

Complaints, Feedback and Compliments Policy

Introduction

This policy applies to everyone regardless of age, disability, sex and gender identity (including same and different gender partners), marital status, pregnancy and maternity, race, sexual orientation, religion, or belief.

Bron Afon aims to be an agile, effective and efficient business, delivering the services our contract holders and customers need. This policy will help us to meet our aim to deliver effortless customer experiences, by resolving complaints at the earliest opportunity and by learning lessons from our mistakes.

If you require this Policy in another language or format, please contact enquiries@bronafon.org.uk or telephone 01633 620 111.

Policy Statement

We aim to provide a consistent, high quality of service to our contract holders and customers.

Unfortunately, sometimes things do go wrong and this policy sets out how customers can inform us when they feel dissatisfied with the service they have received.

When things go wrong, we will respond quickly and honestly to your comment or complaint. We welcome your views and opinions on ways to improve our services together with praise when our team members do things well.

Your feedback provides the organisation with an opportunity to learn and understand how we can improve the services we deliver. It also allows the organisation to understand the expectations and needs of our customers.

Definitions

Comment: "A suggestion or idea from a customer (or a group of customers) about how we can improve our services."

Complaint: A complaint is:

- An expression of dissatisfaction or concern.
- Written or spoken or made by any other communication method.
- Made by one or more members of the public (someone or a group in receipt of or denied a service to which they are entitled by Bron Afon).
- About Bron Afon's action or lack of action or the standard of service provided.
- Something which requires a response. It can be about Bron Afon, a person, body, or trader acting on its behalf, or a partnership of Bron Afon and other public service providers.

Compliment: "Unsolicited feedback from a customer (or a group of customers) about how we exceeded their expectations when delivering a service."

What is not a complaint?

The following will not be treated as complaints under this policy:

- You are requesting a service (in these circumstances please contact our Customer Hub on 01633 620111 or via email at enquiries@bronafon.org.uk)
- You are reporting Anti-Social Behaviour, such as a Noise Complaint.
- You are reporting a defect.
- The matter is concerning a personal injury or being dealt with by our insurers.
- The matter is covered by other statutory redress.
- The matter is covered by another statutory body (e.g. Torfaen County Council <https://www.torfaen.gov.uk> or the Police Authority <https://www.gwent.police.uk/>)

How can customers give feedback, compliments, or make a complaint?

We want to make giving feedback as easy as we can, so you can give comments or compliments, or make a complaint, by:

- Telephone
- Email
- Letter
- In-person
- Social media
- My Bron Afon (online customer portal)
- Website
- Responding to one of our satisfaction surveys or listening posts.

If you are writing to us, please send your letter to: Customer Quality Officer at Tŷ Bron Afon, William Brown Close, Llantarnam Industrial Park, Cwmbran, Torfaen NP44 3AB. Or email complaints@bronafon.org.uk

We provide equal access to our complaints service by:

- Accepting oral complaints.
- Supporting vulnerable customers through the complaints process and where appropriate refer the customer to alternative service that may be able to assist.
- Providing translation and interpreting services.
- Providing information in large print, braille, audio, and other languages.
- Provide meetings in places with disabled access and hearing loops.
- Provide support to help you to make a complaint.

Who can make a complaint?

Any member of the public, including a child, who has received, or was entitled to receive, a service from us may make a complaint. The same applies if you have suffered due to the inappropriate action or lack of action taken by Bron Afon.

Where a concern is raised by a young person or child, we will assist to ensure they're able to pursue their concern. Including notifying them of the help that could be provided by the Children's Commissioner for Wales.

A concern can also be put forward by someone on behalf of another person, as follows:

- Someone who is unwell or has died
- A child
- Those who lack the capacity (as defined by the Mental Capacity Act 2005)
- They have been asked to do so by the person affected

Where necessary we will ask representatives to provide evidence to confirm they are acting with the authority of that person and, if possible, obtain their signature to confirm this.

What if you need help?

Where additional assistance is required, we will try our best to assist internally, however, we may also try to put you in touch with alternative advocacy services such as Age Cymru, Meic, or the Children's Commissioner for Wales who may also be able to assist you. Please see their contact details listed below:

Age Cymru:

Website: <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/cymru/gwent/>

Telephone: 01633 763330

Meic Helpline:

Telephone: 0808 802 3456

Website: www.meiccymru.org

Children's Commissioner for Wales:

Telephone: 0808 801 1000

Email: post@childcomwales.org.uk

Website: www.childcom.org.uk

The Complaints Procedure

We aim to resolve complaints first time. To help us achieve this, we have set out clear guidance for our staff to follow to ensure that we are fair, consistent, and open in the way we deal with complaints. Each complaint is different, but by following the same clear steps we can ensure that you feel that your complaint has been taken seriously and resolved professionally.

What we expect from you

In times of trouble or distress, we understand that some people may act out of character. 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 believe that our staff have those 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 policy to manage situations when we find that someone's actions are unacceptable.

How do we deal with anonymous complaints?

If you would like to make an anonymous complaint, please be aware that although we may act on the information provided, we are unable to advise you of the action we have taken.

How do we put things right?

We aim to resolve complaints by dealing with outstanding issues quickly, improving communication, giving an apology when one is due, and ensuring that we learn from the complaint.

