

## Complaints policy and procedures

This complaints policy and procedures relate to all services provided by the Scottish Alcohol Counselling Consortium (SACC) - Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SC044817.

Complaints about alcohol counselling services should be made to the agency providing that service as these will be dealt with through its complaints procedure. Please contact [sacc@scotacc.org](mailto:sacc@scotacc.org) for help if you are unsure who to contact.

The complaints policy and contact form are available on our website [www.scotacc.org](http://www.scotacc.org)

Please contact the SACC Co-ordinator at [sacc@scotacc.org](mailto:sacc@scotacc.org) or on 07934 295047 if you require a copy of this policy in a different format or language - or if you need any support with accessing SACC's complaint procedure or submitting your complaint.

The SACC co-ordinator can explain the complaints process to you, help you understand the process or answer any questions you have. The co-ordinator is not involved in any investigation of complaints.

### Complaints

Complaints can be made by any individual or organisation with a legitimate interest/concern regarding the services provided by SACC.

This includes any dissatisfaction about the standard or quality of service, treatment, action or lack of action you, or your organisation, has received from SACC.

It includes any concern about the service from, or treatment by, SACC's

- staff
- volunteers
- trustees (members of the SACC board)
- members or other workers or groups providing services on behalf of SACC

In response to upheld complaints SACC may take appropriate action such as: -

- amend its policies or procedures
- provide additional training for staff or volunteers
- take up disciplinary action with staff
- terminate an organisational membership of SACC.

The person making the complaint and other parties involved will be informed of the action to be taken.

## **Complaints about people who have left SACC**

If the person complained against has left, an investigation will be conducted for the learning of the organisation. Wherever possible the person complained against will be offered the opportunity to respond to the complaint. If they are still a member of COSCA, COSCA may investigate under its system for dealing with information about members.

As with other complaints, the outcome of the investigation will be sent to COSCA.

## **Anonymous complaints and complaints by third parties**

Complaints made anonymously will be given consideration if there is enough information to enable SACC to make further enquiries as necessary. If there is not sufficient information within an anonymous complaint, it may not be possible to pursue it further. This decision will be made by the Chair of SACC Board.

SACC will consider complaints by third parties affected by its services. However, if it is necessary to investigate the complaint further, consent from the person who was originally in receipt of the service may be sought.

Complaints will not be accepted from third parties acting on behalf of complainants – e.g. solicitors, claim management companies, colleagues, elected members (councillors, MSPs)

The person appointed to manage the complaint can halt the process at any time, should it emerge that legal action is underway, until any legal process is complete.

## **Principles of SACC's complaints policy**

- SACC recognises that complaints can provide important feedback and can help improve services.
- Anyone making a complaint will be given a clear response, within clearly defined timescales, in a sensitive and sympathetic manner.
- SACC's complaints process will be well managed, objective and aimed at resolving problems as promptly as possible in a manner which respects confidentiality and privacy. All complaints will be dealt with fully and fairly.
- All parts of SACC's complaints process will be conducted in a sensitive manner. Different parties involved in the complaint will not come into contact at any point of the investigation.
- SACC's complaints procedure will be completely impartial – any individuals or panel investigating the complaint will be independent of the person making the complaint and the person complained against.
- SACC welcomes independent support and advocacy for anyone who would find it difficult to make a complaint unsupported and will signpost people to other agencies who may be able to help.
- SACC will never discriminate against someone for making a complaint.
- SACC's complaints process reflects its Equality and Diversity Policy and is operated in line with GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation).

## The Complaints Procedure

To ensure complaints are investigated fully and responded to promptly, any complaints should be made as soon as possible after the experience.

The time limit for making a complaints is up to 18 months following the experience. Complaints outwith this time limit may be given consideration depending on the circumstances surrounding the complaint and the feasibility of investigating fully and fairly. This decision will be made by the Chair of the SACC board.

