

Procedure for dealing with complaints relating to services

Introduction

This procedure is principally concerned with complaints made against Burton and District Mind staff, Board of Trustees and volunteers. However, there will be occasions when it will be appropriate to use this framework for an investigation of self-employed counsellors and therapists in our employ.

Principles

1. The opportunity to make a complaint or grievance is an essential right for all those who use the services provided by Burton and District Mind. Complaints can be a valuable way of evaluating and improving our services and ensuring they are responsive to the needs and preferences of our clients.
2. Burton and District Mind's complaints procedure is intended to be timely, effective and easy to understand. To ensure fairness, any investigation required will be carried out by someone who was not directly involved with the incident relating to the complaint.
3. Burton and District Mind recognises that making a complaint can be difficult and stressful for the person making the complaint. Appropriate assistance will be offered to the complainant. At any stage a complainant may seek the help of an independent advocate and Mind will provide information on this on request.
4. A complaint can also be stressful for a person against whom a complaint is made and that person may also need assistance and support. Any member of staff or volunteer against whom a complaint is made will be given the fullest opportunity to answer any criticisms.
5. Every effort will be made to try and resolve any problem as soon as possible with the person concerned. If it is necessary to take the matter further it will be done in line with the procedure described below.
6. Mind will respect the confidentiality of both the complainant and any person complained about, subject to the provisions of Mind confidentiality policy. This states that, if a complainant is to be properly investigated and action taken as a result of the complaint, it may not always be possible to avoid a breach of confidentiality. The permission of the complainant will be implied by the act of making a complaint in order that we are able to investigate the complaint fully. When the welfare of the complainant or other people are seriously at risk it may be necessary to breach confidentiality outside of our organisation and partners to ensure service user safety.
7. The outcome of all complaints and investigations will be reported in confidence to the Board of Trustees and in writing to the complainant. A report on complaints will

also be made available to funders of Mind's services as part of the evaluation of these services.

8. This procedure should be read in conjunction with Burton and District Mind's Confidentiality and Data Protection Policy (and Whistleblowing Policy if appropriate).
9. Burton and District Mind will make efforts to ensure that every user of its service is aware that this procedure exists and display this policy within our premises. The procedure is described below.

Procedure

1. **1st Stage:** informal discussion with the person concerned. The Centre Manager may be asked to help resolve the complaint informally.
2. **2nd Stage:** a formal complaint by letter should be sent as follows: to Burton and District Mind, 67 Branston Road, Burton on Trent, Staffordshire, DE14 3BY.

Complaint against a member of staff, self-employed staff or volunteer: to the Centre Manager.

Complaint against the Centre Manager: to the Chairman of Trustees.

Complaint against the Chairman of Trustees: to the Board of Trustees.

The person who receives the complaint will carry out an investigation, or, where appropriate, appoint someone else to do so. The investigator will report the results in writing within 2 weeks to the complainant and the relevant members of staff.

If the complainant or person about whom the complaint is made is dissatisfied with the results of this, they can then ask for the complaint to be referred to:

3. **3rd Stage:** On receiving the complaint, the Chairman will consult with another trustee to decide whether the complaint should proceed to this level. If they decide it should not, the Chairman will write to the complainant explaining why. If they deem that it should, the Chairman will set up a panel to consider the complaint. The panel will generally consist of 2 to 3 trustees, one of whom will be a service user. These will usually be trustees, but the Chairman may replace one or more of the trustees with people independent of Burton and District Mind if appropriate. The panel will aim to meet within 28 days, although this may take longer in complicated cases.

The panel will invite to the meeting the complainant and the person or persons against whom the complaint has been made. Any such person may be accompanied to the meeting by a friend or supporter, or by an independent advocate.

The panel will report their decision and any recommendations in writing to the complainant and to any persons against whom the complaint was made within 21 days. The decision of the panel will be final.

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