



Compliments and Complaints - Policy and Procedure

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Women's Counselling and Therapy Service (WCTS) welcomes feedback about its services, the organisation and staff from current clients, prospective clients, clients who have moved on in the past two years, their families, friends or carers, organisations and individuals who come into contact with us, our services, or work in partnership with us.
- 1.2. We are committed to providing a high-quality service or response to everyone we work with. In order to do this, we need you to give us any feedback, and to tell us when we get things wrong. We want to help you resolve any concerns or complaints as quickly as possible. That is why we have a complaints procedure. Sometimes we can put things right; sometimes we can only explain ourselves and apologise. But we do want to learn from our mistakes. What you tell us helps to improve our service to you.
- 1.3. We understand that many people do not see the point in complaining fearing that they will not be listened to or suffer a negative response so we expect all our employees to respond positively to concerns or complaints, taking time to listen to the issue and not to respond defensively. We hope that this helps create an environment where it feels safe and acceptable to raise a complaint or concern.
- 1.4. Any expression of dissatisfaction with our service which calls for a response is treated as a complaint. We listen, treat them seriously, and learn from them.
- 1.5. This procedure is not intended for use by employees who should use our grievance or whistleblowing procedures.
- 1.6. Current and prospective users of our services are advised of the Policy and shown where to access it.
- 1.7. You can access our Compliments and Complaints Policy or find out how to make a complaint by visiting our website <https://www.womenstherapyleeds.org.uk> or looking on the reception noticeboard.
 - 1.7.1. Please contact us if you need document in an alternative format e.g. large print, other languages.
 - 1.7.2. Compliments and Complaints can be made face to face, by telephone or text (for deaf and hard of hearing clients), via the website to the relevant person or in writing. A form is available (appendix 1).

2. Compliments and Suggestions for Improvement

- 2.1. It is great to receive compliments, even better if they are in writing.

2.2. Compliments can be given direct to the worker, manager or anyone else. We will ensure they get passed on to the relevant employee.

2.3. We welcome any suggestions for improvements to services. We will consider any reasonable idea and will let you know if we have been able to act on your suggestion or not.

3. Our Standards for Handling Complaints

3.1 We treat all complaints seriously, whether they are made face to face, by letter or by email etc.

3.2 You will be treated with courtesy and fairness at all times. We would hope, you too, will be courteous and fair in your dealings with our employees at all times.

3.3 We will treat your complaint in confidence however, it is likely that in order to fully investigate a complaint your details will need to be shared with relevant employees.

3.4 We ask that outline your complaint as clearly as possible and to tell us what outcome(s) you would like as a result of your complaint.

3.5 At any stage you can have support from a friend, carer or agency (e.g. advocate). If you need support to arrange this, your service manager can provide details of advocacy organisations and help you to make contact with them. Interpreters can also be arranged if required.

4. Overview of the Complaints process and Timescales

4.1 At each Stage it will help us to resolve your complaint quickly if you can give us as much detail as possible, including any documents and correspondence and telling us that you are making a complaint in line with our procedure.

4.2 We aim to (at each Stage):

- Acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days.
- Offer a time to meet with you within a further 10 working days
- Provide a full written response within a further 10 working days.

4.3 If for any reason the complaint will take longer to investigate and respond to, we will keep you fully informed.

4.4 The purpose of an investigation is to make sure all relevant evidence is collected and assessed. The manager will interview witnesses as appropriate and take statements from those involved. They will keep records of all meetings and telephone conversations undertaken as part of the investigation together with any other relevant documentation.

4.5 Particular care will be taken to identify any issues that are subject to other statutory or WCTS procedures and policies, such as Child Safeguarding, Adult Safeguarding, Racial Harassment etc. that may come to light during the investigation.

4.6 Our response aims to offer:

- An acknowledgement that the complaint was/is taken seriously;
- An outline of the scope of the investigation;
- The investigator's view of what happened and why;
- An outline of the decision;
- Information about any right of appeal;
- Inform you of the complaints handling feedback questionnaire.

