



COMPLAINTS POLICY

Nottinghamshire Sexual Violence Support Services (Notts SVSS) is committed to providing high quality support for all service users. One of the ways we do this is by listening to those who are in contact with our service.

While positive feedback is always welcome, we want you to feel able to tell us when we have got things wrong or could have done better. By being told about these things, it helps you to feel heard and it helps us to make positive changes to our service. It also means that we can continue working to the standards set by organisations such as the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP).

We aim to make our complaints process as easy as possible, but we understand that sometimes making a complaint can be hard. We want you to know that making a complaint will not negatively affect the support you receive from us or your place on the waiting list. We can also support you with making a complaint if this would be helpful to you.

We believe:

- Making a complaint should be as easy as possible. We can support you with making a complaint if this would be helpful to you.
- Making a complaint will not negatively affect the support you receive from us or your place on a waiting list
- A complaint is a clear expression of dissatisfaction with our service which calls for an immediate response.
- Complaints should be dealt with it quickly, politely, professionally and, where appropriate, confidentially.
- Complaints should be responded to in the right way - for example, with an explanation or an apology where we have got things wrong or information on any action taken where appropriate.
- Complaints help us to improve our service.

We understand that some people may want to raise a complaint anonymously. Unfortunately, we will not normally be able to investigate a complaint made in this way. This is because we won't be able to identify the issues rising to the complaint, investigate it fairly or provide an outcome. We would always seek to support people who are worried about making a complaint to do so in a way that is comfortable to them.

Definition

Notts SVSS defines a complaint as “any expression of dissatisfaction (with Notts SVSS, a member of its staff or volunteers, or a Trustee of Notts SVSS) that relates to Notts SVSS and that requires a response or a response has been requested”.

Making an Informal Complaint

Sometimes having an informal chat can help you feel heard straight away and get things sorted out more quickly. If this feels like something you want to do, you can raise a complaint about Notts SVSS

informally. This can be useful, for example, if you think there might have been a genuine misunderstanding.

You can make an informal complaint by:

- Speaking to the staff member involved or the service manager and letting them know what has gone wrong. They should then look at how they can make things right.
- Raising an informal complaint through the helpline by phoning 0115 941 0440. They will then contact the member of staff or their manager (depending on your choice) who will then arrange to chat with you further about the issue.

There can be advantages of raising a complaint informally, such as:

- The process can happen more quickly
- It can stop a problem from developing into something that needs a more formal complaint
- You might feel it is less stressful to manage things this way.

If the informal process has not worked or you feel the situation cannot be resolved informally, you are welcome to raise a formal complaint and we are happy to support you in this.

You do not need to raise a complaint informally prior to making a formal complaint.

Formal Complaints Procedure

Stage 1

Our formal complaints process helps us to ensure that all complaints are handled fairly and consistently.

How to make a formal complaint:

- While there is no time limit on making a complaint it helps us to know early on where things have gone wrong. Please note that it might be more difficult for us to investigate it and find a resolution if the incident happened over six months ago.
- It is easier for us to deal with complaints that are given to us in writing. But we know that this is not always possible. Complaints can also be made to the helpline (0115 941 0440) by asking to raise a 'formal complaint.'

Written complaints should be addressed to the department you want to complain about.

This can be either done by email to complaints@nottssvss.org.uk (and we will pass it onto the department manager) or by post to Notts SVS Services, 30 Chaucer Street, Nottingham, NG1 5LP. Our services are grouped into the following departments:

- Counselling / Therapeutic Services
- Helpline / Hub
- ISVA Service / Survivors Support Service
- Admin, Campaigns and Communications

It would help us if you put the department concerned in the subject line of the email. If you are not sure you can leave this blank and we will send it on to the department we think is best.

If the complaint relates to a department manager, then the complaint can be sent into the same email or postal address but for the attention of Novlet Holness, Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

- In your letter/telephone call, it would be helpful if you explain the problem as clearly and fully as possible, including any action taken to date. If you have already tried to raise the issue informally, it would help us to know this.

When we have received your complaint we will:

- Acknowledge the formal complaint in writing within 72 hours
- Undertake an investigation and respond within 10 working days. If for any reason we are not able to respond in this time, we will give you an update and let you know when we expect to send a full response.
- Deal reasonably and sensitively with the complaint
- Take action and follow up action as necessary

Stage 2

Grounds for stage 2 review

If you:

- feel that your complaint has not been investigated fully
- or the procedure has not been followed
- or you have new information available that you feel should be considered as part of your complaint

then you can write to Novlet Holness, Notts SVSS's CEO and ask for your complaint and the response to be reviewed by the CEO and a Trustee. You can do this by email (complaints@nottssvss.org.uk) or by post (Notts SVS Services, 30 Chaucer Street, Nottingham, NG1 5LP). You should set out the grounds for your request, which must come within one of the three grounds set out above. You can also ask for a review to be done via our helpline (0115 941 0440) giving the above information.

The CEO will let you know that she has got your request within two weeks of receipt. A full response will be sent within 28 days.

Final Stage

If you are still not satisfied with the final 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 usually get back to you within 15 working days. This response might include the following:

- Acknowledgement of your complaint
- Information about the action they will take to investigate your complaint
- Details of when you can expect to hear the outcome of the investigation.

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 might mean that we are not able to maintain complete confidentiality. Each complaint and the information in it will be judged on its own merit. If we need to break confidentiality, the situation will be explained to you before this is done.

Monitoring and Reporting

Trustees of Notts SVSS will be given a report of all complaints made and their resolution on a quarterly basis. The information in the report will be anonymised to keep your information safe.

Other ways to give us feedback

Sometimes you might want to give us feedback that is not a complaint. Whether you want to tell us something good or something bad or have an idea how things could be done differently, we would really like to hear from you. You can do this anonymously if you choose. Anything you share will not negatively affect the support you receive from us or your space on a waiting list.

The main ways people usually give feedback is by:

- Speaking to your worker if you are currently getting support from us.
- Using the feedback form on our website: <https://nottssvss.org.uk/feedback-questionnaire/>
- Calling our helpline: 0115 941 0440

If there is another way you would like to give feedback, or you would like to get involved with one of our service user groups, please let us know. You can do this by phoning our helpline or by emailing Karen, our Campaigns and Communications Manager feedback@nottssvss.org.uk

Notts SVSS will use feedback to understand where we are getting things right and to make changes where things could be done better.

We believe:

- That using negative feedback can help us to resolve problems quickly before they cause bigger issues.
- Monitoring and identifying trends in complaints can help us to improve service.
- In supporting you to give feedback in a way that is easiest for you. This means that we will try and remove things that might get in the way of you making your voice heard.
- That it is important that people can see how their feedback and suggestions have made a change to the service. We have a page on our website called 'you said – we did' which shows how feedback lead to changes in our service. All information on there will be anonymised before being put on this page.
- A complaint and feedback process will help us to improve things for people coming to our service for support in the future.

*Last review: March 2024
Next review due: March 2025*