



Pregnancy Counselling & Care (Scotland)

Complaints Procedure & Policy

Purpose

If you feel dissatisfied with any matter relating to your involvement with any staff, volunteers or individuals representing Pregnancy Counselling & Care (Scotland), hereafter referred to as PCC(S), it is important that you have a clear and effective means by which your grievance may be aired and resolved. This Policy & Procedure document is available as a hard copy from the PCC(S) office, and may also be accessed via our website (www.counsellingandcare.co.uk). At present, this document is unavailable in other languages however we will offer help in whatever way we can.

These procedures apply to all employees, volunteers, clients and customers of Pregnancy Counselling & Care (Scotland). The relevant Manager is designated as the person responsible for following through on any complaint. The Manager will be both independent and impartial throughout any complaint inquiry and will act confidentially at all times.

Our counselling service is recognised through COSCA, Scotland's professional body for counselling and psychotherapy. Information of COSCA's complaints procedure is available on their website www.cosca.org.uk

Our charitable status comes from the Office of Scottish Charity Regulator. For more information about OSCR and making complaints please visit their website www.oscr.org.uk

Procedure

Informal complaint

In the first instance you should raise your complaint with the member of staff concerned or the Manager. It may be possible to resolve the issue through informal discussion. If the complaint is about your line manager, then speak informally to the Board Member responsible for Human Resources. If you are unable to speak to either person directly, please telephone, email or write informally.

PPC(S) Head Office

24a Haddington Place

Edinburgh

EH7 4AF

Manager – Juulia Karlstedt

PCC(S) Leith Charity Shop

28 Great Junction Street

Edinburgh

EH6 5LA

Manager – Sarah Brown

Please send mail for the board to the PCC(S) Head Office marked clearly for board attention.

Formal complaint

If informal discussion is unsatisfactory, you should put your complaint in writing to the relevant Manager or the HR Board Member, as appropriate. Please fully explain the nature and extent of your grievance. You will receive a written acknowledgement of your letter within seven days.

Assistance is available from the PCC(S) Office to enable any complainant to fully understand the complaints procedure. The staff can also help any complainant who has difficulty in completing a written complaint. Further assistance may be required from an external support group (eg. Citizens Advice) and information on how to contact groups will be offered.

PCC(S) will accept any complaint made by a defined third party and/or representative. All parties involved in the complaint can, where relevant, declare a conflict of interest to the Manager or Board Member. Should the conflict exist with the board's ability to remain impartial, the complaint will be passed onto an independent and impartial person with relevant experience. Any anonymous complaint will be appropriately logged by the Manager, and raised at the next Board Meeting for any further action.

What will happen?

Permission will be sought from the complainant to share information with those involved in reviewing a complaint. If permission is not provided, the complaint may move ahead as an anonymous complaint with no identifiable information about the complainant being presented. The complaint will be firstly investigated thoroughly and fairly by the office manager or by a member of the board should a conflict of interest exist. The parties involved will be notified that they can attend the complaints panel individually, not together, to present any supporting evidence. They can be accompanied, but not represented, by a supporting person. All evidence will be heard separately, and not together, from both parties concerned. As far as possible the complaint will be dealt with in confidence and information shared only with those involved. However, if there are concerns about the wellbeing of a party involved, knowledge of illegal activities, or issues that require advice from external parties this confidentiality may need to be broken. Where ever possible the parties involved will be informed before this is done. A report will be produced which will be passed to a sub-group of the Board of Trustees of at least three members including the HR Member to decide if there is enough corroborating evidence to support the complaint . The sub-group will decide if they approve the report. Once approved, a letter will be sent to both parties stating the outcome. If required, an outcome report will also be submitted to COSCA. The process should be completed wherever possible within 28 working days of receipt of the written complaint. Where necessary, the PCC(S) Disciplinary Rules and Procedures will be implemented. Actions taken in accordance with the Disciplinary Rules and

Procedures may include further training for those involved, a formal written apology or termination of work or volunteering contract.

If the individual named in the complaint is no longer affiliated with PCC(S), an investigation will still be carried out for organisational learning and to determine if any further steps are required. If appropriate, the former staff or volunteer member may be given the opportunity to represent themselves. The outcome of any counselling service related complaints will be reported to COSCA even if the individual in question is no longer with PCC(S) and COSCA may investigate under the system for dealing with information about members.

During this time the complainant will be regularly updated by email or telephone as to the progress of the inquiry. Should the complainant or party complained against wish to attend the sub-group meeting of the Board, they may do so, and be accompanied by and/or represented by a supportive person of their choice. Should any legal action (pending or intended) begin during this process, the Manager can halt the complaints procedure until such legal process is complete. The process can be paused for a reasonable length of time to allow for external circumstances such as holidays and sickness. However the complaint can only be fully discontinued if; the complainant fails or refuses to participate in the investigation, or chooses to withdraw their complaint. In these instances both the complainant and the other party involved will be informed.

A complaint must be received by email or letter within six months of the initial grievance.

If during the investigation of the complaint, the committee becomes concerned the complaint is vexatious and or malicious in nature, the complaints and grievances policy will still be followed. However, the committee may choose to limit the scope of the complaint to what is reasonable and relevant to the complaint itself. If there is evidence that a staff member or volunteer is making vexatious or malicious use of the complaints and grievances policy, the matter will be investigated under the PCC(S) Disciplinary policy. In both of the above instances, guidance will be sought from appropriate external agencies including ACAS and COSCA.

Appeal

An appeal may be requested and granted if you are not satisfied with how the original investigation was managed or if new evidence is cited. An

appeal must be requested within six months of the original findings report in writing to the HR Board member. You will receive a written acknowledgement of your letter within seven days. The appeal would take place at a hearing in front of a new sub-section of the board who did not review the original complaint within 4 weeks of our request for an appeal.

If you are unsatisfied with the way your complaint was dealt with you can escalate it beyond our Board of Directors. This process involves COSCA or the Office of Scottish Charity Regulator and is only possible once all avenues of consultation have been exhausted.

For counselling clients you can submit a complaint directly to COSCA, the professional organisation for counselling in Scotland. This can be done up to one month after PCC(S) complaints procedures have been exhausted. The COSCA Complaints Procedure can be viewed from their website at www.cosca.org.uk. COSCA will on receipt of a complaint verify with PCC(S) what procedures have been followed to deal with the complaint already.

All COSCA Organisation Members are now required to submit to COSCA the Final Report at the conclusion of their complaints proceedings related to counselling and psychotherapy, and notify COSCA of any sanctions applied to individual members of COSCA working for them. COSCA will consider taking appropriate action on receipt of notifications about sanctions. PCC(S) will submit this report within one month of the end of internal processes in writing to COSCA.

It is the responsibility of the office manager to keep all parties informed of any changes to sanctions and monitor adherence.

COSCA (Counselling & Psychotherapy in Scotland)
16 Melville Terrace
Stirling
FK8 2NE

Telephone: 01786 475140

For other complaints you can submit a complaint to OSCR, the Scottish Charity Regulator. You can find their complaints procedure on their website www.oscr.org.uk

OSCR
Quadrant House
9 Riverside Drive

Dundee
DD1 4NY

Telephone: 01382 220446

This document was originally produced in May 2016 by Alice Dickson & was approved by the Board on the 9th of August 2016
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