



Key Contact: Senior Management Team (SMT)

Date : 1st June 2025

Review Date: 1st June 2028

Complaints Policy and Procedure

At Survivors' Network, we are brave, we are compassionate, we are empowering and we are collaborative. These values guide how we interact with each other and serve our community.

This means:

We centre survivors in everything we do

We attention to and transform power

We practice care and love

We tackle intersecting forms of oppression

We build a culture of openness and are open to change

We do the work

We believe that by living these values, we can create a stronger and more effective charity that makes a meaningful difference in the world.

We strive to ensure that these values are reflected in the creation and implementation of all Survivors' Network policies.

Our commitment

Survivors' Network is committed to delivering efficient and high-quality services. We aim to be open, to answer for our actions and to respond to enquiries in an effective and professional manner. This complaints procedure builds upon our commitment to equal opportunities and data protection. We are members of the Fundraising Standards Board and the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP). Survivors' Network strives to be a learning organisation, where we invite all feedback from service users and stakeholders. It is essential that staff (sessional and contracted), volunteers and trustees are able to identify, receive and direct any concerns about the services we provide. This policy is on the website.

Helping us to put things right

Survivors' Network is always keen to hear views of the people we are in contact with about our performance: things that we are doing well and areas for improvement. We recognise that things may go wrong and, as a result, we may not provide the standards of service that we have set ourselves. We are especially keen to know when this happens as it gives us an opportunity to put things right and to learn from our mistakes. That way, we can get it right next time. Below we provide time frames for our complaints. If for any reason we will not be able to meet this time frame we will contact you to agree a new time frame.

What is a complaint?

Survivors' Network regards a complaint as:

"Any written or spoken expression of dissatisfaction about Survivors' Network and its services, where the client or stakeholder is wanting us to investigate"

How do you go about complaining about us?

You can make a complaint to any member of our staff or volunteers. You can make a complaint:

- in person
- by phone
- in writing by post or e-mail

Once a complaint has been received, we will:

- treat the complaint seriously, however it is made
- investigate all complaints regardless of when the incident happened, although we may be restricted in any investigation of an event/incident that happened over six months ago
- do our best to deal with it professionally and within the agreed time frames
- apologise when we have got things wrong
- explain our position or any action we take
- give explanations which are clear and easy to understand
- give you contact details for an individual who will deal with your complaint
- tell you how to take your complaint further if you wish to do so
- consider (with your input) how to avoid the same / similar issue arising, if applicable
- aim to resolve the complaint to our mutual satisfaction

Complaints Procedure

We will take your complaint seriously and endeavour to meet all timetables that are set out here. Sometimes however it is not always possible to meet the scheduled time frames, for example due to staff absence, office closures or if the issues are particularly complex or require us to speak to a number of other individuals. However, we will always ensure that we inform you of any delay and agree a new timetable with you.

The investigation will include some or all of the following:

- phone call/meeting with you to ensure we have all relevant information
- clarification of your desired outcome

- review of any relevant paperwork/case notes/policies/procedures
- interview with staff/volunteers/witnesses
- keep a record of all actions and meetings taken
- depending on the investigation findings; Progress to a formal disciplinary hearing if there is sufficient evidence that one or more than one member of staff may have acted in a way which raises concerns and requires further investigation. Please see the Disciplinary Policy for further information.
- a written outcome with actions / recommendations. There may be limits to the detail of the information that we are able to share with the complainant due to data protection (GDPR).

Stage One – Informal Complaint

We will always try to resolve any concern or complaint informally in the first instance. It is always best practice for the complainant and the member of staff or volunteer to attempt to resolve the issue directly. If this is not appropriate or not possible, the complaint should progress to stage two.

Stage Two – Formal Complaint

If it is not appropriate or possible for the complaint to be resolved informally, it will then be passed to the relevant service manager. They will then conduct a full and thorough investigation of the complaint and complete an investigation report with their findings. There may be several different outcomes from the investigation: these may be informal (e.g. learnings and improvements for the organisation) or more formal. One of the formal outcomes may be a recommendation to progress to a formal disciplinary hearing. Please see the Disciplinary Policy for further information. Following the investigation outcome and findings we will respond to you in writing according to the stated timeframes (giving an outcome of the investigations and ensuring GDPR is followed). If the complaint concerns more than one service or relates directly to the actions of a manager, it will be investigated by a senior manager.

Stage Three – Escalated Complaint

If you are unhappy with the outcome or investigation of your complaint, you can ask for your complaint to be escalated to a more senior manager.

They will respond to your complaint according to our timeframes and will review the investigation and all relevant documentation and evidence found during the investigation, and also investigate any additional evidence provided or found. Depending on the findings; the outcome may be a recommendation to progress to a formal disciplinary hearing, where appropriate. Please see the Disciplinary Policy for further information.

Stage Four – Board Review

If there is still a concern regarding the outcome or the investigation of your complaint, you can ask the Board of Trustees to review your complaint. The Board will assess any reasons you give for being unhappy along with any supplementary evidence. They will inform you in writing if they feel that your letter warrants an additional investigation.

Stage Five – External review

If you are still not happy with the way that Survivors' Network has managed and addressed the complaint, then we will take your complaint to the Fundraising Standards Board (for complaints relating to fundraising) or the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (for complaints relating to therapeutic support).

We aim to work in an honest and transparent way to the highest ethical standards.

If the complaint is about a senior manager, it will be escalated to the SMT. If the complaint is about the SMT, it will be passed to the CEO or Chair of the Board of Trustees to investigate. The stages outlined above may be contracted as a result.

| Stage / Process | Time frame for response from Survivors' Network |
|--|--|
| Complaint received | |
| Acknowledge and send copy of policy | 5 working days after complaint received |
| Stage 1: Resolve informally between complainant directly with relevant SN staff / volunteer, if appropriate. If not appropriate or resolution not possible, move to: | 15 working days after complaint received |
| Stage 2: Relevant manager to investigate | 30 working days after passed to Stage 2 |
| Stage 3: CEO to investigate / review | 15 working days after passed to Stage 3 |
| Stage 4: Chair of Board of Trustees to investigate / review | 15 working days after passed to Stage 4 |
| Stage 5: British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy, Rape Crisis England and Wales to investigate | https://rapecrisis.org.uk/complaints/ https://www.bacp.co.uk/about-us/protecting-the-public/professional-conduct/how-to-complain-about-a-bacp-member/ |

Complaints that we may not be able to investigate

Whilst we do not put a time frame on any complaints received (you can complain about something irrespective of how long ago it happened), we will be limited in our ability to carry out an investigation where something happened over six months and the longer ago, the more restricted we will be in our ability. It may be that a complaint relates to an incident that happened such a long time ago that we will not be able to investigate at all.

Sometimes, we may define a complaint as an unreasonable complaint, and in these circumstances, we may decide not to investigate a complaint. This decision is only taken on very rare occasions and will always be taken as a joint decision by more than one person to include the SMT/CEO and/or the Chair of Trustees.

A complaint may be regarded as unreasonable when the person making the complaint:

- Refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance.
- Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints

- procedure.
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the
- complaints procedure or with good practice.
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds.
- Refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into that complaint, where the
- complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and
- completed
- Seeks an unrealistic outcome.
- Makes excessive demands on the charity by frequent, lengthy, complicated and
- stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and
- by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.

For more information on how we store information and our commitment to confidentiality and keeping you safe please see our Data Protection and Confidentiality policies.