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**Complaints and Comments Policy and Procedure**

**Purpose**

To establish the policy and procedure of EVA Women's Aid with regard to complaints and comments from service users and other stakeholders and how these will be used to improve the range and quality of services.

**Related policy and procedures**

Safeguarding Adults Policy, Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy; Confidentiality Policy; Data Protection Policy; Code of Conduct and Professional Boundaries; Lone Working Policy; Whistle Blowing Procedure.

**Aims and Principles**

1 EVA Women's Aid is committed to encouraging service users and stakeholders to come forward with any complaints and comments about the services delivered in order to make sure that quality is protected and service users’ needs are appropriately met

2 EVA Women's Aid also undertakes to monitor all comments and complaints to ensure that they are used to improve the range and quality of service delivery on a continuous basis

3 EVA Women's Aid will also ensure that all service users and stakeholders have access to clear information on how to voice complaints.

4 Service users in particular will be provided with the support they need in order to make their views known. EVA Women's Aid will also ensure that no service users are disadvantaged or treated less favourably as a result of complaining or making comments.

**Definition of a complaint**

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction by a person, whether justified or not.

An individual may complain about:

* An experience of services (such as the quality or range of services we provide, our external relationships and partnerships, staff conduct and our decision-making processes).
* The decisions taken by staff (such as those related to referrals and the provision of accommodation and support services).
* We welcome complaints and comments from clients, residents, relatives, neighbours and also members of the public or local community. We also welcome comments and/or complaints from other stakeholders such as partner agencies, officers and members of local authorities, funders and Members of Parliament.  However, where a complaint relates to a third party, we will require the consent of that person to investigate the complaint and to provide feedback.
* In exceptional circumstances, we may need to investigate a comment as a complaint without the person’s consent, especially where this exposes, or appears to expose, a significant risk or staff misconduct.
* We reserve the right not to investigate a complaint if this is made by someone who is alleged to be a perpetrator of abuse or violence.

**Dealing with Complaints and Comments from Service Users**

1. If a woman wishes to complain or make a comment about the services she is receiving, or any other aspect of her experience whilst being supported by EVA Women's Aid, she can do this by speaking with the Staff member or her Team Leader, or a written complaint addressed to the CEO or Board of Trustee Directors at EVA Women’s Aid, 86 High Street, Redcar, TS10 3DL.
2. Once a woman wishes to complain, they must first establish if the complaint or comment is a minor matter which can be rectified simply and without conflict. In such cases, there may be no need to seek a written version of the complaint/comment. This should be discussed and agreed with the woman making the complaint/comment. Such cases are most likely to be situations where a woman is requesting a service rather than making a complaint, strictly speaking.

3. In cases where the Staff member has been approached about a more serious issue that is a complaint and not a request for a service, they must establish whether the woman would like assistance in putting her complaint in writing.

No pressure should be exerted on her to do this on her own but she can be offered the opportunity to sit down together and record the complaint – the woman giving the details and the staff member recording these details and reading them back for confirmation before seeking the woman’s signature that what has been recorded is accurate.

4 If the staff member within the boundaries of her delegated authority can resolve the complaint she should attempt to do so. However, if the complaint cannot be resolved like this or the complaint is about Staff at project level, the Team Leader/CEO must lead on resolving the complaint.

5 If the complaint is about a Team Leader, the CEO must lead on resolving the complaint.

7 Whichever member of staff is trying to resolve the complaint, they should follow these guidelines:

* Get clear information from the woman making the complaint about what went wrong and when. Ask for her views about how she would like her complaint resolved – i.e. what will fix the problem
* If her complaint is the result of a poor service or mistake by EVA Women's Aid, this should be rectified immediately and an apology made to the woman
* If her complaint is the result of a poor service or mistake by an outside agency the member of staff dealing with the complaint must take this up with the agency and agree who will rectify the problem and apologise to the woman
* If her complaint is considered unjustified by EVA Women's Aid or another agency, this should be explained to the woman along with why this is.
* In all cases, the member of staff must reply to the woman letting her know the outcome of her complaint. She should be told this in writing but should be given support in discussing and understanding the situation with a member of staff to ensure that she feels an acceptable resolution has been found.

**If a complaint about EVA Women's Aid remains unresolved-**

1. If it has not been possible to achieve a resolution to the woman’s complaint that is satisfactory to both her and EVA Women's Aid, she should be advised that she can proceed to the next stage of the process if she wishes to pursue the matter
2. If the initial complaint was made to a Staff member but remains unresolved, the Team Leader/CEO must review it. If the Team Manager CEO has already been involved previously, the Board of Trustees must review the complaint. The information they will need to consider the woman’s complaint is:

* What the problem is
* What actions have been taken to resolve the problem?
* Why the woman remains dissatisfied
* What the woman would consider a satisfactory resolution to her complaint

1. Once the Board of Trustees has considered the woman’s complaint, they must explain to her in writing their decision and what the next steps are if she remains unsatisfied. The woman should be offered the same support as described above in discussing and responding to the decision about her complaint.

**Dealing with Complaints and Comment from Stakeholders**

The procedure for dealing with complaints and comments from stakeholders will follow the steps set out above, except that these complaints and comments should be addressed to the CEO or the Chair of the Board of Trustees, EVA Women’s Aid, 86 High Street, Redcar, TS10 3DL.

**Monitoring Complaints and Comments and using Feedback to improve services**

1 Each time a formal complaint or comment is made in writing, it should be recorded electronically by the member of Staff who receives it and is dealing with it before informing the Operations Manager who will consult with the CEO as appropriate

2 The results of this record should be fed into the following systems and processes:

* Annual business planning, particularly in terms of identifying and prioritising changes and improvements to existing service
* Identifying gaps in service provision
* Service reviews (timing will be dependent on the cycle of review)
* Reviews of policies and procedures

3 The results of the complaints record should also be presented at least annually to the Board of Trustees and any service user participation groups

4 Appeals procedure: these are tailored to EVA’s service delivery and will be heard by the Trustees within 3 weeks of the complaint being received

5 Complaints will be recorded and will be monitored by the CEO and fed back into the relevant services, business planning and Board meetings

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