4.7 It may also include any of the following as appropriate to the circumstances:

- An apology;
- An undertaking to learn from the complaint and to take steps to make sure such an event is not repeated (for example a review of policy or practice);

4.8 We will send you a Diversity Monitoring Form to complete if you are not currently a service user of our services.

5. **Three stage Process**

Stage 1

A complaint at this stage can be made in person, by telephone or text (for deaf or hard of hearing clients), in writing or via the website to the member of staff you are in direct contact with or the relevant Service Manager. Often a concern can be resolved to your satisfaction at this stage.

Stage 2

If you feel Stage 1 has not considered all the relevant information, or you are dissatisfied with the outcome, you may refer the matter to the Support Services Manager by telephone or text (for deaf and hard of hearing clients), or in writing, within ten days of receiving the response at Stage 1.

The Support Services Manager will receive all the evidence and documentation that has been gathered in previous stage and will examine this to make sure that all procedures have been followed correctly. They will also liaise with the original Investigator to ensure they are satisfied that the original complaint was, understood fully, investigated thoroughly and responded to appropriately.

Stage 3

If you feel the investigation has not considered all the relevant information, or if you are dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage 2, or your complaint is about the Support Services Manager you may refer your complaint to Stage 3. This can be done by telephone or text (for deaf and hard of hearing clients) or in writing to the Chief Executive or Chair of the Board of Trustees within ten days of receiving the response from stage 2.

The CEO or Chair (or her designated deputy) will consider the way the complaint has been investigated and handled by the organisation and make a decision as to whether the outcome is fair and appropriate.

The CEO or Chair will either uphold the complaint and/or direct a different remedy to that decided upon at stage 1 or 2; or confirm the previous decision.

Where applicable, the Chef Executive will make recommendations to review or change the organisation's policies or procedures.

The decision at Stage 3 is final.

5.1 If you remain dissatisfied, you are able to contact service commissioners or counsellors' registration bodies such as the BACP and HCPC, but there is no further right of appeal within the organisation. Links to relevant organisational websites can be found on the service page of the service you wish to complain about.

6 Exceptions

6.1 Complaints will always initially be processed at stage 1 except in the following circumstances

- A complaint about a service manager should be made to the Support Services Manager (Stage 2).
- A complaint about the conduct of the Chief Executive should be made to the Chair of the Board of Trustees (Stage 3).

7 Withdrawals

7.1 A complaint can be withdrawn at any stage. If you wish to withdraw please contact the person investigating your complaint or the relevant Service Manager. A formal notification will be sent to confirm your complaint has been withdrawn.

7.2 It may be that the issue/s raised within the complaint should still be investigated as a matter of safety/risk. This will be decided on a case by case basis.

8 Non Engagement in the process

8.1 If the investigating manager has attempted to contact you on a number of occasions, without success, then they may need to take a decision to close the complaint case. A formal notification will be sent to confirm we are closing the complaint file.

8.2 It may be that the issue/s raised within the complaint should still be investigated as a matter of safety/risk. This will be decided on a case by case basis.

9.0 Monitoring and Review of compliments and complaints

9.1 The Support Services Manager and will keep a log of all compliments and complaints received on the central Complaints Record Form.

9.2 Diversity Monitoring

Where complaints are not made by current service users you will be asked to complete a diversity monitoring form.

Current service user's diversity monitoring data will already be held on our system.

Complaints are monitored by diversity solely for the purpose of ensuring anti-discriminatory practice.

Complaints are monitored to assess service response and identify ways to improve service quality and practice.

Information gathered regarding complaints will be collated into an annual Compliments and Complaints report by the Chief Executive to be presented to the Board of Trustees in October. The report can be shared with service users and employees and will be made anonymous with identifying details removed.

Policy Adoption Table

WCTS (*Charity number 1145377*) adopted the Compliments and Complaints Policy on 19 November 2018 and recorded in the minutes of Board of Trustees meeting.

Updated (minor changes) August 2019, November 2020 and January 2023



Appendix 1 Complaint / Compliments Form

You can use this form if you wish to make a complaint or compliment. You can hand it in at any WCTS office/service, or post it to us at WCTS Portland House, 5 Portland Street, Leeds LS1 3DR

I want to make a:

Compliment Complaint *(Please circle as appropriate)*

Name:

Title:

Address:

Email:

Phone Number(s):

Please use the space below to tell us about your compliment or complaint. If you are making a complaint, please include as much information as possible about the issue and how you would like us to put things right.

If you are making the complaint for someone else, please remember to give us their name and address too.