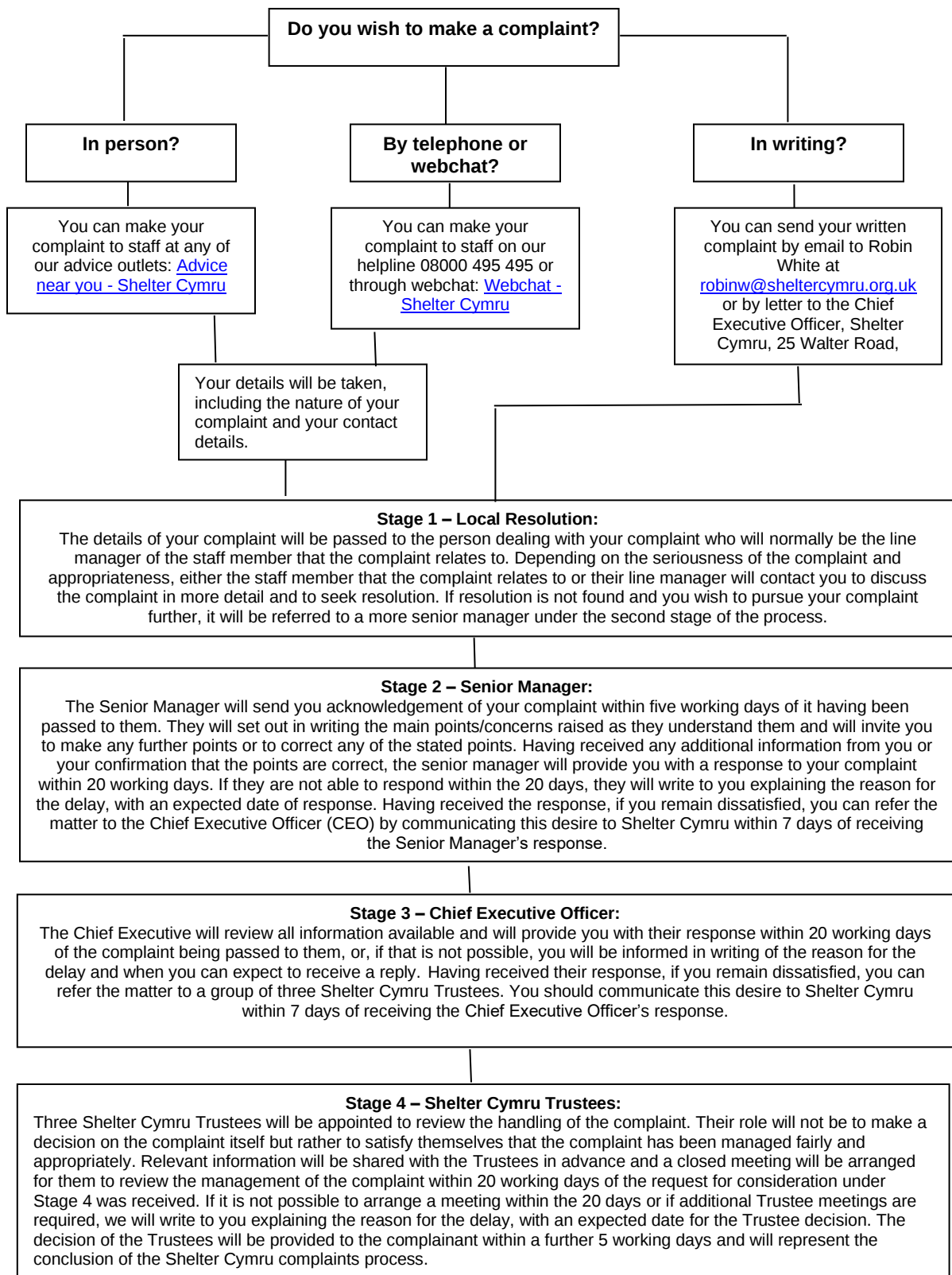




**COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURE –
SERVICE USERS**

1.0 Flowchart



2.0 Introduction

It is Shelter Cymru's policy to elicit views from all our service users about the services we provide whenever possible. The Complaints Policy and Procedure is a vital cornerstone of this approach. Any complaint will be seen as an opportunity to continuously improve the quality of the services that we provide and to learn lessons from mistakes that may have occurred. Complaints, criticism or suggestions, whether oral or written made by our service users will be taken seriously, handled appropriately and sensitively. Shelter Cymru will always make every attempt to resolve complaints within the spirit of the 'local resolution' principle. Staff who provide a service on behalf of Shelter Cymru will make every attempt to resolve complaints at an early stage.

