



COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURES

This policy was approved by the
Management Committee of
Foyle Women's Aid on

Date: _____

Signed: _____

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This policy provides information primarily for clients and also for stakeholders, other agencies and members of the public on how they should make a comment or complaint to Foyle Women's Aid. A separate process for paid staff is outlined in the Grievance Procedure; a process for volunteers is outlined in the Volunteering Policy.
- 1.2 Foyle Women's Aid encourages open communication and involvement by clients and stakeholders of the organisation. It is important that effective communication is encouraged between all staff (paid and unpaid); with callers to the 24-Hour Domestic Violence Helpline, residential clients, users of community-based services, stakeholders and members of the general public with whom Women's Aid has contact. Comments and/or complaints help the organisation to improve and further develop its practice and service.
- 1.3 Foyle Women's Aid has a duty to operate in accordance with some contractual obligations and ensure all issues of concern and/or complaint are fully investigated in a fair, open and equitable manner. This policy reflects Women's Aid's commitment to best practice.

2.0 POLICY STATEMENT

- 2.1 The Management Committee of Foyle Women's Aid will promote a positive culture to ensure that staff understand the policy and procedures; are trained and supported; and that frontline staff, where appropriate, are able to resolve matters directly and speedily, without recourse to the formal complaints procedure.
- 2.2 Foyle Women's Aid will accept comments and/or complaints verbally; in writing by letter or on a standard complaints form; or in any other reasonable format which meets the complainant's needs, e.g. email. Women's Aid will also accept comments and/or complaints submitted by advocates and others on behalf of clients.
- 2.3 Foyle Women's Aid will ensure that all clients, including children, young people and stakeholders, have access to clear information on how to voice complaints and comments.
- 2.4 Clients will be provided with the support they need in order to make their views known.
- 2.5 Clients will not suffer a penalty for making a comment and/or complaint. Any allegation of victimisation towards a complainant will be dealt with seriously, promptly and confidentially.
- 2.6 Users of all Women's Aid services have the right to confidentiality in the handling of their comments and/or complaints; or of comments and/or complaints made against them, except in those circumstances identified within the Confidentiality Policy.

2.7 Some issues and concerns are managed more appropriately through specific policies relating to the work of Foyle Women's Aid. This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies and procedures:

- Code of Conduct for Employers & Workers
- Collaborative & Partnership Working
- Confidentiality
- Disciplinary Procedure
- Equal Opportunities for Clients
- Health & Safety
- Safeguarding
- Whistleblowing

3.0 IMPLEMENTATION

3.1 The Director and Line Managers have specific responsibility for the effective implementation of this policy. Foyle Women's Aid expects all staff to abide by the policy and help create and maintain a quality service, which meets the needs of women, children and young people affected by domestic violence and to fulfil its responsibilities to other stakeholders. In order to implement this policy, Foyle Women's Aid will ensure that:

- All staff, paid and unpaid, are made aware of the Comments and Complaints Policy during induction training;
- The Director/Line Managers/staff understand and fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with the Comments and Complaints policy and procedures; and
- All staff understand the policy and procedures and are able to fulfil their responsibilities. Appropriate training on the policy, its promotion, the procedures and monitoring will be provided to all staff.

3.2 Foyle Women's Aid will take every appropriate opportunity to promote and publicise the Comments and Complaints Policy to all service users and other stakeholders. In particular, it will make use of the Foyle Women's Aid website; relevant promotional literature; and train and encourage staff to identify possible sources of complaint and/or opportunities to receive feedback from clients.

3.3 Foyle Women's Aid will ensure this policy is available in leaflet form for all clients. The Comments & Complaints Form (CC1) is available to clients wanting to make a formal complaint in all Women's Aid services and premises.

3.4 Foyle Women's Aid will fully implement this policy in the management and operation of the 24-Hour Domestic Violence Helpline, mindful of the particular circumstances related to this service. A Recording Form for comments from Helpline callers is included at Appendix 6.

3.5 Where Foyle Women's Aid is contracted to provide services on behalf of other organisations, it may be necessary to take account of their respective complaints policies. Where appropriate, complainants will be advised of this.

3.5 A breach of the Comments and Complaints Policy and Procedures by staff will be regarded as misconduct, and may lead to disciplinary action.

4.0 PROCEDURES

4.1 See appendices 1 - 6

5.0 MONITORING & REVIEW

5.1 The policy will be reviewed on a regular basis to identify areas for improvement and, where appropriate, to make changes.

PROCEDURES

Appendix 1

MANAGING COMMENTS and/or COMPLAINTS from CLIENTS

1.0 The Management Committee of Foyle Women's Aid will promote a positive culture to ensure that staff understand the policy and procedures; are trained and supported; and that frontline staff, where appropriate, are able to resolve matters directly and speedily, without recourse to the formal complaints procedure.

Informal Procedure

Staff receive and respond to comments and complaints on a day-to-day basis and, more often than not, are able to resolve a wide range of issues to the satisfaction of the client. As a first means of resolving complaints, the following informal process will be followed:

- Where a client has a comment and/or complaint about the service she is receiving, she should, in the first instance, speak with a FWA worker.
- If the client does not feel comfortable discussing her comment and/or complaint with their worker, there are a number of options available:
 - a. Report the matter to the PA., who will refer it to the appropriate Line Manager.
 - b. Use the Client Comment Form and Client Comment Box, which are situated in the Women's Room, Ashleywood House; Reception in Pathways; and the entrance hallway in Rose House.

c. Use the Client Comment Form available online and submit via our website: www.foylewomensaid.org.

- If there is not a satisfactory resolution of the comment and/or complaint within five working days, the following formal procedure should be followed.

