

## **COMPLAINTS POLICY**

### **Complaints Procedure**

If anyone is unhappy with any part of our service, or if they have a complaint to make, we would like to know about it as soon as possible in order to resolve the situation quickly. All complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially.

### **Aims of the Complaints Procedure**

- To enable a complaint to be investigated in a fair manner
- To enable complaints to be resolved as speedily as possible
- To allow consequences of mistakes to be put right without unnecessary conflict
- To improve the quality of the service

### **Access to this Complaints Procedure document**

This Complaints Procedure can be accessed as follows:

- It can be viewed on our website at [www.mindworx.uk](http://www.mindworx.uk)
- A hard copy can be requested by phone, email, letter or in person from Mindworx Counselling.
- Although we do not have the resources to produce this procedure in multiple languages and formats, it can be translated, viewed in larger text and read out loud here using standard online tools.

### **Who can complain?**

- Anyone who is using the counselling service
- Anyone who has used the counselling service within the past three years
- Anyone who has enquired about the counselling service or is on the waiting list
- Anyone from another organisation who has enquired about our service, or who is working with or representing someone who is using or has used the service
- Anonymous complaints will be investigated by the Director or the Chair, who will use discretion in assessing what action should be taken.

### **Time limits for complaints**

Complaints can be accepted up to three years from the time of the problem arising. If the complaint refers to specific client work the maximum is three years from the date the client ended counselling with Mindworx Counselling. However, it is much easier to sort out difficulties if the complaint is brought to our attention as quickly as possible.

### **How to Make a Complaint**

If you are receiving our counselling service, please try to talk your concerns over with your counsellor if you can.

A formal complaint should be made in the first instance to the Director. This can be in person by appointment, by telephone, or in writing by email or letter. Please contact:  
Andy Hiscock

Director – Mindworx Counselling  
124 City Road  
London  
EC1V 2NX

Tel: 07482 143804

Email: [hello@mindworx.uk](mailto:hello@mindworx.uk)

If you have any difficulty making a complaint in person or in writing, please let us know and we will try to help you.

### **Scope of Complaints**

Complaints made under this Procedure may cover paid staff, volunteer counsellors or receptionists, Board members, and other volunteers or contractors acting for or on behalf of the Mindworx Counselling.

### **Confidentiality & Communications**

Every complaint will be treated with care and confidentiality. We will attempt to communicate clearly and directly with all complainants or their representatives in a timely manner, as described below.

### **Safety of Clients**

If a complaint relates to the conduct of a counsellor in counselling, at all times the client's safety will be a primary consideration. Suspension of counselling and/or disciplinary proceedings may take place at any stage of the complaints process, if appropriate.

### **Stage 1 – Informal Complaint**

Every opportunity will be taken at the time of the initial complaint to settle the concern informally. This may include telephone conversations and/or face to face meetings or written explanation of the reasons for a decision taken. The Director will normally handle the complaint at this stage, but if the Director is the subject of the complaint, then a designated independent facilitator will undertake to respond to the complaint and manage the complaints procedure.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of discussions at this stage then a formal written complaint can be made.

### **Stage 2 – Formal Complaint**

A formal complaint will be acknowledged in writing by the Director within seven days. A copy of the Complaints Procedure will be enclosed. If an employee, volunteer or contractor of Mindworx Counselling is the subject of the complaint, they will be sent a copy of the complaint along with the Complaints Procedure.

### **Investigation of the Complaint**

The Director or an independent and impartial person or persons with relevant experience will be appointed to investigate the formal complaint. All parties involved will be given the opportunity to declare a conflict of interest with them. The investigator(s) will make a thorough and confidential investigation of the complaint, contacting both the complainant and the person complained against.

The investigator will have access to relevant documents and policy papers within Mindworx Counselling and to staff members, if appropriate. They may ask for evidence from either party and if this is sought in person, they will meet with each party separately. All parties will have the right to be accompanied, and/or be represented, by a supportive person of their choice. The complainant and the party or parties

complained against and/or their representative will not be asked to attend any meetings together.

The investigator will make a written response to the complainant within twenty-eight days, a copy of which will be sent to the Mindworx Counselling and the person complained against. If it proves not possible to respond within 28 days, the complainant will be informed of any reasons for a delay. All investigations will be completed and responded to within a maximum of six months.

The investigator(s) will make a written response to the complainant within twenty-eight days, a copy of which will be sent to the Mindworx Counselling and the person complained against. If it is not possible to respond within 28 days, the complainant will be informed of any reasons for a delay. All investigations will be completed and responded to within six months.

The investigator(s) will make recommendations regarding the action required to bring about the resolution of the complaint and any sanctions which they may consider appropriate to apply to either party. In such circumstances, they will also provide instructions for the monitoring of the fulfilment of said actions or sanctions. Examples of possible sanctions would include:

- A formal apology to the complainant
- A requirement to undertake further relevant training
- Suspension of the person concerned

The Director or whoever is managing the complaint may halt the procedure at any stage if it emerges that legal action is under way, pending or intended, until such time as any legal process is complete.

### **Monitoring of Complaints**

A record will be kept of all complaints received. Anonymous complaints will also be recorded, including the reasons for any decision to pursue or not to pursue the complaint. Complaints will be monitored regularly by the Director. Once a complaint has been concluded, an 'Outcome Report' will be generated. Records of complaints will be kept for a period of five years.