



Clients Complaints Procedure

At Soul Soup the well-being of every young person is at the core of our service and we strive to treat everyone who accesses our organisation with consideration and respect.

Our aim is to provide consistent high standards of professionalism across our counselling provision and associated activities at all times and practice within *The Ethical Framework and Code of Practice* set out by the governing body for Counselling and Psychotherapy in Scotland, COSCA

However we do recognise that there may be occasions when our service falls below a client's expectations, leading to a complaint against Soul Soup or an individual(s) working for us. Complaints will be accepted by clients, third parties or representatives.

We aim to treat every concern, received, seriously and will investigate all matters as a priority. The following procedure outlines the steps we will take to resolve any complaints against us. While it is helpful to us to know who you are so we can get in touch with you, we believe everyone has a right to complain. As a result we will investigate anonymous complaints thoroughly.

A copy of this procedure can be found on our website <http://www.soulsoup.co.uk> or on request by telephone 01387 269161.

Confidentiality:

1. All aspects of any complaint will be dealt with in a confidential manner.
2. All parties relating to the complaint will be given the name and contact details of the person, normally the Project Manager, investigating the complaint.
3. The Project Manager will discuss the details of the complaint only with the Board of Management, the complainant and the individual(s) to whom the complaint is against, and the counselling supervisor. The Project Manager will only divulge information that is necessary for the purposes of investigation.
4. All files and administration will be kept in a secure location such as a lockable filing system or password protected digital file, with access to both areas restricted and accessed only by an authorised person(s)



5. All information stored will be used solely for the purposes of investigating the complaint and for any subsequent disciplinary matters and will be documented in a professional and appropriate manner.
6. All meetings relating to the complaint will be conducted in a private area to ensure that details of the complaint and privacy of the parties involved is maintained.

Please Note: Complaints can only be dealt with if received within three years of the incident

If either the complainant or the person assigned to deal with the complaint feels there is a conflict of interest during any point of the complaints procedure then this should be addressed to our external adjudicator who will then appoint an impartial individual within the organisation that all parties agree upon. Our external adjudicator is Karen Lewis, c/o The Hub, 24-26 Friars Vennel, Dumfries, DG1 2RL

Initial Procedure:

1. Soul Soup endeavours to address any complaints at a local level and the complainant is asked to discuss their concerns with the Soul Soup personnel in the first instance i.e. Counsellor, Support Worker,
2. If following the above discussion the response is unsatisfactory, then a formal complaint can be made in writing and addressed to the Project Manager
3. If the complaint is against the Project Manager then a Director of Soul Soup will be responsible for investigating and managing the complaint procedure.
4. Any complaint made on the telephone or in person to an employee/volunteer of Soul Soup will be reported to the Project Manager or Board of Directors at the earliest opportunity. The date the concern is received and the person to whom the concern is reported will be recorded on a secure client filing system.
5. The Project Manager/delegated Director will contact the complainant, normally within three working days, to discuss the nature of their concerns. If the complaint is unresolved following discussion, the Project Manager will request a formal, written



statement from the complainant laying out the matters which give rise to the complaint.

6. If the complainant declines to pursue the complaint, the date of the conversation and nature of the complaint will be entered on the Client's File by the Project Manager/delegated Director and the person complained against and their supervisor will be informed.
7. Internal disciplinary procedures may be put into effect if considered necessary.
8. Any written complaint received from a client regarding the work of the Service or by any individual working for the Service, should be passed to the Project Manager/delegated Director as soon as possible and within a week of receipt of complaint. A formal record will be made on the Client File.

