Complaints Policy

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Zenobia Nardishaw		Vice- Chair	June 2028	4.0

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EACH Counselling & Support
Complaints Policy and Procedures

CONTENTS

Statement of Intent 3
What is a complaint? 3
Our standards for handling complaints 4
Third Party Reporting 4
Confidentiality 5
How to complain to us 5
The stages of the service complaints procedure 5
Our timescales for handling a service complaint 8
Remedies 8
Recording complaints 9
Contacting us 9
Reasonable adjustments and alternative formats 10
Comments and non-service complaints 10

Appendix A

Formal Complaint Form 11

Statement of Intent

EACH Counselling & Support is committed to providing a high quality, transparent and accessible service to everyone we support or deal with. In order to do this we need you to tell us when we get things wrong. We want to help resolve your complaint as quickly as possible.

We handle any expression of dissatisfaction with our service which calls for a response as a complaint. We listen to your complaints, treat them seriously, and learn from them so that we can continuously improve our service.

This policy is to provide guidance to service users, carers and members of the public on how to make a complaint and what to expect from us in response.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not.

Our policy covers complaints about:

- the standard of service you should expect from us
- the behaviour of our staff in delivering that service
- any action, or lack of action, by our staff or others engaged on EACH business

We refer to these complaints as "service complaints". Staff are termed to include trainees, placements and volunteers for the purposes of this document.

Our complaints policy does not cover:

- comments about our policies or policy decisions
- dissatisfaction or complaints expressed with our policies or decisions about individual cases, funding, or requests for legal advice and assistance
- matters that have already been fully investigated through this complaints procedure
- anonymous complaints
- internal staff grievances and disciplinary matters (though a complaint may initiate grievance or disciplinary procedures)
- complaints by employees related to their employment

We refer to these types of comments or complaints as "non-service complaints". These are handled differently, as set out in the "Comments and Non-service complaints" section on page 11.

Our standards for handling complaints

- We can receive complaints verbally, by phone, email or in writing
- We treat all complaints seriously
- You can expect to be treated with courtesy, respect and fairness at all times. We expect that you will also treat our staff dealing with your complaint with the same courtesy, respect and fairness
- We will treat your complaint in confidence within the organisation
- We will deal with your service complaint promptly. We will acknowledge receipt of a written complaint within five working days where we have a return address and you can expect to have a full reply within 20 working days. In a few cases we will not be able to send a full reply within 20 working days of receipt, for example if your complaint is very complex. If this happens, we will tell you the reason why and let you know when we will be able to reply in full, keeping you fully informed of progress.
- We will not treat you less favourably than anyone else because of your:
    - sex or legal marital or same-sex partnership status: this includes family status, responsibility for dependants, and gender (including gender reassignment, whether proposed, commenced or completed)
    - sexual orientation
    - colour or race: this includes ethnic or national origin or nationality
    - disability
    - religious or political beliefs, or trade union affiliation
    - any other unjustifiable factors, for example language difficulties, age, pregnancy and maternity.

Third Party Reporting

Complainants may wish to have a third party act on their behalf. A third party is any person or organisation acting on behalf of or making enquiries for the complainant. For example, third parties may include:

- advice organisations
- professionals such as keyworkers, social workers, community psychiatric nurses or doctors, solicitors
- family members or friends

Where a third party is helping a complainant with a particular complaint, we need written consent to that effect. Where we have this authority, we will endeavour to take all possible steps to keep the third party informed of progress on the complaint.

We do not need written consent if a MP or elected Councillor is helping a constituent with a complaint, and we can disclose information to them in response to their enquiries.

Also, some lawyers and attorneys are legally empowered in certain circumstances to act on behalf of a complainant, and consent to disclose information is not required once we have ascertained this.

Confidentiality

All complaints received will be dealt with confidentially and in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998, subject to the need to disclose information as required by statutory authorities, and/or as a result of statutory, legal or parliamentary obligations placed on the Commission.

How to Complain

If you wish to make a formal complaint, you can do so by completing our Complaints Form (Appendix A.) and sending this to the relevant service manager or team leader (details in our Complaints Leaflet) via

- email
- post

Or you may hand it in to a staff member.

If you are disabled, and need a reasonable adjustment to ensure you can register your complaint, you can contact us alternatively by:

- telephone (one of our staff will help you by writing out your complaint)
- asking a member of staff to help you in writing out your complaint

You can also make a complaint by putting it in writing to us, and we will accept and respond in line with the procedures outlined below.

Our contact details are in the Contacting Us section below as well as in Appendix.. . If you require different adjustments, let us know and we will try and put those arrangements in place where we can.

