

Shetland Bereavement Support Service Complaints Policy

Shetland Bereavement Support Service (SBSS) aims to adhere to the Statement of Ethics and Code of Practice of COSCA (attached appendix). COSCA is the professional body for counselling and psychotherapy in Scotland of which SBSS is a member.

It is the policy of SBSS to encourage and support clients/families/other professionals to use the complaints procedure if they are unhappy with any aspect of the service, including complaints against members of staff, volunteers and any groups carrying out work on behalf of SBSS.

The aim of the complaints procedure is to ensure that all complaints are dealt with in the most efficient and appropriate fashion, and that they are resolved at the earliest possible opportunity.

It is the view of SBSS that complaints should be welcomed as they will allow the organisation the opportunity to rectify problems and improve its service delivery.

Complaints leaflets will be readily available and the complaints procedure will be included with the information pack which is given to each client at their initial assessment session along with a copy of COSCA's Statement of Ethics and Code of Practice and Complaints Policy. These documents are available on our website; www.shetland-communities.org.uk/sbss. The policy will be provided in different language formats if requested, and where possible.

All complaints received will be treated in the strictest confidence and Trustees are responsible for ensuring that the complaints procedure is fairly and effectively implemented.

Please note: Before making a formal complaint, the complainant can make a complaint to the person they are complaining about directly. This encourages a dialogue between the complainant and SBSS with the aim of resolving any issues before reaching the formal complaints procedure.

1. How to make a complaint

a) The complaint should be sent in writing, signed, dated and marked 'Private and Confidential' to:

The Chair, Shetland Bereavement Support Service,
Market House, 14 Market Street, Lerwick, Shetland ZE1 0JP

Where a written complaint cannot be made, assistance will be offered to make a written complaint; or an oral complaint (in person or over the telephone) will be accepted (provided that parts 1b, and 1c are met). Anonymous complaints will be considered on an individual basis within the timescales outlined. External assistance may be available from Advocacy Shetland.

b) A complaint may be submitted within 3 years of the alleged breach of the COSCA Statement of Ethics and Code of Practice.

c) The complaint must:

- identify the member(s) complained against
- the part(s) of the Statement of Ethics and Code of Practice which have been breached
- how the above part(s) of the Statement have been breached

d) The complaint can be made directly from the complainant or via a third party/representative.

2. Responding to complaints:

Stage 1

The Chair will acknowledge receipt of a complaint within 5 working days to the complainant and send a copy of it to the member(s) against whom the complaint has been made.

Stage 2

The Chair of SBSS and two other Trustees (the Complaints Panel) will investigate the complaint as a matter of priority. To ensure impartiality, all parties involved, if relevant, must declare any conflict of interest to the Chair; whereby an alternative Trustee, or an independent third party will make the investigation.

All relevant information will be taken into account and a response will be given within 20 working days. The Complaints Panel will inform all parties involved in the complaint, in writing, of the outcome, and a complaints handling record will be submitted to COSCA.

The complainant and member(s) against whom the complaint has been made, have the right to be supported by an advocate/family/friend throughout this process. All parties will be heard separately during the investigation and all meetings will be minuted.

The complaints procedure can be halted at any time by the person appointed to manage the complaint should legal proceedings commence.

Sanctions

In the event of a complaint being upheld, the Complaints Panel is empowered to make decisions of sanction against a member of SBSS. The following sanctions, can be applied permanently or for a specified period of time: suspension or termination of volunteering with SBSS. In addition, or as an alternative, to these sanctions, the Complaints Panel may make recommendations to the member regarding, for example: ceasing to practise, either temporarily or permanently; changing working structures and management systems; undertaking further training or personal therapy; increasing and/or changing supervision arrangements.

In addition, or as an alternative, to these sanctions the Complaints Panel may make recommendations to SBSS Trustees, for example: revising the organisation's complaints procedure; changing working structures and management systems; and increasing and/or changing supervision arrangements.

The Complaints Panel will state the commencement date and duration of any sanctions to be applied.

The Chair will decide if the requirements of the sanction(s) have been fulfilled and whether the sanction(s) should be lifted. Depending on any cited mitigating circumstances, the Chair has the right to give an extension to the member to fulfil the requirements of the sanction(s). Failure or refusal to comply with a sanction may result in SBSS membership being withdrawn immediately. The Chair will notify in writing the member complained against of any decision made in respect of the fulfilment or otherwise of the requirements of the sanction(s).

Stage 3

If the complainant feels the case is still unresolved he/she may appeal the decision within 30 days. The appeal will be heard by three Trustees including at least one office bearer or by an appointed independent party who were not involved in the initial investigation.

All parties involved in the complaint will be informed in writing of the outcome of the complaint procedure, which will take no longer than 20 working days, and a complaints handling record will be submitted to COSCA within 1 month following exhaustion of an investigation into a complaint .

Appeals may be submitted if the complainant is unhappy with the result AND/OR if they feel the complaints process has been handled badly.

Stage 4

If the complainant feels that the case is still unresolved, he/she may submit the complaint to COSCA:

COSCA

16 Melville Terrace, Stirling, FK8 2NE

phone 01786 475140 email: info@cosca.org.uk web: www.cosca.org.uk

A time limit of one month from the time the complainant was informed by the member about the exhaustion of their complaint investigation is allowed for a complaint to be submitted to COSCA.

This policy was adopted by SBSS Committee on

Signed Chair

All SBSS policies will be reviewed annually or earlier if changes in legislation occur.

Review date Chair

[Associated Documents](#)

[COSCA Statement of Ethics and Code of Practice & COSCA Complaints Procedure](#)

[Complaints Handling Record](#)

[Complaints Leaflet](#)