



Central Counselling Service

Internal Complaints Procedure

Stage 1 - Informal Complaint

Central Counselling Service (CCS) will always seek to resolve complaints internally. All clients are advised at the commencement of the counselling contract that CCS has an internal complaint's procedure which will be used if a concern is raised. If this does not address the matter, CCS will direct the client to COSCA's website and to its complaints procedure. If the complaint is of an informal nature it should be raised with the Director of Counselling (currently Susanne Beitan) and Susanne will seek to resolve the matter locally.

CCS will seek to provide the complainant with the support he or she needs to fully understand the complaints procedure.eg through local advocacy services if appropriate.

Stage 2

If you, as the complainant are not satisfied with the response you receive informally you should make a formal complaint in writing to the Director of Counselling.

The Complaint must

- state whether it is against an individual or against the service
- identify the member of the service complained against
- advise the nature and details of the complaint
- CCS will not respond to anonymous complaints

The written complaint should be sent to:

Susanne Beitan, Director of Counselling , Central Counselling Service , Central Hall, 2 West Tollcross , Edinburgh EH3 9BP

The Director of Counselling will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within three working days and advise the complainant that a full response will be sent within one month. If a delay beyond this timescale is unavoidable a revised timescale will be advised. Any complaint against an individual counsellor or against CCS must be submitted to the Director of Counselling within 3 years of allegation.

An investigation will take place to establish

- what went wrong
- where appropriate, facilitate discussion between the complainant, the Director and a member of the Board of Advisors
- where appropriate, offer an apology.

All parties involved in the complaint will be kept informed as to what is required of them at different stages of the complaint process.

The investigator / panel Chair person will hear separately the evidence from each party. The complainant and the person complained against will not attend the complaints panel meeting at the same time.

The party complained against has the right to attend and be accompanied by a supportive person of their choice at the meeting.

Should the complaint be against the Director of Counselling the investigation will be transferred to a member of the Board and the complainant advised of the details of the person leading the investigation.

The Director of Counselling in the case of the Complaint's Procedure, or Stuart Aitken currently Director of Operations in the case of the Appeals Procedure can halt the complaint at any time should it emerge that legal action is under way, pending or intended.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the resolution offered he/she may follow CCS internal appeals procedure.

The appeal should be submitted in writing and addressed to Stuart Aitken at the above address. Stuart is a member of the Board but not directly involved with the counselling team. He, along with another two members of the Board will Chair the panel and lead the appeals investigation. To ensure that there is no conflict of interest the Director of Counselling will not be part of this panel or involved in any part of the appeal. All parties involved in the complaint can, where relevant, declare a conflict of interest to a person who will be designated at the time of appeal proceedings. Should there be a conflict of interest by the Director of Counselling investigating a complaint, a member of the board will be appointed to take this investigation forward. At all times CCS will ensure that an impartial investigator is appointed.

Stage 3

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation and appeal, CCS will refer the complainant to the professional body COSCA whose complaints procedure is available on the website. A link to that website, is available on the website of Central / CCS .

COSCA (Counselling and Psychotherapy in Scotland)

16 Melville Terrace

Stirling FK8 2NE

T-01786 475140 F-01786 446207

E-info@cosca.org.uk

W-www.cosca.org.uk

CCS is very aware of the need for confidentiality and will not accept a complaint on behalf of a third party without prior written consent from the person involved.

Records

Records will be kept detailing the nature of the complaint raised, CCS response and any action taken and the reason for that action. These records will be kept confidentially in accordance with the DATA Protection Act 1988, which requires the release of certain data to individuals on their request. Copies of any meeting records will be given to the individual concerned, on request. In certain circumstances some information may be withheld, for example, to protect a witness.

CCS is required to submit to COSCA reports at the conclusion of the complaints process and notify COSCA of any sanctions applied to individual members of COSCA working either in a paid or volunteer capacity for CCS. COSCA will consider appropriate action following it's receipt of this information.

COSCA will conduct an audit and or any other measures as necessary to ensure that CCS complaints procedure and the way in which the complaint has been handled meets it's standard.

A copy of COSCA's complaints procedure can be viewed on the COSCA website which is linked to the web page of CCS.

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