Service complaints procedure

There are 4 stages to our complaints procedure.

Stage 1 - Informal resolution

It is our intention to listen to and look into all complaints and concerns objectively. However, whilst this policy primarily covers our procedures to respond to formal

complaints about our service, you may want to seek an informal resolution of your concern first.

Where appropriate, we will try to resolve the complaint informally by addressing the issue on the spot, including apologising where necessary. We will also provide you with an opportunity to meet and address your complaint informally with an appropriate manager.

Nevertheless, any informal complaints will be logged on site and flagged to the Team Leader, which may result in us obtaining additional information from you to ensure we provide the best service possible to our users.

Stages 2 – 4: Formal Resolution

We have a formal service complaints handling procedure, explained below. At each stage it will help us to resolve your complaint quickly if you can give us as much clarity and detail as possible, including providing any documents and correspondence and stating that you are making a complaint. If we do not have all the details required to deal with the complaint, we may contact you and ask you for further information.

Stage 2
This is the first opportunity for us to resolve your dissatisfaction on a ***formal*** basis. We expect the majority of formal complaints to be resolved at this stage. On receipt of your complaint, the Team Leader responsible for the project or staff to which the complaint is related will log it and initially offer you an opportunity to meet an appropriate manager to discuss and come to a resolution without undertaking a formal investigation.

Where appropriate to do so, there may be a formal investigation based upon the information obtained at this meeting to ensure we adjust and make the necessary improvements to our services.

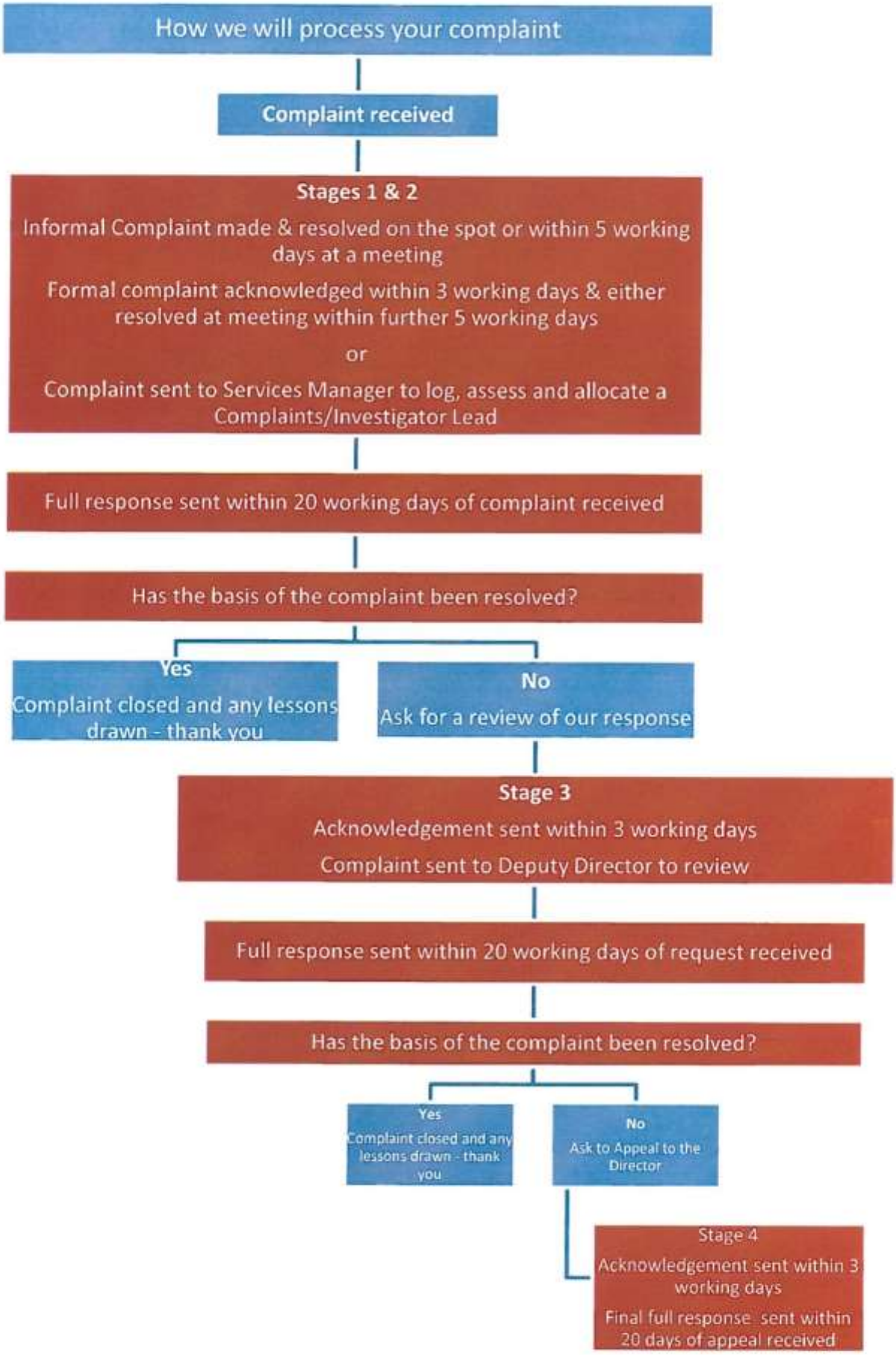
If there is no resolution at this meeting, or if depending on the nature of the complaint it is deemed more appropriate to do so, the responsible services manager will allocate the most appropriate senior staff member to investigate and respond to your complaint within the indicated timeframes.

