


## COMPLIMENTS & COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURE

<b>Signature</b>		<b>Dated</b>	28 <sup>th</sup> June 2022
<b>Name</b> (on behalf of Board of Trustees)	Nikki Griffiths	<b>Review Date</b>	28 <sup>th</sup> June 2026

**PURPOSE:**

To set out the approach of West Mercia Women's Aid (WMWA) in relation to the raising of compliments and complaints by service users and stakeholders.

**RELATED POLICIES & PROCEDURES:**

Whistle blowing  
 Disciplinary Action Policy & Procedure  
 Performance Management and Capability Policy & Procedure  
 Supervision, Support and Appraisal Policy  
 Induction, Training and Development for Staff Policy  
 Quality Assurance Statement

**INTRODUCTION**

This document contains a policy statement (Part One) and procedural guidance (Part Two). The functions of each are set out briefly below.

**Part One – Policy Statement.** The policy statement sets out the broad framework of principles within which comments and complaints will be recorded and addressed. It sets out the organisation's broad style and approach to the issue, including any aims and guiding principles.

**Part Two – Procedural Guidance.** The procedural guidance sets out the detail for this process. It also sets out the specific tasks involved in undertaking this area of work and identifies who is responsible for carrying them out.

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### PART ONE – POLICY STATEMENT

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**1. Aims & Principles**

- 1.1 The compliments and complaints process allows for situations where individuals (or a group of individuals) have something positive that they wish to raise, and also for situations where an individual (or group of individuals) believe they have a collective

complaint that they wish to pursue. “Individuals” in this context may relate to service users, stakeholders, visitors or members of the public.

- 1.2 WMWA has collective responsibility for the provision of an effective and efficient service to those affected by domestic abuse whom we support, to those visiting our premises, to our stakeholders and to the general public. This is underpinned by our adherence to Women’s Aid Federation England (WAFE) Quality Standards and by WMWA’s commitment to quality.
- 1.3 WMWA aims to provide a fair and open means to resolve concerns where service users or stakeholders feel they have been unfairly treated or discriminated against by the organisation, or disadvantaged by perceived bad practice.
- 1.4 WMWA may receive complaints from those who have been negatively impacted upon by our services as a consequence of the advice and support that WMWA has given to others with whom they have a relationship. WMWA will respond to all complaints, but will remind those who have been, or are complaining on behalf of, perpetrators or alleged perpetrators of domestic abuse, that a valid complaint is one that claims that the organisation has acted in contravention of its Mission and Values. It is entirely consistent with the WMWA Mission and Values that a perpetrator of domestic abuse may, as a consequence of WMWA action, experience a diminution of their status in their relationship with the victim of their abuse. The response to such complaints will be made within this context.
- 1.5 Compliments, comments and complaints form an integral part of both our learning process and our commitment to continuous improvement, and WMWA is committed to using all feedback on service provision to inform our review and planning processes.
- 1.6 If, as a consequence of this process, it is felt that a staff member’s behaviour merits further investigation, this will be dealt with using the appropriate WMWA Policy (see list of related policies and procedures above).

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## **PART TWO – PROCEDURAL GUIDANCE ON RAISING A COMPLIMENT OR COMPLAINT**

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### **1. Compliments**

- 1.1 Compliments are seen as a measure of the success of the service and alongside comments and complaints, are equally considered when planning changes or improvements to services. Compliments also serve to inform service reviews done by the local authority, who fund WMWA services.
- 1.2 Compliments may be received by any member of staff and in a variety of ways, including verbally, on WMWA Comments & Compliments forms and by cards and letters. All compliments are captured and used to inform the evaluation of service performance.

### **2. Comments**

- 2.1 Comments about WMWA services may include positive or negative feedback on the experiences of service users or suggestions and ideas for changes and improvements. Comments are considered alongside complaints and compliments when planning changes or improvements to services.

- 2.2 If a member of staff is approached with a comment, they must first establish if the feedback is a comment or if the commentator intends it to be a complaint. Comments are minor matters that can be rectified simply and without conflict. In such cases, there may be no need to complete a Complaints Form. This should be discussed and agreed with the person making the comment. Such cases are most likely to be situations where a service user is requesting a service rather than making a complaint.
- 2.4 Comments may be received in a variety of ways, including verbally, on WMWA Comments & Complaints forms and by written note or letter.
- 2.5 All recorded comments will be passed to the Data and Admin Manager for recording and reporting. The CEO may contact the person who has made the comment for further information, discussion or to investigate the issue further. They will also ensure that the learning from all complaints is used to inform training and workforce development across the organisation.
- 2.6 All comments requiring a response will be responded to in writing within 14 working days.

