



SERVICE USER COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Nottinghamshire Sexual Violence Support Services (Notts SVSS) is committed to providing high quality support for all service users. One of the ways in which we aim to continue to improve our service is by listening and responding to the views of our service users. We aim to respond positively to all complaints, thereby ensuring that any negative aspects of our service are unrepeatable. This is also in accordance with BACP's recommendations for organisational membership and is concerned with working ethically and maintaining standards of practice.

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 right way – for example, with an explanation or an apology where we have got things wrong or information on any action taken
- We learn from complaints, use them to improve our service, and review annually our complaints policy and procedures

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

Notts SVSS defines a complaint as "any expression of dissatisfaction (with Notts SVSS, a member of its staff or volunteer, or a Trustee of Notts SVSS) that relates to Notts SVSS and that requires a formal response".

Notts SVSS's responsibility will be to:-

- Acknowledge the formal complaint in writing
- Respond within a stated period of time (see below)
- Deal reasonably and sensitively with the complaint
- Take action where appropriate

A complainant's responsibility is to:-

- Bring their complaint, in writing, to Notts SVSS's attention normally within 8 weeks of the issue arising

- Raise concerns promptly and directly with the relevant department lead - Counselling Co-ordinator, Helpline Co-ordinator, Senior ISVA or SSS Co-ordinator who will be responsible for any further action
- Explain the problem as clearly and fully as possible, including any action taken to date
- Allow Notts SVSS a reasonable time to deal with the matter
- Recognise that some circumstances may be beyond Notts SVSS control

Confidentiality

In line with Notts SVSS'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 breached.

Monitoring and Reporting

Trustees of Notts SVSS will receive annually an anonymous report of complaints made and their resolution.

Formal Complaints Procedure

Stage 1

If you are unable to resolve the issue informally face to face with the staff member concerned, you should contact the department lead – either the Counselling Co-ordinator, Helpline Co-ordinator, Senior ISVA or SSS Co-ordinator (as is appropriate for your complaint). If your complaint concerns a Trustee of Notts SVSS rather than a member of staff or volunteer, you should write formally to the individual concerned. In your letter/email 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 one week of receipt. You should get a full response and an explanation within three weeks.

If you do not feel satisfied with the response/resolution put forward, then you have the right to ask for the matter to be escalated to the Senior Manager of the particular service you are dissatisfied with.

Stage 2

If you are still not satisfied with the response to your complaint then you can write to Notts SVSS's CEO and ask for your complaint and the response to be reviewed. You can expect the CEO to acknowledge your request within two weeks of receipt as it may need to be forwarded on to them and a response from them within 28 days.

Notts SVSS's aim is to resolve all matters as quickly as possible. However, inevitably some issues will be more complex and therefore may require longer to be fully investigated. Consequently timescales for handling and responding to complaints are indicative. If a matter requires more detailed investigation, you will receive an interim response describing what is being done to deal with the matter, and when a full reply can be expected and from whom.

Final Stage

If you are not satisfied with the subsequent reply from Notts SVSS, then you have the option of writing to the Charity Commission at Charity Commission Direct, PO Box 1227, Liverpool, L69 3UG, stating the reason why you are dissatisfied with the outcome. All information on making complaints to the Charity Commission can be found on the Charity Commission's website www.charity-commission.gov.uk in information Form CC47.

The Charity Commission will respond usually within 15 working days, either by way of acknowledgement of your complaint, or to inform you of the action which will be taken to investigate your complaint, and when you can expect to hear the outcome of the investigation. Notts SVSS confirms that it will always use service user feedback to improve the quality of its services. We believe in:-

- Identifying our failures and resolving them reasonably and quickly;
- Monitoring and identifying complaints trends to inform and improve service delivery;
- Ensuring our service users and staff/volunteers are aware of the complaints procedure in order that action can be taken effectively and swiftly;
- Using the outcome of complaints and any remedial action taken as a positive method of improving services

Last review: June 2019
Next review due: June 2020