



NEEMA WOMEN COMMUNITY

Complaint Handling Policy



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Custodian of Document	Neema Women Community
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Purpose of the policy	The purpose of this policy statement is to define how Neema Women Community operates to in response to complains and concerns submitted by its members and external partners.
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Complaints Handling Policy

Introduction

Neema Women Community is committed to providing a quality service and working in an open and accountable way that builds trust and respect. One of the ways in which we can continue to improve our service is by listening and responding to the views of our clients and stakeholders, and in particular by responding positively to complaints, and by putting mistakes right.

Therefore we aim to ensure that:

- making a compliment or complaint is as easy as possible
- we welcome compliments, feedback and suggestions
- we treat a complaint as a clear expression of dissatisfaction with our service which calls for an immediate response
- we deal with it promptly, politely and, when appropriate, confidentially
- we respond in the right way – for example, with an explanation, or an apology where we have got things wrong, or information on any action taken etc.
- we learn from complaints, use them to improve our service, and review annually our complaints policy and procedures

We recognise that many concerns will be raised informally, and dealt with quickly.

Our aims are to:

- resolve informal concerns quickly
- keep matters low-key
- enable mediation between the complainant and the individual to whom the complaint has been referred

This policy ensures that we welcome compliments and provide guidelines for dealing with complaints from members of the public about our services, facilities, staff and volunteers.

Purpose

We take complains and suggestions seriously

The purpose of this policy is to demonstrate the commitment of Neema Women Community to respond to complains in an efficient and appropriate manner.

A complaint is defined as any expression of dissatisfaction, however, it is expressed. This would include complaints expressed face to face, via a phone call, in writing, via email or any other method. All staff should have sufficient knowledge to be able to identify an "expression of dissatisfaction" even when the word "complain" or "complaint" is not used.

We are always glad to hear from people who are satisfied with the services we offer. All compliments are recorded, acknowledged, and a copy is sent to the relevant service manager to provide feedback to the member of staff or service.

The formal complaints procedure is intended to ensure that all complaints are handled fairly, consistently and wherever possible resolved to the complainant's satisfaction (please see Complain procedure).

Policy Statement

Neema Women Community responsibility will be to:

- acknowledge the formal complaint in writing;
- respond within a stated period of time;
- deal reasonably and sensitively with the complaint; and
- take action where appropriate.

A complainant's responsibility is to:

- bring their complaint, in writing, to NWC's attention normally within 8 weeks of the issue arising;
- raise concerns promptly and directly with a member of staff in NWC;
- explain the problem as clearly and as fully as possible, including any action taken to date;
- allow NWC a reasonable time to deal with the matter, and
- recognise that some circumstances may be beyond NWC's control.

Except in exceptional circumstances, every attempt will be made to ensure that both the complainant and NWC maintain confidentiality. However the circumstances giving rise to the complaint may be such that it may not be possible to maintain confidentiality (with each complaint judged on its own facts). Should this be the case, the situation will be explained to the complainant.

Complain Procedure

Written records must be made by NWC at each stage of the procedure.

Stage 1

In the first instance, staff member(s) must establish the seriousness of the complaint. An informal approach is appropriate when it can be achieved. But if concerns cannot be satisfactorily resolved informally, then the formal complaints procedure should be followed.

The complaint should include the complainants name and address, the nature and date of the complaint and how they want to see it resolved. The complaints form can be requested and can be sent to the complainant or collected by the complainant.

The complaint can be written or if the individual prefers they can tell someone at Neema Women Community, or someone else, who will write it down for them. The complainant will need to sign it. A complaint form is available to use at appendix 1.

On receipt, each complaint will be allocated a reference number and logged on the complaints register. Complainants must receive an acknowledgement within 3 working days of receipt of a signed complaint.

Stage 2

If the complaint cannot be resolved informally, the member of the public should be advised that a formal complaint may be made and the following procedure should be explained to them. It may sometimes be appropriate for a different member of staff, preferably a member of the Management Team, to make this explanation.