The purpose of local resolution is to provide an opportunity for the complainant and Shelter Cymru to attempt a rapid and fair resolution of the problem. The complaints process will be fair and flexible, and will enable open communication on all sides.

This policy outlines the principles and procedures for dealing with complaints from clients about any aspect of the service provided by Shelter Cymru.

Shelter Cymru will treat complaints positively and recognise them as a way of finding out what people think of our services.

3.0 Complaints Framework

There are four stages to the complaints process in Shelter Cymru. The stages are;

1. Local resolution
2. Referral to a Senior Manager
3. Referral to the Chief Executive Officer
4. Review by a group of three Shelter Cymru Trustees

4.0 Objectives

The primary objective is to provide the fullest possible opportunity for investigation and resolution of the complaint, as quickly as is sensible in the circumstances.

The aim will be to resolve complaints at an early stage. Specifically, the process aims to;

- a) Provide you with a clear, responsive, effective and efficient means of resolving dissatisfaction with services provided by Shelter Cymru.
- b) Resolve complaints as quickly as possible.
- c) Resolve as many complaints locally as possible.
- d) Enable effective communication.
- e) Ensure the protection of service users' confidentiality and compliance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.
- f) Ensure the protection of client's wellbeing under Shelter Cymru's safeguarding responsibilities.
- g) Support staff complained against during the handling of the complaint.

- h) Ensure clear and accurate documentation about complaints is held by the relevant senior managers and that the information from complaints is analysed and the causes of complaints identified and remedied.

Shelter Cymru will continually review the Complaints Procedure with a view to making improvements where required and ascertaining ways to improve services to continually meet your needs.

5.0 Responsibilities

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible, on behalf of the Shelter Cymru Board, for ensuring the appropriate framework is in place to manage complaints effectively and that it is integrated with other appropriate internal policies e.g. Safeguarding/Welsh Language Plan etc.

All complaints, whether verbal or written, will be investigated promptly, thoroughly and fairly, respecting confidentiality.

The appropriate line manager within each area has responsibility for taking actions as the 'Complaints Manager'.

Senior Managers within the Housing Services function are responsible for the management of complaints within their own teams and are expected to ensure compliance through effective implementation of this policy.

Front line staff, as well as their line managers, have an important role in dealing with local resolution issues – as they are often the first point of contact for the complainant.

In cases, where the issue looks serious or complex, the appropriate manager will intervene – either to investigate the problem or to co-ordinate, in conjunction with appropriate staff, the local resolution of the issue.

It is the overall responsibility of the Complaints Manager to;

- receive complaints and co-ordinate any investigation and respond appropriately and effectively in line with the Complaints policy;
- advise staff dealing with complaints and who have complaints made against them;
- support and ensure training is provided to those in contact with service users on how to deal with concerns and complaints when they first arise.

6.0 What is a complaint and who can complain?

A complaint is defined as an expression of concern or dissatisfaction about a service provided by Shelter Cymru, whether verbal or written, which requires a response.

The Complaints Procedure is available to any service user.

7.0 Complaints Procedure

7.1 Identifying complaints

If you have a complaint, you can express your dissatisfaction to any representative of Shelter Cymru. You can make your complaint by speaking to a Shelter Cymru member of staff or you can put your complaint in writing via email or letter, whichever you prefer.

The main points of contact are:

Shelter Cymru's advice surgeries - [Advice near you - Shelter Cymru](#)

Shelter Cymru Live Helpline - 08000 495 495

Shelter Cymru Live Webchat - [Webchat - Shelter Cymru](#)

Shelter Cymru's email point of contact for complaints - robinw@sheltercymru.org.uk

Writing to the Chief Executive Officer, Shelter Cymru, 25 Walter Road, Swansea SA1 5NN

Staff induction and refresher training will include the Complaints Policy and Procedure and staff will be regularly reminded that any complaints should be managed under this procedure and that a complaint includes any expression of concern or dissatisfaction about a Shelter Cymru service and does not need to be only triggered by someone saying that they wish to complain.

7.2 The Four Stage Process

Stage One: Local Resolution

We will endeavour to resolve your complaint locally.