Stage 3
If you are dissatisfied with the response at stage 2, you may request a review. This will be carried out by the Deputy Director who will review your complaint and the outcomes from our investigation, and respond to you within the appropriate timeframe.

Stage 4

If you remain dissatisfied, you can appeal and ask to have your complaint reviewed by the Director who will review and assess your complaint, and respond to you.

These 4 stages are summarised below.


How we will process your complaint
Complaint received
Stages 1 & 2
Informal Complaint made & resolved on the spot or within 5 working days at a meeting
Formal complaint acknowledged within 3 working days & either resolved at meeting within further 5 working days
or
Complaint sent to Services Manager to log, assess and allocate a Complaints/Investigator Lead
Full response sent within 20 working days of complaint received
Has the basis of the complaint been resolved?
Yes
Complaint closed and any lessons drawn - thank you
No
Ask for a review of our response
Stage 3
Acknowledgement sent within 3 working days
Complaint sent to Deputy Director to review
Full response sent within 20 working days of request received
Has the basis of the complaint been resolved?
Yes
Complaint closed and any lessons drawn - thank you
No
Ask to Appeal to the Director
Stage 4
Acknowledgement sent within 3 working days
Final full response sent within 20 days of appeal received

Timescales

Our timescales for handling a complaint comply with guidance issued by the Public and Health Services Ombudsman.

Stages 1 & 2
We will respond to and resolve an Informal complaint either on the spot or within 5 working days through a meeting.

We will acknowledge a formal complaint within 3 working days of receiving each complaint and send a full response within 20 working days of receiving it.

If you make a complaint in person to a member of our staff whilst at an external event or meeting or via our main email address (see below), we will record your complaint in writing within 3 working days, and acknowledge it within 5 working days thereafter. We will then deal with your complaint in accordance with our policy for written complaints.

Stage 3 (Review)
We will acknowledge a request to review our response if you feel the basis of your complaint has not been resolved within 3 working days of receiving it. A full response to the request will be sent within 20 working days of receiving it.

Stage 4 (Appeal)

We will acknowledge an appeal within 3 working days and send a full response within 20 working days of receiving it.

Extending time limits

We aim to complete our investigation into all complaints received about our service within the timescales set out above. However, in a limited number of cases - for example, if a complaint is very complex or requires further breakdown, it may be necessary to extend the time limit to ensure we have all the information necessary to deal with it. If this is the case we will keep you informed of progress with the investigation, the reasons for the delay, and inform you of next steps.

Remedies

When we get things wrong we will act to:

- accept responsibility and apologise
- explain what went wrong and why, and
- put things right by making any changes required
- learn lessons from mistakes and change policies and practices where proportionate and sensible to do so, including through consultation with our service user group

The action we take to put matters right (i.e. redress) in response to a service complaint can include any combination of the remedies set out in the list below.

The remedy applied needs to be proportionate and appropriate to the failure in service, and take into account what redress people seek when they complain. An apology is generally the most appropriate action, but other action may also be necessary in some circumstances.

List of remedies

- A full apology, explaining what happened and/or what went wrong. (an apology is not an acceptance of liability under Section 2 of the Compensation Act 2006)
- Remedial action, which may include reviewing or changing a decision on the service given to an individual complainant
- Provide the service required in first instance (immediately, if appropriate)
- Putting things right (for example a change of procedure to prevent future difficulties of a similar kind, either for the complainant or others)
- Training or supervising staff; or a combination of both

Recording complaints

Complaint details, outcomes and actions taken are recorded by us and used for service improvement. We record all complaints we receive and collate data from them to help us understand what types of problems are most prevalent, and how well we are doing to resolve them.

