

COMPLAINTS POLICY



Revision History

Date	Section(s)	Page(s)	Brief Description of Change	Author of Change
2010	All	All	Developed	Board
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1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Rape Crisis Grampian (RCG) aims to be entirely supportive to everyone needing our support. Nevertheless, there may be times when someone using our service is dissatisfied and wishes to make a complaint.

Maintaining good relationships throughout the process of the complaint is essential in order that full support can continue to be offered. This in turn requires that we develop a “no blame” culture where complaints are welcomed as an opportunity to improve our service and to correct occasional errors in practice and judgement. The appropriate response to a complaint will develop further a person’s sense of value and will add to the organisation’s credibility.

WE WILL ARRANGE TO SPEAK TO YOU ABOUT THE BEST WAY TO DEAL WITH YOUR COMPLAINT AND AGREE THE NEXT STEPS WITH YOU. WE WILL DO OUR BEST TO RESOLVE YOUR COMPLAINT.

2. PRINCIPLES AND AIMS

The key principles of our complaint's procedure are: -

- Complaints procedures encourage relevant and important feedback and help us to improve how we work.
- Complainants have a right to be treated with respect and to have their complaint taken seriously and dealt with confidentially.
- Complainants have the right to have their complaint heard promptly, be given a full explanation or an apology if RCG has made an error.

The key aims of our complaints' procedure is:

- To share complaints procedures with complainants
- To give guidelines for handling first stages of receiving complaints
- To outline procedures for dealing with complaints which are unresolved at the early stages.

3. PROCEDURE

3.1 First Stage: Guidelines for Receiving Complaints

How an organisation receives the complaint is crucial to its outcome. RCG will, therefore, strive to be open and relaxed when hearing complaints made against us.

Employees or Board Members hearing a complaint will bear in mind the following:

- Some vulnerable people may not be used to making complaints and will need maximum support and reassurance to clarify their concerns.
- Some vulnerable people may express anger which might seem disproportionate to the complaint. The support and understanding of the employee is essential: reassurance and recognition of the anger will support the person to make their complaint
- The first complaint stated may not be the real issue. Space should be given to explore possible further concerns.

Complaints come in a variety of forms. In responding to the first statement of complaint, RCG will adhere to the following principles as far as is possible: -

- The complainant will be reassured that RCG welcomes and responds to complaints.
- The complainant will be encouraged to speak and be heard fully.
- The employee or Board Member will clarify any points which are unclear and may take notes.
- The employee or Board Member will repeat back to the complainant the key points from their complaint and outline the next steps.

- They will reassure the complainant that their complaint will be fully investigated and indicate when this will happen and when they should expect a response.
- The complainant will be invited to state any other concerns.
- No comment will be made about the validity or otherwise of the complaint. Our intention is to provide accurate and supportive listening: decisions about the complaint will be made thereafter.
- We will reiterate our intention to give the best support possible to the survivor making the complaint.

If the complaint is received by e-mail or by letter, we will, if possible, follow up with a phone-call or a meeting. At this stage the complainant will be invited to reiterate their complaint.

3.2 Timeframe for Response

The complainant will receive a written or verbal response to their complaint within 14 working days of raising the issue; if the complaint requires lengthier investigation the first response will be:

- Reassure that the complaint is being taken seriously.
- Indicate the reason for the extension.
- Indicate expected date for final response.

3.3 Dealing with a Complaint

Many complaints are easily resolved: some relate to a misunderstanding; some to miscommunication; some have no substance. Some however can be more serious. Therefore, in dealing with all complaints for the protection of both employee and complainant, it is essential that the procedure is transparent and well documented.

- Employee or Board Member receiving complaint completes "Complaint Form".
- Complaint is passed to the Manager who will lead the complaint investigation.
- Complaint investigated; action taken; paperwork completed.
- Outcome conveyed to person who has made the complaint.
- Copy of paperwork to Board Chair

Further:

- If a complaint is made against an employee or Board Member, they must be informed.
- If the complaint is serious, this information should be communicated to the person under investigation by someone other than the investigator.
- A serious complaint may lead to disciplinary action. All records of investigation must, therefore, be clear and the individual against whom the complaint is made should be

advised for their support and protection that, when the issue is discussed with them, they may choose to be accompanied by a trade union representative or a work colleague.

- If a complaint is unsubstantiated or caused by misunderstanding, support will be given to the individual against whom the complaint has been made as they may feel distressed.
- RCG is aware of the possibility of litigation and if in doubt will seek legal advice.

If, following investigation, the complainant is not satisfied they should appeal to the Chairperson of the Board of Directors.

3.4 Responding to Complaint

Points for response to the complaint should be noted on the final section of the form.

- If the complaint has been lodged verbally, in general a verbal response is appropriate. The exception to this is if the complainant has requested written feedback or if the complaint is very serious.
- If the complaint has been raised in writing, it may still be appropriate to respond verbally, with the complainant's permission.
- If a complaint has been found to be unsubstantiated this will be made clear
- There may be times when it is appropriate to apologise for offence caused and to regret any resulting distress. While it is appropriate to accept responsibility and outline changes which have been made, or actions which have been taken, any statements which imply damage will be treated with caution. If concerned that litigation may be possible, any written communication will only be made with legal advice.