- a) In all cases, the complaint must be passed on to our Complaint Handling Officer. In the event of a complaint about the Complaint Handling Officer the complaint should be passed to the Board Members, and if the complaint is about the Board Members this must be passed on to the Chair of the Board.
- b) The Complaint Handling Officer or Board Members, depending on the nature of the complaint, must acknowledge the complaint in writing within one week of receiving it.
- c) One of the above will investigate the complaint. Any conclusions reached should be discussed with the staff member involved and their Line Manager.
- d) The person making the complaint will receive a response based on the investigation within four weeks of the complaint being received. If this is not possible then a letter must be sent explaining why.

To note that there are some further information to account when complaints are received:

- All complaints at this stage should be dealt with by our Complaints Handling Officer. If they need to meet with the complainant, they will do so within seven working days of receiving the written complaint.
- Complaints will be fully investigated, and a written response provided to the complainant within ten working days by the CHO.
- The complainant will receive written confirmation of the outcome of any investigation any recommendations/remedies made, such as reviewing of policies, staff development and training or appropriate improvement to our services.
- Where the complaint is upheld an apology should be offered.
- Occasionally investigations may take longer, particularly if the complaint is complex. Should this be the case a holding letter will be sent after ten working days and a final date given for a conclusion to be reached.
- If an individual remains dissatisfied with the outcome from Stage Two they can appeal within fourteen working days of the date of the outcome and progress to Stage Three.

- The complaints register will be updated, and any pending complaints flagged so they are followed up

Stage 3

If the complaint cannot be resolved to the complainant's satisfaction at stage two, or if the manager feels that the complaint is of a very serious nature, or concerns a staff member/manager then it will be referred to the CEO. If the complaint is about the CEO then the matter will be discussed with two Trustees.

The CEO and/or Trustees will acknowledge receipt within three working days, they will review the Stage Two investigation and recommend one of the following actions within ten working days (from the date the complainant stated they wanted to take the complaint to stage 3):

- Uphold the action taken at Stage Two
- Make changes to the Stage Two recommendation/actions

The complainant should be informed in writing of the outcome of stage three, the decision reached about this complaint will then be final but other options available to the complainant (as listed below) should be detailed in the letter.

If after NWC has been through the three stages and the complainant is still not satisfied with the result, they should be advised that there is no further right of appeal with NWC but they could approach any of the following agencies for advice:

- A solicitor
- Citizens Advice Bureau

This should be done within one month of receiving the outcome from the appeal.

Anonymous complaints

Complaints received anonymously will be recorded and considered, but action may be limited if further information is required to ensure a full and fair investigation.

Data protection and Monitoring

To process a complaint NWC will hold personal data about the complainant, which the individual provides, and which other people give in response to the complaint. We will hold this data securely and only use it to address the complaint. The identity of the person making the complaint will only be known to those who need to consider the complaint and will not be revealed to other people or made public. However, it may not be possible to preserve confidentiality in some circumstances, for example, where relevant legislation applied or allegations are made which involve the conduct of third parties.

NWC will normally destroy complaints files in a secure manner six years after the complaint has been closed.

Monitoring

Complaints are an important tool which, alongside data provided by exit surveys, stakeholder surveys, user feedback and focus groups, will allow us to learn about the services we provide. They provide a useful source of information about how individuals see our services and how we are serving them. To ensure we can learn from complaints the following data will be collected:

- Name and address
- Name of person dealing with the complaint
- Date of complaint and response
- Nature of complaint
- Action(s) taken/recommendations made in response to the complaint Lessons learnt

Appendix 1

Neema Women Community Complaint Handling Officer:

Name : Siyam Farah

Email: siyam.farah@neemawomen.co.uk

Appendix 2

NEEMA WOMEN COMMUNITY

COMPLAINTS FORM

You may use this form to make a suggestion or to make a complaint about Neema Women Community.

We would like you to return this form as soon as possible.

Your Name

Address

Telephone and email

Date of incident:

Approximate time of incident:

Suggestion / Complaint :

What action would you like to be taken?

What times are convenient for you to have an appointment to discuss this?