



COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURES

**This policy was approved by Board of Directors:
Reviewed:**

**June 2006
March 2010
August 2013
August 2016
September 2019
September 2022**

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Causeway & Mid-Ulster & Causeway & Mid-Ulster & Mid-Ulster Women's Aid is committed to providing a range of high quality residential and support services to women, children and young people affected by domestic violence.
- 1.2. Causeway & Mid-Ulster & Mid-Ulster Women's Aid encourages open communication and involvement by service users and stakeholders in the organisation. It is important that good communication is encouraged between all staff (paid and unpaid), residents in refuge, users of other services, stakeholders and members of the general public with whom our work brings us into contact. Comments and/or complaints help the organisation to improve and further develop practice and service.
- 1.3. Causeway & Mid-Ulster & Mid-Ulster Women's Aid has a duty to operate in accordance with legal requirements and ensure all issues of concern and/or complaints are fully investigated in a fair, open and equitable manner.
- 1.4. Causeway & Mid-Ulster & Mid-Ulster Women's Aid welcome complaints about the service that it provides. The organisation and staff view complaints as a positive feedback tool and thereby a way to continually improve the service.

2.0 POLICY STATEMENT

- 2.1 Causeway & Mid-Ulster & Mid-Ulster Women's Aid will promote a positive culture to ensure that staff understand both policy and procedure, are trained and supported and that front-line staff, where appropriate, are able to resolve matters directly and speedily to the satisfaction of the service user without recourse to the formal complaints procedure.
- 2.2 Causeway & Mid-Ulster & Mid-Ulster Women's Aid will accept comments and/or complaints verbally, in person or by telephone; in writing by letter or on the standard Complaints form (see appendix 1) or in any reasonable format which meets service users' needs. We will also accept comments/complaints submitted by advocates and others on behalf of a service user.
- 2.3 Causeway & Mid-Ulster & Mid-Ulster Women's Aid will ensure that all service users and stakeholders have access to clear information on how to voice complaints and/or comments.
- 2.4 Service users will be provided with the support they need in order to make their views known.
- 2.5 Service users should not suffer a penalty for making a comment/complaint. Every effort will be made to ensure that service users making a comment/complaint will not be victimised. Any complaint of victimisation will be dealt with seriously, promptly and confidentially.
- 2.6 Residents of the refuge and users of all other Causeway & Mid-Ulster & Mid-Ulster Women's Aid services have the right to expect confidentiality in the handling of their comments/complaints or comments/complaints made against them except in those circumstances identified within the Confidentiality Policy.

2.7 Some issues and concerns are managed more appropriately through specific policies relating to the work of Causeway & Mid-Ulster Women's Aid. This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies and procedures:

- Safeguarding / Child Protection
- Code of Conduct for Employers & Employees
- Confidentiality
- Disciplinary & Grievance
- Equal Opportunities for Service Users
- Financial Management
- Harassment in the Workplace
- Health & Safety
- Safeguarding / Protection from Abuse
- Volunteering
- Whistleblowing
- Service refusal procedures

3.0 IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY

3.1 The CEO of Causeway & Mid-Ulster & Mid-Ulster Women's Aid has specific responsibility for the effective implementation of this policy. We expect all staff (paid and unpaid) to abide by the policy and help create and maintain a quality service which meets the needs of women, children and young people affected by domestic violence and fulfill our responsibilities to other stakeholders. In order to implement this policy, we will ensure that:

- All staff, paid and unpaid, are made aware of the comments and complaints policy during induction training;
- The senior manager/line managers understand and fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with the comments and complaints policy and procedures; and
- All staff understand the policy and procedures and are able to fulfil their responsibilities. Appropriate training on the policy, its promotion, the procedures and monitoring will be provided to all staff.

3.2 Causeway & Mid-Ulster Women's Aid will take every appropriate opportunity to promote and publicise the comments and complaints policy to all services users and other stakeholders. In particular, it will make use of relevant promotional literature; and train and encourage staff to identify possible sources of complaint and/or opportunities to receive feedback from service users.

3.3 Causeway & Mid-Ulster Women's Aid will ensure this policy is available in leaflet form for all service users. The comments & complaints form (See Appendix 3) is available to service users wanting to make a formal complaint in all Causeway & Mid-Ulster Women's Aid services and premises.