The details of your complaint will be passed to the person who will manage your complaint. This will normally be the line manager of the staff member that the complaint relates to. They will be the 'Complaint Manager'.

Depending on the seriousness of the complaint and appropriateness, either the staff member that the complaint relates to or their line manager will contact you to discuss the complaint in more detail and to seek resolution. If you no longer wish to have contact with the staff member you are complaining about due to the circumstances of your dissatisfaction, do please say so in your complaint and we will endeavour to respect this wish.

If these discussions do not lead to a resolution being found and you wish to pursue your complaint further, it will be referred to a more senior manager under the second stage of the process.

Stage Two: Senior Manager

The relevant Housing Services Senior Manager will send you acknowledgement of your complaint within **5 working days** of it having been passed to them. They will set out in writing the main points/concerns raised as they understand them and will invite you to make any further points or to correct any of the stated points. Having received any additional information from you or your confirmation that the points are correct, the Senior Manager will provide you with a response to your complaint within **20 working days**. If they

are not able to respond within the 20 days, they will write to you explaining the reason for the delay, with an expected date of response.

Having received the response, if you remain dissatisfied, you can refer the matter to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) by communicating this desire to Shelter Cymru within **7 days** of receiving the Senior Manager's response.

Stage Three: Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

The Chief Executive Officer will review all information available and will provide you with their response within **20 working days** of the complaint being passed to them, or, if that is not possible, you will be informed in writing of the reason for the delay and when you can expect to receive a reply. Having received their response, if you remain dissatisfied, you can refer the matter to a group of three Shelter Cymru Trustees. You should communicate this desire to Shelter Cymru within **7 days** of receiving the Chief Executive Officer's response.

Stage Four: Shelter Cymru Trustees

Three Shelter Cymru Trustees will be appointed to review the handling of the complaint. Their role will not be to make a decision on the complaint itself but rather to satisfy themselves that the complaint has been managed fairly and appropriately. Relevant information will be shared with the Trustees in advance and a closed meeting will be arranged for them to review the management of the complaint within **20 working days** of the request for consideration under Stage 4 was received. If it is not possible to arrange a meeting within the 20 days or if additional Trustee meetings are required, we will write to you explaining the reason for the delay, with an expected date for the Trustee decision. The decision of the Trustees will be provided to the complainant within a further **5 working days** and represents the completion of the Shelter Cymru complaints process.

At all four stages of the process, we will keep you informed of who to direct your complaint communications to. However, any member of staff who receives a complaint directly will be expected to immediately refer this to the appropriate manager, who will delegate if necessary.

If your complaint was made in relation to one of our debt advice services and you are still unhappy with the outcome, you have the right to make a complaint to the Financial Ombudsman Service.

You can do this by telephoning 0800 023 4567, visiting the 'How to Complain' section of the Financial Ombudsman website: financial-ombudsman.org.uk, or e-mailing complaint.info@financial-ombudsman.org.uk

8.0 Additional Support in making complaints

If you require additional assistance to make a complaint, please tell us and we will endeavour to ensure support is arranged for you e.g. interpretation of other languages, literacy or communication difficulties, assistance for individuals who are visually or hearing impaired.

9.0 Resolution meetings

Where it is felt appropriate, you may be offered a meeting with key individuals involved who may be able to clarify issues of concern you have. Notes will be taken during such meetings and a copy will be sent to you following the meeting to reinforce discussions relating to attempts to resolve the complaint.

10.0 Support for staff complained against

Staff will be informed at the start when a complaint has been made against them. Individual members of staff will also normally see any letters of complaint in which they are mentioned. All staff named in a complaint will be updated during the process and informed of the outcome of the complaint.

11.0 Timescales for complaint handling

You should make a complaint within six months from the incident, or, within six months of the date of discovering the problem, provided that this is within 12 months of the incident. If a complaint is out of time, the Complaints Manager can ask you for reasons for the delay and extend time limits if appropriate.

If a complaint is not investigated because it is out of time, you will be given reasons why.

12.0 Requests for further information

If, at any time, you are not satisfied with a response, you can request to see the full response and relevant complaint file under the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.

13.0 Monitoring Complaints

A summary of complaints on an anonymous basis will be reported at appropriate meetings, including Board meetings annually, as a means to identifying preventative measures and as a means of reviewing effectiveness and quality.

Complaints Policy – Service Users	
Last reviewed	March 2025