

Women and Girls Network Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy

Women and Girls Network (WGN) is committed to developing, delivering and promoting supportive, empowering and appropriate services and relationships. We strive for high standards and good practice in all that we do and one of the ways we continually improve and develop is by listening to and learning from others views. We welcome comments, compliments and complaints and encourage you to let us know if you have any feedback for us.

Who this policy is for

This policy applies to service users, members of the public and organisations who would like to comment on, compliment or complain about WGN's services, the conduct of our colleagues or third parties working with or representing us.

Ways to get in touch

- By calling our central office on 020 7610 4678 (between 10am-1pm and 2-5pm, Monday-Friday)
- By emailing gurpreet@wgn.org.uk
- By writing to: WGN, PO Box 13095, London W14 0FE

To help us to respond as quickly as possible, please let us know

- Your name
- Your contact details and the best way and time to contact you
- What happened and when (i.e. the service(s) or colleagues(s) involved)
- What you would like to happen

Definitions

- A comment is feedback which expresses an opinion or view about WGN.
- A compliment is when you tell us what we are doing well and the positive difference WGN makes.
- A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the actions or lack of action by WGN, or someone acting on behalf of WGN.

When it is unclear whether feedback is a comment or complaint, we will try to confirm this with you. If we are unable to do this, we will usually treat your feedback as a complaint. If feedback is provided anonymously we will not be able to treat it as a complaint.

Our commitment

We treat all comments, compliments and complaints seriously and view them as an opportunity to improve, develop and learn. We are interested in ideas you may have on how we might do things better.

Everyone who provides feedback to WGN will be treated with courtesy and respect and we will listen to you. We expect that you will treat our colleagues with the same courtesy and respect and that you will listen to us.

Any feedback you provide will not affect your relationship with WGN or stop you from accessing our services.

We are happy to acknowledge the mistakes we make and welcome the opportunity to apologise and then try to prevent them from happening again in the future.

WGN regularly reviews all the feedback we receive to identify any trends, areas of concern and wider learning.

WGN's Directors report to our Board of Trustees on the nature and (level of) feedback we receive and the outcomes of complaints, including whether they have led to changes, improvements and developments in our work or the ways we work. This information will not usually be available to others.

Thank you for supporting us to improve, develop and learn, and for providing us with an important opportunity to put things right when we get them wrong.

Inclusivity

We are committed to ensuring and promoting inclusivity and will arrange for an interpreter, provide information in an accessible format(s) and any other reasonable adjustment required. If you have additional needs please let us know so we can ensure the right support is in place for you.

Third party reporting

You may wish to have a third party act on your behalf. A third party is any person or organisation acting on behalf of you. For example, this may include a friend or advice agency. Where a third party is supporting you, we will need written consent to confirm this. Where this confirmation has been provided, we will make every effort to keep your chosen third party fully informed.

Commenting on WGN

It is always useful to learn what people think about WGN, what we do and how we are doing. Comments are welcome because they help to influence and ensure the standard of our work and the ways we work.

Whenever we can we will record and monitor the comments we receive. We aim to acknowledge comments however, this may not always be possible. All comments received are appreciated and helpful.

Complimenting WGN

We work hard to ensure and maintain high standards and good practice and it useful for us to know when we get things right and we do well. Compliments enable us to understand the positive impact we have.

Whenever we can we will record and monitor the compliments we receive and provide positive feedback to our teams and colleagues where appropriate. We aim to acknowledge compliments however, this may not always be possible. All compliments received are appreciated and helpful.

Complaining or concerns about WGN's work or our colleagues

When we get things wrong we will do everything we can to make things right. We will take appropriate action to stop mistakes happening again and going forward we will learn from the experience.

WGN is committed to using the learning from the complaints we receive to support our continuous improvement and development. We value the understanding receiving and resolving complaints provides, using it help us to be more open and accountable.

All complaints received are appreciated and helpful.

Informal complaints or concerns

Many concerns arise from misunderstandings, which can be sorted out quickly on an informal basis. Often the best way to achieve a resolution is for you to clearly explain your concern and for us to listen, respond and to make appropriate changes or take action where required or possible.

However, if you feel that your complaint or concern cannot or is too serious to, be dealt with in this way WGN has a formal complaints procedure.

We recognise making a complaint is not always easy. It is important to us that you feel able to voice your concerns and complaints and are confident that we will take what you have to say seriously and treat you fairly.

We aim to ensure:

- We treat complaints as an expression of dissatisfaction with our work or ways of working, which calls for a response.
- Making a complaint is as easy and transparent as possible.

- Complaints are handled respectfully, fairly and appropriately and within the timeframes set out in this policy.
- We respond in the right way – for example, when we get things wrong, we accept responsibility, take proportionate action including apologising where appropriate.
- We continuously learn from complaints and use this learning to improve and develop our work and ways of working.

The timescale for making a formal complaint is 8 weeks from the date when an incident takes place or comes to light unless there are exceptional circumstances why the complaint could not have been submitted within this timeframe (this will be determined at the discretion of WGN). It may be harder to investigate or resolve complaints which are more than 8 weeks old.

Formal complaints – Stage 1

You can make a complaint by contacting us by any of the methods outlined in the ‘Ways to get in touch’ section. Formal complaints should be made in writing.

- Complaints about our services should be directed to Dr Akima Thomas OBE (Clinical Director) – marked ‘Private & Confidential - Complaint’
- Complaints about all other issues should be directed to Gurpreet Virdee (Director of Operations & Development) – marked ‘Private & Confidential - Complaint’

The appropriate Director will assign a Manager to investigate your complaint. If your complaint relates to a Director, it will be investigated by a Trustee appointed by WGN’s Board of Trustees. Your complaint will always be handled by someone who is independent.

