

POLICY FOR DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS FROM SERVICE USERS OR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

1. Introduction

The quality and standard of service that Glasgow Council on Alcohol provides to the individuals who use our services are at the centre of the organisation's activities. The views of our users are important in helping us to maintain and improve our services. It is crucial that any complaint or dissatisfaction about the service that we have provided is dealt with swiftly, satisfactorily and treated as a high priority. Complaints are distinctive from Feedback. Feedback is when service users have no expectation of a personalised response. **A formal complaint is where a complainant expects a response.** GCA will display the Complaints Policy and Procedures on noticeboards within GCA premises and make them known to service users. Documents will be made available in other languages and formats on request and where possible. Anonymous complaints and complaints by third parties and/or representatives are acceptable.

This policy applies to members of staff and volunteers.

Complaints should be submitted to a Team Leader or to Head of Service, 14 North Claremont Street, Glasgow G3 7LE, who will forward it to the appropriate member of staff.

2. Principles

In dealing with a complaints and concerns the GCA approach will be open and transparent and the consideration of the issues will be fair and reasonable.

GCA staff will: -

1. Assist the complainant in any way possible to have the complaint communicated and understood clearly.
2. Provide a response to the complaint.
3. Establish clearly what is important to the complainant(s).
4. Ensure that issues are resolved promptly within agreed time scales.
5. Be consistent and impartial in dealing with responses.
6. Communicate effectively with all concerned.
7. Advise the Head of service in writing of all service user concerns whether they are resolved at local level or not.
8. Record all and every complaint, concern.

3. Resolution

It is expected that most complaints will be resolved at local level or service level through the staff member who receives the complaint. If this fails to satisfy the complainant, a formal complaint can be made to the organisation's Head of Service based at Head Office. For further practical guidance, please see Complaints Procedures in Appendix 1.

PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS FROM SERVICE USERS OR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

1. Informal processes

- 1.1 It is expected that most concerns can and will be resolved informally at local level without the complainant needing to resort to the formal complaints procedure. Please see Appendix 2 for an informal complaints form. Anyone raising concerns should be provided with a copy of the complaints leaflet. Please see Appendix 3 for a formal complaints leaflet.
- 1.2 If the complainant is not satisfied following this local approach, then he/she should be advised that there is a formal complaints procedure and it should be confirmed that they have been provided with a copy of the complaints leaflet.
- 1.3 All concerns raised should be recorded in some form. If the issue does not warrant a complaint form it should still be logged in complaints log which is held on the company drive. For example comments regarding unanswered phone calls to offices may be offered as feedback rather than an actual complaint.

2. Formal complaints procedure

- 2.1 All complaints will be dealt with in accordance with the GCA Complaints Policy and Procedures.
- 2.2 Complaints will be handled and resolved locally as far as possible.
- 2.3 Any service user or member of the public wishing to make a formal complaint should be sent a copy of the complaint form, please see Appendix 3. Any other relevant documentation should also be made available on request.
- 2.4 Complainants can submit the complaint in person, in writing, telephone or by email.
- 2.5 The initial contact from the complainant will be acknowledged in writing within 14 working days. He/she will then be kept informed, as appropriate, of the progress being taken to address the issues.
- 2.6 Where a formal complaint has been received by an office, the Line Manager will be advised immediately. He/she will then determine how the complaint will be investigated and dealt with and will either manage the complaints procedure his/herself or pass it to the appropriate Head of Service. The Head of Service will be informed on every occasion of a formal complaint from a dissatisfied service user.