Formal Procedure - Stage One:

1. When a written complaint is received, the Project Manager/ delegated Director will write a letter acknowledging receipt within seven days. The counsellor concerned and their supervisor will be informed of the complaint and a meeting will be arranged, either together or separately with the Project Manager/delegated Director, to discuss the complaint. The Board of Directors and counselling supervisor will be informed that a formal complaint has been made.
2. A second letter will be sent to the client advising them that discussion has taken place with the counsellor concerned and offering an opportunity for formal discussion of the complaint with the Project Manager/delegated Director. This meeting should take place not more than four weeks after receipt of the written complaint.
3. The complainant will have the right to be accompanied at the meeting by one other person of their choice. Help and advice on understanding formal complaints proceedings and accessing advocacy services is available through Citizens Advice and Dumfries and Galloway Advocacy Service if necessary (contact details below)
4. All parties will be advised that they must articulate their concerns in a courteous manner and must not interrupt or use abusive language towards another whilst



addressing their concern. In the event of a serious complaint being received, that has the potential to escalate to legal proceedings the meeting may be recorded for accurate recording of all information but the prior written consent of all parties must be obtained. If during proceedings it is stated that legal action will be pursued, then the process will be halted until legal advice can be sought.

5. All parties relating to the complaint will be interviewed individually to ascertain the full nature of the complaint.
6. If the complaint is resolved at the meeting, the client, counsellor, supervisor and Board of Directors will receive written confirmation that the matter is resolved.
7. If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the meeting, they will be asked to give a written statement to this effect to the Project Manager and the complaint will move to Stage 2.

Formal Procedure - Stage Two:

The purpose of this stage is to review the conduct of the complaint; to ensure that procedure has been followed correctly; to provide the client with an opportunity to contest the decision of Soul Soup; to arrive at a final ruling for the resolution of the complaint.

1. The Project Manager/delegated Director will inform the Board of Directors of the continuing complaint, the Director(s) will inform the Management Committee, and will write to the client and person complained against advising them that the procedure has moved to Stage Two.
2. The Chair will convene a panel comprising a Director, a member of the Management Committee (not the Project Manager) and a person external to the Service, with relevant experience, agreed by the Project Manager and the Client. A meeting date will be set for the meeting to take place, within six weeks of the decision to move to Stage Two.



Stage 2

3. The panel will be provided with all relevant paperwork prior to the date of the meeting. The client, person complained against, and the Project Manager will be given the opportunity to attend and may be questioned by the panel. The client and person complained against can be joined by one person of their choice.
4. The findings of the panel, in the form of a written report, will be conveyed to the Board of Directors; the Management Committee; the client and person complained against.
5. If the complainant is not satisfied with the response to the complaint, then the reasons should be given in writing within 4 weeks, in the same fashion as above and passed to the Board of Soul Soup. An Appeals Panel of 2 members of the board, one of whom will be designated to chair, will be convened to consider the Appeal. As far as possible, membership of the Appeals Panel will be restricted to members who have had no previous involvement in the complaint.
6. The members of the Appeal Panel will make a final decision after reading any necessary papers and speaking to relevant individuals involved with the complaint. Any interviews will be conducted under the same terms as those for Stage Two.
7. The chair of the Appeals Panel will write to the complainant within 28 days of receiving the appeal to confirm the decision about the complaint which will be final. The letter will include:
 - The reason for the decision
 - The redress, if appropriate, which will be offered e.g. an apology
 - Any action which may be taken in light of the complaint
 - If it is not possible to complete the investigation within 28 days, an explanation for this and the date of completion.

(Reporting)

8. Because our Counselling Service is a member of COSCA (see below for details) the results of any complaints against the Counselling Service will be submitted to



COSCA Counselling and Psychotherapy in Scotland (taking into account the affiliated body of the member to whom the complaint is against)

9. If all of the above procedure has been exhausted then the complainant may submit their complaint to COSCA (see details below) to pursue.

Counselling sessions will be suspended when the complaint moves to Formal Procedure Stage Two. At the discretion of the Head of Counselling, all client Work of the counsellor complained against may be suspended during investigation.

The complaints procedure can be accessed in other formats and languages *Click in the "Find What" box, then click "No Formatting." Then click Format->Language..., and select the language, e.g. Arabic or style and change format style.*

We can supply this procedure in different formats and languages if you have difficulty. Please contact us.

Advocacy services

Citizens advice Service Dumfries 81-85 Irish St, Dumfries DG1 2PQ Phone: 0300 303 4321

Dumfries Advocacy service 107 English Street, Dumfries DG1 2DA Phone: 01387 247237

COSCA Counselling and psychotherapy in Scotland 16 Melville Terrace, Stirling FK8 2NE
Phone: 01786 475140