

Complaints Policy

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Introduction

Share aims to provide a high-quality service for our clients. To know we are achieving this we need to understand when users of our service feel that the service has not met their expectations or when the standard falls below that which is acceptable.

By enabling clients to bring issues to our attention we will aim to put things right for those concerned while also reviewing our work to ensure the problem does not recur. All involved will try to ensure that such situations are handled sensitively and with understanding and are resolved at the earliest possible point in the complaints process.

This procedure does not cover disciplinary matters or grievances relating to staff or volunteers, for which there is a separate procedure.

1. Informal Procedure

1.1 When an individual has a complaint or concern about Share Psychotherapy's services or personnel, they should be encouraged to raise the matter informally in the first instance. Most issues can be effectively resolved in this way through discussion and mutual agreement.

1.2 Issues can be raised informally either verbally or in writing:

- By speaking directly to any member of staff or volunteer
- Asking to speak to the Operations Manager or Clinical Manager
- Writing to the Operations Manager or Clinical Manager whose contact details are:

Share Psychotherapy
73 Wilkinson Street
Sheffield
S10 2GJ
Telephone: 0114 2730200
office@sharepsychotherapy.org

2.2 When an issue is raised informally, we will endeavour to come to an agreement with the individual concerned. This will normally be done by inviting them to come to Share to discuss their concern, and taking any further investigative action that is needed. All information, communications and

actions taken will be recorded on an investigation form by the manager dealing with the issue. The individual will be notified of receipt of their concern within 24 working hours.

- 2.3 Any outcomes or actions to be taken as a result of the complaint will be communicated to the person raising the concern in writing immediately after the discussion meeting if possible or, if not, within 5 working days.
- 2.4 Regular reports will be made by the managers to the Board of Trustees on complaints dealt with under the informal part of this policy.
- 2.5 Our User Engagement strategy will be used as a mechanism to continually improve the service we offer and ensure our clients are a part of this process.

3. Formal Complaints Procedure

3.1 If the individual feels the issue has not been adequately dealt with under the Informal procedure or where the issue is of such seriousness that the informal procedure is not appropriate, they may wish to make a formal complaint.

3.2 Formal Complaint

The complaint should be made directly to the Operations Manager or Clinical Manager (contact details above).

This can be done:

- By writing a letter (please include as much detail as possible).
- By sending an email
- By telephone
- By asking for a meeting

The complaint will be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt, and this will include a copy of this procedure. The course of action will depend on the nature of the complaint but could include raising the issue with the staff or volunteer concerned or a more detailed investigation if the matters complained of are more complex. The complaint will be dealt with, and the complainant will be informed in writing of the outcome within 28 days of the complaint being received. If the manager investigating the complaint requires support a trustee will work with them, this must not be the Chair of Trustees.

If the complaint is being made against the Operations Manager or Clinical Manager, it will be referred to the Chair of Trustees, who will decide the action to be taken to handle or investigate it. The Chair will not be directly involved in the investigation or resolution of the complaint at this stage. In this instance the trustee investigating the complaint will do so promptly and thoroughly.

All investigations by managers or trustees should be done in person through face-to-face meetings wherever possible. Information will be gathered from all relevant parties, including third-party witnesses, to come to as balanced and fair a conclusion as possible.

The investigator (manager or trustee) will be responsible for communicating the results of the investigation to the complainant.

3.3 Appeal

If the complainant is not happy with the outcome of the above, they can refer the complaint to the Board of Trustees. This should be done in writing and addressed to the Chair of Trustees c/o Share (address above). The appeal should be made within 10 working days of receiving the outcome of Stage One.

The Trustees will appoint a panel comprising at least two Trustees and an independent person who is not a trustee or member of staff of Share Psychotherapy. The panel will meet within 28 days of the complaint being received and the complainant will be given at least 14 days' notice of the meeting date. The panel will come to a decision about the complaint and identify any further action that needs to be taken. They will report to the Chair of the Trustees who may consult with other members of the Board. The complainant will be informed of the outcome in writing within seven days. This decision is final.

- 3.4 At all stages in this procedure, the complainant may be assisted and accompanied by another person of their choice, but not someone acting in a legal capacity. This could be a family member, friend, or colleague. At all stages, the time limit may be altered by mutual agreement.
- 3.5 A poster will be displayed in a public area of the office stating the procedure for making comments, suggestions, and complaints.
- 3.6 This complaints policy will be made available on Share's website, www.sharepsychotherapy.org
- 3.7 All staff and volunteers should be made aware of this policy on commencement of their employment. It is the responsibility of line managers to ensure that all staff who report to them are aware of and adhere to the policy framework within which Share operates and to keep them abreast of updated and new policies as soon as practicable. The Complaints Policy should be brought to the attention of service users and others through publicity such as the website, notice boards and leaflets.

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