### **3. Dealing with Complaints**

- 3.1 Service users, stakeholders, visitors or members of the public may want to make a complaint. This may be because they are very unhappy about some aspect of WMWA services, or because they feel that their comment was not given due consideration or resolved satisfactorily.

### **4. Complaints from Service Users**

- 4.1 Complaints are normally made by current or recent (within the past 12 months) users of WMWA services. However, in exceptional circumstances complaints made by previous service users from over 12 months before the date of the complaint may be considered.

### **5. Stage 1 – Informal Complaint**

- 5.1 If a service user wishes to complain about the services they are receiving, or any other aspect of her experience whilst being supported by WMWA, they can do this informally by speaking with a member of staff in the service that they are using
- 5.2 Should the service user not feel comfortable discussing her complaint with a member of staff in the service that they are using for whatever reason, they can complain to a member of the Leadership Team. They can do this by emailing [general@wmwa.org.uk](mailto:general@wmwa.org.uk) or by calling 01432 356146, which is the Main Office number, and making a request for a member of the Leadership Team to contact them regarding a complaint.
- 5.3 Anyone considering making a complaint may have preliminary confidential discussions with a member of the Leadership Team. If the potential complaint is against a member of the Leadership Team, initial discussions may be requested with the CEO or with a Board Member.
- 5.4 If a member of staff is approached about a comment or complaint, they must establish with the service user which route they would like to take – formal or informal. If it is about a minor issue, and the service user is in agreement, they should follow the procedure above at point 2.3. If it is a more serious issue that is a complaint and not a request for a service, the service user will need to follow the procedure for making a Formal Complaint

5.5 If the Support Worker, within the boundaries of her delegated authority, can resolve the complaint they should attempt to do so.

## **6. Stage 2 – Formal Complaint**

6.1 A formal complaint can be raised by filling in a WMWA Complaint Form (see Appendix 1) setting out the details of the matter and sending this, together with any supporting documentary evidence to a member of staff, manager or to the Chief Executive.

6.2 The Chief Executive will be the Deciding Officer for all complaints. If the complaint concerns the conduct of the CEO, then the complainant should email their concern to [general@wmwa.org.uk](mailto:general@wmwa.org.uk) and ask to be put in contact with the Chair of Trustees for the purpose of making a complaint.

6.3 Any appeal will be heard by Chair of the Board.

6.4 Upon receipt of the above form, the Deciding Officer will appoint an investigating officer to investigate the complaint on their behalf. The Investigating Officer will have the skills and capacity to undertake and conclude the investigation, and will not be directly connected with the service area about which the complaint is made. The Investigating Officer will convene a meeting with the complainant to discuss the complaint. This will take place within 5 working days of receipt.

6.5 Whilst most complaints will be treated as complaints against the organisation, there may be some where the conduct of named individual is the main, or sole, issue to be investigated. If this is the case, then it will be at this point that the Investigating Officer will take steps to ensure that the individual concerned is advised of the complaint with a summary of it's nature and a schedule for their participation in the investigation process and their opportunity to respond to any allegations embedded within the complaint.

6.6 Further evidence may be required in order to ensure that decision-making is sufficiently well informed. The Deciding Officer or investigating officer may choose to undertake further investigations which will be progressed as soon as possible and within a maximum of 4 weeks of the interview with the complainant, unless otherwise agreed with the complainant.

6.7 Interviews with the complainant and with any other individuals interviewed in the investigation process, will be recorded in writing and should be signed by the subject as a true record.

6.8 Where an investigating officer has been appointed, they will prepare a report for Deciding Officer. Where the Deciding Officer has conducted their own investigation, they will prepare a summary report of their findings. The report will summarise the evidence from the interviews and will conclude with a recommendation for whether the complaint is supported. The report is a confidential and internal document.

6.9 The Deciding Officer will give full consideration to the recommendation in the report and decide as to whether the complaint is upheld. If the complaint is upheld, then the Deciding Officer will need to determine the action required to address the issues which are the basis of the complaint, and to consider whether the complainant is entitled to any specific redress or apology on behalf of the organisation.