All informal complaints must be recorded by the worker who dealt with it and reported to their Line Manager, who will, in turn, feed it into the Director for the monthly Management Committee Report.

Formal Procedure

Stage One

The formal procedure is appropriate if the comment and/or complaint is serious, if the person making the complaint prefers this approach, or if the informal stage has not satisfactorily resolved the issue. Only complaints received in writing can be addressed through the following formal procedure:

- All formal comments and/or complaints will be sent to FWA's Employment Consultants.
- A staff member may support a client making a complaint to complete a Comment and/or Complaint Form.
- A manager will acknowledge receipt of the comment and/or complaint in writing; investigate the comment and/or complaint; and inform the client of the outcome and any action taken as a result within ten working days (both verbally and in writing).
- If the client is not satisfied with the outcome and feels that the matter should be taken further, the next stage is to make a further complaint to the Director in writing within 14 days.

Stage Two

- The Director will investigate the comment and/or complaint; what procedures were followed; and inform the client of the outcome within ten days in writing.
- If the client remains dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage Two, she may make an appeal in writing to the Chairperson of Foyle Women's Aid within 14 days.

Stage Three - Appeal

- The Chairperson will convene an appeal panel of members of the Committee, which will investigate the comment/complaint; what procedures were followed; and inform the client of the outcome within 30 days in writing.
- The decision of the appeal panel will be final and no further right of appeal will

exist internally to Foyle Women's Aid

4.0 Monitoring Comments and Complaints

- 4.1 Each comment and/or complaint made in writing will be recorded within a comments and/or complaints log book by the staff member managing it.
- 4.2 The comment and/or complaint record log will be monitored annually by the Director. Actions and recommendations arising will be presented to the Management Board/Committee and addressed as part of clients' participation groups.

Appendix 2

MANAGING COMMENTS and/or COMPLAINTS from STAKEHOLDERS and OTHERS

1.0 General

- 1.1 Any member of the general public, key stakeholder or other agency raising an issue of concern, which has not been resolved informally, will be advised to submit their comment and/or complaint in writing to the Director. If the complaint is regarding the Director, the complaint may be submitted to the Chairperson of Foyle Women's Aid.
- 1.2 The procedure for dealing with comments and/or complaints from the general public and key stakeholders is the same as outlined within the Formal Procedure, Stage Two for clients (see Appendix 1).
- 1.3 The complainant will be kept informed of all stages of the investigation.
- 1.4 On completion of the investigation, the complainant will be advised of the outcome. If appropriate, a meeting may be convened.

2.0 Monitoring Comments and Complaints

- 2.1 Each comment and/or complaint made in writing will be recorded within a Comments & Complaints Log by the Line Manager managing it.
- 2.2 The Comments & Complaints Log will be monitored annually by the Director. Actions and recommendations arising will be presented to the Management Committee and addressed as part of clients' participation groups.

Appendix 3
Form CC1

COMMENTS and COMPLAINTS FORM
FORMAL PROCEDURE: STAGE 1

Name of complainant	
Complainant's address	
Date of complaint	

Type of complaint

Please tick one or more of the following boxes:

Complaint about service	<input type="checkbox"/>	Complaint about member of staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
Complaint about other client	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

Details of complaint

Please include date, time & place occurred; individual/s concerned; any corroborating evidence.

Signed (Complainant)	Date
Signed (staff member supporting complainant, if applicable)	Date

COMPLETED FORM SHOULD BE SENT TO THE COMPLAINTS MANAGER.

For office use only

Comment or complaint reference no.	Copied to Line Manager (date)
Project name	Feedback to complainant (date)

Please detail below actions taken:

Please detail below any outcome:

Any additional comments:

**THIS FORM MUST BE KEPT IN THE COMPLAINTS FILE
FOR FUTURE REFERENCE**

24-Hour Domestic Violence Helpline COMMENTS and COMPLAINTS FORM

If a caller to the 24-Hour Domestic Violence Helpline informally or formally indicates that they have a comment or complaint to make about the service, the Helpline Worker will seek to take note of the comments. If appropriate, the Helpline Worker may use the following form of words:

*“I hope that the Helpline has been able to respond satisfactorily to your call, but I realise (from your earlier comments) that you may have some (particular) concerns or complaints about the service. The Helpline is keen to hear feedback from callers in order to improve the service, and the manager looks after all the comments and complaints we receive. **Either:** Deirdre (or deputy) is here today – may I put you through to her? Or I’m sorry Deirdre is not here right now, but she will be here tomorrow/later/Monday – may I give you her number or would you like her to phone you?”*

Name of person making complaint	
Address (if applicable)	
Date of complaint	

Details of complaint

Please include date, time and place occurred; individual/s concerned; any corroborating evidence. Please tick one or more of the following boxes:

Lack of information about the Helpline and/or freephone number <i>e.g. number not easily accessed</i>	
Delay in answering call <i>e.g. making several attempts before call answered</i>	
Quality of service <i>e.g. inaccurate or out-of-date information</i>	
Helpline worker’s attitude/response <i>e.g. unable to hear/understand Helpline worker; judgemental/impatient response</i>	
Other, please specify	
Full Details:	

Signed (staff member)	Date of signature
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[Completed form should be forwarded to Line Manager].

Please detail below actions taken:

Please detail below any outcome:

Any additional comments:

**THIS FORM MUST BE KEPT IN THE COMPLAINTS FILE
FOR FUTURE REFERENCE**

Office use only

Helpline comment & complaint ref no.	Received by Line Manager (date) (signature)
	Feedback to complainant (if applicable) (date)