

## Complaints Policy

### Introduction

WAY Widowed and Young aims to provide its members with the best possible service. We recognise that there may be times that concerns are raised. It is our policy to encourage free communication so that any difficulty can be quickly resolved.

**Equally, positive comments and suggestions are welcomed as a valuable source of information for us in improving services and making sure that staff and volunteers do receive praise and appreciation.**

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of WAY Widowed and Young's – administration, a staff member, activity or service – resulting from WAY's failure to meet your expectations.

WAY cannot consider complaints regarding matters that are the responsibility of another group, organisation, or individual and are beyond our control.

### Making a Complaint

We would anticipate that any day-to-day difficulties or concerns can be handled informally and as quickly as possible. In the first instance we would expect the issue to be raised directly with the person concerned, if appropriate to do so.

It is only in situations where an informal discussion of a complaint or problem has failed to bring about a satisfactory solution, that the formal complaints procedure should be followed.

### Formal Complaint

Where informal discussions have failed to reach a satisfactory outcome, the complaint will be escalated.

Complaints should then be put in writing, with the subject line 'URGENT: Complaint', and sent to the Chief Executive by email to [complaints@widowedandyoung.org.uk](mailto:complaints@widowedandyoung.org.uk) or posted to our registered address:

Chief Executive, WAY Widowed and Young, Advantage House, Stowe Court, Stowe Street, Lichfield. WS13 6AQ

*Please mark the envelope 'Private and Confidential'*

The complaint must include;

- clear details of your concern(s),
- if/how you have tried to resolve the complaint,
- what you would expect an appropriate outcome to be.

Failure to include the information above may result in further clarification being sought which may delay the complaint handling process.

The information we receive from all parties will be handled confidentially and sensitively. Mailboxes are received either directly by the CEO or her nominated Deputy at the time.

We will not share any information about a complainant with a third party without consent. However, if the complaint involves another member, volunteer, or employee, the person concerned will normally be informed, in order that we can respond and take action if necessary, to resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

To qualify as a complaint any allegations made about an individual must be about unreasonable or unacceptable behaviour and not about personality.

WAY Widowed and Young will only consider anonymous complaints if there is enough information in the complaint to enable further enquiries to be made. If, however, an anonymous complaint does not provide enough information to enable further action to be taken, we may decide not to pursue further.

If the complaint is about the Chief Executive it should be addressed to the Chair (marked 'Private and Confidential'). In this instance, all references to the Chief Executive below will, thereafter, be the Chair.

At this, and any subsequent stage, the complainant may be accompanied or supported by a friend, but not a legal representative.

#### **Time limits on making a complaint**

Complaints should be made within six months of the event or within six months of the complainant becoming aware of cause to complain. In exceptional circumstances, the Chief Executive in discussion with the Board of Trustees may consider complaints outside the time limit. This will take into account the seriousness of the complaint, reasons for the delay and the practicability of investigating the matter.

If you feel that the time limit should not apply to your complaint, please tell us why.

#### **What WAY Widowed and Young will do:**

Complaints will be acknowledged within 5 working days. The Chief Executive, will investigate the circumstances leading to the complaint. The Chief Executive may request a staff member or trustee to act as an independent witness if they feel this is appropriate/necessary, although this is often not required.

The Chief Executive will communicate the results of the investigation to the complainant within a reasonable time – normally within 20 working days of the complaint being received. If the complaint is found to be justified, the Chief Executive will agree any necessary further action with the complainant.

#### **Serious / Complex Complaints**

For most complaints the Chief Executive shall investigate. However, where serious or complex complaints are made, the Chief Executive reserves the right to request an investigatory panel be formed, which will include the Chief Executive and two board members. A majority decision of the panel is acceptable.

#### **Complaint Appeals**

Should an agreement not being reached between the Chief Executive and the complainant, the complainant will have the right to put their case, in writing, to an appeal panel. The panel would be made up of two Trustee Board members, who have had no prior involvement in the complaint. Appeals must be received within 10 working days. Any appeal submitted after this period will not be considered.

If the appeal is found to be justified, the appeal panel will agree any necessary further action with the complainant. The decision of the appeal panel is final, and no further appeal is possible.

### Complaint Meetings

Requests to make an appointment to discuss a complaint being handled by WAY widowed and Young will be considered at our discretion.

We will take into account the circumstances of the complaint, including the identity of the individual, previous dealings they might have had with WAY, any risk involved and any duty to make reasonable adjustments. We will also consider whether or not there may be operational benefits in discussing the complaint. Should a meeting be deemed necessary, they are by held by appointment only, at an appropriate time and location agreed between parties. For security reasons, WAY operates strictly by appointment only and shall decline to meet anyone where a prior appointment has not been agreed.

### Complaint Reporting

The Chief Executive is responsible for logging complaints and will keep the Trustee Board informed of the number and nature of complaints along with the outcomes.

### Changes to this policy

WAY Widowed and Young, reserve the right to change this policy at any time, in which case the amended policy will be updated on our website and will apply from that date.

The format and content of our website changes constantly. It is recommended that users refresh their browser each time they visit our sites to ensure that the most up to date version is accessed

### Our Contact Details


We can be contacted in the following ways:

WAY- Widowed and Young,

Advantage House, Stowe Court, Stowe Street, Lichfield. WS13 6AQ

[enquiries@widowedandyoung.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@widowedandyoung.org.uk)

### Policy Control

Version	1	First Issue Date MM/YY	06/19	Last Review Date MM/YY	10/22	Next Review Date MM/YY	10/23
Signed (Chair or Trustee)	 Agreed by WAY Trustees Meeting Date 10 <sup>th</sup> December 2022						
Name	Joanna Sedley-Burke						

**\*\*END OF POLICY\***