

Complaints Procedure and Process

Procedure

The formal complaints procedure may be implemented as follows:

- 1) When a complaint is made against a counsellor or trainee counsellor of the Counselling Pastoral Trust, on the basis of a breach of the BACP *Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions (2015)*, the complainant should give a detailed account of the practice giving rise to the complaint in writing to the Chairman of the Trustees, including the following information:
 - a. The name of the person to be investigated
 - b. A description of the alleged incident or incidences
 - c. The date or dates of the alleged incident or incidences
 - d. The place or places in which the alleged incident or incidences occurred
 - e. If the alleged incident or incidences took place within a contracted counselling relationship, that should be clearly stated
- 2) The Trust will normally only investigate complaints initiated by the person or persons who were involved in the alleged incidents, but will investigate any indiscreet behavior or unprofessional conduct involving any staff member, including voluntary staff.

Complaints Process

- 3) On receipt of the written complaint, the Chairman of the Trustees will acknowledge the complainant's letter within 14 working days and begin the process of investigation.
- 4) A letter will be sent to the person against whom the complaint was made within 28 days, outlining the alleged issue.
- 5) If the alleged incident or incidences involves a breach of any specific section of *Ethics or Good Practice* in the *Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions*,

it may be necessary to consult with a solicitor or an independent practitioner appointed by the CPT Board of Trustees. Where necessary, liaison with this solicitor or independent practitioner will continue for the duration of the complaint's investigation.

- 6) Where the Chairman of the Trustees deems appropriate, another member of the Board of Trustees may be asked to deal with the preliminary investigative process.
- 7) The process of investigation is effected through correspondence unless it is deemed necessary for the relevant parties to meet with the appointed complaints investigator.
- 8) The complaints investigator has the authority to request copies of the counselling contract, and a supervisor's report. Any other material requested may only be given if written permission is received from the party concerned.
- 9) When all relevant information has been collated, a decision on whether to uphold the complaint will be taken by the Disciplinary Committee of the Board of Trustees, and a decision on any disciplinary action will normally be taken at the same time. (The Disciplinary Committee of the Board shall consist of the Chairman and at least two other members of the Board.)
- 10) The complainant and the person(s) complained against will be informed in writing of those decisions.
- 11) If the complaint is not upheld the parties involved with the complaint will be informed and the file closed.
- 12) It is intended that the complaints process set out above shall be completed within 6 months.

Disciplinary Measures

Measures will be taken in accordance with the decision made by the Board of Trustees and may include one or more of the following sanctions:

- 1) A written warning which may include a request for an apology and an undertaking that there will be no further breach of *Ethics* or *Good Practice* as set out in the *Ethical Framework*.

- 2) A requirement for further training to be undertaken or for work to be monitored by a supervisor acceptable to the CPT Board of Trustees.
- 3) Suspension of practice for a period of time until any conditions specified by the CPT Board of Trustees has been met.
- 4) The permanent withdrawal of permission to work at the Trust with the request to cease counselling/training/supervision immediately.

One or more of these sanctions may be imposed at any given time. The Chairman of the Trustees can, after consulting with the other Trustees, suspend a counsellor of the organisation from affiliation. The suspension can be made with immediate effect, pending investigation.

Appeals

The person complained against may appeal against the decisions and sanctions of the Board of Trustees by writing to the Chairman of the Trustees within two weeks of notification that the complaint was upheld.

If an appeal is granted, then the complaint will be laid before the Appeals Committee of the Board of Trustees at the earliest possible meeting. The Committee will consider the appeal fully and, if necessary, will consult the Board's solicitor or an independent practitioner.

The person complained against will be notified in writing by the Chairman of the Trustees whether the appeal has been successful or not.

(The Appeals Committee of the Board shall consist of all Board members who have not served on the Disciplinary Committee in relation to the case, chaired by the longest standing Board Member present.)