Whilst there may be some circumstances where compensation is appropriate for losses or expense incurred that has been caused by our action or inaction, compensation should not be seen as the primary method of resolution.

Here are the stages of our complaints procedure:

Stage One

Where possible, we believe it's best to deal with complaints straight away. If you have a concern, please raise it with the person you're dealing with. They will try to resolve it for you there and then, if necessary, they will also be able to provide appropriate information on advice and advocacy support. If there are any lessons to be learned from addressing your concern, the staff member will inform us. If technical expertise and oversight are required, you may be referred to our central complaints team, a specialised customer hub assistant, or a team leader or manager.

Investigations will be completed by following our six-step complaints guidance. Summarised below:

1. Thank you for your feedback, apologise for your dissatisfaction, and reassure you that they will take ownership of your complaint.
2. Identify what outcome you are looking for from your complaint, and advise you on what you can reasonably expect from the process.
3. Investigate the complaint thoroughly. This will normally involve meeting with you to discuss the circumstances of your complaint.
4. Make a decision based on the findings of the complaint.
5. Take action and look for a long-term fix. This might involve changing or improving our processes for the benefit of all our customers. At this point, we will write to you to explain our findings and the outcome of your complaint.
6. Share the learning with colleagues. We do this when we have investigated complaints to help us understand what went wrong to ensure that we don't make the same mistake again for you or any of our other customers.

Investigating Officers will have a timescale of ten working days in which to carry out their investigation and contact you with an outcome. They will make initial contact with you within the first three working days of being assigned the complaint. If for any reason a mutually

agreeable outcome is not achieved within this timescale, your complaint will automatically be escalated to the next stage of our complaints process.

Where a complaint involves a potential insurance claim, litigation, prosecution, disciplinary investigation, health and safety investigator or other circumstance that may give rise to external intervention, the Chief Executive may suspend the complaints process and delay time scales provided he informs you and explains the reasons.

A complainant may withdraw their concern at any time, however, we may continue to investigate if we feel that it is necessary to do so.

Actions taken will be recorded on Bron Afon's contact management system - YODA.

At the end of an investigation, where appropriate, a written outcome, such as a letter or email will be produced. In more serious circumstances, we may choose to produce a report or utilise the case for a wider lessons learnt review.

We will make it clear that you can escalate your complaint to the second stage, however, we may ask you to provide additional guidance to confirm:

- Desired outcome, and how that is different from the original investigation.
- What inaccuracies occurred during the previous investigation that led to your escalation request.

If you wish to appeal a decision and escalate your complaint to Stage 2, we ask that you inform us within 14 days of the outcome of your initial investigation. Notification outside of this timeframe may result in you having to restart our complaints process.

Stage Two

Investigations at this stage will be conducted by a Head of Service whenever possible. If the investigation requires specific technical expertise or oversight, or if resource constraints might prevent us from meeting our target service level agreement, an appropriate colleague will be designated to lead the investigation under the sponsorship of a Head of Service.

Investigating Officers have a target timescale of twenty working days in which to carry out their investigation and contact you with an outcome. However, should a complaint be complex and either you or the investigating officer require additional time, an amended and mutually agreed timescale will be decided. They will make initial contact with you within the first three working days of being assigned the complaint.

Actions taken will be recorded on Bron Afon's contact management system - YODA.

At the end of an investigation, where appropriate, a written outcome, such as a letter or email will be produced. In more serious circumstances, we may choose to produce a report or utilise the case for a wider lessons learnt review.

A complainant may withdraw their concern at any time, however, we may continue to investigate if we feel that it is necessary to do so.

If at any stage in the complaints procedure a full response has been given to you and there has been no further contact from you within 14 days, the complaint will be deemed to be satisfactorily closed. If we receive contact after this date, you may be asked to restart our complaints process.

If you remain dissatisfied following the second investigation, you can also choose to escalate your complaint to the Public Services Ombudsman Wales, you can find their details listed below.

The Public Services Ombudsman

The Public Services Ombudsman is independent of Bron Afon and deals with complaints against public service in Wales. The Ombudsman has the legal power to look into complaints where people feel they have been treated unfairly or received poor service, however, they do suggest that you first allow us to address your complaint by using our complaints procedure.

Contact details for the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales:

Telephone: 0300 790 0203

Email: ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk

Website: www.ombudsman.wales

Postage Address: 1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, Pencoed, Bridgend CF35 5LJ

Data Breach or GDPR concerns

Any allegations of breaches of data or GDPR will be passed to the Assurance Manager via email at data.protection@bronafon.org.uk. The team will investigate the allegation within 72 hours of becoming aware of the breach to assess if it is a reportable breach to the ICO. The team will provide you with an outcome of your complaint and take any necessary actions following their investigation.

Learning from complaints

We are particularly keen to learn lessons from our customers when they tell us that they have been dissatisfied with our service. Where appropriate, debriefs will be held following complaint investigations to ensure that lessons are learned to improve our handling of similar situations, as well as to inform changes to policies and/or procedures where appropriate.

Performance Monitoring

We will:

- Monitor comments, complaints, and compliments for each service and report findings regularly to Heads of Service and Directors.
- Monitor the proportion of complaints resolved at each stage, and the emergence of trends in respect of particular services or types of customers.

