

COMPLAINT POLICY

At Patchouli Therapy, I recognise the importance of maintaining a professional working practice. This complaint policy outlines the way complaints are handled. I am committed to providing the highest-quality service, and the procedure is outlined here.

If you are unhappy with any part of my service, or if you have a complaint about how I practice, please raise it with me as soon as possible so I can address it promptly. All complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially, whether informally or formally.

I aim to treat you with consideration and respect, and to act in accordance with the Ethical Frameworks for Good Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy of the BACP and NCPS governing bodies.

Your complaint will be addressed in the same way as it was raised. For example, if your complaint is verbal, whether in the session or outside, I will respond promptly in the same medium.

Please note that if a complaint is raised during our time in the therapeutic alliance, your right to access therapy is not discriminated against you, should you wish to still have therapy with me.

Aim of the Complaint Procedure

- To enable a complaint to be investigated in a fair manner.
- To enable complaints to be resolved as quickly as possible.
- To allow consequences of mistakes to be put right without unnecessary or discriminatory conflict.
- To improve the quality of the therapeutic practice.

Access to this Complaint Procedure

This policy can be found on my website under Resources: Policy and Terms.

Confidentiality

All aspects of any complaint will be dealt with confidentially. The complainant will be kept aware of the extent and details of any information divulged to a third party, on a need-to-know basis.

The third party may be a counselling supervisor, local authority, your GP or any organisation that may need to be involved, such as the governing bodies or legal services.

The maintenance of the file and administration of the procedure in connection with a complaint will be the responsibility of a named individual, the counsellor.

Who can make a complaint?

- Anyone who is using this counselling service.
- Anyone who has used this counselling service within the past year.
- Anyone who has enquired about the counselling service or is on the waiting list.
- Anyone from another organisation who has enquired about my service.
- Anonymous complaints will be investigated discreetly to determine the appropriate course of action.

Time limits for complaints

Complaints can be accepted up to a year from the time the problem arises. If the complaint refers to a specific client's work, the maximum is six months from the date the client ended counselling with Patchouli Therapy.

How to make a complaint

If you are receiving my counselling service, please bring your complaint to me in the first instance and discuss your concerns with me during the session or by phone (informally) outside the session. If you still feel that I have not addressed your complaint to your satisfaction, please submit a formal complaint, in writing, by email or letter. You can send the letter by post or in person during the session.

Please send your complaint to patch.welling@patchoulitherapy.com. If you have any difficulty making a complaint in person or in writing, please let me know, and I will help you.

Scope of Complaints

Complaints about the facility or the building where I practice cannot be upheld, as I rent the therapy room. I am not responsible for the premises daily, and they do not fall within the scope of our therapeutic working practice. I am not able to mediate a complaint regarding the facility, therapy room, or building.

As a self-employed counsellor renting a room space where we meet, I have no responsibility for any incidents during your visit, including loss or theft in or around the building (in the car park).

Should you wish to raise any concerns regarding the facility, therapy room, or building, please let me know so I can raise a complaint with the establishment.

Communication of the Complaint

Every complaint will be treated and addressed with care, sensitivity and confidentiality. I will attempt to communicate clearly, concisely and directly with all complainants or their representatives promptly.

Client's Safety

If a complaint relates to my professional counselling practice, my primary consideration will always be the client's safety.

Initial Procedure

- Any complaint, made in any way, will be reported and documented, as it may constitute legal evidence.
- I aim to contact the complainant in the same way it was made, whether formally or informally, by phone, letter, or email. If a formal complaint is made, a written statement outlining the issues will be sent, along with a proposal for mediation or improvement.
- If the complainant declines to communicate about the nature of the complaint, it will be escalated to my supervision, governing bodies, or legal services. A formal record will be made in the client's file. I reserve the right to withdraw counselling services during the formal complaint process until the complaint is resolved.
- Formal, or any written complaint received, will be reviewed, assessed and investigated promptly. Please be mindful that, as a self-employed person, I will prioritise active clients' work during the complaint process. I will respond promptly during the working practice hours. This process can take up to two weeks to confirm receipt of the complaint, depending upon my counselling demands.
- A formal record will be made in the client's file and remain in your file for 1 year. I reserve the right to refuse to provide you with further counselling services at any time. However, I will signpost you to another counsellor/therapist for your consideration.
- I reserve the right to refuse further counselling services from the date of the complaint or one year after the complaint.

Formal Procedure Stage 1

Every opportunity will be taken at the time of the initial complaint to settle the concern informally. This may include telephone conversations and/or face-to-face meetings, or a written explanation of the reasons for the decision. I will typically handle the complaint at this stage. Still, a designated independent party, such as a facilitator, consultant, or supervisor, can assist in responding to the complaint and help me manage the complaints procedure.

If further conversation and/or a face-to-face meeting are still required, this will be advised appropriately.

A letter will be sent advising them that a discussion has taken place with the counsellor concerned and offering an opportunity to discuss the complaint formally, if required. This meeting should take place not more than four weeks after receipt of the written complaint.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of discussions at this stage, then another formal written complaint can be escalated to Stage 2.

However, if the complaint is resolved at the meeting, the client, counsellor, supervisor and any other party involved will receive written confirmation that the matter is resolved.

Formal Procedure Stage 2

A formal complaint will be acknowledged in writing within ten working days. A copy of the Complaints Procedure will be enclosed.

I will write to the client and copy any other party who complained against, advising them that the procedure has moved to Stage Two.

As a lone worker, I will seek third-party assistance to ensure the procedure has been handled correctly. The third-party services may include my supervisor, legal services, personnel services, medication services, social services, and mental health consultants forming a panel.

The panel will be provided with all relevant paperwork prior to the meeting. The client, the person complained against, and the panel will be given the opportunity to attend and may be questioned by the panel. The client and the person complained against can be joined by one person of their choice but that person may not actively participate.

The panel's findings and deliberation, in the form of a written report, will be conveyed to the complainant and the person complained against within 28 days. In the event of the client being dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage Two, the complainant may decide to take the complaint to the counsellor's governing bodies directly and may refer their complaint to the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy and/or the National Counselling and Psychotherapy Society.