



Black Country Women's Aid

We listen, we support, we care

Policy Name	Complaints Policy and Procedures
Policy last updated	September 2024
Version Number	V9
Policy Owner	Tracey Alexander
Policy applies to	<p>Staff, volunteers, service users or any person who has contact with BCWA or Ask Marc</p> <p>Black Country Women's Aid policies apply to all services within the organisation who work with men, women, non-binary and children. This includes: Ask Marc, Women's Justice, Children and Young People, Therapeutic Services, Rape and Sexual Violence Support Service, Stalking Support, Community Domestic Abuse Services, Modern Slavery Support Services and DV Accommodation services</p>
Distribution and access	<p>The form is available to anyone who requires access in the following locations:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• BCWA server• BCWA Intranet• In paper form, available upon request• In QR form, available upon request
Policy Purpose	<p>Black Country Women's Aid aims to ensure that all those using our services receive the highest possible quality of service and that our services are shaped by the views of our clients.</p> <p>We want to encourage all our clients to give feedback about our services and we recognise their right to make a complaint, compliment or a suggestion about our services.</p>
Related Policies and Procedures	<p>Please use this policy in conjunction with:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Equality of opportunity policy• Safeguarding Adults and children policy

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee handbook
Policy review date	September 2025

PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

- Black Country Women's Aid aims to ensure that all service users receive the highest possible quality of service and that our services are shaped by the views of men, women and children.
- Black Country Women's Aid aims to ensure that all employees, volunteers or anyone who comes in to contact with BCWA or Ask Marc are treated with respect and have a good experience.
- We want to encourage all our service users, colleagues, volunteers and partners to give feedback about our services and we recognise their right to make a complaint, compliment or a suggestion about our services.
- We are committed to making sure that we use service user feedback to help us continuously improve our services.
- We will also encourage feedback from service user's on areas of local, regional and national policy, legislation and services to help us to develop a more effective and coordinated response to interpersonal violence.
- We work with a range of stakeholders and ongoing feedback is vital for the ongoing development and review of our services.
- **We will address complaints about discrimination, including racism and sexism, with the utmost seriousness and in line with our Equality and Diversity policy. Black Country Women's Aid does not tolerate discrimination and encourages individuals to report discrimination, so that it can be challenged and redressed.**

Policy Aims & Objectives

We will:

- Inform individuals about the right to complain to the next stage when dissatisfied with our response
- Treat all complaints confidentially and reassure individuals that they can make complaints without fear of reprisal or victimisation
- Record and analyse all complaints
- Set and monitor response targets for responding to feedback
- Contact the client, acknowledge their complaint and advise who is dealing with it
- Keep the client updated with the progress of their complaint

All individuals have the right to:

- Choose how they give us feedback about our services – online, in writing, phone, in person or any other method they prefer
- Expect us to use plain language when communicating and communicate in a way appropriate to their needs, e.g. literacy level, language, age.
- To be given a named contact officer, phone number, e-mail address and target date for a response
- Be kept informed when we cannot send a response in time
- Complain to the next stage when dissatisfied with our response

WHISTLEBLOWING

Black Country Women's Aid is committed to ensuring a culture of openness and accountability in which abuse, fraud or other misconduct within the organisation is recognised and reported. All staff should feel confident to voice concerns about the actions of colleagues or the organisation.

Where a complaint is made that fits within the criteria of whistleblowing, the whistleblowing procedures should be followed, including legal protection for the whistleblower, immediate action and thorough investigation.

Whistleblowing procedures **are accessible for all employees** can be located in the Protection from Abuse policy located on **BCWA internal server** and are referenced in the Employee Handbook **which are issued to employees as part of induction and on-boarding.**

The person to whom the complaint is reported should discuss with the complainee that their complaint meets the criteria for whistleblowing. They should explain what this means, for example by walking them through the whistleblowing procedures. They should ensure that the complainee understands and consents for their complaint to be dealt with according to the whistleblowing procedures.

Complaints that count as whistleblowing include;

- A criminal offence, e.g. fraud
- Someone's health and safety is in danger
- Risk or actual damage to the environment
- A miscarriage of justice
- The company is breaking the law, e.g. doesn't have the right insurance
- You believe someone is covering up wrongdoing

SERVICE PROCEDURES

- Complaints, comments and compliments can come through a range of sources. Every service should have their response for dealing with feedback from service users and professionals who you work with
- These procedures should be documented as part of your individual case management procedures
- Complaint forms should be sent to the Executive Officer who will review and arrange for the appropriate manager to respond. Any complaints that are responded to by managers should be given to the Executive Officer for final audit and review
- Where complaints come via Facebook, or corporate emails, they will be sent on to the Executive Officer who will arrange for a response to be made. For more information, please see the section on social media.

