

Women's Aid aim to offer the highest level of service at all times. However, we recognise that from time to time there may be the need to raise a concern about an aspect of our work or the conduct of our staff. We take all feedback, both good and bad, very seriously and are continually working to improve the level of service we provide.

Below you will find different ways you can contact us, what you can expect when you do contact us and how we use your ideas to make sure that we offer the highest level of customer service possible.

Compliments 😊

If you would like to formally pass on a compliment or thank you to someone in Women's Aid please send the information by one of the contact methods shown below. We will ensure that all compliments are passed to the relevant team and/or individual and are shared with the internal management team.

By letting us know we what we are doing right it helps us to do more of it and continue to increase the level of service we can offer our customers.

Raising a concern informally 😊

We encourage open dialogue where possible to talk through any areas of concern as soon as possible in order that they can be resolved quickly.

If you are unhappy with any aspect of Women's Aid please discuss it with your main contact in the organisation who will take steps to put the action right. If you are not satisfied with the response or wish to express your concerns formally please contact the Women's Aid National office.

Raising a concern formally – making a complaint 😞

A complaint is when you express to us your dissatisfaction with a particular aspect of the work of Women's Aid. For example if you believe that:

- We have failed to do something that we undertook to do
- We have made a wrong decision or
- The way we carried out a service was not appropriate or unsatisfactory
- If you are unhappy about the performance of our member services

Our commitment to you is that we will:

- handle your complaint swiftly and keep you informed of the situation
- investigate all complaints related to services directly provided by Women's Aid thoroughly and objectively

- work closely with our member organisations to understand the outcome of their complaint investigations relating to the services they are providing
- seek your personal consent to disclosure information to others when investigating complaints
- provide accessible support to meet your specific needs
- send you a full response which addresses all of the issues you have raised
- provide clear guidelines about what to do if you are unhappy with our response
- record and monitor all complaints taking the relevant actions in order that our service improve

What we can't do:

We are unable to investigate advocate complaints relating to current users without their express written consent. We will seek this written permission ensuring that they understand who we will be contacting and why and what information will be shared before any action is taken and this will affect our standard response times, as summarised later in this procedure.

We are unable to directly investigate complaints raised in relation to specific services delivered by our members. We will signpost you to their organisation and their complaints policy and procedure. We can provide their contact details to make this easier for you.

We need you to:

Take your time to explain your concerns and provide specific information to help us determine the appropriate course of action and to start our investigation activity in the right place.

How to make a complaint:

All complaints should be made to the Customer Care Co-ordinator:

- Telephone: 0117 983 7137
- Email: l.owen@womensaid.org.uk
- Fax: 0117 924 1703
- Post: Women's Aid, P O Box 391, Bristol, BS99 7WS

All complaints are logged and given a unique reference number which will be provided to you in your acknowledgment letter and will be used as the reference on all future correspondence relating to this matter. If you should unfortunately need to complain about the Customer Care Co-ordinator please address your complaint to Nicki Norman, Deputy Chief Executive at the above postal address or email to n.norman@womensaid.org.uk

Our letters will be typed, clear and easy to read. We are committed to providing accessible services and will support your specific needs once we are aware of them.

We can write to you in English or the language you prefer.

We can contact you in the best way for you, if you tell us that this is. Our preference is always to write to you personally but we recognise that at times this won't work.

Complaint Timings and Response

1. Complaints relating to Women's Aid National Services

Stage 1 – Acknowledging your complaint (within 5 working days)

The Customer Care Co-ordinator will acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days and let you know who will be investigating your concerns.

Stage 2 – Keeping you posted (an update within 10 working days)

The Customer Care Co-ordinator will allocate your complaint to a Manager who will be responsible for ensuring that they read through the complaint, commence an internal investigation, speaking with the relevant individuals involved in the complaint and decide how to respond. They will make initial contact with you at this stage.

Stage 3 – Communicating our decision (within 21 working days *)

A formal response will be sent which will confirm:

- The final decision about the complaint
- The reason for the decision
- The solution, if appropriate, which will be offered, e.g.: an apology, additional help or directing to other sources of advice or support.
- Any action that may have been taken in the light of the investigation
- We aim to complete all investigations within 21 working days of receiving the complaint, however, on occasion due to holidays, sickness or other planned absence the relevant internal staff may not be readily available to support the investigation. If this is the case, we will make you aware within 10 working days of receiving your complaint.

Appealing a complaint decision

If you are still dissatisfied you should correspond with the Customer Care Co-ordinator within 10 working days of having received your response raising an appeal against the initial decision.

The Customer Care Co-ordinator will acknowledge receipt of the correspondence within 3 working days and forward all details to the Deputy Chief Executive (DCE). They will make arrangements for a review of the complaints handling process covering:

- Whether the procedure has been following properly, and fairly
- The reason for the decision
- The solution, if appropriate, which will be offered
- What action may be taken in light of the review

The appeal decision will be discussed by the Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive and their joint decision will be final. This will be communicated back to you in writing within 10 working days of receipt of your appeal.

2. Complaints relating to Member Services

Stage 1 – Acknowledging your complaint (within 5 working days)

The Customer Care Co-ordinator will acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days and advise the contact details for the member organisation, offering to forward your complaint to them.

Stage 2 – Your consent

In order for us to forward the complaint we will require your consent to disclose the information and where the complaint is being made by an advocate they are required to seek your formal and written consent.

Stage 3 – Confirming our actions (within 5 working days)

Once we have received your consent, and it is much easier to provide this consent within the initial complaint letter or form, we will write to the Member service and ask them to investigate the complaint, liaise directly with you and keep us advised of the outcome of their internal investigation.

Sharing your thoughts

From time to time we may want to use some of your ideas, thoughts and experiences about the service you have received from Women's Aid as a case study or testimonial to share with other people. We will not sure your name or any personal details which will identify you unless we have your permission to do so.

How well did we do?

So that we can continually improve our internal systems we may contact you to find out if you are satisfied with the way in which we dealt with your enquiry. This will allow us to find out what we are doing well and where you think we can improve.