which is delivered within the scope of our charitable objects, strategic plan and funder requirements.

WWA aims to provide high quality services, whilst having regard to promoting equality and addressing discrimination, and in compliance with occupational standards and accreditation frameworks where relevant, e.g. PQASSO, National Quality Service Standards.

WWA welcomes comments and feedback from service users, members, individuals and organisations about the service they have received, or the services we provide. This will enable us not only to deal with the specific problem, but also help us to continually improve our quality of service.

Positive feedback and comments will be collated and evaluated, in order to attain, maintain and develop quality service delivery.

Complaints about the quality or standard of service we provide will be investigated and responded to promptly, and will be used to improve our practice and approach as necessary.

WWA is committed to:

1. Encouraging service users, members and other stakeholders to come forward with any comments, feedback or complaints about the services delivered in order to make sure that quality is protected and service users' needs are appropriately met.
2. Monitor all comments, feedback and complaints to ensure that they are used to improve the range and quality of service delivery on a continuous basis.

3. Ensuring that all service users, members and other stakeholders have access to clear information on how to voice comments, feedback or complaints. Service users in particular will be provided with the support they need in order to make their views known. WWA will also ensure that no service users are disadvantaged or treated less favourably as a result of complaining or making comments.
4. Actively encouraging service users, members and other stakeholders to comment and provide feedback on the services we provide. We will do this in a number of ways:
 - Publicising this policy and that managers ensure information is available to clearly explain the procedure for making a complaint.
 - Responding to and recording verbal comments, complaints and feedback from service users and other stakeholders, agencies or funders, in a Comments Log held locally. All staff will be required to record comments in the log book that will be monitored by the relevant manager and will be reported on to the senior manager on a monthly basis.
 - Providing comments/suggestions boxes in all our premises which are used by service users, and encouraging service users to use the comments/suggestions box.
 - Encouraging and supporting service users to complete an Exit Survey, upon leaving the service, taking into account communication support needs.
 - Providing regular meetings with service users where they will be encouraged to offer feedback about their experiences of using our services.
 - Ensuring evaluation of all formal events, workshops, training sessions, and conferences attended by members, service users and other stakeholders.
 - Monitoring feedback and comments and reporting back on progress and, where possible, on the outcome of any feedback received that required action.
 - Ensuring service users, members and other stakeholders will be enabled to make comments and complaints through a process that meets the needs of the diverse communities we serve. This may include providing translated information, interpretation (including sign language interpretation), and information in alternative formats, where necessary.

WWA wants to deal fairly and transparently with complainants and also 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 advisor will take the necessary steps to protect staff and the charity.

4. Procedures

4.1 Dealing with complaints and comments from service users

If a service user wishes to complain or make a comment about the services received by WWA direct services, or any other aspect of the experience whilst being supported by WWA, this can be done by initially speaking with a Support Worker or raising this with the Service Delivery Manager who will then explain the next steps to the service user.

Complaints and comments are generally related to the service. If a complaint is about the conduct of a particular member of staff it would trigger an investigation by management as per HR and associated disciplinary processes. This policy will be followed where appropriate after the service user has put their complaint in writing. 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.

Should the service user not feel comfortable discussing the complaint with a Support Worker for whatever reason, the complaint can go to the Service Delivery Manager initially or to the Regional Services Manager, the HR Manager or Director of Operations and Business Development.

Once a service user wishing to complain has approached a Support Worker, they must first establish if the complaint or comment is a minor matter which can be rectified simply and without conflict. In such cases, there may be no need to seek a written version of the complaint/comment. This should be discussed and agreed with the service user making the complaint/comment. Such cases are most likely to be situations where a service user is requesting a service rather than making a complaint, strictly speaking. However, all complaints / comments must be recorded in the relevant log, with the action / resolution take and raised with the line manager.