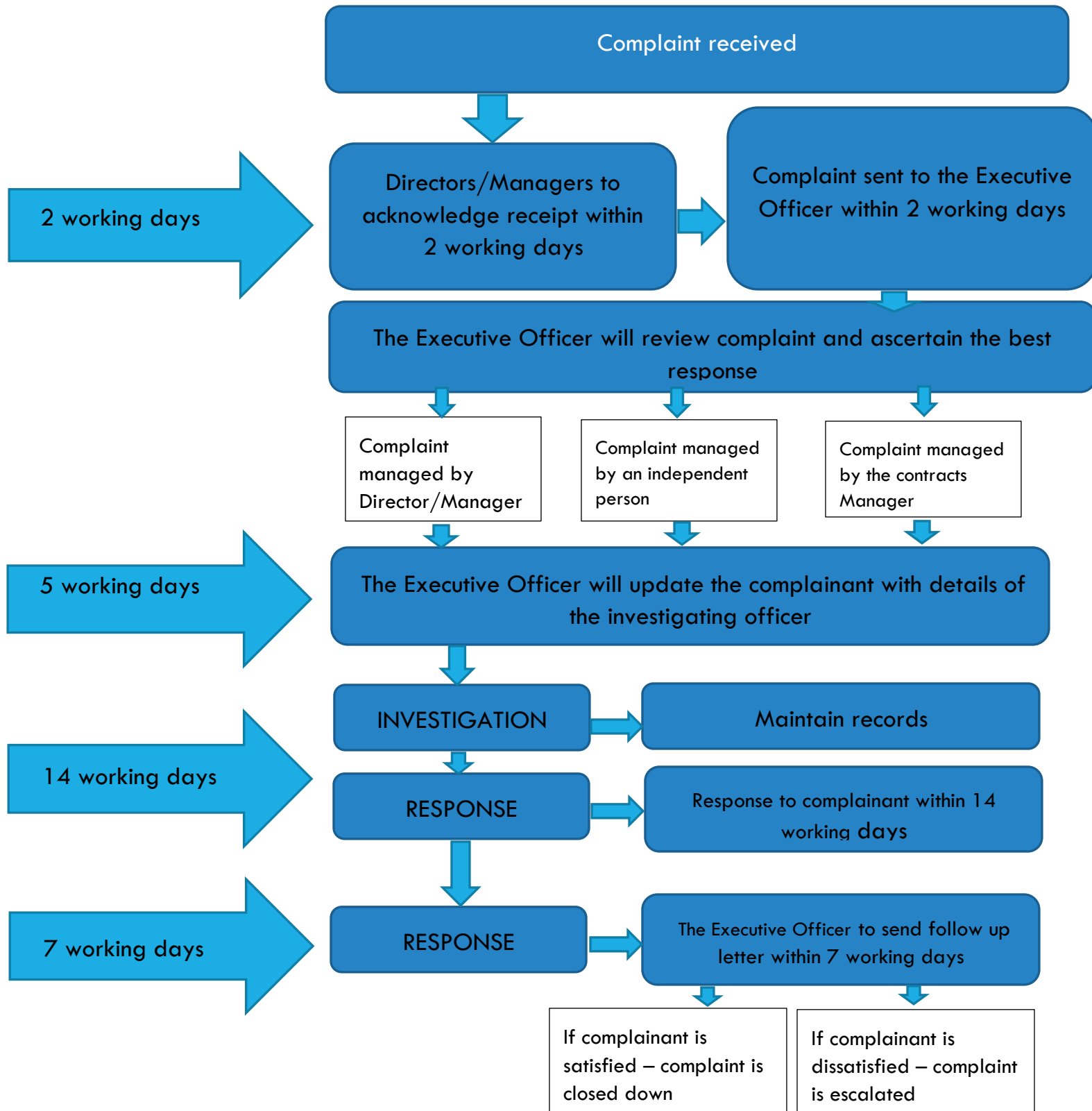
PROCEDURES

Dealing with complaints

It is important that we have a robust framework for dealing with complaints. All services should ensure these procedures are embedded into their case management systems. **Complaints can be made against any BCWA volunteer or employee including managers, CEO and trustees.** Complaints are an important part of service contracts and to ensure independence they will be over seen by the following personnel: Executive Officer.

All complaints received into service are considered as part of BCWA's overall governance and assurance arrangements. BCWA gathers information about complaints to check that the complaints handling arrangements are meeting the required performance standards. All complaints are regular reported to the CEO, the Board of Trustees and senior management and are holistically reviewed to identify themes to inform policy and practice.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE



STAGE 1 - INITIAL COMPLAINT

1. All complaints which come in will be directed to the a Director or service Manager
2. Director/Managers will send an acknowledgement of the complaint within 48 hours
3. This should be done in writing, this can be via Letter or email (A copy of the letter should be provided to the Executive Officer)
4. All Complaints received should be sent within 2 working days to the Executive Officer

Social Media Complaints

When a complaint is received via social media this should be notified to the Executive Officer with full details of the post. Where comments are posted publicly a public acknowledgement should be made expressing our concern and asking the complainant to contact Tracey Alexander so the complaint can be resolved. The form of words should be agreed by the Executive Officer and the Development and Communications Manager. A response **should not** be posted without agreement.

