



## Complaints Policy and Procedure

ICARUS is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation, Charity Registration Number SC049263. Our registered office is Third floor, 3 Hill Street, New Town, Edinburgh EH2 3JP. We are staffed by volunteers who provide a variety of services to clients such as therapeutic practices and interventions, mentoring and coaching.

We view complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to put things right for the person or organisation that has made the complaint.

### Our Policy

- To provide a complaints procedure that is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint.
- To publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that you know how to contact us to make a complaint.
- To make sure everyone at ICARUS knows what to do if a complaint is received.
- To make sure all complaints are treated seriously and confidentially.
- To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way.
- To make sure that complaints, wherever possible, are resolved and relationships are repaired.
- To gather information which helps us to improve what we do.

### Responsibility and Review

Overall responsibility for our complaints policy and its implementation lies with the Board of Trustees of ICARUS. The Board may vary the complaints procedure for good reason. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest and ensure that, at any stage, individuals investigating a complaint have had no previous involvement with the complaint.

Our Complaints Policy and Procedure is reviewed regularly and updated as required. Complaints are reviewed annually to identify any trends which may indicate a need to take further action.

### What is a complaint?

A complaint is either a verbal or written expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, which relates to either how the charity itself has carried out its work or how you have been treated by a volunteer mentor, practitioner or therapist working for the charity. Please note that whilst a verbal complaint may be acknowledged, only a written complaint may proceed further.

### Who can complain?

You can complain if:

- You are currently using our services
- You have used our services in the past
- You have enquired about our services or are on a waiting list for our services
- You are a person from another organisation who has enquired about our services or you are working with or representing someone who is using or has used our services



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Anonymous complaints and any that are deemed to be vexatious or malicious will be investigated by us and we will use discretion in assessing what action should be taken.

This policy does not cover complaints from staff or volunteers engaged by the charity. Staff and volunteers should refer to the charity's internal grievance policy on such matters.

## **Time limits for complaints**

There is no set time limit from the time of the problem arising for making a complaint. However, it is much easier to sort out difficulties if the complaint is brought to our attention as quickly as possible. Generally speaking, a complaint registered after a long period of time has elapsed may be more difficult to investigate than one registered closer to an alleged event.

## **Scope of complaints**

Complaints made under our Complaints Procedure may cover paid staff, volunteer therapists, counsellors or mentors, Officers of the Charity, Trustees and other volunteers or contractors acting for or on behalf of ICARUS.

Complaints must be supported by sufficient evidence to enable an investigation. Our Compliance Officer will make an initial assessment of whether there is a case to answer. If our Compliance Officer is the subject of the complaint, then our Chief Executive Officer (CEO) will undertake this initial assessment.

If there is a complaint against a person who has left ICARUS, this will still be investigated for the purposes of learning and improving the quality of our services.

## **Relationships with other professional organisations**

ICARUS is a member of Veteran Scotland and our volunteers, who are fully qualified in any therapeutic practices and interventions, maintain links with a number of professional organisations. Where a complaint against a therapist is upheld, notification of any action taken by us may also be brought to the attention of other organisations to which that therapist is affiliated. In most cases it is a requirement of professional membership that an organisation be informed by the member immediately when that member has received notice of a complaint or becomes aware that a complaint is being brought against them.

Please note that, if you have already complained to another professional organisation with whom the therapist is also registered, we will not be able to hear that complaint as well. However, we will note the other organisation's decision in any ruling we may make on the matter.

## **Confidentiality**

Every complaint will be dealt with care and in confidence. However, we do use the evidence gathered from any complaint to help improve our services. Records are kept of all complaints and how they are handled and this is reviewed, on an annual basis, by the ICARUS Management Team.

If you are making a complaint, you will be required to give permission for confidential information pertinent to your complaint to be disclosed to all parties cited in and involved in handling the complaint, including the charity's legal or other specialist advisors.

