

A photograph of two women standing in a clinical or office environment. The woman on the left is wearing a blue scrub top with a red collar and glasses. The woman on the right is wearing a black top with a blue and white polka-dot pattern and has a tattoo on her left arm. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a hallway or office space.

MANAGING A COMPLEX CASE

Guidance Document 2025



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Complex Case Advice

Introduction

It is known that across NHS Wales, organisations will have to manage situations where a person, whether patient, ex-patient, relative or member of the public makes a complaint or series of complaints or causes situations, that are multi-faceted and complex in nature. This guide is intended to assist staff who are responsible for managing such instances, by providing practical steps to follow and should act as a framework in an effective response to such complex matters.

Complex Case: Definition

In understanding what may be deemed 'complex', the below definition may be useful:

The case relates to actions by an individual(s), whether physical, verbal or otherwise, and which are carried out by any means, which are beyond reasonable, and have one or more of the following effects.

- The action(s) cause severe harm, which could be physical, psychological or which in anyway effects the wellbeing of another person or persons
- The actions(s) severely disrupt a service offered by NHS Wales
- The action(s) severely damage the professional reputation of an NHS Wales staff member
- The action(s) severely impact the reputation of the NHS Wales organisation to which the action(s) are directed
- There is a significant financial implication to an individual or an NHS Wales organisation to which the action(s) are directed
- Action(s) which equate to unreasonable demands on both NHS Wales staff and organisations

Factors to Consider

- **Has the incident had a severe outcome?**
(Did the incident cause a staff sickness, is there police involvement, is there risk to organisation repetition, is there risk to individual reputation)
- **Are there numerous factors involved?**
(Are several sites/locations involved, several people affected etc)
- **What is the potential harm?**
(physical/psychological harm to individuals, disruption to services, financial implications, organisational reputation etc)
- **What is the risk posed by this case?**
(Does risk assessment highlight concerning levels of risk to individuals/services/organisation/what mitigation can be put in place)

Based on the responses to the above, is the case deemed to be complex?

YES – Convene meeting of the **Complex Case Review Group** – see below.

NO - continue PTR management with potential support from Violence Prevention and Reduction Team, Legal Team and any other team deemed relevant.

Complex Case Review Group (CCRG)

Once a case is deemed to be in this category, an effective method of tackling the issues presented is for the case to be reviewed by a defined group of staff with a broad range of appropriate skills and experience.

If the **right** people meet at the **right** time, often the **right** decisions are made.

Purpose of the CCRG

The purpose of the CCRG is to understand in detail the case in hand, and to decide and take appropriate actions to **reduce risk and harm** to individuals and the organisation.

Points to Consider

Who deals with/manages the issue?

How does the organisation respond?

What is the nature of the response?

The CCRG should discuss any potential consequences of their decisions and weigh up the possible effects on those involved with the case.

For example,

Is there a potential for harm to staff or others by acting or not acting?

Is there potential for harm to the service provision or reputation of the organisation or department?

Is it possible that other organisations are affected by the groups decision(s)?

Suggested Group Structure

In order to achieve the most appropriate outcome to the case, it is advisable to bring together colleagues working in the below areas of work:

- Putting Things Right Team Manager
- Head of Health & Safety department
- Violence & Aggression Case Manager or equivalent
- A representative from the organisations' Legal Team
- Workforce & OD Manager
- Relevant staff for that case, e.g. senior clinician, department manager, trade union representative
- Administrative support
- Team responsible for equality/human rights
- Any other person considered relevant e.g. police, social services, local council)

Gather Information and Record

The group should gather as much information as possible that is known about the case before any decisions are made. Where there are 'unknowns' efforts should be made to fill that information gap. The group should note what information has been gathered, what action(s) have been agreed and who is responsible for the action. Where it is decided not to take an action, this should also be noted, along with the rationale for not acting.

Potential Actions for the Group to Consider

- Reporting incident to partners – Police, Local Authority, Social Services
- Activating organisational sanctions document
- Consideration that sanctions will be taken
- Legal options
- To consider the 'so what' of the group's decisions

The group should ensure that all meetings, decisions made, actions taken or not taken **are recorded**. There should be a detailed and accurate recording of the group's rationale for future reference and review. Consideration should be given to creating a '**Master Datix**' incident report so that all decisions and actions are recorded in one location.

Avoid 'Silo Working'

The CCRG should avoid working in a 'silo' and seek advice from other NHS colleagues or any other group or organisation they feel would assist in managing the issues presented by the case effectively. This can include the Anti-Violence Collaborative Wales (AVC).

Anti-Violence Collaborative Wales (AVC)

The Anti-Violence Collaborative Wales (AVC) is a collaboration of all NHS Wales bodies, the Police Service in Wales, the Crown Prosecution Service in Wales and NHS staff Support Groups. The aim of the AVC is to prevent and reduce incidents of violence and aggression across the NHS Wales footprint.

Where an NHS Wales body is involved in managing a complex case through the Complex Case Review Group process, the AVC is available to advise and assist with the view to achieving the most appropriate outcome.

Contact can be made to the AVC via the email address below:
AntiViolence.Collaborative@wales.nhs.uk

Review

Once it has been decided by the CCRG that a case has been effectively managed, a review of decisions made by the group should be held. A case management summary should be submitted to the AVC for review and sharing of learning. Also, consideration should be given for a peer review by another organisation.