

## Complaints and Customer Care Policy

### 1. Policy statement

Complaints will be treated as part of a comprehensive feedback system that records and uses comments, compliments and complaints as well as satisfaction questionnaires to improve our performance.

### 2. What is a complaint?

We aim to provide a good service to customers at all times but sometimes things do go wrong and complaints are received. We will investigate anything that you consider to be a complaint.

Bron Afon has adopted the definition of a complaint put forward by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales:

“An expression of dissatisfaction or concern either written or spoken made by one or more members of the public about a public body’s action or lack of action or about the standard of service provided which requires a response..”

### 3. Examples of what is a complaint

A complaint can be described as follows:

- We have done something we should not have done
- We have not done something we should have done
- When an employee of Bron Afon (or any of our contractors or agents) behaviour or attitude has been inappropriate
- A service we provide has not been delivered to the quality, frequency or cost expected
- You believe a decision-making process has been flawed
- You do not agree with a policy decision

### 4. Areas not covered by the complaints process

We will not deal with the following matters using our complaints procedure if:

- You are requesting a service for the first time
- You are reporting a defect for the first time
- The matter is covered by other statutory redress
- The matter is covered by another Statutory body (e.g. Torfaen County Council, the Police Authority)
- Anonymous complaints received will be treated and dealt with as issues.

### 5. How to make a complaint?

Triggering a complaint should be easy, complaints can be made:

- By telephone\* 0800 111 4242
- In person\*
- In writing (letter or email)

\* The member of staff you speak will record the details of your complaint.

If you are writing to us please:

- Send your letter to Tŷ Bron Afon, William Brown Close, Llantarnam Industrial Park, Cwmbran, Torfaen NP44 3AB
- Or email to [mandie.adams@bronafof.org.uk](mailto:mandie.adams@bronafof.org.uk)

## **6. What are the stages of Bron Afon's complaints procedure?**

### Informal/first point of contact

Any expressions of concern should be raised at the first point of contact. We aim to resolve issues at this first point of contact. However if this can not be done or you still remain dissatisfied you can then ask for your issue to be formalised into a complaint.

### First stage complaints

- On receipt of a complaint forward to Mandie Adams Liaison Officer who will log and acknowledge the complaint.
- Managers will resolve complaints at this stage having ensured they fully understand all the issues.
- Resolution will involve the manager carrying out a home visit, followed by a written confirmatory letter. Directors will ensure that all possible steps are taken at this stage to resolve complaints.
- First stage process will be closed by recording contact with the complainant, the action taken to resolve, identify if the complainant is satisfied with the resolution and also any lessons learnt for the future. There will be a date for follow up recording what improvements have been agreed and implemented as a result.
- Directors will ensure that these records are collated and followed up so that we can report to the Membership Committee and Board on lessons learnt throughout the organisation.
- Where leaseholders report that repairs have not been carried out for which they have been charged, this will automatically be recorded as a complaint and trigger an investigation.
- We will have tight timescales of 10 working days for dealing with complaints.
- Where a complaint involves a potential insurance claim, litigation, prosecution, disciplinary investigation, health and safety investigation or other circumstance that may give rise to external intervention, the Chief Executive may suspend the complaints process and delay time scales provided he informs the complainant and explains the reasons.
- The confirmatory letter will make clear that complainants can take the complaint to the second stage.
- Some complaints will by-pass this stage, see below.

### Second stage complaints

- These will be dealt with by the Chief Executive or on his behalf by a Senior Officer.
- We will advise timescale in the acknowledgement letter based on the complexity of complaint.
- The Chief Executive may refer the matter back to a Director in an attempt to resolve the complaint directly with the complainant if he considers that inadequate steps have been taken to attempt this beforehand.

- The same record of outcomes will be kept as for first stage complaints and the outcome will be confirmed by letter.
- If a complaint is about a Bron Afon policy, the Chief Executive will report the details of the complaint to the Membership Committee anonymously. The Committee may decide to initiate a review of the policy.
- The confirmatory letter will make clear that the complainant can take the complaint to the third stage.

### Third stage complaints

- Will be considered by the Board. The Board is a voluntary body and the timescale will be dependant on availability.
- The complainant will have the option, if he or she wishes. This may involve the sharing of confidential information with the Membership Committee, or a subgroup of the membership committee. Having investigated the complaint they will report to the Chief Executive and may make recommendations to the Board on their findings.
- A record of outcomes will be kept as for previous stages and the outcome will be confirmed by letter.

### Fourth stage complaints

- The Public Services Ombudsman is independent of Bron Afon and deals with complaints against public bodies. We hope that you will give us an opportunity to address your complaint first by using our complaints procedure.

The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales can be contacted:

- In writing - 1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, Pencoed, Bridgend, CF35 5LJ
- Telephone: 0845 6010987 (Calls to this number are charged at a local call rate)
- E-mail: [ask@ombudsman-wales.org](mailto:ask@ombudsman-wales.org)
- Website: [www.ombudsman-wales.org](http://www.ombudsman-wales.org)

## **7. How do we put things right?**

We aim to resolve complaints by dealing with outstanding issues quickly, improving communication, giving an apology when one is due and ensuring that we learn from the complaint.

Whilst there may be some circumstances where compensation is appropriate for losses or expense incurred that has been caused by our action or inaction, compensation should not be seen as the primary method of resolution.

We will consider compensation claims in certain circumstances. For further information a copy of Bron Afon's compensation policy is available on request or is available from our website [www.bronafon.org.uk](http://www.bronafon.org.uk)

## **8. How we deal with anonymous complaints?**

If you would like to make an anonymous complaint please be aware that although we may act on the information provided, we are unable to advise you of the action we have taken and therefore dealt with as an issue. For details on how to contact us please see section "How to make a complaint".

## **9. How we deal with serious, repeat or vexatious complaints?**

A serious complaint will be referred immediately to Stage 2, bypassing stage 1. This will include any allegation of fraud or serious misconduct by a Board Member, member of staff or contractor or any case where Bron Afon could be liable to prosecution or a substantial financial compensation claim or penalty or where any person's life or limb is at stake.

Where a complainant makes the same complaint repeatedly or is making a vexatious complaint against a member of staff, this will also be referred to stage 2.

The Chief Executive may refuse to pass repeat complaints to stage 3 provided he advises the Chair that he has done so.

## **10. How we monitor complaints?**

We monitor complaints in a number of ways, which include:

- Monitoring comments, compliments and complaints for each service on a monthly basis.
- Monitoring the proportion resolved at each stage.
- Ensuring we record the lessons learnt from complaints and the action taken to improve our services as a result of complaints.
- Reporting quarterly to Board as part of the overall management information report.

## **11. How we learn from complaints?**

Lessons learnt will improve our handling of similar situations and inform changes to policy and procedures where appropriate.

Membership Committee scrutinise complaints and compliments by service area and by area according to Bron Afon's forum set up.

Board receives a quarterly report from the Chief Executive as part of the overall management information report.

<b>Policy Data</b>	
Version number	1.1
Date approved	7 September 2010
Approved by	Chief Executive
Next review due	7 September 2011
Review Committee	Board
Delegated authority	All staff
Responsibility	Chief Executive
Reporting arrangements	As outlined in this policy.
Risks	Without this policy there is a risk that inequality of access to this service could occur.
Links with legislation	None.
Links with other policies & strategies	Excellence Strategy. Compensation Policy.
Consultation	This has been developed after consultation with the Membership Committee and Board.

### **Document Control:**

All enquiries with regard to this document should be addressed to the [Chief Executive](#)  
Expired issues of this document will be retained by the [Policy & Research Officer](#)