You will receive written acknowledgement of your complaint within 10 working days. This acknowledgement will tell you the name of the person dealing with your complaint, the process they will follow and when you can expect to be informed of their decision. You will also be provided with a copy of this policy.

The Manager will carry out a detailed investigation. To do this she will ensure she understands your complaint fully – to do this she may need to speak or meet with you. If the Manager invites you to meet with her, you can bring a friend to support you. If your complaint involves a WGN colleague then the Manager will speak to those concerned and, if necessary any others who may also be able to provide information relevant to the investigation. They may also need to review WGN’s records.

The Manager will make every attempt to ensure and maintain the confidentiality of your personal information. She will only disclose it to colleagues who need this information in order to look into your complaint.

Investigation outcomes may include:

- Changes to WGN's service delivery or provision.
- Improvements to WGN's service delivery or provision.
- Training, supervising or providing guidance to WGN colleague(s), or a combination of all three.

Once the Manager has completed her investigation, she will respond to your complaint. The Manager will aim to respond to your complaint in full within 20 working days. Wherever possible the Manager will deal with it more quickly. If the issues raised are complicated and a detailed investigation is required, it may take longer to investigate and any delay will be explained and a revised timescale will be provided.

The full response provided will:

- Be balanced, fair and impartial.
- Address the specific issues raised.
- Outline the findings of the investigation and wherever possible resolving the matter to your satisfaction.
- Provide an explanation of why the complaint has been upheld, partly upheld or not upheld.
- Include an apology when appropriate.
- Provide an indication of any actions to be taken or changes to be made.

If you have expressed a preference for a telephone discussion regarding the outcome of the investigation this will always be followed up with a written response, so you and WGN have a written record of the outcome.

We expect the majority of complaints to be resolved at this stage.

Appeal – Stage 2

However, if you are not satisfied with the outcome of your complaint, you have the right to ask us to arrange for somebody else to look at it again. An appeal must be submitted in writing within 10 working days from the date of the letter notifying you of the outcome.

Your right to appeal (and the process for doing so) will be outlined in the response you receive from the Manager initially assigned to investigate your complaint.

To appeal against our initial findings, you should write to us clearly explaining the reasons why you feel your complaint has not been resolved fully, provide any new and relevant information and outlining what it is that you want us to do next.

The relevant Director will then arrange for the alternative WGN Director to investigate your appeal.

The same process and response times will apply as at Stage 1.

Final Appeal – Stage 3

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your appeal, you have the right to ask us to arrange for a Trustee to look at it for a final time. Your final appeal must be submitted in writing within 10 working days from the date of the letter notifying you of the outcome of your appeal.

Your right to a final appeal (and the process for doing so) will be outlined in the response you receive from the Director assigned to investigate your first appeal.

To request a review of your first appeal, you should write to us clearly explaining the reasons why you feel it has not been resolved fully, provide any new and relevant information and outlining what it is that you want us to do next.

The relevant Director will then arrange for WGN's Board of Trustees to appoint a Trustee to undertake your final appeal.

The same process and response times will apply as at Stages 1 and 2.

The decision reached by the Trustee at Stage 3 is final and concludes WGN's complaints procedure.

Taking your complaint outside of WGN

We really hope that we are able to resolve your complaint in a fair, consistent and transparent way. However if after WGN's three internal stages for responding to complaints you have been exhausted, if you remain dissatisfied with the final response you have received you are entitled to take your concerns to any relevant statutory body, including but not limited to:

- The Charity Commission (England and Wales) - www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity
- The Information Commissioners Office - <https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint>

We cannot investigate or respond to complaints which

- Are anonymous.
- Relate to issues that have already been fully investigated and where no new information has come to light.
- Are malicious or include offensive or other discriminatory attitudes or where the tone adopted is not appropriate or where complaint threatens or abuses our colleagues.
- Relate to WGN's policies and policy decisions.
- Relate to matters that do not directly involve WGN. In these circumstances we may decide to reply to confirm our lack of involvement or responsibility only.

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- Which have clearly been sent to WGN and numerous other organisations as part of a bulk mailing or email. In these circumstances we will decide whether it is necessary for us to provide a reply or not. As a charity with limited resources and we must use these in the most responsible way possible.

Disciplinary action

If any feedback we receive leads to concerns about the conduct of one of our colleagues, the right to initiate WGN's Disciplinary Procedure is reserved. Any comments, compliments and complaints and evidence gathered may be used as evidence in such a process. Due to confidentiality it is not appropriate or possible to provide details regarding any disciplinary action which may or may not be taken against a WGN colleague.

Criminal offences

If any comments, compliments or complaints lead to concerns that WGN or one of our colleagues has been engaged in any criminal activities the matter will be referred to the relevant authorities.

Privacy

By providing feedback you are agreeing to let WGN use the information you provide to process your comments, compliments and complaints. We will treat your feedback confidentially and will only share information when you have provided your permission to do so or when we are required to do so.

Records of complaints will be retained for two years after which they will be destroyed securely.

Your rights under the Data Protection Act 2018 allows you to ask to see the data WGN holds about you. You have the right to withdraw consent that you have previously provided, to our processing of your data at any time. There are no consequences for withdrawing your consent. However, in some cases, we may continue to use the data where we are permitted if we are able to demonstrate a legitimate reason for doing so.

Copies of WGN's Privacy Notices are readily available. They can either be downloaded from www.wgn.org.uk/data-protection or requested from any of our colleagues.

Sharing WGN's Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy

All WGN colleagues have easy access to this policy. Any colleague who knows that someone would like to provide feedback should explain that WGN is happy to hear from you.

Service users are informed of this policy at the start (or as soon as is appropriate or practicably possible) of their relationship with WGN.

Service users, members of the public and organisations can request a copy of this policy from any of WGN's colleagues at any time.