



**Supporting
women and children
in West Cornwall**

Complaints Policy

1. Complaints Policy Statement

West Cornwall Women's Aid (WCWA):

- is committed to providing services of a good standard to service users, other agencies and organisations
- will take seriously any concern or complaint about WCWA's services and will look into it promptly, for resolution as quickly as practicable
- recognises that all service users, agencies and organisations have the right to raise concerns or complaints about WCWA's services and need access to clear information on how to voice complaints and concerns
- will ensure WCWA's concerns and complaints procedure is open to everyone who receives or requests a service from WCWA and to people acting on their behalf
- will deal with complaints in accordance with WCWA's policies
- will keep a register of all complaints, which will be reviewed at each meeting of the Governance Sub-Committee of the Board of Trustees
- will make reviewing concerns and complaints part of the process of monitoring the quality, effectiveness and non-discriminatory nature of its services
- will require all staff, volunteers and Trustees to read, understand and comply with this policy and its procedures

2. Introduction

2.1 WCWA strives for good standards in service delivery and welcomes feedback from individuals, users of our services, stakeholders, funding bodies and anyone who works with us, on all aspects of our services. Such feedback is invaluable in helping us evaluate and improve our work.

2.2 The objectives of WCWA complaints policy and procedures are to:

- Ensure everyone knows how to make a complaint and how a complaint will be handled
- Ensure that complaints are dealt with consistently, fairly and sensitively within clear time frames
- Provide individuals with a fair and effective way to complain about our work
- Ensure that complaints are monitored to improve our services

2.3 WCWA will ensure that we:



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Supporting women and children in West Cornwall

- Listen carefully to complaints and treat complaints as confidential, where possible
- Record, store and manage all complaints accurately and in accordance with the Data protection Act
- Investigate the complaint fully, objectively and within the stated time frame
- Notify the complainant of the results of the investigation and any right of appeal
- Inform the complainant of any action that will be implemented
- Report on an annual basis to the Board of Trustees, the number of complaints received, the outcomes and any actions taken.

3. Definition of a complaint

3.1 A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction by an individual, whether justified or not.

3.2 An individual may make a complaint if they feel WCWA has:

- Failed to provide a service or an acceptable standard of service or made a mistake in the way the service was provided
- Failed to act in a proper way
- Provided an unfair service

3.3 This policy and procedure relates only to complaints received about WCWA and its services.

4. Concern or Complaint

4.1 It is important to establish the difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage will reduce the likelihood of their developing into formal complaints.

4.2 Concerns about our work should be reported to a staff worker or their manager as soon as possible, so they can quickly understand any concerns and try to put things right.

4.3 If the complainant is not happy with the response to their concern and/or they want to make a formal complaint the procedure below should be followed.

5. Complaints Procedure

5.1 If a person or organisation wishes to make a complaint about the behaviour, action of a member of staff, a volunteer or any aspect of West Cornwall Women's





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women and children
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Aid's service we would encourage them, in the first instance, to talk to the person concerned, informally and try to resolve the situation. **If** they are dissatisfied by the response they receive or feel unable to raise the matter with the person concerned then the complaint can be made in writing. The complainant can do this by writing us a letter telling us about what the issue is and what they would like us to do about it. Details of who the complaint should be addressed to can be found in section 6, point 2.

5.2 There are three stages to the complaint's procedure:

- Stage One – the complaint
- Stage Two – investigation
- Stage Three – appeal

6. Stage One - Complaint

6.1 The complaint must be made in writing and can either be written by the person wishing to make the complaint or if the individual prefers they can tell someone at WCWA, or someone else, who will write it down for them. If the complaint is written by someone other than the person making the complaint transcribed by a third party, WCWA may require verification of the complaint

6.2 Individuals wishing to make a complaint should either write to West Cornwall Women's Aid, PO Box 94, Penzance TR18 2XP or send an email to the manager of the person who provided the service at their direct email address below:

Community Services Manager – communityservices@wcwaid.co.uk

Refuge Manager – refugemanager@wcwaid.co.uk

Clinical Therapy Lead (Counselling) – counsellingmanager@wcwaid.co.uk

Finance Manager – admin@wcwaid.co.uk

Development Manager – development@wcwaid.co.uk

In the event that the relevant manager is absent, the complaint will be dealt with by the manager of another service of equivalent standing.

6.3 If the complaint is about a manager, the complaint should be made to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), by email to manager@wcwaid.co.uk or by writing to West Cornwall Women's Aid, PO BOX 94, Penzance TR18 2XP. If the complaint is about the CEO the complaint should be made to the Board of Trustees at trustees@wcwaid.co.uk.

