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Complaints Policy

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Complaints Policy

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If you require this Policy in another language or format, please contact mandie.adams@bronafofon.org.uk or telephone 01633 620 173.

Os oes angen y Polisi hon mewn iaith neu fformat arall, cysylltwch â mandie.adams@bronafofon.org.uk neu ffoniwch 01633 620 173.

1. What is our policy statement?

Here at Bron Afon we listen to understand what's important. We are caring, responsive and open to change and improvement. Our Complaints Policy is founded on these values.

We recognise that on occasion our customers may be unhappy with their service experience. When this happens we will always aim to resolve things informally, to our customer's satisfaction, as soon as we are told about the problem. We will do this by listening carefully to our customer's concerns to understand what may have gone wrong and how we can best put things right. We will check our that we have understood the issue correctly before explaining clearly what we can do in response. Sometimes we may not be able to do precisely what our customer wants. At these times we will always explain to them why that is. We will never just simply say "no". We will always leave our customer with a choice or alternative solution.

Sometimes our customer may feel this is not enough. When that is the case we will always offer them the opportunity to have their complaint to be formally reviewed by a member of staff who hasn't previously been involved in dealing with their service request and concerns. We explain how the formal stages in our Complaints Policy work later on in this guide.

We will always aim to arrive at a satisfactory outcome, as quickly as possible, for customers who ask us to formally review their complaint. Occasionally we may not be able to reach agreement so once the formal steps in this Policy have all been taken customers will always have the right to ask the Independent Ombudsman to review their case. We will explain this clearly at the appropriate stages of our formal complaint handling process.

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.

We are committed to the principles of equality and diversity throughout the organisation and aim to:

- Meet the needs and choices of people from all backgrounds.
- Ensure that our services are relevant, responsive and sensitive to the needs of our existing and future customers.
- Ensure that all sections of the community in which we work have equal access to our services.

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.

We define a complaint as:

Any expression of dissatisfaction that you consider to be a complaint, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by Bron Afon or its representatives affecting an individual customer or group of customers.

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 contactors 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 we have applied.

4. What areas are 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 Anti Social Behaviour.
- 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).

5. How to make a complaint?

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

- In person*
- In writing (letter or email)
- Web
- Social media

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

If you are writing to us, please send your letter to: Liaison Officer at Tŷ Bron Afon, William Brown Close, Llantarnam Industrial Park, Cwmbran, Torfaen NP44 3AB. Or email mandie.adams@bronafon.org.uk

5.1 We acknowledge that we have customers who may need support to make a complaint. We also recognise that we have customers who are vulnerable and may need additional support through the complaints process. To effectively manage this and to meet the needs of vulnerable customers, Bron Afon will make reasonable adjustments in how we manage their complaint.

5.2 We provide equal access to our complaints service by:

- Accepting oral complaints.
- Supporting vulnerable customers through the complaints process and where appropriate refer the customer to alternative service that may be able to assist.
- Providing translation and interpreting services.
- Providing information in large print, braille, audio and other languages.
- Provide meetings in places with disabled access and hearing loops.
- Provide support to help you to make a complaint.

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 will always aim to resolve issues at this first point of contact. However, if this cannot be done or you still remain dissatisfied, you can then ask for your complaint to be formally reviewed.

First stage complaints

- On receipt of a formal complaint, the Liaison Officer will log and acknowledge the complaint.
- Managers will always seek to resolve complaints at this stage having ensured they fully understand all the issues
- Resolution will involve the manager carrying out a home visit or telephone call, followed by a written confirmatory letter. The Head of Service 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. Investigating Officer will record these actions on Bron Afon's contact management system YODA.
- The Head of Service will ensure that these records are collated and followed up so that we can report to the Complaints Learning Forum and Board on lessons learnt throughout the organisation.
- We will have tight timescales of 10 working days for dealing with complaints. Should a complaint be complex and the Manager require more time a manager will keep you informed and agree a timescale with you.
- Where a complaint involves a potential insurance claim, litigation, prosecution, disciplinary investigation, health and safety investigator 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.
- Complainants can write to: Liaison Officer at Tŷ Bron Afon, William Brown Close, Llantarnam Industrial Park, Cwmbran, Torfaen NP44 3AB. Or email mandie.adams@bronafon.org.uk
- Some complaints will by-pass this stage, see below.

Second stage complaints

- These will be dealt with by a Senior Management Team or Head of Service. We will have timescales of 20 working days for dealing with complaints.
- Investigating Officer will record these actions on Bron Afon's contact management system YODA.
- Should the complaint be complex and the Senior Management Team or Head of Service require more time a manager will keep you informed and agree a timescale with you.
- 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 Head of Service will investigate the complaint. Additionally the Chief Executive will report the details of the complaints to the Complaints Forum anonymously.
- The Complaint Forum 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.
- Complainants can write to: Liaison Officer at Tŷ Bron Afon, William Brown Close, Llantarnam Industrial Park, Cwmbran, Torfaen NP44 3AB. Or email mandie.adams@bronafon.org.uk. Advising exactly what outcomes you want from your complaint that is different from the outcomes proposed by the Stage 1 decision. What conclusions made in the Stage 1 decisions you believe to be wrong and the reasons it is wrong.

Third stage complaints

For your complaint to be considered at the third stage you are required to:-

- Write to request this within 90 working days of receiving the Stage two response telling us:-
- Exactly what outcomes you want from your complaint that is different from the outcomes proposed by the Stage 2 decision.
- What conclusions made in the Stage 2 decisions you believe to be wrong and the reasons it is wrong.

Only then will your complaint be considered by a Sub-committee panel which is made up from the Board members.

- Having investigated the complaint they will report to the Chief Executive and may make recommendations to the Sub-committee panel on their findings.
- A record of outcomes will be kept as previous stages and the outcome will be confirmed by letter.

Fourth stage complaints

- May be made to Welsh Government or the Ombudsman.
- The Public Services Ombudsman is independent of Bron Afon and deals with complaints against public services in Wales.
- The Ombudsman has the legal power to look into complaints where people feel they have been treated unfairly or received poor service.
- We hope that you will give us an opportunity to address your complaint first by using our complaints procedure.
- Contact details for the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales:
 - 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
 - Website: www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk

7. How do we put things right?

- We should 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 by request or is available from our website 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.

For details on how to contact us please see our factsheet "How to make a complaint" which is available from our offices or our website www.bronafon.org.uk.

9. What about 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 do we monitor complaints?

We will:

- Monitor comments, compliments and complaints for each service on a monthly basis to Senior Management team and Heads of Service.
- Monitor the proportion resolved at each stage.
- Ensure we record the lessons learnt from complaints and the action taken to improve our service as a result of complaints.
- Report quarterly to Board as part of the overall management information report.

11. How do we learn from complaints?

- Debriefs will be held following a complaints investigation to ensure that lessons are learnt to improve our handling of similar situations and inform changes to policy and procedures where appropriate.
- Complaints Learning Forum will scrutinise complaints by service area and will report to Heads of Service.
- Board receives a quarterly report from the Chief Executive as part of the overall management information report.

Document History	
Version number	3.0
Date approved	13 th December 2017
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Review Committee	Chief Executive
Who this policy applies to	All staff
Who is responsible for the policy	Chief Executive
Reporting arrangements	As outlined in this policy.
Risks of not having this policy	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.
Who was consulted	This has been developed after consultation with the service users of complaints policy, staff, Heads of Service 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 Governance & Policy Assistant	