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| **Greater Manchester Rape Crisis** | **Edition number: 4** |
| **Title: Complaints Policy** | **Last review date: 16/12/2024** |
| **Approved by: Anne Stebbings (CEO)** | **Next review date: 16/12/2025** |

**Complaints Policy**

1. **Complaints Policy Statement**

Greater Manchester Rape Crisis is committed to providing high quality support for all service users. One of the ways in which we aim to continue to improve our service is by listening and responding to the views of our service users. We aim to respond positively to all concerns and complaints, thereby ensuring that any negative aspects of our service are unrepeated. Greater Manchester Rape Crisis acknowledges that complaints can help to improve service delivery.

Therefore, we aim to ensure that:

* making a complaint is as easy as possible
* we treat a complaint as a clear expression of dissatisfaction with our service which calls for an immediate response
* we deal with it promptly, politely and, when appropriate, confidentially
* We respond in the right way - for example, with an explanation, or an apology where we have things wrong, or information on any action taken etc.
* we learn from complaints, use them to improve our service, and regularly review our complaints policy and procedures

We recognize that many concerns will be raised informally and dealt with quickly. Our aims are to:

* resolve informal concerns quickly
* keep matters low-key
* Where necessary and appropriate, enable mediation between the complainant and the individual to whom the complaint has been referred.

An informal approach is most appropriate when it can be achieved. However, if concerns cannot be satisfactorily resolved informally, then the formal complaints procedure should be followed as outlined below.

The formal complaints procedure is intended to ensure that all complaints are handled fairly, consistently and wherever possible resolved to the complainant's satisfaction.

**Definition**

Greater Manchester Rape Crisis defines a complaint as 'any expression of dissatisfaction (with Greater Manchester Rape Crisis, with a member of staff or volunteer, or with a Greater Manchester Rape Crisis Trustee) that relates to Greater Manchester Rape Crisis and that requires a formal response'.

**Greater Manchester Rape Crisis’ responsibility will be to:**

* acknowledge the formal complaint in writing
* respond within a stated period of time
* deal reasonably and sensitively with the complaint
* take action where appropriate
* All staff, volunteers and Board of Trustees members are required to read, understand and comply with this policy and its procedure

**A complainant's responsibility is to:**

* bring their complaint, in writing, to Greater Manchester Rape Crisis’ attention within 8 weeks of the issue arising
* If the complaint is about the Chief Executive Officer complaints will be dealt with by the Chair.
* explain the problem as clearly and as fully as possible, including any action taken to date
* allow Greater Manchester Rape Crisis a reasonable time to deal with the matter
* recognize that some circumstances may be beyond Greater Manchester Crisis's control

**Confidentiality**

In line with Greater Manchester Crisis's Confidentiality Policy, all information will remain strictly confidential. However, in exceptional cases, the circumstances giving rise to the complaint may be such that it may not be possible to maintain complete confidentiality (each complaint will be judged on its own merit).

**Complaints Policy**

1. **Introduction**
   1. Greater Manchester Rape Crisis strives for high standards in service delivery and welcomes feedback from individuals, users of our services, stakeholders, funding bodies and anyone who works with us, on all aspects of our services. Such feedback is invaluable in helping us evaluate and improve our work.
   2. The objectives of Greater Manchester Rape Crisis complaints policy and procedures are to:

* Ensure everyone knows how to make a complaint and how it will be handled
* Ensure that complaints are dealt with consistently, fairly and sensitively within clear time frames
* Provide individuals with a fair and effective way to complain about our work
* Ensure that complaints are monitored to improve our services
  1. Greater Manchester Rape Crisis will ensure that we:
* Listen carefully to complaints and treat complaints as confidential, where possible
* Record, store and manage all complaints accurately in accordance with the Data Protection Act
* Investigate the complaint fully, objectively and within the stated time frame
* Notify the complainant of the results of the investigation and any right of appeal
* Inform the complainant of any action that will be implemented
* Report on an annual basis, the number of complaints received, the outcomes and any actions taken.
  1. This policy and procedure relates only to complaints received about Greater Manchester Rape Crisis and its services.