6.4 The complaint must include the complainant's name and address and the nature and date of the complaint and how they want to see it resolved.] The complaints





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in West Cornwall**

form can be requested and can be sent to the complainant or collected by the complainant.

6.5 On receipt, each complaint will be logged on the complaints register. The line manager will write to the complainant, acknowledging receipt of the complaint, as soon as possible and within 5 working days of receiving it.

7. Stage Two - Investigation

7.1 All complaints at this stage will be investigated by a line manager. They may need to speak with the complainant by telephone or in person and may invite the complainant to a meeting. If the complainant is invited to a meeting they may bring a supporter with them to the meeting.

7.2 Within 15 working days of WCWA receiving the complaint a manager will write to the complainant outlining their findings and the action WCWA will take, including any recommendations/remedies made, such as reviewing of policies, staff development and training or appropriate improvement to our services.

7.3 Where the complaint is upheld an apology should be offered.

7.4 Occasionally investigations may take longer, particularly if the complaint is complex. Should this be the case a holding letter will be sent after ten working days and a final date given for a conclusion to be reached.

7.5 If an individual remains dissatisfied with the outcome from Stage Two they can appeal within fourteen working days of the date of the outcome and progress to Stage Three.

7.6 The complaints register will be updated, and any pending complaints flagged so they are followed up

8. Stage Three - Appeal

8.1 If the complaint cannot be resolved to the complainant's satisfaction at stage two, or if the manager feels that the complaint is of a very serious nature, or concerns a service leader, then it will be referred to the CEO.

8.2 If the complaint is about the CEO then the matter should be referred to the Board of Trustees.

Board of Trustees – trustees@wcwaid.co.uk





**Supporting
women and children
in West Cornwall**

8.3 The CEO (or the Chair of Trustees in the event that the complaint concerns the CEO) will acknowledge receipt of the review request within 10 working days, they will review the Stage Two investigation and recommend one of the following actions within 30 working days (from the date the complainant stated they wanted to take the complaint to stage 3):

- Uphold the action taken at Stage Two
- Make changes to the Stage Two recommendation/actions
- The complainant will be informed in writing of the outcome of Stage Three

9. Stage Four – Further Appeal

9.1 If the complaint cannot be resolved to the complainant's satisfaction at Stage Three, then it will be referred to the Chair of Trustees.

9.2 The Chair of Trustees will acknowledge receipt of the review request within 10 working days, they will review the Stage Three investigation and recommend one of the following actions within 30 working days (from the date the complainant stated they wanted to take the complaint to Stage 4):

- Uphold the action taken at Stage Three
- Make changes to the Stage Three recommendation/actions

9.3 The complainant should be informed in writing of the outcome of Stage Four and the decision reached about this complaint will then be final but other options available to the complainant (as listed below) should be detailed in the letter.

9.4 If after WCWA has been through the four stages and the complainant is still not satisfied with the result, they should be advised that there is no further right of appeal with WCWA but they could approach any of the following agencies for advice:

- A solicitor
- Citizens Advice Bureau

This should be done within one month of receiving the outcome from the appeal.

10. Anonymous complaints



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women and children
in West Cornwall**

10.1 Complaints received anonymously will be recorded and considered, but action may be limited if further information is required to ensure a full and fair investigation.

11. Data protection

11.1 To process a complaint WCWA will hold personal data about the complainant, which the individual provides, and which other people give in response to the complaint. We will hold this data securely and only use it to address the complaint. The identity of the person making the complaint will only be known to those who need to consider the complaint and will not be revealed to other people or made public. However, it may not be possible to preserve confidentiality in some circumstances, for example, where relevant legislation applied or allegations are made which involve the conduct of third parties.

11.2 WCWA will normally destroy complaints files in a secure manner 7 years after the complaint has been closed.

12. Monitoring

12.1 Complaints are an important tool which, alongside data provided by exit surveys, stakeholder surveys, user feedback and focus groups, will allow us to learn about the services we provide. They provide a useful source of information about how individuals see our services and how we are serving them. To ensure we can learn from complaints the following data will be collected:

- Name and address
- Name of person dealing with the complaint
- Date of complaint and response
- Nature of complaint
- Action(s) taken/recommendations made in response to the complaint
- Lessons learnt

12.2 Complaints information will be considered on a regular basis by the Management Team and reported annually to the WCWA Board of Trustees. Wherever possible the data will be used to improve and develop the service.





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