



Complaints Policy

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Approved by:	Board
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Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Scope	3
3. Policy Statement	3
4. Safeguarding	4
5. Complaints Procedure	4
Stage 1	4
Stage 2	4
Stage 3	5
Stage 4	5
6. Supporting Individuals who use our Services to Complain about Thrive Women’s Aid Services.....	5
7. Supporting Individuals who use our Services to complain about other Services and Organisations	6
8. Managing conflict or disputes between people who use our services.....	6
9. Monitoring Complaints and Feedback to Improve Services	6
10. Confidentiality.....	7
11. Document Details	8
12. Appendix 1: Complaints Poster.....	10
13. Appendix 2: Child and Young Person Complaints Form	11

1. Introduction

This document sets out how Thrive Women's Aid deals with and responds to complaints and how these will be used to improve the range and quality of services.

Thrive Women's Aid seeks to provide a high quality, responsive service which adequately meets the needs of women, children and families experiencing domestic abuse.

At all times, Thrive Women's Aid welcomes comments and feedback from people who use our services, volunteers, individuals and organisations about the service they have received or about any other aspect of our work, including the behaviour of our employees.

2. Scope

This policy is applicable to all employees, volunteers, Trustees, people who use our services and other external agencies or individuals.

3. Policy Statement

- 3.1** Thrive Women's Aid is committed to encouraging those who use our services and all other stakeholders to come forward with any complaints about the services delivered or other aspects of work provided in order to maintain high quality provision.
- 3.2** Thrive Women's Aid commits to monitoring all complaints to ensure that they are used to improve the range and quality of service delivery on a continuous basis.
- 3.3** Thrive Women's Aid will ensure that all those who use our services and other stakeholders have access to clear information on how to voice complaints. People who use our services and children and young people in particular will be provided with the support they need to make their views known.
- 3.4** Thrive Women's Aid will ensure that no individual who uses our services are disadvantaged or treated less favourably as a result of complaining.
- 3.5** Thrive Women's Aid is committed to helping individuals to resolve their complaint as quickly as possible.
- 3.6** Thrive Women's Aid will actively encourage those who use our services and stakeholders to comment and provide feedback on the services, or other aspects of work, provided. This will be done in a number of ways:

- Listening to, evaluating, and responding appropriately to comments and compliments about any aspect of Thrive Women's Aid's work;
- Providing comments/suggestions boxes for those who use our services;
- Displaying a simple and easy to understand complaints poster (see Appendix 1) at all venues;
- Having a child friend complaints form (see appendix 2);
- Publishing our complaints procedure on our website;
- Encourage all individuals who use our services to complete an exit interview, upon leaving Thrive Women's Aid support services;
- Regular house meetings, where women will be encouraged to give feedback about their experiences of using Thrive Women's Aid residential services; and
- Evaluation of all formal events/workshops/training sessions/conferences and regular evaluation of informal activities such as coffee mornings and other community activities.

Further guidance and information on how we collect and monitor the effectiveness of our services is provided in the **Quality Policy**.

3.7 All complaints will be reported regularly to the Senior Management Team and annually to the Board of Trustees.

4. Safeguarding

If a complaint involves a situation where an adult or child or young person is at risk of significant harm, employees should follow guidance set out in the **Safeguarding Policy**.

5. Complaints Procedure

Stage 1

If an individual or organisation is unhappy about any aspect of Thrive Women's Aid's services as a first step the relevant employee should be contacted directly to see if the problem can be resolved informally. The employee will give a response as soon as reasonably practicable.

Where an individual raises a complaint through social media, by way of a response the organisation will post a link to the complaints procedure.

Stage 2

If the matter has not been resolved satisfactorily through informal discussions the individual or organisation representative must put the complaint in writing, outlining the nature of the complaint and the outcome they are seeking.

The Director or Chair of the Board will assign an Investigating Officer, who will make contact with the complainant on receipt of the written complaint within 5 working days. If necessary, the Director or Chair will refer the matter to the relevant authority or regulatory body for investigation and that organisation's investigation procedure will be followed.

The Investigating Officer will investigate the issue; this may include interviewing any witnesses, examining any documents, and may include a meeting with the complainant and any others involved.

The Investigating Officer will respond, in writing, within 20 working days and will inform the complainant of the appeals procedure. Clear and suitable language will be used in all communication.

Stage 3

If the matter is not resolved satisfactorily, the complainant should appeal in writing within 5 working days of the Investigating Officer's response to the appointed Appeal Decision Officer.

The organisation may appoint a complaints panel from amongst its Senior Managers and Board of Trustees to review the complaint and the actions taken.

The Complainant will be notified in writing of the Appeal Officer's decision within 20 working days. This decision is the final stage within Thrive Women's Aid.

Stage 4

If the complainant remains dissatisfied they will be informed of the right to complain to commissioning body for the organisation or the relevant authority.

