



Addictions Counselling Inverness

Policy

Approved By:

Title: Complaints

**Senior
Management**

1. Policy Statement

Addictions Counselling Inverness is committed to providing a high quality experience through the services provided. All feedback, concerns and complaints are welcomed and are an opportunity to improve client and public experiences of Addictions Counselling Inverness.

2. Scope

This document outlines the policy for handling all concerns and complaints brought to the attention of Addictions Counselling Inverness. The policy applies to all the client centered activities. It also includes concerns and complaints relating to our general business and activities.

It is the aim of Addictions Counselling Inverness to investigate issues thoroughly as close to the initial point of contact as possible and to settle complaints promptly and courteously in the best interests of all parties, addressing areas where improvement is identified as a result of the complaint.

3. Definitions

3.1 Concern

A matter of interest or importance to someone associated with Addictions Counselling Inverness and normally arises before a formal complaint is made. It may include a request for information or an explanation of policy or practice. If dealt with effectively there may not be the need to escalate the concern to a formal complaint.

3.2 Complaint

is defined as any expression of dissatisfaction by one or more individuals about the standard of service, action or lack of action by or on behalf of Addictions Counselling Inverness. Complaints are normally received in writing.

3.3 The definition of a complaint is very broad but may relate to:

- The quality and standard of service
- Failure to provide a service
- Treatment by, or attitude of a member of staff, student or contractor
- Inappropriate behavior by a member of staff, student or contractor
- Dissatisfaction with Addictions Counselling Inverness policies or procedures



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4. References

- 4.1 Diversity and Equal Opportunities Policy DOC01001
- 4.2 Data Protection Policy DOC01003
- 4.3 Grievance Policy DOC01010
- 4.4 Disciplinary Policy DOC01011
- 4.5 Whistleblowing Policy DOC01012

5. Associated Documents / Guidance

- 5.1 Complaints Register F01009A

6. Roles and Responsibilities

- 6.1 The Executive Board is responsible for ensuring that there is an effective complaints process in place with robust investigation and recording mechanisms that demonstrate implementation of change/service improvement with learning fed back to the wider organisation where appropriate.
- 6.2 Line Managers have an active role in ensuring all staff and students are aware of the Complaints Policy and maintain overall responsibility and accountability for complaints within their own areas of responsibility.
- 6.3 All staff must be aware of their duties and are encouraged to try to bring concerns and complaints to a satisfactory early resolution, as close to the point of service delivery as possible to avoid unnecessary escalation.

Addictions Counselling Inverness is committed to ensuring that no individual who raises a genuine complaint will be penalised. Members of staff involved in handling complaints must ensure that the action of raising a complaint does not influence the manner in which the complainant is treated.

7. Procedure

- 7.1 Who can make a complaint?

A complaint can be made by anyone who receives, requests or is affected by Addictions Counselling Inverness service provision no matter where or how this service is provided. Complaints may include (but are not limited to):



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- A client or their carers concerned about their experience of Addictions Counselling Inverness
- A member of the public, where they have a complaint about matters which are (or were at the time they arose) the responsibility of the ACI e.g. taking part in a fundraising event.
- A third party acting as a representative as long as the individual(s) affected have given their personal consent under the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 providing clear written authority for the third party to act on their behalf.

7.2 Informal

In some situations the entire complaints procedure may be managed informally and without recourse to any formal response leaving the complainant completely satisfied with the outcome.

All members of staff should be able to resolve minor concerns immediately and informally and if this is not possible have the knowledge to explain to complainers how to make a more formal complaint.

7.3 Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints will be considered if sufficient information is provided to enable Addictions Counselling Inverness to investigate further. Where this is not the case Addictions Counselling Inverness may decide to take no further action.

7.4 Time Limit for Raising Complaints

Complaints should be raised as soon as problems arise to enable prompt investigation and swift resolution.

There is no time limit within which a complainant should raise a complaint, however, beyond 12 months the complainant should be aware that although Addictions Counselling Inverness will endeavor to conduct a thorough investigation of all the facts this may be hindered by the passage of time of changes to personnel within the organization.

7.5 Complaints relating to Staff and/or Students

In the normal course of events, individuals who are the subject of a complaint are entitled to know who has raised a complaint about them and the nature of the complaint. In exceptional circumstances and for justifiable reasons related to confidentiality a complainant may wish to remain anonymous from an individual about whom a complaint is made.

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Where a complaint has been raised against a member of staff or a student and has been upheld or partly upheld the complainant will be advised of the outcome. However, it would not be appropriate to share specific details affecting a specific individual, or any disciplinary proceedings that may have been taken.

