

Client Complaints Procedure



Network is committed to providing clients with professional, empathetic counselling and a professional administrative communication. You can view our [ethos and values statement on our website](#).

If anyone is unhappy with any part of our service, or if they have a complaint to make, we would like to know about it as soon as possible in order to resolve the situation quickly. All complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially.

Aims of the Complaints Procedure

- To enable a complaint to be investigated in a fair manner
- To enable complaints to be resolved as speedily as possible
- To allow consequences of mistakes to be put right without unnecessary conflict
- To improve the quality of the service

Access to this Complaints Procedure document

This Complaints Procedure can be accessed as follows:

- A copy is available in the waiting area of Network's building at Elm Park.
- A hard copy can be requested from Network by phone, email or letter.

Who can complain

- Anyone who is using the counselling service
- Anyone who has used the counselling service within the past three years
- Anyone who has enquired about the counselling service or is on the waiting list
- Anyone from another organisation who has enquired about our service, or who is working with or representing someone who is using or has used the service.

Time limits for complaints

Complaints can be accepted up to three years from the time of the problem arising. If the complaint refers to specific client work the maximum is three years from the date the client ended counselling with Network. However, it is much easier to sort out difficulties if the complaint is brought to our attention as quickly as possible.

Scope of Complaints

Complaints made under this Procedure may cover paid staff, volunteer counsellors or Administrators, Board members, and other volunteers acting for or on behalf of Network's Counselling Service.

Complaints must be supported by sufficient evidence to enable an investigation, and the Head of Counselling will make an initial assessment of whether there is a case to answer.

Complaints against a person who has left Network will be investigated for the learning of the organisation and a report submitted to the BACP even if sanctions cannot be applied.

Confidentiality and Communications

Every complaint will be treated with care and confidentiality. We will attempt to communicate clearly and directly with all complainants or their representatives in a timely manner, as described below.

The complainant is required to give permission for confidential information pertinent to the complaint to be disclosed to all parties cited in the complaint by those involved in handling the complaint, including Network's legal or other specialist advisors.

Safety of Clients

If a complaint relates to the conduct of a counsellor in counselling, at all times the client's safety will be a primary consideration. Suspension of counselling and/or disciplinary proceedings may take place at any stage of the complaints process, if appropriate.

How to make a complaint

If you are unhappy about something the first stage is to try to resolve it informally through conversation and discussion with the person directly involved. For clients, this might be your counsellor.

This may include telephone conversations and/or face to face meetings or written explanation of the reasons for a decision taken.

Managing the complaint

You should address complaints and further correspondence to the person who will manage the complaint.

The Head of Counselling will handle client complaints.

If the complaint is against the Head of Counselling (or if the Head of Counselling has a conflict of interests), the Chief Executive will manage the complaint.

If the complaint is against the Chief Executive (or if the Chief Executive has a conflict of interests), the Chair of Trustees will manage the complaint.

Stage 1 – Informal Complaint

Every opportunity will be taken at the time of the initial complaint to settle the concern informally. This may include telephone conversations and/or face to face meetings or written explanation of the reasons for a decision taken.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of discussions at this stage then a formal complaint can be made.

Stage 2 – Formal Complaint

A formal complaint should be made in writing to the person managing the complaint using the 'Client Complaint Form', by email or letter. Please mark letters 'Private and Confidential'. If you have any difficulty making a complaint in writing, please let us know and we will try to make arrangements to help you.

Anonymous complaints, and any that are deemed to be vexatious or malicious, will be investigated by the Chief Executive or the Chair of Trustees, who will use discretion in assessing what action should be taken.

A formal complaint will be acknowledged in writing by the recipient within seven of the recipient's working days. A copy of the Client Complaints Procedure will be enclosed. If an employee or volunteer of Network is the subject of the complaint, they will be sent a copy of the complaint along with the Complaints Procedure.

Stage 2: Step 1- Investigation of the Complaint

The person managing the complaint will investigate the formal complaint, or appoint a suitably qualified independent person(s) to do so.

The investigator(s) will make a thorough and confidential investigation of the complaint, contacting both the complainant and the person complained against.

The investigator(s) will have access to relevant documents and policy papers within Network's Counselling Service and to staff members, if appropriate. They may ask for

evidence from either party and if this is sought in person, they will meet with each party separately. All parties will have the right to be accompanied, but not be represented, by a supportive person of their choice. The complainant and the party or parties complained against and/or their representative will not be asked to attend any meetings together.

Stage 2: Step 2 - Outcome

On completion of the investigation, the person managing the complaint will write to you, the complainant, with the outcome by email or letter within 28 days, a copy of which will be sent the person complained against. If it is not possible to respond within 28 days, the complainant will be informed of any reasons for a delay. All investigations will be completed and responded to within six months.

The person managing the complaint, may halt the procedure at any stage if it emerges that legal action is under way, pending or intended, until such time as any legal process is complete. They may also adjourn the procedure, ensuring that it is re-started at the point at which it was stopped, within a reasonable time.

Complaints to the BACP

Network Counselling & Training Ltd is an organisational member of the BACP (British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy). If, having received a formal response to your complaint, you are not satisfied, you can approach the BACP with your concern.

BACP can be contacted here:

Website: <https://www.bacp.co.uk/>

Telephone: 01455 883300

Email: bacp@bacp.co.uk

Mail: BACP, 15 St John's Business Park, Lutterworth, Leicestershire LE17 4HB.

Monitoring of Complaints

A record will be kept of all complaints received. Anonymous complaints will also be recorded, including the reasons for any decision to pursue or not to pursue the complaint.

Complaints will be monitored regularly by the Chief Executive and brought to the attention of the Board of Trustees.

Records of complaints will be kept for a period of six years.

A complaint will be discontinued if the complainant fails or refuses to participate at any stage of the complaint procedure without good reason or the complainant formally withdraws the complaint. In these circumstances, all parties will be informed.