- 2.7 An appropriate, impartial investigator will be appointed to investigate the complaint in a confidential manner. The investigator(s) will hear separately and not together the evidence from either party.
- 2.8 The party complained against and the complainant have the right to be accompanied and/or represented by a supportive person of their choice at the meeting.
- 2.9 All parties involved in the complaint can, where relevant, declare a conflict of interest to a designated person.
- 2.10 The individual identified to manage the complaints procedure can halt the complaint at any stage should it emerge that legal action is under way, pending or intended and can halt the procedure until any legal process is complete.
- 2.11 All complaints should be raised within a reasonable timeframe from the incident giving rise to the complaint.
- 2.12 We aim, as far as possible, for the complaint to be investigated and a status response made to the complainant within 14 working days. Resolution of complaints should take a maximum of 28 working days. If, for any good reason, it is going to take longer then the complainant will be advised accordingly in a timely manner.
- 2.13 If a complaint is specifically about a member of staff or volunteer, then the staff member/volunteer will be advised of the nature and status of the complaint and offered support where appropriate.
- 2.14 Depending on the seriousness of the complaint against a member of staff or volunteer, it may be appropriate to follow steps laid out within the GCA Disciplinary Policy.
- 2.15 If the complainant is not satisfied with the response, then he/she will be advised to contact the Head of Service, who will liaise with all appropriate senior members of staff to determine the review process/appeal.
- 2.16 Complaints received directly at the Head Office will normally be recorded and acknowledged by the Head of Service and forwarded to the service, appropriately for action.
- 2.17 If a complaint is received in relation to a counselling or counselling related activity, the Head of Service will complete the proforma 'Report to COSCA at Conclusion of Complaints Proceedings' and submit it COSCA.

3. Criminal offence

- 3.1 In some cases, the original complaint, or the results of an investigation, may suggest that a criminal offence has been committed by a volunteer or member of staff. The decision to breach confidentiality should normally be taken by a senior member of staff.

Please see GCA Confidentiality Policy and Procedures for further information on reporting criminal offences.

4. Records and reports

4.1 A record must be kept of all complaints listing:

- Date the complaint was received
- Time the complaint was received
- Name and address of complainant
- Description of the nature of the complaint
- Who the complaint was addressed to
- Who dealt with the complaint
- Action taken
- Outcome
- Reasons for decisions taken
- Any future action required
- Initial and final response to complainant

Please see attached record forms for more information.

4.2 Copies of complaints and associated correspondence/notes must be kept for six years. In the case of young people records should be kept for six years or until they are 21 years old, whichever is the longer.

4.3 A report of the number and nature of the formal complaints received and dealt with will be provided to the Board as part of the quarterly performance reporting arrangements. The Heads of Services will report routinely to the Chief Executive Officer as a matter of course in all instances of received complaints.

4.4 The Heads of Service can, if so deemed necessary (or beneficial) and following discussions with the Chief Executive Officer, direct a staff member (or members) out with the department receiving the complaint to lead any investigation. However, the concept of dealing with complaints at the level the dissatisfaction was experienced is the general approach adopted by GCA.

4.5 **Counselling service and counselling related activities**

GCA is an organisational member of COSCA (Counselling and Psychotherapy in Scotland). If an individual is unable to resolve their complaint with GCA and their complaint is in relation to the above service they can contact COSCA (Counselling & Psychotherapy in Scotland).

Any complaint must be made in writing using the Proforma for Submitting a Complaint to COSCA and within the procedures laid down in the COSCA Complaints Procedure (see www.cosca.org.uk under Complaints).

The above proforma can be obtained from COSCA. This must be completed and sent, signed, dated and marked 'private and confidential' to the Chief Executive, COSCA (Counselling & Psychotherapy in Scotland), 16 Melville Terrace, Stirling FK8 2NE.

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

5. Confidentiality

- 5.1 Confidentiality must be respected at all times. Information concerning complaints should only be shared with those engaged in the process, on a 'need to know' basis. Please see the Confidentiality Policy and Procedures for further information. Any breach may result in disciplinary action.

Complaint Record – Informal (Local Level) Form 1

Date received:		Received by:	
How received:	Caller <input type="checkbox"/>	Telephone <input type="checkbox"/>	Letter <i>(attach copy)</i> <input type="checkbox"/>
Name of complainant:			
Address:			
Telephone number:			
Nature of complaint:			
Action taken:			
By whom:			
If the complaint was resolved locally, detail the action taken and the proof of the complainant's satisfaction with the action taken:			
Signed: _____		Date: _____	
Pass to Head of Service for information reporting purposes			
If the complaint becomes formal, see Form 2.			

Complaint Record – Formal Form 2

Passed to:		By:
Date received:		Time:
Name of complainant:		
Address:		
Telephone number:		
Nature of complaint:		
Acknowledged: <i>(date & copy of letter attached)</i>		
Action taken to resolve:		
Action taken by: <i>(name, title, date)</i>		
Complainant's reaction to response:		
How can we make sure this doesn't happen again:		
Head of Service to sign off		
Signed: _____		Date: _____