

Winchester Youth Counselling

User Feedback and Complaints Policy

1. Introduction

1.1 Winchester Youth Counselling exists to provide a quality service to young people living in the district of Winchester. We believe that users of the project should have a right to comment on the service they have received and to make suggestions for improvements.

1.2 Young people who have gone through a process of counselling will be asked to provide feedback on what they have gained from coming to counselling and what improvements they feel they need to make in the future. They will also be encouraged to feedback comments on their views about our service and how it can be improved.

2. Definitions: (From Cambridge Dictionary 2025)

Feedback - Information or statements of opinion about something.

Complaint - A statement that something is wrong or not satisfactory.

Compliment - A remark that expresses approval, admiration, or respect.

2.1 We believe that the majority of our clients value the service provided to them, however, we recognise that there may be occasions when a client feels dissatisfied with the service they have received and may wish to make a complaint.

2.2 We believe that having a procedure which enables clients to make complaints about our service is an essential safeguard for users. This is especially important as young people who use our services are often extremely vulnerable.

2.3 User feedback including complaints provides us with essential information which enables us to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of our service and also helps us improve our service.

2.4 If an allegation, rather than a complaint is being raised, please see our [Whistleblowing and Allegation Management Policy](#).

3. Procedure:

3.1 All young people using our service should be encouraged to give on-going feedback throughout the duration of their counselling sessions. Regular reviews should be held with

the counsellor to reflect on progress made. Clients will also be asked to complete a feedback questionnaire on Microsoft Forms at the end of their counselling. These evaluation forms will be collated on Microsoft Forms and reviewed by the Co-Clinical Leads for monitoring and evaluation purposes.

3.2 The Client Contract given to young people at the start of their counselling sessions includes an outline of the complaints process and the process for making allegations and gives the email address for the CEO. The process should be flagged up when the contract is introduced.

How to make a complaint

3.3 The following three stages outline the procedure which occurs when a complaint is made. The complaint will only progress to the next stage if the client is unsatisfied with the outcome of the previous stage.

Stage 1

3.4 If a young person is dissatisfied with the service they have received, this should be discussed with their counsellor or staff member in the first instance. The counsellor/staff member should explore with the client the nature of their dissatisfaction and how it could be resolved.

3.5 If the young person feels unable to complain for any reason such as special needs, disability, they are entitled to find a 'third person' or advocate to help them make the complaint.

3.6 If a satisfactory resolution is reached the counsellor/staff member should record the details of the dissatisfaction and outcome in a Note or Attachment in Tacklit. The CEO and Co-Clinical Leads should also be informed about this.

Stage 2

3.7 If a satisfactory solution cannot be found, the counsellor or staff member should inform the young person of their right to make a formal complaint to the Co-Clinical Leads (if the complaint does not involve them). The Co-Clinical leads would then contact the young person concerned and ask them to put their complaint in writing. All complaints passed to the Co-Clinical Leads should be recorded and the complainant contacted within 7 working days to acknowledge receipt of the complaint. If the complaint is still not resolved, they will also be informed of their right to contact the CEO and the Winchester Youth Counselling Board of Trustees.

3.8 The Clinical Leads, CEO or member of the Board of Trustees would then investigate the complaint and agree to hold a meeting with the complainant to explain to him/her their findings. This meeting should take place within 3 weeks of the formal complaint being received.

Stage 3

3.9 If the complainant is still unhappy with the outcome of this meeting, a member of the management committee would advise him/her of their right to appeal.

3.10 The appeal would then be sent to an outside Consultant who can offer an objective opinion. The choice of consultant would have to be agreed by the complainant and by Winchester Youth Counselling. A member of the Board of Trustees would then prepare a report for the Consultant detailing the background of the complaint and action taken to date.

3.11 The Consultant's decision will then be final. The complainant will receive a written reply from the Consultant to inform him/her of their final decision within 8 weeks of acknowledging receipt of the appeal.

4. Complaints from parents and carers

4.1 Parents and carers are entitled to make complaints either on a client's behalf or on their own accord. Any formal complaints should be put in writing to ensure that the complaint is reviewed by the appropriate person(s). If a complaint is made via a phone call or in person, the complainant will be asked to put the complaint into writing and send it to admin@winchyc.org, which will then be passed on to the appropriate person (Co-Clinical Leads and/or CEO).

4.2 Similar procedures and stages as to those stated above will be used to record and resolve the complaint as stated above, however, due to confidentiality and safeguarding concerns, the CEO and/or Clinical Leads would have to assess the complaint on a case-by-case basis.