



Complaints Policy and Procedure

1. Purpose

The West of England Centre for Inclusive Living (WECIL) treats complaints and appeals about its services and comments from those who use its services very seriously. The policy aims to be open and accountable and to provide a prompt, considerate and confidential response to such complaints.

WECIL aims to identify where things are going wrong and to put them right for the future.

It is accepted that others not directly in receipt of services may have cause to complain about WECIL's actions or lack of action. The organisation will give the same consideration to those complaints.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all who use WECIL's services or who are affected by them. It includes the following:

- Service Users
- Stakeholders
- Members of the public

Complainants not directly in receipt of a service from WECIL, for example a person wishing to complain about a project may, if so wished, use the complaints procedure.

3. Policies

A complaint is defined as the following:

- A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by WECIL or its staff which affects an individual, a group of service users or an organisation who might be in receipt of a service from WECIL or who are otherwise affected by WECIL's action or lack of action.

A first request for a service, or the first request for assistance with a problem, is not a complaint within the scope of this policy. However, any aspect of the way in which such request or problems are subsequently dealt with could be the subject of a complaint.

WECIL's complaints policy sets out to provide:

- A staged approach to resolving problems quickly;
- A procedure for investigating a complaint;
- A means of keeping the complainant informed about progress as well as about the eventual outcome;
- An appeals facility appropriate to the category of complaint;
- Advice to complainants on where they can obtain independent help and assistance, for example legal aid, Citizens Advice Bureau or other appropriate organisation;
- Access to the relevant local authority's complaints procedure where applicable;
- Systematic analysis at a corporate level to see why most complaints are arising;
- Reports on complaints that state what preventative action has been taken.

It is WECIL's policy to accept both written and oral complaints and to assist those who wish to put their complaint into writing but who may have difficulty doing so.

Complaints can be brought by individuals and/or by their advocate or representative. People giving support may participate at every/or any stage of the process.

It is not WECIL's policy to investigate anonymous complaints, except where they indicate the possibility of danger to the health and safety of a service user, member of staff, or other individual or the safety of a project.

3.1 Service Standards:

- All written complaints will be acknowledged in writing within five working days, with information concerning how the complaint will be handled, and the date by which they will receive a response.
- WECIL will aim to resolve complaints within ten working days with a written response confirming action taken.
- If the complaint is complex it may take longer to resolve. In such cases, the complainant will receive, at minimum, monthly written progress reports.

3.2 Access to Complaints Policy and Procedure:

A complaint information sheet is provided for service users. A separate leaflet detailing the complaints procedure is available for non-service users.

WECIL will publicise its complaints policy in the following way:

- All induction packs will contain the complaints information sheet for service users. Staff will go through the complaints procedure in service user inductions.

- Complaints information sheets will be displayed on office notice boards and on the organisation's website.

All staff are trained in dealing with complaints. In addition, where relevant, complaints will be discussed in team meetings and supervision sessions so that employees can learn from them.

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years. Service users will be involved in this review.

4. Procedures

Complaints are handled in stages. These stages and required actions are set out in the complaints process.

All complaints received whether in writing or verbally should be recorded on a Complaints Form. The following information should be obtained:

- Name and address of complainant;
- Matter complained about;
- How the complaint has been made, in writing, verbally, by the person named or by someone else on their behalf;
- Necessary action, and by whom.

If a complaint is made verbally then the complainant should be asked to put it in writing. If this is difficult, then the staff member taking the complaint should provide the complainant with a written statement that can be agreed and then signed. In many cases a complaint may be made to staff verbally which is not required to be recorded as an official complaint since the matter can be resolved informally. It is therefore important to ascertain whether the person merely wants the problem dealt with or whether s/he wishes to make a formal written complaint.

The complaints process outlines who deals with complaints and at what stage.

It is likely that the person dealing with the complaint will need to meet with the complainant as part of their investigation. The complainant should be informed that they may be accompanied at this meeting if they wish.

WECIL will liaise with other relevant agencies and ensure complainants are aware of them.

A complaint cannot normally be referred to a local authority until WECIL's procedure has been exhausted. At the final stage of the WECIL complaints procedure the complainant will be informed of the relevant local authorities contact details.

Service Users who have exhausted the WECIL complaints procedure and are complaining about the quality of advice received should be referred to Advice UK who will review the steps WECIL have taken in order to assess compliance with this procedure.

5. Performance Monitoring

The monitoring of complaints and complaint resolutions will be carried out by Line Managers and reported to the Board of Trustees, every quarter.

The complaints form allows staff to note any recommended policy or procedural changes as a result of complaints. This is then discussed in manager's team meetings. This ensures that complaints are actioned at strategic level.

6. Records

The Complaints Register will be maintained, and resolved complaints will be held for twelve months. They may need to

be held longer in nuisance/harassment cases as they might be needed for subsequent court action if problems reoccur.

7. Other Relevant Documents

- Complaints Information Sheets (including Easy English)
 - Making a Complaint: Information for Service Users
 - Complaints Flowchart for Service Users
 - Complaints Information for Non Service Users
- Complaints Form
- Complaints Register
- Complaints Process (internal use only)
- Confidentiality Policy
- Whistle Blowing Policy
- Prevention of Bullying and Harassment Policy
- The quick guide to customer care (Department of Health 2009)

Policy Review

This policy and procedure should be reviewed every two years.