Letters of complaint should be marked as confidential and should be addressed to:

Director (or Chair of the Trustee Board if your complaint is about the Director)
Thrive Women's Aid
PO BOX 20
Port Talbot
SA13 1AA

Tel: 01639 894 864

Email: info@thrivewa.org.uk

6. Supporting Individuals who use our Services to Complain about Thrive Women's Aid Services

- 6.1** Thrive Women's Aid acknowledges that some individuals may require additional support in order to complain and to complete the process as outlined above.
- 6.2** Individuals should be asked whether they would like assistance to put a complaint in writing. No pressure should be exerted to do this but the individual can be offered the opportunity to sit down together and record the complaint. The form in **appendix 2** can be used for children and young people wishing to put their complaint in writing.
- 6.3** The individual should give details of the complaint and the member of staff should record the details. This will be read back for confirmation before seeking a signature to confirm that what has been recorded is accurate. The supporting member of staff should not lead the individual in any way.
- 6.4** Supporting an individual to complain is an important and necessary role. No inference should be taken by members of the wider team, particularly if the complaint is about an employee.
- 6.5** The individual may wish to have someone to accompany them if they are asked to meet with or be interviewed at any point during the investigation. This may include a friend or family member, or a member of the Thrive Women's Aid Support Team.

7. Supporting Individuals who use our Services to complain about other Services and Organisations

- 7.1** There may be occasions when people we support, including children and young people, raise concerns or complaints about services or situations in other areas of their lives.
- 7.2** Employees should support individuals and families to access information on how to complain to external agencies.
- 7.3** If an individual's complaint is the result of poor service or a mistake by the landlords of Thrive residential accommodation; the service user should be supported to complain through the relevant housing association's complaint policy and procedure.

8. Managing conflict or disputes between people who use our services

Conflict and disputes arising between volunteers, residents and people who use our services should be dealt with in line with the **Managing Conflict and Dispute Resolution Policy**.

9. Monitoring Complaints and Feedback to Improve Services

- 9.1** Each time an informal or formal complaint is made the Director or a member of the Senior Management Team should be informed.
- 9.2** All formal complaints are logged and a copy of the complaint and subsequent communication are saved on the organisation's shared server under 'Governance/Complaints'.
- 9.3** The result of the complaint should be recorded within this file and also fed into the following systems and processes:
- Annual business planning to identify and prioritise necessary changes and gaps in service provision;
 - Service reviews and evaluations;
 - Reviews of policies and procedures; and
 - Staff training and development plans.
- 9.4** If a complaint is about the conduct of a member of staff it will be fairly investigated and if substantiated the disciplinary policy and procedure may be used.
- 9.5** The result of the complaint should be discussed at the next Senior Management Team Meeting.
- 9.6** The complaints record will be presented annually to the Board of Trustees.
- 9.7** Where contractually required, the relevant Project or Service Manager should make the commissioning body or funder aware of the complaint and its outcome.

10. Confidentiality

- 10.1** We will respect the privacy of complaints and only tell people involved in resolving the complaint.
- 10.2** The summary recorded will be kept securely in line with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and will be kept for 3 years for adult complaints and until the age of 21 where the complaint is from or involves a child or young person.
- 10.3** We use anonymised information from complaints so that we learn and improve our services.

11. Document Details

11.1 Document History

Version Number	Approved v.3.0
Date approved	June 2021
Approved by	Board
Next review due	June 2024
Who this policy applies to	Employees, service users, volunteers, trustees, and all other stakeholders.
Who is responsible for the policy	The Director.
Links with legislation	•
Links with other policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Data Protection policies• Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy• Grievance policy• Disciplinary policy• Whistle-blowing policy• Support Planning Policy• Managing conflict and dispute resolution• Quality Policy

11.2 Document control

All enquiries with regard to this document should be addressed to the Director.

Expired issues of this document will be retained by the Director.

11.3 Document review

This policy and procedure will be reviewed every three years, unless:

- There are significant changes to legislation or regulation
- There are found to be deficiencies or failures in this policy and procedure which result in complaints from managers or staff members
- The policy and procedure is deemed to be no longer effective or in line with business requirements

At which point, the Director will initiate an immediate review.

11.4 Revision History

Version 1.0	May 2014	Thrive Women's Aid	Approved version
Draft 2.0	May 2018	Director	Draft Amendments
Version 2.0	May 2018	Board	Approved version
Version 3.0	June 2021	Director	Approved version

12. Appendix 1: Complaints Poster

You have the right to complain about our service

If you are unhappy about any part of Thrive Women's Aid's services you are encouraged to complain using the following steps:

Stage One:

Contact a member of staff to see if the problem can be resolved informally. They will respond as soon as possible.

Stage Two:

If you are unhappy with the outcome then you should write to us, explaining what the problem is and what you would like to happen. We can help you to do this if you need support. Someone will contact you within 5 working days and will then write to you to tell you what we have done within 20 working days.

Stage Three:

If you are still unhappy with what we have done then you must write to us within 5 days to tell us why. We can help you to do this if you need support. We will review the information and then write to you again to tell you what we have done within 20 working days.

Stage Four:

If you are still unhappy then you can complain to our commissioning body or the relevant authority. We will tell you who this is and we can help you if you need support.

Complaints should be addressed to:

Director (or Chair of the Trustee Board if your complaint is about the Director)
Thrive Women's Aid
PO BOX 20
Port Talbot
SA13 1AA

13. Appendix 2: Child and Young Person Complaints Form

If you are unhappy about something then you have a right to make a complaint about it by filling in this sheet to help us to try and sort things out so that it doesn't happen again.

Date	
My name	
I'm not happy about	
Because	
When did it happen	
Who else was there	
It made me feel	
What I want to happen now	
The person who helped me fill in this form	
I have been given a photocopy of this form	YES / NO
Thrive Women's Aid will get back to me by	
Signed:	
Signed (Thrive Women's Aid Staff)	