

Empathy Rooms Ltd Complaints Procedure

If you are unhappy or dissatisfied with any of the services received through Empathy Rooms Ltd, then we care enough to want to know about. We want to be able to work with you to find a resolution and resolve any dissatisfaction. We treat all complaints seriously and with the utmost of sensitivity and confidentiality.

The Aims of our complaint procedure are:

- To enable any complaint to be investigated in the fairest possible way
- To ensure that complaints are dealt with in a timely manner
- To enable the consequences of mistakes to be resolved and avoid any unnecessary conflict
- To help in service development

How to access our Complaints Procedure document:

- It can be viewed and downloaded as a PDF from the Empathy Rooms Ltd website.
- A hard copy is available from any operating office.
- A hard copy can be requested by phone, email, letter or in person.
- The above is in line with COSCA's Standards for Complaints Procedures, item 1
- Although we do not have the resources to produce this procedure in multiple languages and formats, it can be translated, viewed in larger text and read out loud here using standard online tools.

Who can complain:

- Anyone who is using our therapy, supervision or training services
- Anyone who has used the above services in the last 6 months. This is in line with COSCA's Standards for Complaints Procedures, item 21
- Any third party who is working with or representing someone who is using or has used the service

Anonymous complaints will be investigated by a Director, who will use discretion in assessing what action, should be taken.

What is the time limit:

The time limit within which service users or third parties may make a complaint is 6 months. This is in line with COSCA's Standards for Complaints Procedures, item 21. It is however beneficial for all concerned if the complaint is brought to our attention as soon as possible.

How to complain:

A formal complaint should be made in the first instance to the Director. This can be in person by appointment, by telephone, or in writing by email or letter. Please contact:

Stephen Queen
Shareholder/Director
Empathy Rooms Ltd
22 Toftcombs Avenue
Stonehouse

Scotland
MI9 3QY
Telephone 01698 225215

Who is covered by the Empathy Rooms Ltd complaints procedure?

This complaints procedure covers staff, subcontracted Clinical Supervisors, subcontracted Therapists, administrative staff and directors.

Safety of our service users:

The safety of our service users is paramount. Suspension of counselling practice, training, supervisory practice and/or disciplinary proceedings may take place at any stage of the complaints process, if considered necessary.

Phase 1 Informal Complaint:

When a complaint has been received initially then an informal resolution will be sought. This could involve a face to face meeting or written explanations. The complaint will be handled by the company director (Stephen Queen) but if the director is the subject of the complaint (i.e. a conflict of interest) then an alternative appointed person will be nominated to manage the complaint.

If the party making the complaint is unhappy with the outcome, then a formal complaint may be made.

Phase 2 Making a Formal Complaint:

When a formal complaint has been received it will be acknowledged by the company director within 7 days of it being received. This is in line with COSCA's Standards for Complaints Procedures, item 21. The subject of the complaint will receive a copy and both parties will be forwarded the complaints procedure.

Investigation of the Complaint:

An independent and impartial person who has relevant experience will be appointed by the director managing the complaint. The investigator will make a thorough and confidential investigation of the complaint, contacting both the complainant and the person complained against to gather the information that is required.

The investigator will have access to any relevant documentation, policies and procedures. Furthermore, the investigator may interview members of staff, if appropriate. They may ask for evidence from either party and if this is sought in person, they will meet with each party separately. All parties will have the right to be accompanied, and/or be represented, by a supportive person of their choice.

The investigator will make a written response to the complainant within twenty-eight days, a copy of which will be sent to the director managing the complaint at Empathy Rooms Ltd, and the person complained against. The maximum time period allowed to investigate the complaint and to respond is 6 months. This is in line with COSCA's Standards for Complaints Procedures, item 21.

The investigator will make recommendations regarding the action required to bring about the resolution of the complaint and any sanctions which he/she may consider appropriate.

Unless the director of Empathy Rooms Ltd makes a formal appeal to COSCA within fourteen days, then the decisions and recommendations of the investigator will be upheld. At this stage a Report of the Conclusion of Complaints Proceedings will be sent to COSCA by the investigator.

The Director or whoever is managing the complaint, may halt the procedure at any stage if it emerges that legal action is under way, pending or intended, until such time as any legal process is complete.

Phase 3 Making an appeal

A complainant may appeal against the findings of the investigator on the following grounds:

- that the complaints procedure had not been followed
- that there was new evidence which the investigator did not have access to in the investigation

An appeal will not be accepted on the grounds that the complainant disagrees with the investigators report.

How to make an Appeal:

The dissatisfied complainant must make an appeal in writing within fourteen days of the receipt of the investigators report.

The reasons for the appeal must be evidence based, factual and clearly set out in writing.

The appeal will be acknowledged in writing by the Director and duly considered.

The complainant will be informed in writing within twenty-one days whether or not the appeal is accepted. This is in line with COSCA's Standards for Complaints Procedures, item 21

The Appeal Panel

If the director decides to accept the appeal then a panel will be set up to consider it. The panel will consist of 1 Empathy Rooms Director and 2 members from out-with Empathy Rooms Ltd with experience and knowledge related to the appeal. If the complain is in regard to the Director, then three members will be invited to form the panel.

The panel will meet within twenty-eight days of the notification of the acceptance of the appeal to the complainant. This is in line with COSCA's Standards for Complaints Procedures, item 21.

No member of the panel will have been involved in the investigation of the initial complaint.

The Appeal Hearing:

All parties involved in the appeal hearing will be provided with 14 days' notice of the date of the hearing. This is in line with COSCA's Standards for Complaints Procedures, item 21. All involved will also be informed of who will sit on the appeal panel.

All parties involved will receive the necessary documentation at least 14 days before the hearing takes place. This is in line with COSCA's Standards for Complaints Procedures, item 21

The complainant and the person being complained against will be asked to make a written statement to the panel which will be circulated seven days before the hearing.

The complainant and the person being complained against may be required to attend the hearing and may be accompanied, and/or be represented, by a person of their choice.

The complainant and the person being complained against will have the opportunity to make a short statement to the hearing.

The investigator of the original complaint will be available to give information to the panel.

The appeal hearing will be recorded and minutes taken.

The appeal panel will have the authority to adjourn the hearing.

The panels decision will be reached during a private discussion and a written record of this discussion will be taken. The panels decision will be provided within 7 days. This is in line with COSCA's Standards for Complaints Procedures, item 21

Empathy Rooms Ltd will abide by the decision and recommendations of the appeal panel. If the complainant remains dissatisfied after the decision of the appeals panel or remains dissatisfied about the content of the investigators report he/she will be advised to contact COSCA.

Keeping records of complaints:

A record will be kept of all complaints received. Anonymous complaints will also be recorded, including the reasons for any decision to pursue or not to pursue the complaint. Records of complaints will be kept for a period of five years. A report of the complaint, procedure and outcome will also be submitted to COSCA. This is in line with COSCA's Standards for Complaints Procedures, item 26

Complaints to COSCA:

COSCA is the professional body for counselling and psychotherapy in Scotland and we subscribe to the COSCA complaints procedure to maintain an ethical framework, we are therefore also covered by the COSCA Complaints Procedure.

In the event that a complaint is not resolved satisfactorily by Empathy Rooms Ltd, it is possible to refer a complaint to COSCA.

COSCA
16 Melville Terrace
Stirling
FK8 2NE
01786 475140
www.cosca.org.uk

The above is in line with COSCA's Standards for Complaints Procedures, item 14