



Complaints Policy

1. Introduction

In Grŵp Cynefin we are committed to 'putting the customer first' to improve the quality of our services and the experience of our customers.

We welcome the opinions of our customers. Complaints are important to us in order to highlight the areas that we are operating well, and where we need to focus on in order to improve future services.

2. Definition of a Complaint

A complaint can be defined as someone who is unhappy with the service they have received. A complaint can be about the standard of the service, a lack of implementation, or un-satisfaction with the way in which a member of staff has dealt with the problem.

3. Complaints

Grŵp Cynefin is committed to effectively deal with any concerns or complaints you may have about our services. We will try to explain any matters you are uncertain about. If we have done something wrong, we will apologise and try to put things right. We will also learn from our mistakes and use the information to improve our services.

4. When to use this policy?

If you have a concern or a complaint, we will respond in the way in which we explain below.

Sometimes, we will not be able to respond, if we were not responsible, or if we didn't have the right to respond. If this was the case, we will suggest other ways in which to deal with the matter.

This policy is not applicable if the matter is about Freedom of Information or Data Protection matters. Please contact the Director of Business Services in such circumstances.

4.1 Have you brought the problem to our attention before?

This complaints policy should not be used if it is the first time you are telling us about a problem or concern – for example asking for work to be done at your home where you should do this via the Customer Services Team in the usual manner.

We will not use this policy when you are expressing your dissatisfaction for the first time either – for example when you express dissatisfaction with the standard of work of a contractor who has been working on your home. You should declare this on the satisfaction cards, or by contacting the Maintenance Department directly.

You should first give us a chance to respond to your problem or dissatisfaction, as we believe that it is better to deal with things immediately rather than try to resolve them at a later date. If you are still not happy with our response, then we will deal with your complaint via this policy as we describe below.

5. How to express a complaint through the complaints procedure

To express a concern or make a formal complaint:

- Ask a member of Grŵp Cynefin staff for a complaints form. Tell him/her that you want to make a complaint.
- You can contact our complaints contact point on 0300 111 2122 if you wish to make a complaint over the telephone
- Use the form on our website on www.grwpcynefin.org
- Send an email to post@grwpcynefin.org
- Write a letter to the attention of the Senior Performance Officer to any one of our offices:

Grwp Cynefin, 54 Stryd y Dyffryn, Dinbych, LL16 4BD
Grwp Cynefin, Ty Silyn, Penygroes, Caernarfon, LL54 6LY
Grwp Cynefin, Uned 8, Gweithdai Penllyn, Y Bala, LL23 7SP
Grwp Cynefin, 33-35 Stryd Fawr, Llangefni, LL77 7NA

There will be complaint forms, in Welsh and English, in all of our offices. We can provide audio tape and large print versions as well.

6. Dealing with your complaint or concern

- We will formally acknowledge your concern within **3 working days** and let you know how we intend to deal with it.
- We will ask you to tell us how you would like us to communicate with you. For example, do you have a special requirement because of a disability?
- We will deal with your concern in an open and honest way.
- We will make sure the service you receive from us in the future does not suffer because you have expressed a concern or made a complaint.

Normally, we will only be able to look at your concerns if you tell us about them within **6 months**. This is because it's better to look into things when they are still fresh in everyone's mind.

Sometimes, we can consider matters after more than 6 months. But, you will have to give us strong reasons why you have not been able to tell us sooner. We will need enough information to consider the matter properly. Whatever the circumstances, we will not consider matters which took place more than **three** years ago.

If you're expressing a concern on behalf of somebody else, they will have to confirm that they are happy for you to do so.

We will do our best to deal with anonymous complaints by investigating as thoroughly as possible.

7. What if I'm complaining about more than one body?

If your complaint or concerns is about more than one organisation (for example, a noise nuisance involving us and the Council), one organisation or the other will usually take the lead in responding.

If the complaint is about someone working on our behalf (for example repair contractors, someone providing a landlord service, or one of our subsidiary companies) please raise the matter informally with them in the first instance.

8. Investigate your Complaints

There are 2 stages to the investigation process:

- **Stage 1 - Informal Complaint**

The complaint will be dealt with by the Service Manager in the first instance and we will give you their name and the title. You will receive a reply within **10 working days** suggesting ways to resolve the problem, or letting you know the Association's decision.

This letter will also tell you how you may appeal against the decision if you are still not satisfied. We would expect your appeal within **10 working days** of you receiving the Association's response which explains the reasons for your appeal.

If we do not have any response with this time, then we will consider that you are happy with the response, and we will proceed to close the complaint.

