

TOWARDS HEALING

A Catholic Church response to Institutional/Clerical/Religious abuse

Policy 14/15

Complaints Policy:

Introduction

Towards Healing aims to provide the best possible service to our clients.

It is recognised, however, that, from time to time, a client may give negative feedback, or wish to make a complaint about our service. It is the policy of Towards Healing to treat all complaints with respect, to investigate each complaint fully, and to take action as appropriate. All negative feedback and complaints from a client will be recorded on their record and will be resolved as expeditiously as possible. The client's satisfaction with the steps taken is the ultimate goal of the complaints procedure. In this regard, Towards Healing has a very vulnerable client base and the service accepts that misunderstandings can occur.

Negative Feedback

Negative feedback is defined as verbal feedback from a client regarding the service, including the service provided by the therapist(s) to whom the client(s) has been referred by Towards Healing. We will deal with this information seriously, and as quickly as possible. This may involve providing information to the client about the nature and level of service, or providing an apology for our actions.

If the negative feedback substantive issue is not resolved to the satisfaction of both parties, then the matter will be regarded as a Formal Complaint.

Whilst this Complaints Policy is designed, primarily, to address formal complaints, negative feedback may also need to be investigated under the Policy; if the Clinical Director or Clinical Coordinator considers that, this is serious enough to warrant investigation. In this context, complaints that are considered vexatious would not come under the Policy.

The person in the organisation who receives it and will refer it to either the Clinical Director or Clinical Coordinator will record Negative Feedback.

In accordance with the Policy, the Clinical Director and Clinical Coordinator will jointly consider the informal complaint and, if they consider that it requires further investigation, the procedure at 1 to 8 (under Formal Complaint) will be followed.

Formal Complaint

A Formal Complaint is a complaint made in writing (post or e-mail) to Towards Healing from a client. There are two individual Officers in Towards Healing responsible for dealing with complaints: The Clinical Director and the Clinical Co-Ordinator. If a formal complaint is received elsewhere in the organisation, it should be referred immediately to the Clinical Director.

In accordance with this policy, if a formal written complaint is received by either the Clinical Co-ordinator or the Clinical Director, the following standard procedure will be followed:

1. All information, communications and meetings regarding the complaint will be dated and recorded in writing.
2. Towards Healing will keep all formal records on all complaints for a minimum of six years. These records will be made available during any audit or evaluation of the service.
3. On receipt of the written complaint, the Clinical Director and the Clinical Co-ordinator will arrange a meeting to discuss the issues presented. If the complaint is by a third party, and the identity of the complainant is confidential (and therefore should not be revealed to the internal representative), the issues outlined in the formal letter will be addressed, without disclosing the identity of the client. This meeting, and all subsequent meetings in relation to the matter, will be minuted.
4. A letter will then be sent to the individual who lodged the complaint (hereinafter referred to as the client), stating that the complaint has been received and is being investigated. S/he will also be informed as to how the complaint will be handled within three months of the receipt of the letter, although every effort will be made to deal with the complaint as soon as possible.
5. The Clinical Director and Clinical Co-ordinator will consider the complaint, consulting with Towards Healing Staff and the client as required, and will submit a report on the matter to the Chief Executive Officer. The Chief Executive Officer will document his/her judgement of the situation, seek further information from any of the parties as judged necessary, and will recommend action to be taken. The Chief Executive Officer may during this stage appoint an independent external advisor to investigate the matter and make recommendations to inform his decision. This may involve meetings with the client.
6. The complainant will be advised that they may appeal the outcome to the Board, within one month of the decision.

7. In assessing complaint, the Clinical Director, Clinical Coordinator and Chief Executive Officer may consider that a complaint is vexatious and, in such circumstances, may decide that no further action is warranted. In cases where complaints are deemed to be vexatious, The Chief Executive Officer will inform the Board, together with the reasons.
8. If the individual is not satisfied with the outcome, s/he may write to the Chair of the Board, whereupon the Chair will establish a sub-committee of three members who will investigate the matter. This may involve a meeting with the person who made the complaint. The sub-committee will report to the Board, which will take the final decision in the matter in relation to any further action which should be taken.

Anonymous Complaint

Complaints made anonymously will not be dealt with under the Complaints Policy.

Support to Persons with Disabilities

This policy recognises that clients, who make complaints either formally or by way of negative feedback, about the service, may need support to enable them to participate in the procedures set out in this policy.

Towards Healing will, at the earliest stages in the complaints process, in consultation with the client and, if appropriate, with the therapist, establish the support needs, if any, which individual clients may require processing their complaint and will facilitate the provision of these supports.

Scope of the Complaints Policy

In cases where a complaint is made solely about a therapist's professional practice, this policy recognises that this would be a matter for the appropriate body which has provided accreditation to the therapist. Acting within the provisions of the Data Protection Acts 1988 – 2003 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) May 2018, Towards Healing would encourage the complainant to make the complaint to the relevant accreditation body and would provide the complainant, if he/she is a client of the service, with appropriate support to enable them to do so.

Early and Informal Resolution of Complaints.

Every effort will be made, by Towards Healing, working in conjunction with the complainant, to resolve complaints made at the earliest possible stage and as informally as possible.

Towards this end, Towards Healing would propose to the complainant that a process of discussion, under an Independent Person, about the complaint would be entered

into, with a view towards identifying critical issues to the complainant, as raised in the complaint, how these might be assessed as to their accuracy and, if necessary, how these might be addressed.

Complaints Against the Clinical Director or Clinical Coordinator

If the complaint is in relation to the Clinical Director or the Clinical Coordinator or both, the Chief Executive Officer will investigate the matter in the first instance. In assessing the complaint, the Chief Executive Officer may consider that a complaint is vexatious, and, in such circumstances, can decide that no further action is warranted. A vexatious complaint would include the making of multiple complaints by an individual.

The Chief Executive Officer may, following their initial assessment of the complaint, decide that it would be appropriate to appoint an independent external person to investigate the complaint.

The complainant will be informed as to how the complaint will be handled within three months of the receipt of the letter, although every effort will be made to deal with the complaint as soon as possible.

Complaints Against the Chief Executive Officer

If the complaint is in relation to the Chief Executive Officer, the matter will be investigated in the first instance by the Chairperson of the Board, with the assistance of an independent external investigator, who will be nominated by the Board. The Board will not be advised in this instance of the nature of the complaint.

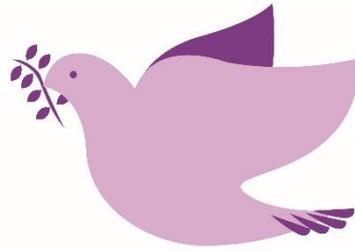
The complainant will be informed as to how the complaint will be handled within three months of the receipt of the letter, although every effort will be made to deal with the complaint as soon as possible.

Written Exchange of information

In the event that the Chairperson or the Chief Executive Officer appoints an external investigator, the person who makes the complaint would be required to sign the Exchange of Information Form (attached), under the requirements of the Data Protection Acts.

Availability of Complaints Procedures

The complaints procedure will be made available to all individuals in the organisation and clients upon request. Clients will be made aware that they have a right to be provided with a copy of the complaints procedures at their request.



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Exchange of Information Form

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (2018, May) and

Data Protection Acts 1988 – 2003.

To facilitate my Formal Complaint, I authorise that all information will be shared between Towards Healing and the Assessor engaged to investigate my complaint –
(Name of investigator)

Name of Complainant

Date