



Complaints and Comments Policy

Title of Policy	Complaints and Comments Policy
Procedure to which policy relates	Complaints and Comments Procedure This procedure can be found within Leeway teams Service User Handbooks
Job title of owner	C.E.O
Date procedure adopted	2004
Date of most recent review	2025
Date of next review	2028 Unless required sooner

Definitions

The following definitions apply to this policy:

- “Leeway”** means Leeway Domestic Violence and Abuse Services;
- “Stakeholders”** means anybody that is engaged for and on behalf of Leeway;
- “Complaint”** means any expression of dissatisfaction with Leeway’s services; whether substantiated or not; with Leeway or a Stakeholder which requires either an informal or formal response.

Introduction

Leeway is committed to providing an excellent service to its service users and Stakeholders, working in an open and accountable way that builds trust and respect. Our Complaints Policy and Procedure explains our approach.

The Policy will be read by each Stakeholder as part of their induction with their senior/manager and will be refreshed every three years, or sooner if required, as part of the review and consultation process.

By implementing this policy, Leeway must ensure that all Stakeholders are treated fairly in line with Leeway’s Equal Opportunities Policy and Procedure.

Policy

Leeway aims to resolve Complaints quickly, fairly and effectively (usually within 10 working days). One of the ways in which Leeway can continue to improve the services that Leeway provide is by listening and responding to the views of our service users and Stakeholders, in particular responding positively to Complaints.

Leeway aims to ensure that: -

- a. Making a Complaint is as easy as possible, ensuring that all service users and Stakeholders have access to clear information on how to voice Complaints and comments.
- b. Service users in particular will be provided with the support they need in order to make their views known. Leeway will also ensure that no service users are disadvantaged or treated less favourably as a result of making a Complaint or making comments.
- c. Leeway will treat a Complaint as a clear expression of dissatisfaction with our service which calls for an immediate response.
- d. Leeway deals with Complaints promptly and where appropriate confidentially.
- e. Leeway responds to and follows up the Complaint according to the Complaints and Comments Procedure.
- f. Leeway learns from Complaints and uses them to improve the services Leeway offer.

Leeway recognises that many concerns raised will be informal, and Leeway aim to deal with these quickly within the course of the service. In the first instance Leeway would expect any Complaint to be raised directly with the Stakeholder concerned. If the concern cannot be satisfactorily resolved informally or a formal Complaint is raised, then the formal Complaints procedure must be followed.

Responsibilities

Leeway's responsibility will be to: -

- a. Acknowledge the formal Complaint in writing and advise of the procedure;
- b. Investigate;
- c. Respond within a stated period of time;
- d. Deal reasonably and sensitively with the Complaint;
- e. Take appropriate action if required.

The complainant's responsibility, as explained in the service user handbooks, is to: -

- a. Raise their concerns promptly and directly with the Stakeholder concerned and if their concerns cannot be resolved satisfactorily informally, then to follow the formal Complaints procedure;
- b. Explain the problem as clearly and as fully as possible, including any action taken to date;
- c. Allow Leeway a reasonable amount of time to deal with the matter as detailed in the formal Complaints Procedure;
- d. Recognise that some circumstances may be beyond Leeway's control.

Monitoring and reporting

Trustees of Leeway will receive regularly an anonymised report at Board of Trustee meetings of any formal Complaints made and their resolution.

Confidentiality

Except in exceptional circumstances, every attempt will be made to ensure that both the complainant and Leeway maintain confidentiality. However, the circumstances giving rise to the Complaint may be such that it may not be possible to maintain confidentiality. Should this be the case, the situation will be explained to the complainant.

Principles of the Complaints Policy

The Leeway Complaints Policy is based on the principle of a three-stage process (as detailed in the Complaints procedure)

This Complaints Policy applies to all services that Leeway provides.

We reserve the right not to investigate a complaint if this made by someone who is alleged to be a perpetrator of abuse or violence.

If at any time during the investigation of a Complaint, matters arise that warrant investigation under disciplinary proceedings, or through a criminal investigation, the Complaints Procedure will be suspended until those investigations are concluded. Similarly, the Complaints Procedure will be suspended if a complainant is actively seeking legal redress.

Where a Complaint is against a Stakeholder, they should be informed of the support services available to them.

The Manager of the department should be informed of the receipt of a Stage 1 formal Complaint. A complete record of the entire process should be kept (Appendix B). A copy of all reports, transcripts of interviews and other relevant information should be forwarded to the Manager of the department for immediate review.

Leeway may, at any stage of the formal Complaints Procedure, review a Complaint and give a decision, without formal investigation, where two members of the Management Team deem the Complaint to be deliberately repetitive or vexatious. Examples of such a situation could be where Complaints have been unsubstantiated or repetitive or where Complaints against an individual or service have previously been investigated and appropriate action taken.

When appealing against a previous decision, the complainant will be asked to state why they are dissatisfied with how their Complaint was handled.

Operation of this policy will be monitored by seniors/managers and discussed within supervision.