- **Stage 2 – Formal Complaint**

If you appeal against the decision of the Service Manager, the complaint will be forwarded to the Senior Performance Officer who will deal with the complaint as a formal complaint. In the absence of the Senior Performance Officer, we will confirm to you who will investigate the complaint.

- Within **3 working days** you will be sent a letter confirming that we have received your complaint.
- We will set out our understanding of your concerns and ask you to confirm that our understanding is correct. We'll also ask you to tell us what you hope will happen as a result of your complaint.

- The person who is investigating your concerns will firstly try to establish the facts. The extent of this investigation will depend on how complex and how serious are the issues you have raised. Sometimes, we may ask to meet you to discuss your concerns. Occasionally, we might suggest mediation or another method to try to resolve disputes.
- In investigating your complaint, we will look at all the relevant evidence. This could include files, notes of conversations, letters and e-mails. If necessary, we'll talk to the staff or others involved and look at our policies and any legal entitlement and guidance.
- We will try to resolve concerns as quickly as possible. We deal with the vast majority of complaints within **20 working days**. If your complaint is more complex, we will:
 - let you know within this time why we think it may take longer to investigate
 - tell you how long we expect it to take.
 - let you know where we have reached with the investigation, and
 - give you regular updates, including telling you whether any developments might change our original estimate.

9. The Outcome

If we formally investigate your complaint, we will let you know what we have found, and we will use your preferred form of communication, for example a letter or e-mail. If necessary, we will produce a longer report. We'll explain how and why we came to our conclusions.

The Leadership team will review the outcome before it is released to you in order to ensure that the complaint has been investigated thoroughly and impartially and according to the timelines as agreed,

If we find that we got it wrong, we'll tell you what and why it happened. We'll show how the mistake affected you.

If our systems or the way we do things are to blame, we'll tell you what went wrong and how we will change things to stop it happening again.

If we got it wrong, we will always apologise.

The letter will also state that the Association will not consider the matter further.

10. Putting things right

If we didn't provide you with the service you should have received, we will now do so if possible. If we didn't do something well, we will put it right. If you have lost out as a result of a mistake on our part we will try to put you back in the position you would have been in if we'd got it right. If you had to pay for a service yourself, when you should have had one from us, we will try to make good what you have lost (in accordance with our Compensation Policy).

11. The Ombudsman

If we do not succeed in resolving your complaint, you have a right to complain to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. The Ombudsman is independent of all government bodies. The Ombudsman can look into your complaint if you believe that you personally, or the person on whose behalf you are complaining:

- have been treated unfairly or received a bad service through some failure on the part of the body providing it
- have been disadvantaged personally by a service failure or have been treated unfairly.

The Ombudsman expects you to bring your concerns to our attention first and to give us a chance to put things right. You can contact the Ombudsman by:

- phone: 0845 601 0987
- e-mail: ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk
- the website: www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk
- writing to: Public Services Ombudsman for Wales at 1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, Pencoed CF35 5LJ

There are also other organisations that consider complaints. For example, the Welsh Language Commissioner deals with services in Welsh.

12. Learning Lessons

We take your concerns and complaints seriously and try to learn from any mistakes we've made. Our internal arrangements for monitoring complaints will be as follows:

- Monthly meetings between the Performance Team and the service managers who deal with complaints
- Our Leadership Team will receive a summary of all the complaints on a quarterly basis, along with the details of any serious complaints
- Report on complaints to our Board of Management at least twice a year..

Where there is a need for change, we will develop an action plan setting out what we will do, who will do it and when we plan to do it by. We will let you know when changes we've promised have been made.

13. What if I need help?

Our staff will try to help you make your concerns known to us. If you need extra assistance, we will try to put you in touch with someone who can help. You may wish to contact advocacy services, Age Concern, Shelter etc who may be able to help you.

You may also raise the matters via your Councillor, Assembly Member, Member of Parliament or Solicitor.

14. What we expect from you

In times of trouble or distress, some people may act out of character. There may have been upsetting or distressing circumstances leading up to a concern or a complaint. We do not view behaviour as unacceptable just because someone is forceful or determined.

We believe that all complainants have the right to be heard, understood and respected. However, we also consider that our staff have the same rights. We, therefore, expect you to be polite and courteous in your dealings with us. We will not tolerate aggressive or abusive behaviour, unreasonable demands or unreasonable persistence. We have a separate procedure to manage situations where we find that someone's actions are unacceptable.

15. Monitoring and Reviewing

Following the closure of your complaint we will contact you to seek your view on your experience of the complaints procedure by sending out a 'Are you happy with the way we handled your complaint?' questionnaire. We will be able to use your comments and experience to improve our services and the complaints process in the future.

This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure that it remains correct and current following any internal, regulation, or other external changes.

Any changes or additions to this Policy have to be approved by the Board of Management.