**Complaints Procedure**

1. **Concern or Complaint**

It is important to establish the difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage will reduce the likelihood of them developing into formal complaints.

* 1. If you have any concerns about our work please tell your Greater Manchester Rape Crisis worker or their manager as soon as possible, so they can quickly understand your concerns and try to put things right.
  2. If you are not happy with the response to your concern and/or you want to make a formal complaint please follow the procedure below.

1. **Complaints Procedure**

Greater Manchester Rape Crisis aims to settle the majority of complaints quickly and satisfactorily by the member of staff who provided the service. The complaint may be resolved quickly by way of an apology or by an acceptable explanation to the individual. However, if this is not possible please follow the procedure below.

* 1. There are three stages to the complaints procedure:
     + Stage One – the complaint
     + Stage Two – investigation
     + Stage Three – appeal

**5. Stage One – The Complaint**

* 1. The complaint should be in writing, if the individual prefers they can tell someone at Greater Manchester Rape Crisis, or someone else, who will write it down for them. The complainant will need to sign it. A complaint form is available to use at Appendix 1
  2. Individuals wishing to make a complaint should contact the person who provided the service or their line manager. Alternatively, they can write to the CEO

Anne Stebbings

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**PLEASE MARK YOUR ENVELOPE PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL**

**If the complaint is about the CEO please write to the Chair marking your envelope PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL to**

Ms. S Wilson

Greater Manchester Rape Crisis

73 Ardwick Green North

Manchester

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* 1. The complaint should include the complainants name and address, the nature and date of the complaint and how they want to see it resolved.
  2. Complainants must receive an acknowledgement within ten working days of receipt of a signed complaint.

1. **Stage Two – Investigation**
   1. A member of the senior management team should deal with all complaints at this stage.
   2. If the complaint is about the Chief Executive Officer, then the matter will be investigated by two Trustees.
   3. Complaints will be fully investigated and a written response provided to the complainant within twenty working days of acknowledging the complaint.
   4. The complainant will receive written confirmation of the outcome of any investigation and any recommendations/remedies made, such as reviewing of policies, staff development and training or appropriate improvement to Greater Manchester Rape Crisis services.
   5. Where the complaint is upheld an apology should be offered
   6. Occasionally investigations may take longer, particularly if the complaint is complex. Should this be the case a holding letter will be sent after twenty working days and a final date given for a conclusion to be reached.
   7. If an individual remains dissatisfied with the outcome from Stage Two they can appeal within ten working days of the date of the outcome and progress to Stage Three.
2. **Stage Three - Appeal**

7.1 If the complaint cannot be resolved to the complainant’s satisfaction at stage two then it will be referred the complaints panel.

7.2 The complaints panel will be formed of no less than three Greater Manchester Rape Crisis trustees.

* The complainant has 20 working days from the date of the original decision to lodge an appeal.
* The panel will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within ten working days
* Review the original complaint
* Ensure that the complaint process has been carried out properly, fairly and fully and recommend one of the following actions within twenty working days from the date the appeal was acknowledged.
* Uphold the action taken by Greater Manchester Rape Crisis at Stage Two
* Make changes to the Stage Two recommendation/actions

If after Greater Manchester Rape Crisis has been through the three stages and the complainant is still not satisfied with the result, they should be advised that there is no further right of appeal with Greater Manchester Rape Crisis but they could approach any of the following agencies for advice:

Rape Crisis England and Wales

The Charity Commission

1. **Anonymous Complaints**

Complaints received anonymously will be recorded and considered, but action may be limited if further information is required to ensure a full and fair investigation.

1. **Data protection**

To process a complaint Greater Manchester Rape Crisis will hold personal data about the complainant, which the individual provides and which other people give in response to the complaint. Greater Manchester Rape Crisis will hold this data securely and only use it to address the complaint. The identity of the person making the complaint will only be known to those who need to consider the complaint and will not be revealed to other people or made public by Greater Manchester Rape Crisis. However, it may not be possible to preserve confidentiality in some circumstances, for example, where relevant legislation applies or allegations are made which involve the conduct of third parties.

Greater Manchester Rape Crisis will normally destroy complaint files in a secure manner 6 years after the complaint has been closed.