



Welsh Women's Aid

National Quality Service Standards Complaints Policy

Introduction

Welsh Women's Aid expects members to provide high quality services in a non-discriminatory way. Welsh Women's Aid operates a complaints process for members that have been awarded the Welsh Women's Aid Quality Mark against the Welsh Women's Aid (WWA) National Quality Service Standards (NQSS).

This complaints process is intended to be used when an organisation or individual wishes to complain about the action, conduct or quality of service of an organisation carrying the Welsh Women's Aid Quality Mark.

WWA National Quality Service Standards

A member organisation that carries the Welsh Women's Aid's Quality Mark has been assessed against the WWA National Quality Service Standards by an independent assessor who has reported to a NQSS Panel that the organisation meets the National Quality Service Standards in full. Welsh Women's Aid reserves the right to withdraw its Quality Mark where there is evidence of a breach of any of the National Quality Service Standards.

We take all complaints regarding our members seriously and ensure that they are promptly responded to and investigated at an appropriate level. We are committed to take action to reduce the likelihood of a recurrence of similar problems.

If an organisation with the Welsh Women's Aid Quality Mark refuses to co-operate with this complaints policy, Welsh Women's Aid reserves the right to withdraw the Quality Mark from the organisation with immediate effect.

Complaints Procedure

1. In most circumstances a complainant should follow the internal complaints procedure of the organisation being complained about first, if the matter of concern is covered by that procedure.
2. If the complainant wishes to tell Welsh Women's Aid, they are using an organisation's complaints process, they are welcome to do so. Welsh Women's Aid will inform the organisation that they are aware that a complaint is in progress.

3. If the complainant is not satisfied with the process or outcome of the organisation's investigation, they may complain to the Welsh Women's Aid NQSS Panel once the internal complaints process has been completed.
4. Any complaint following an internal complaints process should be made to the Welsh Women's Aid NQSS Panel as soon as possible after receiving the outcome of the organisation's internal complaints process and, in any event, **within three months** of the outcome of that process.
5. Anyone who feels that an organisation carrying the Welsh Women's Aid Quality Mark:
 - a) has not dealt with their complaint adequately, **or**
 - b) has breached an element of the National Quality Service Standards not covered by the organisation's internal complaints process,

should contact the Chair of the Welsh Women's Aid's NQSS Panel in writing (contact details below), via email, fax or post, outlining:

- i) the nature of their complaint and the element(s) of the National Quality Service Standards that are alleged to have been breached;
 - ii) the attempts that have been made to use the organisation's internal complaints process and the response from the member organisation;
 - iii) the organisation's Complaints Policy and Procedures, if available.
6. Upon receipt of a written complaint regarding an accredited organisation, the Chair of the NQSS Panel will:
 - a) acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing **within three weeks**, outlining Welsh Women's Aid's powers and limitations regarding the matter and the process that will be followed;
 - b) contact the organisation concerned **within three weeks** of receiving the complaint to inform them of the complaint made against them and to suspend the Quality Mark pending an investigation;
 - c) request information regarding any internal complaints process followed, if relevant. Welsh Women's Aid expects to receive this information **within three weeks** of the request being made.
 7. The Chair of the NQSS Panel will appoint an investigator to investigate the complaint who will not be a member of the NQSS Panel. The investigation will include:
 - a) contacting the complainant to clarify the complaint and gather evidence of the alleged breach of the National Quality Service Standards;
 - b) contacting the organisation to gather responses and information about the alleged misconduct.



8. During the investigation the investigator and Welsh Women's Aid will consider any safety or safeguarding issues that may arise, take appropriate action and endeavour to minimise any potential risks.
9. The complainant may be accompanied by a friend, representative or other supporter in all interactions with the investigator.
10. The investigator will report to the NQSS Panel. The Panel members will make a decision about whether the complaint is proven. If they find that it is, they will decide if the Quality Mark should be withdrawn and if any further action in relation to the organisation or the complainant is recommended.
11. The complainant and the member organisation will be notified in writing of the outcome of the investigation.
12. If any party is dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation, they can appeal to the Chief Executive Officer **within one calendar month** of the decision. After consideration of an appeal, the decision of the Chief Executive Officer will be final; there will not be any further recourse to appeal within Welsh Women's Aid.
13. Welsh Women's Aid will maintain a confidential record of all complaints and the outcomes of any investigations and appeals.

Contact

If or you would like further information about this complaints procedure, please contact membership@welshwomensaid.org.uk.

If you wish to make a complaint about an organisation carrying the Welsh Women's Aid Quality Mark, please write to the Chair of NQSS Panel, Welsh Women's Aid, Pendragon House, Caxton Place, Pentwyn, Cardiff, CF23 8XE, or at eleributler@welshewomensaid.org.uk.