

## **Women and Health Complaints Policy and Procedure**

### **1. Aim**

Women+Health welcomes constructive suggestions and criticisms and feedback from service users, staff, volunteers and organisations about the service they have received. Feedback and comments will be evaluated, in order to attain, maintain and develop quality service delivery.

If any client/user feel they have a formal complaint to make that may require further investigation, the procedure is outlined below.

### **2. Complaint explained**

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made by a client or user about:

- Their treatment by a member of staff, a practitioner, a counsellor, a volunteer or management committee member.
- The quality of the services they have received.

A complainant is any member and/or user of the service.

### **3. Policy commitment**

Women+Health will actively encourage service users and external organisations to comment and provide feedback on the services we provide. We will do this in a number of ways:

- Responding to and recording verbal comments and compliments from women, both in the Centre and in the community
- Encouraging women to use the comments/suggestions box
- Recording verbal feedback and comments in the Comments Book
- Evaluation of all formal events/workshops/training sessions/conferences
- The Director will monitor and evaluate all comments and report them regularly to the Management Committee to ensure we learn from users comments.
- Service users will be supported to make comments and complaints through a process that meets the needs of the diverse community. This may include providing translated information, interpretation (including sign language interpretation), and information in alternative formats, where necessary.

### **4. Policy guidance- comments/compliments**

#### **a) Verbal comments and compliments**

All verbal feedback/comments will be recorded electronically, with the consent of the woman making the comments.

#### **b) Written comments and compliments**

Any written comments and/or compliments from service users and external organisations will be filed in the Comments and Compliments file. This will include all comments in the Comments/Suggestions Box.

#### **5. Complaints from service users about a staff member/management committee members, practitioners/counsellors and therapists, the Director or any other aspect of our service.**

- a) If a service user wants to make a complaint about the behaviour or action (or lack of action) of a member of Women+Health staff or any other aspect of our service, the service user is encouraged, in the first instance, to talk to the staff member concerned and try and resolve the issue informally.
- b) If a service user is not satisfied with the response, or is unable to raise the issue with the staff member concerned, they will be encouraged identify the nature of their complaint to another member of staff or in writing and what they would like us to do to resolve the situation.
- c) The complaint will then be passed to the Director, who will acknowledge the complaint, within five working days of receipt, and who will then investigate the issue and respond to the service user within fifteen working days of receipt of the complaint.
- d) If the service user is not satisfied with the Director's decision, she can appeal to the Chair of the Management Committee, stating the reasons for the appeal. The Chair will acknowledge the appeal, within ten working days of receipt, investigate the issues and respond to the service user within twenty working days of receipt of the appeal. The Chair's decision in the matter is final.
- e) If a service user wants to make a complaint about the behaviour/actions of the Director, the process will be similar to that outlined above; the complaint will be passed to a member of the Management Committee, who will investigate the complaint. The right of appeal will be to the Chair of the Management Committee, whose decision will be final.
- f) The woman making the complaint may be accompanied to any meetings by a staff member (or another current service user); the role of the companion is to provide support to the woman, to remind her of any points she wants to make; it is not to ask or to answer questions on her behalf.

## **6. Complaints from a service user about another service user**

### **a) Informal resolution**

The service user is encouraged, in the first instance, to talk to the service user concerned and try and resolve the issue informally. The woman making the complaint may invite a member of staff or a friend to be present. The staff member will record the date and the fact of the meeting, including who is present and the agreed outcome/s.

### **b) Formal resolution**

- i) If a service user is not satisfied with the response, or wants to make a written complaint, they will be asked if they want assistance to record their complaint, given (or be read) a copy of the Complaints Form inviting the service user to identify the nature of their complaint and what they would like us to do to resolve the situation.
- ii) The complaint will then be passed to the Director who will acknowledge the complaint, within five working days of receipt, and who will then investigate the issue and respond to the service user, in writing, within fifteen working days of receipt of the complaint.
- iii) The investigation may include interviewing any witnesses, examining any documents, and may include a meeting with the complainant and the other person involved, lead by the Director, who may call witnesses, or present witness statements. All documents to be used by any party, at a Complaints Meeting, shall be presented to all parties, at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting. The Director, will consider the issue and give their decision, after due consideration.
- iv) If the service user is not satisfied with the response from the Director, the service user can apply, in writing, to the Chair of the Management Committee for a review of their complaint, stating the reasons for their review request.
- v) The Director will acknowledge the review request, within 5 working days of receipt, investigate the issue and respond to the service user, in writing, within twenty working days of receipt of the review request.
- vi) If the service user is not satisfied with the Director's decision, she can appeal to the Chair of the Management Committee, stating the reasons for the appeal. The Chair will acknowledge the appeal, within ten working days of receipt, investigate the issues and respond to the service user, in writing, within twenty working days of receipt of the appeal. The Chair's decision on the matter is final.
- vii) The woman making the complaint may be accompanied to any meetings by a companion of her choice. This could be a staff member or another current service user or a friend or family member. The role of the companion is to provide support to the woman, to remind her of any points she wants to make and to assist her where necessary.

## **7. Confidentiality**

All complaints will be treated in the strictest confidence, only those people who are directly concerned will be informed of its contents.

## **8. Withdrawing a complaint**

While complaints can be withdrawn at any time, we would usually ask for an explanation for the decision. We would also expect that if a complainant fails to show for an arranged meeting or to correspond, that she provides a good reason. If the complainant fails to meet the conditions outlined above repeatedly, the management committee will take steps to close the case.

## **9. Appealing a decision**

The complainant may appeal in writing or on tape to the Management Committee who will consider the matter. The decision will be given to the complainant in writing, or on tape within seven working days or as soon as reasonably practicable. The Management Committee's decision will be final and binding. This does not affect a client's statutory rights.

**Review Date: April 2013**