

The Bereavement Counselling Service

Complaints Policy

Policy Reviewed 14/09/2024

To be reviewed Annually

The Bereavement Counselling Services (agency) is committed to providing a professional and caring service to all clients, in order to maintain an acceptable service level at all times, it is a requirement for all counsellors to follow and adhere to the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy Ethical Framework, whilst adhering to the requirements of Legislation and adhering to the procedures required by this agency.

However, it is recognised that errors or failure in service levels can occur, to cater for any occurrence of this nature arising this agency has implemented this policy and procedures to ensure a fast and satisfactory resolution to any such circumstances.

The Duty of Care will be shown to all clients and as such at a stressful time when a client feels it necessary to make a complaint all care will be shown to them. Equally it is recognised that a counsellor will experience stress should a client complain of the service they have provided and it is noted that the policy of this agency is to show them respect and support whilst working to resolve any issue.

Once a complaint has been received the counsellor working that case will immediately be suspended from counselling, until such time as the issues have been investigated and resolved.

Should it be found that the error was due to the counsellor requiring additional training this agency will address this and support the counsellor through the period of training. However, should it be found the issues are of a severity requiring Formal Disciplinary action this course will be followed by the agency.

Should the severity of the complaint be found to require the agency to report the counsellor to the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy or their chosen Association this will be carried out.

Upon receipt of a complaint either verbally or in writing the agency will contact all members of the Complaint Review Panel and liaise with the Agency Referral Secretary to inform them of the relevant action required.

This agency will aim to resolve a complaint within thirty days of receipt.

1. Receiving the Complaint.

- 1.1. A complaint can be received via a telephone call or on a written letter.
- 1.2. Upon receipt of a complaint a letter of acknowledgement will be dispatched to the client, informing them of the process which will be followed.
- 1.3. The Chief Officer will immediately request the counsellor involved to stop counselling until further notice. Informing the counsellor, they will be required to attend a meeting in the near future.
- 1.4. The Chief Officer will immediately contact the Referral Secretary to inform her, and request she reassigns the counsellors' current clients to a new counsellor.

2. Complaints Review Panel.

The following members of the agency will form the Review Panel:-

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| Mrs.Audrey Jones. | Chief Officer. |
| Mr.Bob Owen. | Chairman. |
| Mrs.Christina Mitchell-Brown. | Counsellor. |

3. Procedures.

3.1. The Review Panel will undertake a review of the complaint/s raised ensuring the following points are considered: -

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|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Professional boundaries. | Ethical boundaries. |
| Communication problems. | Empathic issues. |
| Respect issues. | Relationship difficulties. |
| Integrity aspects. | Accountability. |
| Values. | Principles. |
| Personal moral issues. | Other difficulties. |

3.2. From undertaking the review the relevant areas of concern should be established, the client should be contacted by letter informing them of the relevant issues and obtain their agreement to them being correct and providing the client the opportunity to make any amendments if they wish.

3.3. The Review Panel will draw up a plan of action: -

3.3.1. Date and time for a meeting with the client. A letter being dispatched to them equally informing them of their right to have a companion etc, present at the meeting with them.

3.3.2. Date and time for a meeting with the counsellor. A letter being dispatched to them also informing them of their right to have a colleague/companion etc, present at the meeting with them if they so wish.

3.3.3. Should it be necessary to obtain assistance or clarification from external professionals, prior to attending the above meetings this action will be taken.

4. Meeting Procedures.

COMPLAINANT.

4.1. The Chief Officer will ensure sufficient time is allowed for the meeting to take place ensuring the complainant feels comfortable and not pressured.

4.2. The Chief Officer will explain each of the Panels findings ensuring the complainant fully understands each one. Allowing the complainant to amend or correct any issues they may consider are not being fully understood by the agency.

4.3. Relevant questions can be raised by both parties, ensuring a satisfactory response is received.

4.4. Full written minutes will be taken during this meeting to ensure accuracy for both parties.

4.5. The complainant will be provided with a copy of the minutes of this meeting and will be kept fully informed of all actions which may be taken.

COUNSELLOR.

4.6. The counsellor at this stage will be clearly informed that this meeting is solely for the purpose of clarification of the issues raised, and is not classed as a Formal Disciplinary process.

4.7. The counsellor will be allowed the time to feel comfortable and safe to provide their perspective in respect of the complaint raised.

4.8. Relevant questions can be raised by both parties to ensure there is accuracy and clear understanding for both parties.

4.9. Full written minutes will be taken during this meeting to ensure accuracy and clarity for both parties.

4.10. The counsellor will be provided with a copy of the minutes of the meeting and will be kept fully informed of all action which may be taken.

5. DECISION MAKING PROCESS.

5.1. The Complaints Panel will review: -

5.1.1. All findings from their first review.

5.1.2. Incorporate all additional information obtained from the meeting with the complainant.

5.1.3. Incorporate all additional information obtained from the meeting with the counsellor.

5.1.4. Will include any information obtained from external professional bodies relating to any aspect of the complaint.

5.2. From reviewing the above points all relevant findings will be analysed and a decision will be made.

5.3. Dependent upon the decision the following action will be taken:-

5.3.1. The complainant will be informed by letter of the decision, allowing fourteen days for the complainant to raise an appeal if they so wish.

5.3.2. The counsellor will be informed by letter of the decision. Should this involve Disciplinary Procedures a formal letter will be sent to them inviting them to attend a further meeting.

5.3.3. Should the agency consider the complaint to be serious enough to inform the British Association of Counsellors and Psychotherapy or any other relevant association they will be notified immediately.

5.3.4. Should the complaint require the counsellor to receive extra training etc., this will be offered to the counsellor and if accepted will be organised by the agency, providing full support to the counsellor.