6.10 The Deciding Officer will write to the complainant to inform them of their decision in relation to whether the complaint is upheld. If the complaint is upheld, then the letter

will also contain information on the remedy to be actioned to address the issue(s) that were the basis of the complaint. The complainant will also be given support in understanding the outcome through the offer of a discussion with the Deciding Officer.

- 6.11 The complainant has the right to appeal against the decision. The appeal should be made in writing to the Chair of the Board within 10 working days of the date of the outcome letter. The decision of the Chair of the Board is final and binding. The organisation will ensure that the complainant is reminded of their right to seek independent legal advice and/or to contact the Charities Commission.
- 6.12 Where the complaint concerns the behaviour of a specific individual at WMWA, then they will be formally advised of the outcome at this stage. Where a complaint about the behaviour of a member of staff has been substantiated, then this may trigger the WMWA Disciplinary Policy. The substance of the complaint will then inform the disciplinary investigation.

## **7. Monitoring Compliments, Complaints & Comments and using Feedback to Improve Services**

- 7.1 All comments or complaints must be recorded on a Comments & Compliments Form or Complaints Form. If the compliment, comment or complaint is received from a current or ex-service user, a copy should be placed in the service user's file. If the compliment is made about a member of staff or volunteer, a copy should be placed in the personnel file.
- 7.2 An Individual Record of Complaints & Comments Form will be completed and forwarded, with a copy of all related paperwork to the Data & Admin Manager who will use the information to inform the development and review of WMWA services, policy and procedure.
- 7.3 The results of these documents will be fed into a Record of Complaints, Comments & Compliments and from there 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
  - Staff supervision and appraisal
  - Team and casework meetings.
- 7.4 The results of the complaints record should also be presented at least annually to the Board of Trustees.

**WEST MERCIA WOMEN'S AID**  
**COMPLAINTS**

**This Complaints Form is for use by:**

- Current users of our services
- Ex-users of our services (within the last 12 months)
- Stakeholders and other agencies
- Visitors to WMWA premises
- Neighbours of WMWA premises or other members of the public

**This form is intended for use when you:**

- Are not satisfied with the services or actions of WMWA
- Feel that your previous approaches or comments have not been responded to in a satisfactory manner
- Wish to make a formal complaint

*Completion of this form opens WMWA formal complaints procedure. For minor matters, comments, suggestions or requests, please use WMWA Comments & Compliments Form, which you can obtain in person, email, or post from any WMWA office or member of staff. (See contact details on page 3 of this form)*

<b>Date</b>	
<b>Name:</b>	
<b>Organisation:</b> <i>(if applicable)</i>	
<b>Address:</b>	
<b>Postcode:</b>	
<b>Telephone No:</b>	
<b>Mobile No:</b>	

**What is your connection with WMWA?**

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**Please provide details of your complaint, including staff names and exact dates/times if possible:** *(Please continue on separate sheets if necessary, but please ensure you sign and date each sheet)*

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**Have you previously approached WMWA with this matter? What response / action was made or taken as a result?** *(Please include staff names and dates if possible)*