7.6 Recording and Reporting

Addictions Counselling Inverness recognises that valuable feedback can be obtained through complaints and that it is important to improve service provision across the organisation where opportunities are identified.

All formal written complaints should be directed to the Manager responsible for acknowledging receipt within 5 working days, recording that a complaint has been received and forwarding the complaint to the Executive Board .

The Executive Board will be responsible for appointing a member to investigate the complaint and to produce a report or draft response to the complainer.

The Manager will update the Complaints Register. This will normally be within 20 working days of acknowledging receipt of the complaint.

7.7 Follow Up Actions and Organisational Learning

The outcome of a concern or complaint may identify the need for additional work to be undertaken. This could include:

- Further audit of service provision
- Re-writing or updating organisational policies and procedures
- The provision of training to meet a learning or development need

Managers will be responsible for ensuring that relevant staff, volunteers and students receive feedback and/or training to promote a culture of continuous improvement and development within Addictions Counselling Inverness.

7.8 Vexatious Complaints

Addictions Counselling Inverness reserves the right to conduct an initial investigation into a complaint but to decline to consider it if it is deemed to be vexatious or where the complainant is unreasonably persistent. Similarly the ACI reserves the right to refuse to deal with a complainant who takes an overly aggressive or abusive approach towards members of staff, volunteers or students; all members of staff, volunteers and students have a right to be treated courteously and with respect.

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7.9 Appeals Procedure

If a complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, they have the right to appeal and can write to the Executive Board .

Executive Board
Addictions Counselling Inverness
108 Church Street
Inverness
IV1 1EP

Telephone: 01463 220995

8. Training

8.1 All Employees, Volunteers and Students should be familiar with this document.

9. Approval

9.1 Consultation and formal approval for this policy is by Senior Management.

10. Review

To ensure that Addictions Counselling Inverness's Diversity and Equal Opportunities Policy is effective, the policy and its implementation will be monitored and kept under review every three years unless there are legislative changes that impact the policy. Any questions relating to the policy should be referred to your Manager. This policy does not form part of the employee's terms and conditions of employment and is not a contractual procedure. Addictions Counselling Inverness reserves the right to amend this policy from time to time.

10.1 The Complaints Register shall be periodically audited by Management to establish if there is any pattern to the complaints made.

10.2 A review of complaints may lead to the identification of a training need or review of a policy and procedure.

11. Appendices

11.1 Appendix 1 - Good Practice Guide

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Good Practice Guide

Emphasis is laid on resolving concerns and complaints as quickly as possible. All staff should know how to respond to concerns and complaints and if they are unable to deal with the problem they should provide reassurance that it has been listened to, understood and outline how this will then be handled.

When a client or relative is considering whether or not to make a complaint our personal responsibility is to ensure that the process is as clear and easy for them as possible and once an issue is identified to resolve it if at all possible without it becoming a written complaint. This is the stage when a client or relative is unhappy with the service or care we have given them and is our opportunity to apologise and solve their problem quickly.

Most people do not want to complain and it can take a lot of courage for them to do so. This must be understood and allowed for by the staff they are speaking with as the complainant's behaviour may be more challenging because of this nervousness.

An apology is much more than an expression of regret, it needs to be meaningful. A meaningful apology can help both sides calm their emotions and move on to put things right. It is often the first step to repairing a damaged relationship and can help restore dignity and trust. It says that both sides share values about appropriate behaviour and that we have regrets when we do not behave in line with those values.

- We will accept what we have done wrong
- We will accept our responsibility and need to be explicit if it was someone's fault
- We will explain why it happened, show it was not intentional or personal and if there is no excuse we will say so
- We will show we are sincerely sorry either by meeting and telling them in person or by letter or both
- We will make clear assurance that it will not be repeated and explain what steps we are taking to prevent a recurrence

(Adapted from Scottish Public Services Ombudsman guidance)

Complaints may relate to any aspect of services provided by Addictions Counselling Inverness. Each complaint must therefore be taken on its own merit and responded to appropriately.

Where a complaint is made that relates to a service matter, the client should be informed that information from their service record may need to be disclosed to those handling the complaint, but this information will only be shared on a need-to-know basis. If the client objects they should be advised that refusal to allow information sharing could affect the ability to fully investigate a complaint.

Document Revision Summary

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Referenced DOCS: 01001, 01003, 01010, 01011, 01012

Details of Revision

Revision

**Effective
Date**

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