

COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

REVIEW DUE: November 2024

POLICY: 1.13

1.13.1 PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

This policy provides a process by which service users and other agencies can make a complaint regarding Bromley & Croydon Women's Aid's (BCWA) services and decisions. This policy also provides information on how BCWA will manage the complaint and timeframes for doing so.

BCWA aims to provide the best service possible to our service users and outreach clients. However, sometimes things do not go to plan. In that case we will work to resolve matters as soon as possible.

1.13.2 RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:

- Whistle blowing Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Data Protection

1.13.3 POLICY STATEMENT

BCWA treats all complaints as a way of improving our services. We will listen and respond to all complaints made by service users and other agencies in relation to our services and decisions. BCWA seeks to continuously improve our service and uses this complaints process as a method through which we can resolve dissatisfaction.

BCWA review any complaints to learn from the feedback received to identify and address any patterns regarding service delivery on a quarterly basis.

A summary of any complaints received is reported to the Management Committee. Opportunities for learning and service improvement are then identified and discussed with the team. Where policies and procedures may need amending to reflect best practice this is disseminated across the whole of the organisation.

Copies of this complaints procedure will be made available to all BCWA service users, referring agencies and funders.

1.13.5 INTRODUCTION

Those who make complaints will not be victimised. BCWA encourages people (service users, other agencies, funders and members of the community) to discuss any concerns with BCWA staff as early as possible. Making a complaint will not affect the provision of services. Where necessary, BCWA will provide interpreting and translating facilities for any complainant needing language support. BCWA will refer a complainant to another organisation should they require assistance in making their complaint.

All complaints will be dealt with in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and Freedom of Information Act 2000.

1.13.6 PROCEDURE FOR MAKING AND RESPONDING TO COMPLAINTS

1.13.6.1 Service Users (Refuge)

Complaints by services users regarding the refuge accommodation services and/or residents in the refuge must be made to their Refuge Support Officer in person or by email.

Complaints by residents regarding their Refuge Support Officer must be emailed to management@bcwa.org.uk or in writing to PO Box 71158 SE20 9BU.

1.13.6.2 Outreach Clients, Agencies, Funders or Members of the Community

Complaints by outreach clients, other agencies, funders or members of the community must be emailed to management@bcwa.org.uk or in writing to PO Box 71158 SE20 9BU.

1.13.6.3 Assistance for Service Users to Make a Complaint

Where a service user requires assistance from BCWA to lodge a complaint, an appointment will be made for the service user and a BCWA staff member, within 2 working days of the initial request.

During this meeting, details of the complaint will be written down by the person making the complaint or the staff member.

1.13.6.4 In Relation to All Complaints

Where appropriate the following details are to be recorded in order for BCWA to begin investigating:

- Date, time and location of incident
- Details of others involved in incident and/or witnesses to incident

- Full description of incident
- There should be an indication from complainant about the outcome they would like to see achieved from the complaint.

1.13.6 PROCEDURE FOR RESPONDING TO COMPLAINTS (cont.)

1.13.6.4 Dealing with a complaint

Complaints to Refuge Officers will be dealt with by the Refuge Officer at the time of the complaint or as soon as possible after the complaint has been received.

Where the complaint has not been resolved in this way the complaint should be escalated to management as in 1.13.6.1 setting out the complaint and why resolution has not been possible

All complaints received by management will be dealt with as follows:-

An Investigating Officer will be appointed by the CEO. The investigating officer will acknowledge a formal complaint in writing within 3 working days of receipt. The complaint will be given a timeline for a response within 5 working days either by email, telephone or in writing.

Where necessary the investigating officer will contact the complainant to get further details about the incident in question and agree a list of actions and timeframes, in order that the investigation of the complaint proceeds in a transparent manner.

If necessary, the investigating officer will undertake to speak with other people/witnesses regarding the incident to gather additional views and feedback. This will be completed within 7 working days of the first contact.

After investigation, the investigating officer will provide the outcome to the complainant in a letter or email, whichever is preferable to the complainant. Feedback on the complaint will be provided to the complainant no more than 10 working days after first contact.

The BCWA investigating officer is responsible for ensuring complaints are investigated and where possible resolved within the stated timeframes.

In the event that the investigating officer is unavailable, the complainant will be informed of any delays that may occur and will be provided with a reasonable alternative timeframe.

If it is deemed appropriate BCWA's CEO will inform the management committee of the nature of the complaint, planned actions and the outcome.

In the event that the complainant is not satisfied with BCWA's response to the complaint, an appeal may be lodged.

1.13.7 APPEALING THE OUTCOME OF A FORMAL COMPLAINT

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint, they may appeal in writing to BCWA's CEO or if the CEO was the investigating officer, to the chair of BCWA management committee. The complainant will need to provide information relating to their original complaint and include reasons for the appeal and the outcome they would like to see. All appeals should be made within one calendar month of receipt of the outcome of the original complaint.

The Bromley & Croydon Women's Aid CEO, or the chair of BCWA management committee, as appropriate, will carry out necessary investigations and will write to the complainant detailing the outcome of the appeal within 15 working days of first receiving the appeal.

If the complainant remains unsatisfied at the end of this internal BCWA investigatory process, they will be referred to a relevant regulatory body as listed below.

Citizens Advice Bureau (Bromley)
Community House South Street
Bromley, Kent, BR1 1RH
<http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk>

Citizens Advice Bureau (Croydon)
48-50 Portland Rd, London SE25 4PQ
0800 144 88 48 (freephone)
<https://www.citizensadvicecroydon.org>

Optivo
Building 1060,
Cornforth Drive,
Kent Science Park,
Sittingbourne
ME9 8PX.

A2 Dominion
Capital House 25 Chapel Street
London, NW1 5WX

The Hyde Group
30 Park Street
London
SE1 9EQ

Housing Ombudsman Service
PO Box 152 Liverpool
L33 7WQ
Telephone: 0300 111 3000

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk
Web: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk