



COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Should any client, organisation or Individual wish to make a complaint about our service, the conduct of our volunteers, employees, information provided or any other aspect of our service then the following procedure will apply.

Whilst we hope that most problems can be solved informally if this is not the case the matter will be raised formally.

In operating this procedure, we aim to ensure that:

- making a complaint is as easy as possible.
- we treat a complaint as a clear expression of dissatisfaction with our service which calls for an immediate response.
- we deal with it promptly, politely and, when appropriate, confidentially.
- we respond in a way that ensures explanation and where appropriate, an apology or information on any action taken

Complaints can be made in writing to:

Herts Area Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Centre, PO Box 256, Hatfield, Herts AL10 0NE or by e-mail to admin@hertsrapecrisis.org.uk. A complaints form is also available upon request.

HOW WE WILL RESPOND TO COMPLAINTS

Except in exceptional circumstances, any complaint made about our organisation will be dealt with in strictest confidence and will be discussed at a specially convened meeting of Trustees who are not the subject of the complaint. In the event that the complaint is of such a nature that confidentiality cannot be maintained within that meeting, all reasonable steps will be taken to explain this to the complainant before confidentiality is breached.

Wherever possible a complainant will be made aware of this policy. The complainant will also be made aware of the likely timescales of the procedure.

HARCSAC reserves the right to discuss the nature of any complaint with the external supervisor.

Where a complaint concerns a volunteer or an employee, they will be given an opportunity to make any comments to the Trustees but will not be party to the discussion resulting from the complaint.

If further information is required to bring the matter to a conclusion, the complainant will be contacted and given the opportunity to further clarify the matter.

At the conclusion of a complaints procedure the complainant will be contacted by a trustee to discuss the outcome of the investigation. This may initially be done by telephone, or in writing according to the wishes of the complainant. If a formal complaint cannot be satisfactorily resolved by the Trustees, the dispute will be forwarded on to another appropriate association or body. These will of course vary according to the nature of the complaint and may include: -

- the police
- solicitor/lawyers
- Rape Crisis England and Wales

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Stage 1

If you are unable to resolve the issue informally, you should write to the Trustees at the address given above. A complaints form may be used for this purpose if preferred. In your written submission you should set out the details of your complaint, the consequences for you as a result, and the remedy you are seeking.

You can expect your complaint to be acknowledged within two weeks of receipt and you should get a response and an explanation within four weeks.

Stage 2

If you are not satisfied with the initial response to the complaint, then you can pursue the matter further by making this known to the Trustees who will refer the matter to an outside body for consideration. You can expect an acknowledgement of your request within two weeks and a response within **28** days.

It is our aim to resolve all matters as quickly as possible. Inevitably, however, some issues will be more complex and therefore may require longer to be fully investigated. Consequently, timescales given for handling and responding to complaints are indicative. If a matter requires more detailed investigation, you will receive an interim response updating you on what is being done to deal with the matter.