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For life free of abuse, fear & oppression
North Surrey Domestic Abuse Service

Complaints Policy and Procedure

<i>Date of Issue</i>	<i>April 2026</i>
<i>Review Date</i>	<i>April 2029</i>
Purpose: To establish the policy and procedure of North Surrey Domestic Abuse Services (NSDAS) regarding complaints and comments from service users and other stakeholders in relation to the service and how these will be used to improve the range and quality of services.	

Aim of Policy

The aim of this policy is to ensure that all feedback received by NSDAS is dealt with professionally and complaints and concerns are addressed and resolved at the earliest possible stage in a professional and supportive manner.

Policy Statement

NSDAS welcomes all feedback at any time. This policy is available to all survivors, external individuals and organisations in receipt of NSDAS services or working in partnership with NSDAS. Any individual should be free to make themselves aware of the procedure without fear of prejudice or judgement.

There is a three-stage process in place for managing complaints from users of the domestic abuse services, with the aim of managing survivor's needs and expectations. In the event of a complaint, the complainant should make their complaint known as soon as possible but in any event within 6 months of the reason for the complaint occurring.

Stage 1 Informal Complaint

In the first instance, the concern or complaint should be made known to the staff member or outreach worker that the complainant is in contact with. A complaint can be received verbally or in writing, via letter or email.

The complainant should be given a copy of this procedure.

That member of staff will try to resolve the matter immediately and informally within 5 working days but, if this is not possible, the complainant will have the option to make a formal complaint.

Stage 2 Formal Complaint

If the complainant wants to make a formal complaint, this should be made in writing by email for the attention of the Service/Operations Manager who will undertake a review of the complaint. (If the complaint is about the Service/Operations Manager, it will be passed to the CEO).

The complaint should be recorded by the Manager dealing with the complaint and include the following details:

- Initial complaint(s).
- Date complaint(s) made.
- Dates of events occurred.
- Person(s) involved.

The formal complaint will be acknowledged in writing within 5 working days and the aim will be to resolve the complaint within 20 working days. This will include arranging to meet with or speak to the complainant to establish the issue needing resolution and discussion with them on how to achieve this.

If the target of 20 working days cannot be met, the complainant will be informed of the delay, the reason for the delay and the new target date for responding.

The Manager will inform the complainant of the outcome of the complaint and highlight:

- Outline of complaint details
- Action taken
- What actions by whom and when
- Whether or not the complaint was resolved

Stage 3 Complaint Still Unresolved

Where there has not been a satisfactory outcome, the complaint will be passed to the CEO or Designated Trustee Lead to progress to stage 3.

Within 7 working days of the end of Stage 2, the CEO/Designated Trustee Lead will carry out an investigation into the complaint. The investigation will evaluate the actions that have been taken so far, identify remaining areas of dissatisfaction and examine further means of resolving the issue.

The investigation will be:

- *Impartial.* Each complaint should be approached with an open mind, and the facts and contentions in support of a complaint should be weighed objectively.
- *Confidential.* A complaint should be investigated in private and care should be taken when disclosing to others any identifying details of a complaint.
- *Transparent.* A complainant should be told about the steps in the complaint process and be given an opportunity to comment on any information that may be evidence against their complaint.

The CEO/Designated Trustee Lead will also comment on whether procedures and practices have been followed and whether any disciplinary, practice or policy issues arise from the situation.

Following the investigation, a report on the complaint will be completed within 20 working days (unless the complexity of the issue requires a delay in which case the complainant will be informed of this and a new target date for completion of the report).

The report will be reviewed and signed off by the Chair of Trustees. A letter explaining the outcome of the investigation will be sent to the complainant and the response will be final.

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your Stage 3 complaint you may contact Women's Aid. If you wish to make a complaint to Women's Aid, please email membership@womensaid.org.uk to raise the issue. It is expected complainants may contact Women's Aid either because they have difficulty in making a complaint direct to the member, or because they feel that a complaint they have made to a Women's Aid member organisation has not been dealt with adequately and that the member may have breached their terms of membership of Women's Aid, or the National Quality Standards.

If there is potential or actual legal action arising from a complaint, then the standard complaints procedure set out in this policy may not be applied. This is because an assessment of the potential claim and this policy's procedures may come into conflict. In such cases, appropriate legal advice will be taken and appropriate procedures followed in compliance with such advice.

NSDAS will keep all records of complaints for tracking purposes and to identify any trends in complaints.

Fundraising

If a complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint related to fundraising, the complaint can be referred to the Fundraising Regulator within 2 months of the final response.

Third Party Complaints

Matters relating to individual clients remain confidential. In dealing with any complaint concerning the service provided to an individual client, confidentiality and the safety of the client will be paramount. This principle also applies to former clients.

Neither managers nor the Board will enter into any discussion with any third party concerning the details of the service provided to any individual client, or former client, unless the complainant is acting on behalf of and with the explicit and recorded permission of the client.

However, neither managers nor the Board will enter into any discussion with any third party whom the client/former client has previously alleged to be a perpetrator of domestic violence or abuse, even if the client has given that person permission to act on their behalf.

At no stage of any third-party complaint under consideration may the complainant be accompanied by any person whom the client/former client has previously alleged to be a perpetrator of domestic violence or abuse.

Any complaint made by a third party acting on behalf of and with the permission of a client, concerning the service provided to that client, must be reported immediately to the Board. In the first instance senior managers may be asked to seek to resolve the matter, depending on the nature of the complaint, and to inform the Board of the outcome.

If a complaint by a third party, representing a former client with that client's permission, is under consideration and cannot be resolved by managers, the matter will be referred to the Board. The complainant will be invited to put their complaint in writing and managers will be asked to submit a report on the actions taken to try to resolve the matter. A holding response will be sent as soon as is reasonably possible and an investigation conducted. When this has been completed the Board will respond to the complainant.

A large print, Braille or audio version of this Policy is available on request. Information can also be made available in other languages. Please contact your local service.