In cases where the Support Worker has been approached about a more serious issue that is a formal complaint and not a request for a service, they must establish whether the service user would like assistance in putting the complaint in writing. No pressure should be exerted on her to do this on her own but she can be offered the opportunity to sit down together and record the complaint – the service user giving the details and the Support Worker recording these details and reading them back for confirmation before seeking the service users' signature that what has been recorded is accurate.

If the Support Worker, within the boundaries of her delegated authority, can resolve the complaint she should attempt to do so, but must also inform her manager of the complaint. If the complaint cannot be resolved like this or the complaint is about staff, the Line Manager must lead on resolving the complaint.

If the complaint is about the line manager or a senior manager a higher manager must lead on resolving the complaint.

Whichever member of staff is trying to resolve the complaint, they should follow these guidelines:

- Record accurate information from the service user about the incident. Also ask for the service user's views about how they would like the complaint resolved.
- Set clear timescales for resolving the complaint and when a response can be made and let the service user know these. In general this first stage complaint should be resolved in a maximum of 5 working days. Where this is not possible due to complexities then other timescales should be agreed at the outset.

- If the complaint is the result of a poor service or an error by WWA, this should be rectified immediately and an apology made to the service user.
- Following a thorough investigation and advice from HR if the complaint is considered unjustified by WWA, this should be put in writing to the service user, including the reasons why the complaint was not upheld.

In all cases, the member of staff with support from HR must reply to the service user letting them know the outcome of the complaint. The service user should be told this in writing but should be given support in discussing and understanding the situation with a member of staff to ensure that she feels an acceptable resolution has been found.

4.2 If a complaint about WWA from a service user remains unresolved

If it has not been possible to achieve a resolution to the service user's complaint that is satisfactory to both them and WWA, they should be advised that they can proceed to the next stage of the process if she wishes to pursue the matter.

If the initial complaint was made to a Support Worker 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 Service User's complaint is:

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

Once the service user's complaint has been investigated, 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 this stage two complaint should be 28 days for giving a written outcome to the person concerned. If this is not possible then alternative timescales will be agreed, explaining the reasons for this, at the outset.

4.3 Complaints regarding a breach of WWA National Quality Service Standards

Complaints regarding action, conduct or quality of service related to members that are specialist services carrying the WWA National Quality Service Standards, fall under the WWA National Quality Service Standards complaints policy and procedure.

4.4 Complaints from a service user about another service user

These should be dealt with using the local policies and agreements that are in place.

4.5 Complaints from a staff members about other staff members

Staff members should use the Grievance Procedure and associated HR policies in cases where they have a complaint about the behaviour of either a colleague or the Line Manager.

4.6 Dealing with complaints from members and other stakeholders or individuals

If a member or other stakeholder or any individual wishes to complain about the services received from WWA, this should be done in writing wherever possible. Written complaints should be sent (marked as private and confidential) to the WWA Director of Business Development and Operations via post to: Welsh Women's Aid, Pendragon House, Caxton Place, Pentwyn, Cardiff, CF23 8XE; or via email to HR@welshwomensaid.org.uk. This will then be dealt with by the most appropriate Senior Manager. A complaint should provide as much detail as possible of what the problem is and how the complainant would like to see it resolved. The attached form (appendix 5.3) can be used to provide specific details, when general concerns have been raised, so that the complaint can be investigated consistently and transparently.

If a complaint is about the conduct of a particular member of staff this would trigger an investigation by management as per our HR process. The stakeholder should be advised that this may lead to an investigation under HR or associated disciplinary processes.

If the Senior Manager, within the boundaries of her delegated authority, can resolve the complaint she should attempt to do so at the earliest opportunity.

If the complaint is about a Senior Manager, Director or CEO, a higher manager or Chair of the Trustees must lead on resolving the complaint, as appropriate.

