



COSCA (Counselling and Psychotherapy in Scotland)
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COSCA's Standards for Complaints Procedure

In the interests of public protection, COSCA sets standards for the complaints procedures of organisational members and individual members who have their own complaints procedure.

COSCA requires that the complaints procedures of the above members meet these standards and that their procedures focus throughout on the interests and protection of service users and the public.

The standards will be used by COSCA to review the complaints procedures of the above members at the point of membership application and as part of COSCA's annual audit of organisational and individual members.

If you are required to submit this document to COSCA for audit purposes, etc., please ensure that it is completed and where possible cross referenced.

To meet COSCA's standards, a complaints procedure needs to state:

Standard Number <i>(please tick)</i>	Your Cross Referencing information	Standards for Complaints Procedures
1.		that it is accessible to the public e.g. online, hard copy, on notice boards etc.
2.		that it is made available in other languages and formats on request and if possible
3.		that information on COSCA's Complaints Procedure is passed onto clients and/or those to whom they provide counselling related services including training and supervision
4.		how a complaint can be made e.g. in person, in writing, telephone, email, proforma etc.

5.		that assistance is offered to complainants who are unable to submit complaints in writing
6.		that assistance and advice is offered to complainants to enable them to understand the complaints procedure, and where they may obtain this support internally and externally e.g. via local advocacy services
7.		the full contact details for complainants to use in the procedure
8.		that it covers complaints against members of staff, individuals (paid and volunteer) and groups carrying out work related to counselling and psychotherapy on behalf of the member
9.		that complaints by defined third parties and/or representatives are acceptable
10.		the arrangements for communicating with complainants about the progress of the investigation
11.		when complaints will be acknowledged and dealt with e.g. within 5 working days
12.		the time limit given for complaints to be accepted and investigated e.g. a maximum of three years following the date of the allegation
13.		how anonymous complaints will be investigated and responded to
14.		that once the complaints procedure is exhausted that complainants who are not satisfied with the outcome can submit a complaint to COSCA under its Complaints Procedure, with COSCA's contact details provided
15.		that a responsible individual will be identified to manage the complaints procedure
16.		that an independent and impartial investigator (s) or complaints panel will be appointed to investigate the complaint in a confidential manner
17.		that the investigator(s) and/or complaints panel will be impartial and independent of the complainant and person/organisation complained against and will act confidentially in their handling of the complaint

18.		that all parties involved in the complaint can, where relevant, declare a conflict of interest to a designated person
19.		that the investigator(s) and/or complaints panel will hear separately and not together the evidence from either party and the complainant and the party or parties complained against and/or their representative will not attend the complaints panel meeting at the same time
20.		that the party complained against and the complainant have the right to attend the complaints panel meeting and be accompanied and/or represented by a supportive person of their choice at the meeting
21.		the periods of time for each stage of the investigation
22.		the maximum amount of time for the complaint to be investigated e.g. six months
23.		that the responsible individual identified to manage the complaints procedure can halt the complaint at any stage should it emerge that legal action is under way, pending or intended and that the above person can halt the procedure until any legal process is complete
24.		the possible sanctions that can be applied and how the fulfilment of any sanctions imposed will be monitored
25.		that there is an Appeals Procedure against the decisions made under the Complaints Procedure and includes the Appeals Procedure
26.		that the Report to COSCA at Conclusion of Complaints Proceedings will be submitted to COSCA. (See COSCA's website under complaints. www.cosca.org.uk)
27.		where the organisation and/or individual member has a Website the Complaints Procedure must be referenced and the following Standards (as above) must be included: 1, 14, 21, 26.

Brian Magee, Chief Executive, COSCA (Counselling & Psychotherapy in Scotland)

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