We value your feedback and expect to use it to help us to:

- get things right in the future if we have not done so already
- become more customer focused
- be more open and accountable
- act fairly and proportionately
- seek continuous improvement

We will handle your information so that it is only processed and retained appropriately and legally, in line with data protection legislation.

Contacting us

All complaints and requests for review under our complaints procedure should be sent to the relevant person responsible for the service you have a complaint about, details in our complaints leaflet.

You may also contact us directly via one of the following ways:

EACH Head Office
Vine House
1&2 Factory Yard
Hanwell
W7 3UG

Or: info@eachcounselling.org.uk

Your complaint will be forwarded to the appropriate person within 3 days of receiving it, with an acknowledgement sent to you.

If you are unable to contact us in writing as above, and require a reasonable adjustment because you are a disabled person, please contact us via

Telephone 020 8579 4529

Reasonable adjustments and alternative formats

EACH is committed to equal opportunities and our aim is to make our complaints policy easy to use and accessible to all of our service users. We will take reasonable steps to accommodate any reasonable adjustments you may have to enable you to access this policy or receive responses to complaints in other formats, and provide such assistance as you may reasonably require.

Comments and non-service complaints

Quality of service is an important measure for us of our effectiveness. Learning from complaints, including non-service complaints (complaints not covered by this policy), is a powerful way of helping continuous improvement at EACH and enable us to better deliver to our values and standards. All non service complaints will be looked at by a responsible manager from the appropriate team, and a response, if required, sent to you directly within 20 working days where possible. Non-service complaints should be sent to the Project Team Leader.

As well as learning from your complaints, we are also interested in ideas you may have on how we might do things better. We would also like you to tell us when we do things well.

Your comments will be passed on to the relevant team and we will use them to help improve our service and the way we do things. You can make your comments by contacting any member of our staff, or you can e-mail us on:

info@eachcounselling.org.uk

APPENDIX A

Formal Complaint Form

This form is intended for use by any service user, carer and or members of the general public who wants to raise a ***formal*** complaint about our services

EACH's policy approach is that, wherever possible, complaints should be resolved informally without recourse to formal procedures. Before resorting to a formal complaint, therefore, you may want to discuss your complaint with a staff member to address your concern informally in the first instance. If you feel your concern has not been dealt with effectively and resolved to your satisfaction informally, then you can use this form to raise the matter formally.

In all circumstances, this form should be completed and delivered / posted to the relevant services Service Manager or team leader marked "confidential" or if sent as an email attachment with "confidential" in the subject heading.

If you require help to fill in this form, please contact us.

Details of Person Making Complaint

Your name:	
Your contact details **Your address:**	
Your phone number:	
Your email address:	
How would you like us to contact you?	Post ☐ Tel ☐ Email ☐

Summary of complaint:
Please set out the details of your complaint(providing as much detail as possible, particularly dates, times, locations and the identities of those involved): *You may attach additional sheets if required.*
Individuals involved in your concern(s) leading to a formal complaint:
If applicable, please provide the names, job titles and contact details of any people involved in your complaint:

Desired Outcome:	
What outcome would you like and how would this resolve the issue?	
Signatures	
Your Name:	
Signature:	
Date:	
If completed on behalf of person making the complaint:	
Your Name:	
Signature:	
Date:	
For completion by the relevant manager:	
Date form received:	
Name of recipient & job role:	
Signature:	
Action:	

Equalities Monitoring: Please help us monitor our complaints by providing the following information, which will be kept confidential. Please tick the appropriate category in each case.

Your gender

Male ☐ Female ☐ Transgender ☐

Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Your ethnic origin

White

British ☐ Irish ☐ White Other ☐

Mixed Ethnicity

White & Black Caribbean ☐ White & Black African ☐ White & Asian ☐ Other Mixed ☐

Asian / Asian British

Indian ☐ Pakistani ☐ Bangladeshi ☐ Asian Other ☐

Black / Black British

Caribbean ☐ African ☐ Other Black ☐

Other

Chinese ☐ Any Other ☐

Prefer not to say ☐

Your age

Under 12 years old ☐ 12-14 years old ☐ 15- 17 years old ☐

18 – 24 years old ☐ 25-34 years old ☐ 35-44 years old ☐

45-54 years old ☐ 55-64 years old ☐ 65-74 years old ☐

75 years or older ☐ Prefer not to state ☐

Your sexual orientation

Heterosexual ☐ Homosexual ☐ Bisexual ☐ Other ☐ Prefer not to state ☐