

## CLIENT COMPLAINTS POLICY

### Context

Chichester Counselling is an organisational member of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (\*BACP). Our counsellors are trained and practice in accordance with the BACP Ethical Framework.

It is Chichester Counselling Services' policy to ensure that a client with a complaint relating to their Counselling, or their administrative experience of Chichester Counselling, can use a procedure that can help them resolve it as quickly and as fairly as possible.

### The difference between a concern and a complaint

A 'concern' may be defined as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'. A complaint may be generally defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'.

It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. Some issues can be resolved informally, without the need to invoke formal procedures.

If a client has a concern, they should aim firstly to resolve it informally in discussion with their counsellor to give an opportunity to talk through in the safety of the counselling relationship. The majority of concerns should be resolved in this way. If the client's concern is not resolved this way, they may request an informal meeting with the Counselling Manager.

If making a formal complaint the following two stage procedure should be followed.

### Complaints Procedure - Stage One

The client should set out in writing their complaint and address it to the Counselling Manger.

The Counselling Manager will write to acknowledge the complaint.

The Counselling Manger will investigate the complaint and respond to the client in writing within 21 days.

We ask clients to please provide us with as much detail as they can to help us investigate their complaint:

- say what the problem is
- say what you want to happen
- provide information on any relevant communication with us on the subject including the times and dates of any conversations.

The investigation is likely to involve a meeting with the client, the Counselling Manager and another member of staff being present. We understand that making a complaint can be a difficult process and so the client may wish to bring a friend or close supporter with them to this meeting.

Minutes will be taken at the meeting and afterwards the outcome of the investigation will be sent in writing to the client.

It is hoped that the matter will be resolved at this stage, if not the client's complaint will be taken to Stage Two.

### **Complaints Procedure - Stage Two**

This is the final stage of the complaints procedure and gives the client the right to appeal to the outcome of Stage One.

The client should write to the Chief Executive who will acknowledge the complaint.

The Chief Executive may consider the appeal themselves or refer the complaint to the Board of Trustees.

The outcome will be given in writing within 28 days of receiving the Stage Two complaint.

Policy date, February 2016.

#### **Notes:**

\*BACP is a professional body representing counselling and psychotherapy in the UK that aims to increase public understanding of the benefits of counselling and psychotherapy, raise awareness of what can be expected from the process of therapy and promote education and/or training for counsellors and psychotherapists.

Link to BACP website and details of Ethical Framework for Good Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy (effective to June 2016)/Ethical Framework for Counselling Professionals (effective July 2016):

<http://www.bacp.co.uk/ethics/EFfCP.php>