

## **COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

### Contents

1. Introduction
2. Aims
3. Procedure
  - General
  - Clients
  - Supporting Policies & Procedures

### **1. Introduction**

The Organisation's aim is to encourage improvement in individual performance and conduct. Employees and volunteers are required to treat members of the public and other employees equally in accordance with the Equal Opportunities Policy. This policy & procedure sets out the action which can be taken when anyone feels they are unhappy with our service.

Savana is committed to providing high quality support for all. One of the ways in which we aim to continue to improve our service is by listening and responding to the views of our clients. We aim to respond positively to all complaints, thereby ensuring that any negative aspects of our service are unrepeatable.

Therefore 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 the correct manner - for example, with an explanation, apology or information on any action taken etc.
- we learn from complaints, use them to improve our service, and review annually our complaints policy and procedures.

### **Rights of Complaint**

All clients, potential clients, external associated and team members should be informed verbally that there is a formal complaints procedure and that this is available on request from the Savana.

Anyone can make a formal complaint about any aspect of the service or individual.

## 2. Aims

We recognise that many concerns will be raised informally, and dealt with quickly. Our aims are to:

- resolve informal concerns quickly;
- keep matters low-key;
- Where necessary and appropriate, enable mediation between the complainant and the individual to whom the complaint has been referred.

An informal approach is appropriate when it can be achieved. However if concerns cannot be satisfactorily resolved informally, then the formal complaints procedure should be followed as outlined below.

The formal complaints procedure is intended to ensure that all complaints are handled fairly, consistently and wherever possible resolved to the complainant's satisfaction.

### Definition

Savana defines a complaint as 'any expression of dissatisfaction (with any function within Savana, (such as service delivery, fundraising or training); with a member of staff or volunteer; or with a Savana Director) that relates to Savana and that requires a formal response'.

### Savana's responsibility will be to:

- acknowledge the formal complaint in writing;
- respond within a stated period of time;
- deal reasonably and sensitively with the complaint;
- take action where appropriate.

### A complainant's responsibility is to:

- bring their complaint, in writing, to Savana's attention normally within 8 weeks of the issue arising;
- raise concerns promptly and directly with the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who will be responsible for any further action;
- explain the problem as clearly and as fully as possible, including any action taken to date;
- allow Savana a reasonable time to deal with the matter;
- recognise that some circumstances may be beyond Savana's control.

### Confidentiality

In line with Savana's Confidentiality Policy all information will remain strictly confidential. However, in exceptional cases, the circumstances giving rise to the complaint may be such that it may not be possible to maintain complete confidentiality (each complaint will be judged on its own merit). Should this be the case, the situation will be explained to the complainant before confidentiality is extended.

## **Monitoring and Reporting**

Directors of Savana will receive annually, an anonymous report of complaints made and their resolution.

Savana aims to provide high quality services. We believe we achieve this most of the time: if we are getting it right, please let us know.

In order to ensure our services remain at a high and improving standard, we have a procedure through which you can let us know if you are not satisfied. This is done via evaluation sheets/clients' comments.

### **3. The Procedure:**

#### **General Complaint (non Counsellor or ISVA related)**

##### **Making a verbal complaint**

If you wish to make a verbal complaint which is unrelated to the counselling or Independent Sexual Violence Advisor services, please ask to speak with a member the Senior Management Team, failing that you may approach the Chief Executive officer. In the unlikely event that there is no Senior Manager/CEO available a member of the Savana team will take your details and ensure that you are responded to within 48 hours (2 business days) using your preferred contact details. If you have requested an email response, but ensure that you check your Spam/Junk mail box if no reply has been received within that time.

##### **Making a written complaint**

If you are not satisfied with our response or wish to raise the matter more formally, please write to the Chief Executive Officer. (If your complaint is about the CEO then please write to the Chair).

All written complaints will be logged. You will receive a written acknowledgement within three working days from date of receipt.

The aim is to investigate your complaint thoroughly and give you a reply within ten working days, setting out how the problem will be dealt with. If this is not possible, an interim response will be made informing you of the action taken to date or being considered.

If, after we have responded you are not satisfied, please write to the Chair who will report the matter to the next Executive Committee meeting, which will decide on any further steps to resolve the situation.

The decision of the Executive Committee will be final.

## **Clients**

### **Time-scale**

Any client can make a complaint, usually within 8 weeks but no later than one calendar year of the end date of the last session attended/contact.

### **Making the Complaint**

- Option 1: Clients could verbally make the complaint to the counsellor. The counsellor would listen to the complaint and discuss a solution. This should be recorded, if the client agrees.
- Option 2: If the client does not feel they can communicate the complaint verbally to the counsellor they should contact the office and speak to the Senior Services Manager. The Senior Services Manager would listen to the complaint and discuss a solution. This should be recorded if the client agrees
- Option 3: The client can formally complain in writing addressing the complaint to Savana. The letter has to be signed by the client.

### **Complaints from clients have to be direct from the clients.**

Any complaint either received out of timescale, or not by a client will be rejected.

### **Notification**

The client will be notified that the formal written complaint has been received and informed it will be dealt with in no more than 20 working days.

### **Response**

- The written complaint will be sent to the Board of Directors.
- The panel will comprise of three members and include a Savana representative, external counselling supervisor and one independent member.
- The panel will meet to investigate the complaint and decide whether further action is needed. The client will be informed of the outcome in writing.
- If the panel views that the complaint requires the client to attend a meeting, or the client wishes to speak directly to the panel, a further meeting will be arranged.
- In the event the complaint is about an individual employee/volunteer or contracted worker or a contracted organisation then they would be informed of the complaint and given the opportunity to make representation.

- The decision by the panel will be put in writing and sent to the client no later than 10 days after any meeting.

### **Formal Appeals Procedure**

- In the event, the client is not satisfied with the written answer by the panel, the client can appeal in writing no later than 28 days from receipt of panel's letter.
- The Letter of appeal would go to an appeals panel made up of 3 new members appointed in consultation with the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) (Counselling complaints only). Savana is an organisational member of BACP and Savana's counselling service is accredited.
- The appeals panel to be convened no later than 28 working days from receipt of appeal.
- The Client and those who the complaint is directed at will be available for the appeal meeting.
- Notification of the appeal panels' decision will be in writing and sent to the participant no later than 28 working days from the appeal meeting.

Finally, please also let us know if you are happy with Savana services.

### **Address for written complaints and correspondence:**

Chief Executive Office or Chair of Directors  
Private and confidential  
Savana  
Unit C Metro Business Park  
Clough Street  
Hanley  
Stoke-on-Trent  
ST1 4AF  
01782 433204  
info@savana.org.uk

### **Supporting Policies & Procedures**

Code of Conduct  
Confidentiality Policy & Procedure  
Disciplinary Policy & Procedure  
Grievance Policy & Procedure