**What would you like WMWA to do to rectify/action in response to your complaint?**

**Signature:**

**Date:**

**Print Name:**

**HOW TO RETURN THIS FORM:**



**IN PERSON:** At any WMWA office or to any member of staff



**BY POST:** To the Chief Executive, PO Box 74, Hereford. HR4 9WB



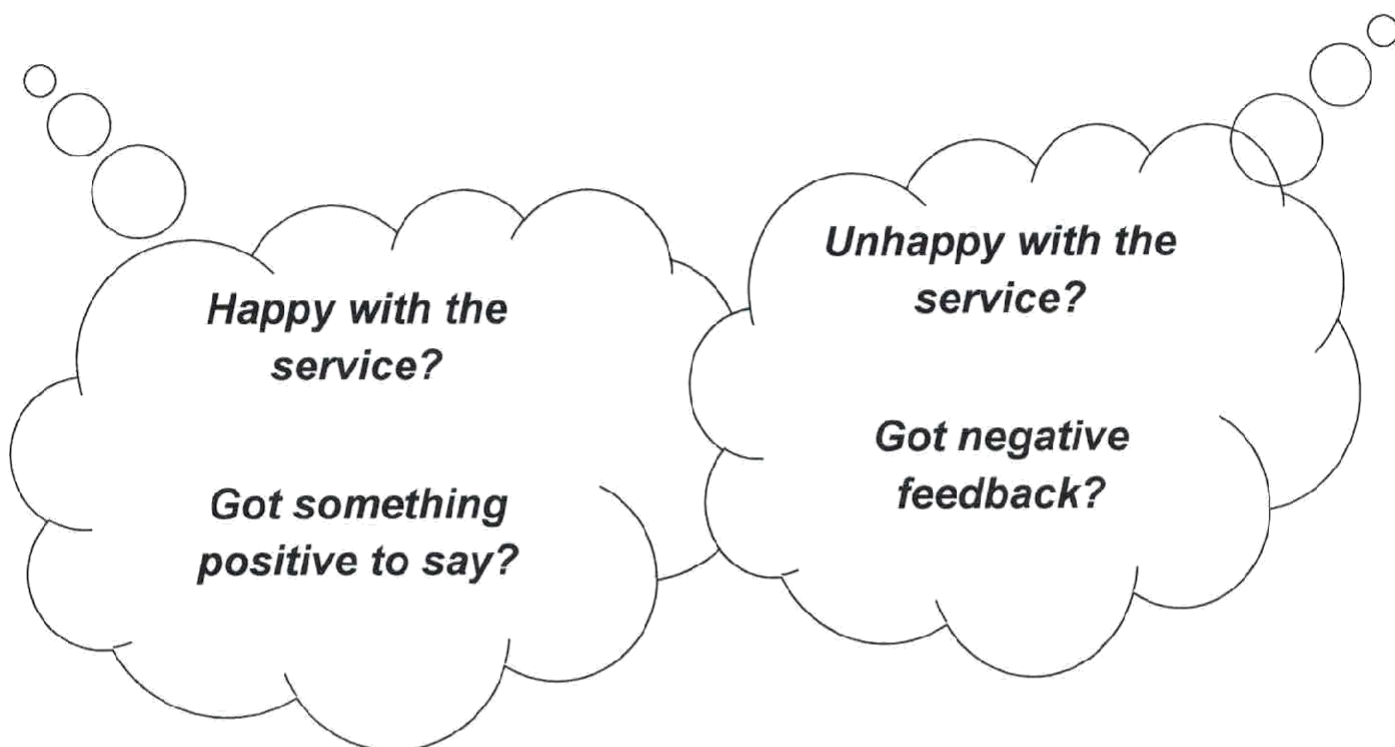
**BY EMAIL:** This form can be emailed to you and returned by email to:

*General@wmmwa.org.uk*

*(Marked 'For the Attention of the Chief Executive')*

Please mark your envelope or email: 'Private & Confidential'. If your complaint is about the Chief Executive, please address your complaint to the Chair of the Board of Trustees and send to the same address.

**APPENDIX 2: Comments & Compliments**



You can complete this form **CONFIDENTIALLY**, or include your name if you wish. You may, of course, talk directly to a worker if you prefer.

If you are very unhappy and would like to make a complaint, or if you feel your comments have not been dealt with appropriately, please complete **WMWA Complaints Form**. You will have been given Complaints Forms at admittance or first appointment, or they can be requested by calling the helpline, collected in person from any **WMWA** office or found on the notice boards in each refuge.

If you just want to make comments and/or suggestions, please complete the form below.

<b>Date</b>	
<b>Name:</b> <i>(Optional)</i>	

<b>How are you involved with the service?</b>

Which area?

Herefordshire  Worcestershire  Shropshire

Write down your suggestion or comment here

*(continue on the back if you run out of space)*

Signature:

*(Optional)*

Date:

Print Name:

*(Optional)*

Your comments will be passed to the appropriate staff member, who will respond to you within 14 days (if you have included your name) if you have requested a response.

**How to return this form:**



**IN PERSON:** By giving it to a support worker or handing it in at any WMWA office



**BY POST:** Post in the refuge letterbox (the letter boxes are emptied every working day) to:  
**PO Box 74, Hereford HR4 9WB**



**BY EMAIL:** [info@westmerciawomensaid.org](mailto:info@westmerciawomensaid.org)