## **Communications**

Should you make a complaint, during the course of dealing with this, we will attempt to communicate clearly and directly with you or your representative in a timely matter.

During the process of you making a complaint, so that the process should not be unnecessarily protracted, replies by you to communications from us must be received within 28 days of the date of any such communication. We would also advise that you send any emails with read receipts on them in order to minimise the likelihood of disputes arising over non-receipt.



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## Our Procedure

We are committed to providing high quality and responsive services where capacity allows. However, we recognise that sometimes you may not be satisfied with those services. If you are unhappy with any part of our service or you have a complaint, we would like to know about it as soon as possible so that we can resolve the situation quickly.

We have set up a complaints procedure to enable you to tell us clearly when and why you are unhappy with the service provided to you or the perceived conduct of a volunteer.

We will try to be as flexible as possible in dealing with your complaint in order to make the situation less stressful for you. In particular, we will endeavour to keep you fully informed throughout the course of the complaint and, in all cases, attempt to bring about a just resolution as quickly as possible.

### How to make a complaint

Most complaints can be resolved informally. Sometimes, all that is required is a conversation. If you are unhappy with a service or the level of service provided by ICARUS, if you can, please try to talk your concerns over with either the department or person concerned. At all times we will try to resolve any problems as quickly and will take every opportunity to settle your concerns informally. This process may include telephone conversations and/or face to face meetings over a video call and conferencing application or a written explanation by email of the reasons for a decision taken.

If you are not happy with the response you get or you feel the complaint is serious, you can raise a formal complaint by contacting our Compliance Officer. This should be done in writing by email to [complaints@icaruscharity.org](mailto:complaints@icaruscharity.org)

In your email, it is important that you provide us with your name, address and telephone number. When explaining the nature of your complaint, please provide as much detail as possible, including relevant dates. This will help us respond appropriately and as quickly as possible. Where relevant, you should also include written confirmation that a copy of your complaint may be forwarded to the individual you are complaining about so that they should have full opportunity to respond.

If you have any difficulty in making your complaint in writing, please let us know and we will try to help you. We are committed to dealing with any complaint fully and in a fair and impartial manner. At all times, we will try to make the procedure for dealing with your complaint the least stressful as possible for you.

### What happens next?

A formal complaint will be logged and will normally be acknowledged in writing by our Compliance Officer, via email within 5 working days.

At this stage we will send you a copy of our Complaints Policy and Procedure, provide you with the name and contact details of the person investigating your complaint and inform you how long we expect it will take to look into your complaint and when you can expect a reply from us. This will vary from case to case.

The person investigating your complaint will have access to all relevant documents and will make a thorough and confidential investigation of the issues raised. They will produce a written report on your complaint, outlining the investigations and any conclusions. They will also make recommendations regarding the action required to bring about a resolution to the complaint and any sanctions which they consider may be appropriate to apply.

You will be advised of any action that we have taken as a result of your complaint.



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## **If you are not satisfied**

If you are not satisfied with our initial response to your formal complaint, you can ask to have it referred to our CEO. Our CEO will review the initial report and you will receive a response from them within 10 working days. If the complexity of your complaint means that it will take longer than 10 days for this review, we will let you know as soon as we can.

If you are still dissatisfied with the outcome then you can request that your complaint is reviewed by the Board of Trustees. This will be done at the next board meeting of the trustees and you will be informed of the date of that meeting.

Whether your complaint is upheld or not, you will receive a written response describing the action taken to investigate your complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of your complaint. The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the Board decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution.

Please note that, if your complaint relates to a specific individual, they will be informed and given further opportunity to respond. They also have the same review process available to them.

At all stages along the process, if any deadlines cannot be met, you will be kept fully informed as to what is happening.

## **Complaints to the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator**

As a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation, we are regulated by the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR). If appropriate, you can also use their complaints procedure.

Information about the kind of complaints the OSCR can involve itself in can be found on their website at <http://www.oscr.org.uk/charities/raise-a-concern/>.