STAGE 2 - INITIAL REVIEW

1. The Executive Officer will review the original complaint and ascertain the best way that this is dealt with, this could involve
 - a. The complaint can be managed by the Directors/ Managers
 - b. The complaint should be managed by an independent person
 - c. The complaint will be managed by the Executive Officer
2. The Executive Officer will write to the service user to update on the process and advise the service user who the managing officer is for this complaint and provide a time scale for response (No more than 14 days)

STAGE 3 - INVESTIGATION

1. The Managing officer will need to review the complaint and will need to undertake an initial investigation.
2. Records should be kept of all Correspondence and associated investigations
3. Investigations should be through to include all aspects of the complaint

STAGE 4 - OUTCOME

1. An update will be required to the service user on the outcome within 14 days.

2. An update should be sent to the Executive Officer who will ensure the response has been completed
3. The Executive Officer will send a complaint closure letter to the service user and ensure they are satisfied with the response provided and providing details of escalation procedures if they are not happy
4. The complaint should be added to the complaint log and stored with all corresponding information

STAGE 5 - ESCALATION PROCEDURES

If at any point the service user is not happy with the response, then this should be passed to the Executive Officer.

1. An acknowledgement should be given within 48 hours
2. A new investigation of the original complaint will be taken
3. Any new circumstances will be taken into consideration
4. An outcome will be given to the service user
5. If the service user is not happy, this will be escalated to the CEO

The service user also has the right to escalate their concern externally, where applicable. The Executive Officer would discuss this with the service user. Concerns may be escalated to;

- Women's Aid for a breach in its National Quality Standards within domestic abuse (community and accommodation), sexual violence, children's or therapeutic and wellbeing services
- Lime Culture for a breach in its Quality Standards within sexual violence services
- The Salvation Army regarding services under the Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract
- The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (or the relevant professional membership body) for breaches of its ethical framework by employed or sessional counsellors within therapeutic and wellbeing services

Complaint Form

Black Country Women's Aid aims to ensure that all service users receive the highest possible quality of service and that our services are shaped by the views of men, women and children. We want to encourage all our service users to give feedback about our services and we recognise their right to make a complaint, compliment or a suggestion about our services. We are committed to making sure that we use service user feedback to help us continuously improve our services

What we do with your information

When we receive a complaint from a person we make up a file containing the details of the complaint. This normally contains the identity of the complainant and any other individuals involved in the complaint.

We will only use the personal information we collect to process the complaint and to check on the level of service we provide.

We usually have to disclose the complainant's identity to whoever the complaint is about. This is inevitable where, for example, the accuracy of a person's record is in dispute. If a complainant doesn't want information identifying him or her to be disclosed, we will try to respect that. However, it may not be possible to handle a complaint on an anonymous basis.

We will keep personal information contained in complaint files in line with our retention policy.

This means that information relating to a complaint will be retained for six years from closure. It will be retained in a secure environment and access to it will be restricted according to the 'need to know' principle.

What you can expect from our complaints process

- Your complaint will be acknowledged within 5 working days
- within 7 working days you will know who will be investigating your complaint and receive an update of the officer details
- Within 14 days your complaint being investigated – you will have been investigated and you will receive an outcome response letter
- Within 7 days of the response letter, you will receive a letter to check if you are satisfied with the outcome
 - If you are satisfied your complaint will be closed

- If you are not satisfied you will be advised of escalation procedures

Name	Contact details	
Address	Telephone	
	Email	
Please give details of your complaint below		
Have you spoken to anyone in relation to this concern?	Yes/No	If yes, what was the response?

VERSION CONTROL AND SIGN OFF

Version	Date Amended	What has changed	Policy updated by
V0.1	March 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated to make monitoring and review more focused. Complaint flow chart procedure added 	Wendy sims
V2	June 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated following consultation period 	Wendy Sims
V4	October 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated complaint manager to Tracey Alexander 	Wendy Sims
V5	March 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social media responses section added 	Tracey Alexander
V6	August 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whole policy review Policy made clearer that also applies to employees and volunteers. 	Tracey Alexander
V7	September 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added section on Whistleblowing 	Beth Guille
V8	August 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated language around gender 	Beth Guille
V9	September 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarified that complaints can be made against managers and volunteers Added where complaints can be escalated externally Added the new policy template to 1st page Updated flowchart with new governance structure Added section on governance assurance Added our commitment to opposing discrimination 	Beth Guille/Chereene Love
	24.10.2024	Provided to MTM for comment and approval	Tracey Alexander
	25.11.2024	Ratified by Trustees at full board meeting on 25.11.24	Tracey Alexander