

NORTH EAST EDINBURGH COUNSELLING SERVICE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

If you are not satisfied with any aspect of North East Edinburgh Counselling Service (NEECS) - including actions of staff, paid and volunteer individuals and groups carrying out work on behalf of the NEECS - and would like to make a complaint, this procedure and information is designed to help you do so.

1. Contact the Manager within 4 weeks of the event:
 - By phone: 07498 520 377; or
 - By email: mail@neecscounselling.org.uk
2. Within two weeks of this communication, you will be offered the opportunity to arrange an informal discussion with the Manager. You can choose to bring a representative with you to this meeting. The Manager will make a note of this meeting which will be confidential between you and NEECS. The Manager will hear evidence from the complainant and the person to whom the complaint is directed independently. If the subject of the complaint is the Manager, then you should go directly to step 4.
3. Within three weeks of this meeting, you will receive a written communication by the Manager with a copy of the note of the meeting held with yourself, the conclusion of the investigation, including details of any sanctions or actions taken by NEECS as a result of your complaint. You will be asked if your complaint or suggestion has been dealt with to your satisfaction. If you are satisfied with the outcome you are asked to put this in writing and no further action will be taken by NEECS.
4. If you are NOT satisfied, the complaint or suggestion should be put in writing to the Chair of the Board of Trustees of NEECS. Within two weeks of receiving this communication a meeting will be arranged for you with two members of the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees will hear evidence from the complainant and the person to whom the complaint is directed independently. The party complained against, and the complainant have the right to attend the meeting and be accompanied and/or represented by a supportive person of their choice at the meeting. The Board of Trustees member(s) will make a note of this meeting which will be confidential between you and NEECS.
5. Within three weeks of this meeting, you will be written to by the Board of Trustees with a copy of the note of the meeting held with yourself, the conclusion of the appeal (upheld or not upheld), including details of any sanctions or actions taken by NEECS as a result of your complaint. Sanctions could include a written apology, further training, ceasing to practice with NEECS (counsellors), or disciplinary action (verbal/written warning or dismissal) for staff. You will be asked if your complaint or suggestion has been dealt with to your satisfaction. If you are satisfied with the outcome you are asked to put this in

writing and no further action will be taken by NEECS other than that specified.

6. If you are NOT satisfied, the complaint or suggestion should be put in writing to the Chair of the Board of Trustees of NEECS. Within a week of receiving the written communication, NEECS will provide you with the name of an individual or body independent of NEECS who will be able to offer you advice, advocacy and support to enable you to pursue your complaint or suggestion. At this stage you may also appeal further to BACP and COSCA (see contact details below).
7. If an anonymous complaint or suggestion is made, the Manager will present it to the Board of Trustees for discussion with the outcome being recorded in meeting minutes and kept securely for future reference.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

At every stage of the above procedure, you will be offered information by NEECS regarding independent advice, advocacy and support.

A conflict of interest can be declared at any point with any person from NEECS involved in resolution of the complaint. An alternative designated person will either be nominated, or NEECS will offer information regarding independent adjudication.

Assistance is offered to complainants who are unable to submit complaints in writing. The Complaints Procedure is accessible to the public (via NEECS website and hard copies can be requested). It may be made available in other languages and formats on request if possible.

The maximum amount of time between the initial communication of a complaint and resolution is 6 months.

NEECS can halt the complaint procedure at any stage should it emerge that legal action is under way, pending or intended until any legal process is complete.

NEECS is an organisational member of the British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy (BACP) and Counselling and Psychotherapy in Scotland (COSCA):
BACP www.bacp.co.uk or phone 01455 883300
COSCA www.cosca.org.uk or phone 01786 475140

All our counsellors are required to adhere to [BACP's Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions](#), and the organisation will be subject to [BACP's Professional Conduct Procedures](#) and the associated protocols of BACP should any complaint arise against NEECS during its period of membership.

As part of their membership of COSCA, NEECS is also obliged to share [COSCA's Complaint Procedure](#) with all clients and is required to maintain a Complaints Log (see below) which can be audited by COSCA. NEECS is also obliged to submit an outcome report to COSCA at the conclusion of any complaint proceedings related to counselling and psychotherapy irrespective of the outcome (upheld or not upheld).

NEECS COMPLAINT LOG

NEECS maintains a log of complaints submitted for monitoring purposes. The log will include:

- Date complaint was received
- Subject matter of complaint
- Outcome of the complaint
- Dates of each step (meetings, communications to and from the complainant)
- Details of any professional and/or statutory bodies notified of the complaint
- Reasons for any delay if any step took longer than NEECS own procedure specifies
- Action/ sanctions taken (in relation to the complaint itself or the way in which the complaint was handled).