3.4 If Causeway & Mid-Ulster Women's Aid is contracted to provide services on behalf of other organisations, it may be necessary to take account of their respective complaints policies. Where appropriate, complainants will be advised of this.

3.5 A breach of the comments and complaints policy and procedures by staff will be regarded as misconduct and may lead to disciplinary action.

4.0 PROCEDURES - See appendices 1 -

5.0 MONITORING & REVIEW

5.1 The policy will be reviewed on a regular basis to identify areas for improvement and where appropriate to make changes.

PROCEDURES

Appendix 1

MANAGING COMMENTS and/or COMPLAINTS from SERVICE USERS/ Third Parties

1.0 General

- 1.1 All service users/ third parties using the comments and complaints procedure will be advised of their right to be accompanied or represented at all stages of this procedure by a Causeway & Mid-Ulster Women's Aid staff member, friend or family member.
- 1.2 If a service user does not wish to be supported in making their complaint by any of the above they have the right to seek independent advocacy and/or support from any external agency such as health professionals, social services or the Citizens Advice Bureau. Contact details for local agencies will be provided on request.

2.0 Informal Stage

- 2.1 Staff receive and respond to comments and complaints on a day-to-day basis and, more often than not, are able to resolve a wide range of issues to the satisfaction of the service user. As a first means of resolving complaints the following informal process will be followed:
 - Where a service user has a comment and/or complaint about the service she is receiving, she should, in the first instance, speak with a project worker.
 - If the service user does not feel comfortable discussing her comment and/or complaint with a project worker, she should raise the matter with the project manager.
 - If there is not a satisfactory resolution of the comment and/or complaint within five working days, the following formal procedure should be followed.

Formal Stage - Stage One

The formal procedure is appropriate if the comment and/or complaint is serious, if the person making the complaint prefers this approach, or if the informal stage has not satisfactorily resolved the issue. Only complaints received in writing can be addressed through the following formal procedure:

- All formal comments and/or complaints will be sent to the project or line manager. This

may be the same person who responded during the informal procedure.

- A staff member may support a service user making a complaint to complete a comment and/or complaint form and this will be made available on request.
- The project or line manager will acknowledge receipt of the comment and/or complaint in writing; investigate the comment and/or complaint; and inform the service user of the outcome and any action taken as a result within ten working days (both verbally and in writing).
- Where a complaint is being made against a line manager the complaint should be sent to the Chief Executive Officer who will allocate the investigation of the complaint to another member of the Senior Management Team
- Where a complaint is being made against the Chief Executive Officer the complaint should be sent to the Chairperson of Causeway & Mid-Ulster Women's Aid.
- If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome and feels that the matter should be taken further, the next stage is to make a further complaint to the Chief Executive Officer in writing within 14 days.
- If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome and the original complaint was against the Chief Executive Officer a further complaint must be made to the Chairperson of the Management Committee in writing within 14 days and the Chairperson will move to Stage Three of the process detailed below.

Formal Stage - Stage Two

- The Chief Executive Officer will investigate the complaint; what procedures were followed; and inform the service user of the outcome in writing within ten working days.
- If the service user remains dissatisfied with the outcome at stage two, she may make an appeal in writing to the Chairperson of Causeway & Mid-Ulster Women's Aid within 14 days.

3.3 Stage three - Appeal

- The Chairperson will convene an appeal panel of members of the Committee which will investigate the comment/complaint; what procedures were followed; and inform the service user of the outcome in writing within thirty working days.
- The decision of the appeal panel will be final and no further right of appeal will exist internally to Causeway & Mid-Ulster Women's Aid.

3.4 External Appeal

- Having used all the internal mechanisms for appeal, if the service user is making a complaint about an issue guided by legislation e.g. Health & Safety, and is still dissatisfied with the outcome at stage three they may be able to raise their complaint with the relevant governing body e.g. The Health & Safety Executive
- In all appropriate cases the service user will be informed of this opportunity in the letter of outcome detailed in Stage Three which will include all the relevant contact details to facilitate this.
- All complainants will be provided with contact details for Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman as a minimum.

4.0 Monitoring Comments and Complaints

- 4.1 Each comment and/or complaint made in writing will be recorded within a comments and/or complaints log book by the staff member managing it.
- 4.2 Senior Management Team report monthly to the Management Committee on any comments or complaints received. Ongoing monitoring of the effectiveness of the Comments & Complaints Policy & Procedures will inform future practice and service provision.

