

# National Complaints Policy & Procedures

If you wish to make a complaint but have not used the Services of RS – Couple Counselling Ayrshire yourself, it may be that our **National 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Complaints Policy & Procedures** would be best suited to your issue. This is available from the Service on request.

November 2014

Couple Counselling Ayrshire is a member of Relationships Scotland

Complaints should be addressed to:

The Manager  
RS – Couple Counselling Ayrshire  
139 Main St, Ayr  
KA8 8BX

To be read alongside Guidance on the Complaints Policy and Procedures for the:

- Complainant
- Person complained against and
- the Service investigating the complaint. Guidance is also available on the National Complaints Appeal Procedure.

Anonymous complaints will be dealt with through the 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Complaints Policy & Procedure

## NATIONAL COMPLAINTS POLICY

All service users have the right to formal consideration of matters about which they feel unhappy or aggrieved relating to all services provided by RS – Couple Counselling Ayrshire  
This policy covers complaints that may arise from counselling, mediation, contact centres and other family support provided by members of Relationships Scotland.

If you require the policy and accompanying procedures in a different language or format please ask and we will try and accommodate that request.

The aims of this policy are to:

- resolve matters co-operatively, informally and as quickly as possible. At all stages of the process (see below) the complaint will be discussed with the individual/s that raised the issue and the person/s complained against. The process will be kept confidential from anyone not directly involved or is part of the investigation process.
- make every effort to ensure speedy and effective resolution of the matter.
- keep a written record of the complaint process at all stages. All information relating to the complaint will remain in a confidential file for 3 years after which time it will be destroyed.
- give both the complainant and the individual complained against the right to appeal against any action decided on.

Complaints are accepted within 3 years of the date of allegation and will be dealt with within 6 months of a formal complaint being raised.

### STAGES

Initial contact with the service

- |         |   |
|---------|---|
| Stage 1 | Spoken or written contact with the Service Manager*# / Chair of local Board   |
| Stage 2 | Formal written complaint lodged (help with writing letters can be obtained from the Citizens Advice Bureau, Advocacy Service or similar organisation) |
| Stage 3 | Formal consideration of Complaint (see guidance on complaints procedure)  |
| Stage 4 | Appeals Procedure: Appeals Panel appointed to investigate the complaint (see guidance on appeals procedure)   |

If the Service is a member of COSCA, and the complainant is not satisfied after the appeals process is completed, the complaint can be submitted directly to COSCA, 16 Melville Terrace Stirling FK8 2NE.

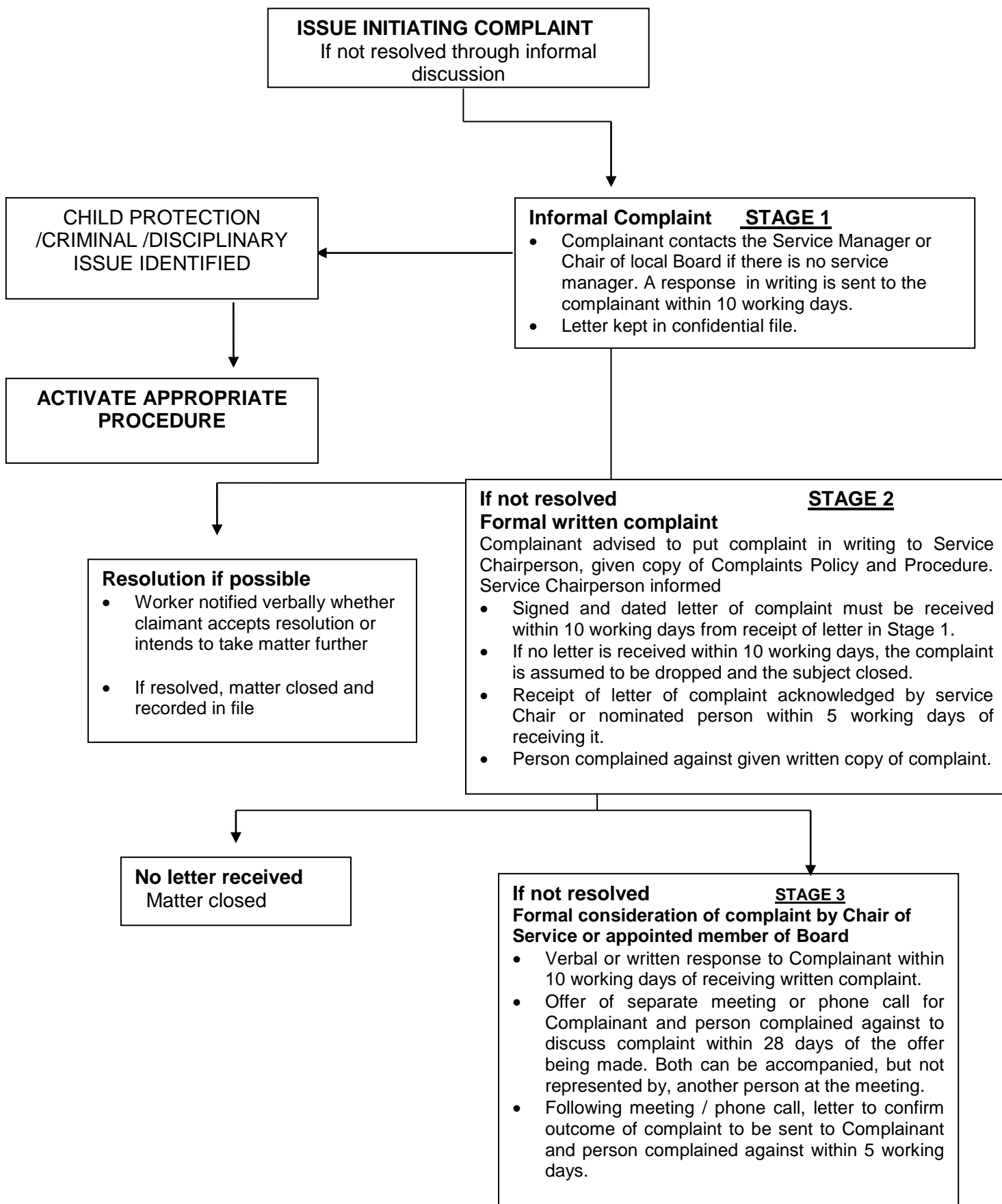
COSCA's complaints procedure can be viewed at:

[http://www.cosca.org.uk/new\\_documents.php?headingno=52&heading=Complaints](http://www.cosca.org.uk/new_documents.php?headingno=52&heading=Complaints) see section 2 on how to make a complaint.

\* manager will herein be used to describe the person in charge of running the local service

# if they are the focus of the complaint it will be handled by someone on the local Service Board of management

## COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE



**STAGE 3 OUTCOME**

Complaint upheld

Complaint dismissed

**Complainant accepts Service response** (does not appeal within 28 days)  
• Worker notified in writing

**National Disciplinary Procedures will be followed. This may lead to sanctions including additional supervision and/or (re)training in a specified area**

The Person complained against can follow internal grievance procedures if they are dissatisfied with outcome of the complaint.

**Complainant does not accept Service response**  
**STAGE 4: APPEALS PROCEDURE**

Appeals can be lodged only when all the previous stages of the procedures have been exhausted and on the following grounds

1. New evidence is available that was not considered when the original complaint was made
2. That the correct procedures were not followed

*The appeal must be lodged in writing, signed by the complainant (appellant) and contain the grounds for the appeal. It must be addressed to the Service Chair and received within 28 days of the letter confirming the outcome of the complaint or the right to appeal is lost*

This letter will be acknowledged by the Service Chairperson within 5 working days of receipt, copied to the person complained against. A copy of the National Complaints Appeals Procedure will accompany this letter.

The Service Chairperson arranges for an Appeals Panel to consider the appeal within 20 working days of receiving the letter lodging the appeal. Appeals Panel to consist of a representative of local service committee, (who has not dealt with the appeal before), a manager or board member from another local service who will chair the Panel and a member of staff from Relationships Scotland National Office.

The Appeals Panel will decide if there are grounds for appeal and if so will offer to discuss this with the appellant. This offer in writing will be made within 20 working days of receiving the appeal letter. If clarification is required from the person complained against, they will also be offered a meeting with the Appeals Panel.

The appellant has 28 days from the written offer of discussion to take up this offer. Otherwise the right of appeal is lost. The appellant must attend the appeal meeting in person and can be accompanied, but not represented by, another person.

Outcome of the appeal must be notified in writing to the appellant and the person complained against by the chair of the Appeals Panel within 5 working days of completion of the Panel's work. This will be within 10 working days of the meeting.

Appeal upheld

Appeal dismissed. Can be referred to COSCA if the Service is a member

**End**

**The maximum time for a complaint to be investigated is 6 months**  
**The process will be reviewed to assess its effectiveness and to identify any learning points.**  
**Action will be taken wherever possible to prevent recurrence of the complaint**