The following guidelines should then be followed:

- Accurate information should be provided by the member or other stakeholder regarding the details of their complaint, where possible using appendix 5.3 to set out the details, to aid the investigation.
- Clear timescales should be set for resolving the complaint by the investigating manager, and the member or other stakeholder should be informed when a response will be made. An initial response to the complaint should be provided within 5 working days. Full investigations will aim to be completed between 10 and 28 working days depending on the complaint. Where this is not possible, due to complexities associated with the investigation, then alternative timescales should be agreed at the outset.
- If the complaint is the result of a poor service or an error made by WWA, this should be rectified immediately and an apology offered to the member or other stakeholder.
- Following a thorough investigation and advice from HR, the investigating manager will write to the complainant summarising what investigations have been carried out and what action, if any, is proposed to resolve the matter. If the complaint is found by

WWA to be unsubstantiated, this should also be put in writing to the complainant, detailing the reason(s) why the complaint was not upheld.

- If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome they should be informed that they may pursue the complaint further and should contact either the HR Manager or the CEO to discuss this further, or in cases involving those officers, the Chair of the Board. If warranted, they will appoint a nominated reviewing officer or Trustee (as appropriate) to review how the complaint was handled and the decision made, who will seek further clarification from the parties involved. The reviewing officer will notify the complainant of their decision within 28 working days, or a timescale agreed between both parties. The reviewing officer's decision is final.

4.7 Monitoring complaints and comments and using feedback to improve services

Each time a complaint or comment is made in writing, it should be recorded in the complaints record by the member of staff who receives it and is dealing with it.

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
 - Identifying gaps in service provision
- Service reviews (timing will be dependent on the cycle of review)
- Reviews of policies and procedures

The content of the complaints record should also be reported to:

- SMT
- Service user participation groups on at least an annual basis, to review service user complaints and outcomes or improvements made
- The relevant service commissioner as agreed in the contract agreement
- The relevant landlord on an annual basis (where applicable)

4.8 Dealing with critical incidents involving service users

WWA expects any service to send details of any incidents involving service users, if any of the following happened, to the Director of Business Development and Operations and the CEO immediately following the incident:

- Any serious accident or injury sustained by the service user either within or outside of the service location
- Any serious accident or injury sustained by the service user while a service provider or support worker is attending on the service user for the purposes of the provision of the support to them
- An incident which is reported to, or is investigated by the police
- Any formal complaint about or allegation of misconduct by the service or any person who works for the purposes of the support service or lives or is a tenant within the service location
- A serious safeguarding incident



5.2 Example of Incident Report Form

Incident Report Form

This form is to be used by staff having experienced verbal or physical abuse, threatening behaviour or a stressful situation, which may or not have been personally threatening.

Details of person completing form:

Name:	
Post:	
Date & Time of incident:	

Yes No

1	Was there violence to staff		
2	Was there any potential violence to staff		
3	Was there violence between residents		
4	Was there violence involving other individuals		
5	Did the incident have the potential for physical violence		
6	Did anyone sustain any injuries for which treatment was necessary		
7	Was this a particular stressful experience		
8	Was there any damage to organisation property		
9	Was there any potential for damage to organisation property		

Were there any contributing factors (please tick all relevant)

Alcohol	
Drugs	
Mental Health	

Were the emergency services involved/called (please tick all relevant)

Fire	
Ambulance	
Police	

Were any other services contacted (please tick all relevant)

On Call - Name	
Partner Agencies Please list:	

Name and Room number of other people involved in this incident:

Name	Room Number	Role played in Incident, e.g. Victim, Assailant, Witness



What Happened?

Number of Pages: 1

Report sent to:

Signed:

Date:

Incident Reporting Form – Welsh Women's Aid

Additional information Noted by:

Other Staff Members:

Manager:

Health & Safety Officer

Appendix 5.3

Membership complaints			
Membership details (organisation and contact names/details):			
General issue raised	Substantive detail: to include specific nature of issues & feedback to enable investigation to take place (to be completed by member organisation)	Employees to which the issues refer (if applicable)	Dates which substantive issues refer to
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			