

## Complaints Procedure

### Statement

WKDA will display the following statement in its main office;

*“WKDA aims to provide a service of a standard acceptable to all our users. If we fail to do this we want to know about it; this will enable us not only to deal with the specific problem, but also to avoid it happening again.*

*Our complaints procedure sets out how to take up matters that you think are unsatisfactory about the service you have received from us. Ask the adviser who sees you for a copy of the Complaints Procedure.”*

### Introduction

This policy sets out the procedures we will follow when we receive a complaint from users of the service, an organisation or another member of the general public. It does not address complaints made by volunteers.

This procedure is meant to provide a means to resolve a dispute between WKDA and any complainant. It requires staff and volunteers at every stage to try and resolve the complaint. Complaints are likely to be in one or more of the following areas;

- Dissatisfaction with our service, such as inadequate work, problems with casework, unacceptable delay or failure to deliver a promised service etc.
- Disputes between the user and WKDA regarding policy, procedure or activities
- Discourtesy or unhelpfulness on the part of staff or volunteers
- Complaint made about the action of an Approved Intermediary.

### The Procedure

When someone wishes to register a complaint, the following procedure should be adopted. Where the complaint is against the Project Manager the same procedure will be followed, but with another member of the Management Team substituting for the Project Manager’s role at all times.

The complaint may be received either in writing or by a request to make a verbal complaint.

**Stage 1** – The complainant should be invited to speak to another advisor to discuss the complaint with them. This can be done in person or by phone and a record of the conversation should be kept on a complaints form. Every effort to resolve the complaint will be made at this stage. If the complainant remains dissatisfied or where it is not possible to use stage 1 then refer to stage 2 below. Stage 1 should be completed within one week of receiving the initial complaint.

**Stage 2** – The complainant should be asked to put their complaint in writing to the Project Manager, marked Private and Confidential, providing as much detail of the complaint as possible. If the complainant is unable to put their complaint in writing the complainant will be offered an interview with the Project Manager. The role of the Project Manager at this interview will be confined to putting the complaints in writing, obtaining the complainants approval for the contents of this and asking the complainant to sign to indicate they agree

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with the contents. The complainant may choose to work with a third party at this stage and throughout the process – WKDA can provide a list of potential advocates if the complainant does not have a resource they can turn to.

The Project Manager will then investigate the complaint and attempt to resolve it. The Project Manager may delegate any aspect of the investigation to a nominee. If the complaint involves a member(s) of staff the Project Manager should offer the opportunity for the member(s) of staff to put forward their account, either by written statement or verbal presentation. The Project Manager will ensure that all complainants receive a response in writing within two weeks of the letter/complaint notes being received. This letter will summarise what investigations have been carried out and what action, if any, is proposed to resolve the matter. A copy of the letter will be attached to the complaints form.

If a response by letter is unsuitable, the complainant will be offered an interview with the Project Manager to provide the response verbally. This meeting ideally will be held within two weeks as before. A written record of the interview will be attached to the complaints form.

**Stage 3** – Where the matter is not resolved by stage 2, the Project Manager should immediately refer the complaint to a nominated representative of the Trustees of WKDA, sending copies of all written correspondence to them. The complainant will be informed immediately by the Representative that they will be contacting any staff member(s) against whom the complaint is made. The Representative will review the decision made at stage 2 and may seek further clarification from any of the parties involved. The Representative will notify the complainant of their reasons and decision (the “Final Response”) within one month of having received notice of the complaint. The Representative’s decision will be final. The Representative is responsible for ensuring records of the meetings are kept and the complaints form is completed.

Complaints we cannot settle may be referred to the Financial Ombudsman Service. Further details are available on their website: [www.financial-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.financial-ombudsman.org.uk).

In the case of a complaint against an Approved Intermediary the final decision procedure must inform the complainant of his/her right to have the complaint and the decision about the complaint referred initially to Advice UK in its capacity as a Competent Authority and ultimately to the Secretary of State.

### **Recording and Monitoring Complaints**

All complaints will be recorded and kept on file, including those which were resolved without being put in writing. The complaints form shall be used to this. All complaints shall be treated with regard to the Confidentiality Policy. The Project Manager will make a report once a year to the Representative summarising the nature of complaints received and how they were resolved

### **Publicising the Procedure**

The Project Manager is responsible for ensuring that information is made available clients in welcoming complaints and clearly explaining the procedure for making a complaint.

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#### **West Kent Debt Advice**

c/o Tonbridge Baptist Church, Darenth Avenue, Tonbridge, Kent, TN10 3HZ

Tel: 01732 300425 (24 hour answerphone) Fax 01732 369453

website: [www.wkda.org.uk](http://www.wkda.org.uk) e-mail: [advice@wkda.org.uk](mailto:advice@wkda.org.uk)

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