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CAUSEWAY & MID-ULSTER & MID-ULSTER WOMEN'S AID
COMPLAINTS FORM

If you wish to make a complaint about any aspect of Causeway & Mid-Ulster Women's Aid work then you can do so informally, by speaking in the first instance to a worker or Project Co-ordinator, or more formally, by completing this form. Our leaflet 'Comments & Complaints' will be forwarded to you on request or on receipt of a complaint which explains the process in full.

Name (or code) of person making complaint: _____

Nature of Complaint (include as much detail as possible i.e. dates, times and places, individuals concerned and corroborating evidence if any)

SAFE contact details for complainant: Telephone : _____ Contact times: _____ Safe correspondence address : _____

Signature of Complainant : _____ Date: _____

Please return this form by email to admin@cmuwa.org.uk.

By post to Causeway & Mid-Ulster Women's Aid, 23 Abbey Street, COLERAINE, BT52 1DU

If you wish to speak to anyone about this matter or have a query about the Complaints Procedure we can also be contacted on: 03003731055 o

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

Date complaint received: _____

Member of staff receiving complaint: _____

Is the complaint Informal or Formal : _____
(if informal please complete section 1, if formal please complete section 2)

Section 1 : INFORMAL COMPLAINTS

Date letter of acknowledgement was sent: _____

Outline Investigation into Complaint



Action Taken including outcome

[illegible]

Date of Feedback to Complainant: _____

Has client indicated that they wish to pursue a formal complaint? YES / NO
(if yes please complete section2)

Name: _____ **Position:** _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

SECTION 2 : FORMAL COMPLAINT

STAGE 1

Date complaint received: _____

Member of staff receiving complaint: _____

Date letter of acknowledgement was sent: _____

Appointed Investigator : _____

Outline Investigation into Complaint

Action Taken including outcome

Date of Feedback to Complainant: _____

Name: _____ Position: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

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STAGE 2

Date appeal received: _____

Member of staff receiving complaint: _____

Date letter of acknowledgement was sent: _____

Appointed Investigator : _____

Outline Investigation into Complaint

Action Taken including outcome

Date of Feedback to Complainant: _____

Name: _____ **Position:** _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

STAGE 3

Date appeal received: _____

Member of staff receiving complaint: _____

Date letter of acknowledgement was sent: _____

Appointed Investigator : _____

Outline Investigation into Complaint

Action Taken including outcome

Date of Feedback to Complainant: _____

Name: _____ **Position:** _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

EXTERNAL APPEAL :

Has complainant been informed of all appropriate agencies that they can pursue their complaint with? YES / NO

Has complainant been provided contact details for these agencies? YES / NO

Please list agencies: _____

TEMPLATE LETTER: ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COMPLAINT

Date

Address

Dear

Further to the complaint you made to us which we received on _____.

Causeway & Mid-Ulster Women's Aid treats all complaints very seriously and will carry out an investigation into every complaint lodged.

You can expect to receive information regarding the outcome of your complaint within 5 working days (informal complaints) or 10 working days (formal complaints). If there is any unavoidable delay I will ensure that you are informed of the reason for this.

I have enclosed a copy of our leaflet 'Comments & Complaints' which provides further information on the process.

Yours sincerely

Name

Position

Causeway & Mid-Ulster Women's Aid

Enc.

CAUSEWAY & MID-ULSTER WOMEN'S AID

COMPLAINT REPORT FORM

Interview/Discussion With: _____

Carried Out By: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Position: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

CAUSEWAY & MID-ULSTER WOMEN'S AID

COMPLAINTS OUTCOME FORM

In relation to the complaint made by: _____ on _____

The following has action has been taken.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Position: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Position: _____

TEMPLATE LETTER: OUTCOME OF COMPLAINT

Date

Address

Dear

Further to the complaint you made to us which we received on _____.

I have investigated your complaint and am happy to meet with you to discuss the outcome.

Please contact me to arrange a meeting at your convenience. I can be contacted at the following number:

Following our meeting, if you are unsatisfied with the outcome, you can appeal, in writing, to Sharon Burnett our Chief Executive Officer at 23 Abbey Street, Coleraine BT52 1DU, within 14 days of receiving the outcome of your complaint.

Yours sincerely

Name

Position

Causeway & Mid-Ulster Women's Aid

Enc.