Usually, complaints should be lodged at the informal stage of the complaints procedure and then proceed, as appropriate, through the stages.

However, if the complaint is of a serious nature, the initial complaint can be made at the formal stage.

SACC aims to investigate all complaints as quickly as possible. Should investigation of the complaint involve all stages of the process this will take a minimum of 11 weeks. Where gathering information around the complaint is complex, and the time limit needs to be extended, the maximum time for completion of all stages would be 6 months.

SACC is an organisational member of COSCA (Counselling and Psychotherapy in Scotland) and submits an outcome report to COSCA within one month of completion of any complaint process.

## Confidentiality

When a person makes a complaint, they are required to give permission for all information related to the complaint to be shared with

- anyone mentioned in the complaint
- those handling the complaint and investigation
- anyone giving legal or other specialist advice to the person complained against.

At all stages complaints will be dealt with confidentially by everyone involved. Information would only be shared with other professionals if :-

- others could be put at risk by matters referred to in the complaint
- the complaint is of a very serious nature - for example it is alleged a person has done something illegal.

## Discontinuation of a complaint

A complaint can be discontinued if

- the person making the complaint formally withdraws it
- the person who made the complaint then decides, without a good reason, not to take part or contribute to, the required process
- during investigation it is found that the complaint has been raised to deliberately cause harm or worry, rather than resolve a real concern. In this case, the person making the complaint would still have access to appeal.

Both parties will be informed.

**The SACC Co-ordinator can explain the process to anyone wishing to make a complaint. Please contact [sacc@scotacc.org](mailto:sacc@scotacc.org) or call 07934 295047 if you need any help.**

SACC's Complaint Procedure encompasses the following stages:

### **Stage 1 - Informal – individual member of staff /SACC representative delivering / responsible for the service**

This stage may be used to advise a member of staff, or SACC representative, of a particular problem - allowing them to resolve the matter first hand. The member of staff, or SACC representative, should respond to the complaint within 5 working days and will note the nature of the complaint and their response with the SACC co-ordinator.

SACC will use this information to improve its services where appropriate and will hold this information for 12 months, in case the complaint is taken further or similar complaints are made.

### **Stage 2 – Formal complaint - SACC board or independent investigators**

This stage formalises the complaint and involves the SACC Board which is ultimately responsible for SACC's services. It also provides an opportunity for first time complaints of a serious nature to be investigated at board level.

Details of the complaint should be made in writing to the chair of SACC Board – either by letter, e-mail or using the SACC's contact form found at [www.scotacc.org](http://www.scotacc.org)

**Gary Meek**  
**SACC Chair**  
**c/o GCA**  
**14, North Claremont Street**  
**Glasgow G3 7LB**  
**Tel 0141 353 1800**  
[gary.meek@glasgowcouncilonalcotland.org](mailto:gary.meek@glasgowcouncilonalcotland.org)

Where the person making the complaint is unable to submit the complaint in writing, complaints will be accepted by telephone or other suitable means.

The chair of the board will appoint a complaints manager to manage the process.

The SACC board will act as the complaints panel and will review the action taken to date and the decision reached.

All board members will declare any conflict of interest to the complaints manager. This would include any connection to a specific person involved in the complaint or any personal or organisational interest in the outcome of the complaint.

Any board member who is not independent of the complainant or the person complained against, will not take part in the investigation of the complaint.

Where it is considered that the SACC board is not able to impartially investigate a complaint, for example if the complaint is regarding the board itself or a trustee, the complaints manager will appoint independent investigators from outside SACC.

The person making the complaint has the right to attend the complaints panel with a supportive person of their choice.

The complaints manager will acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days of receipt and outline how and when the complaint will be dealt with.

The person complained against will also be informed of the complaint.

The person making the complaint will not come into contact with the person they have made the complaint against, or their representative, at any point during the formal investigation of the complaint.

The complaints manager will advise of the progress /outcome within 20 working days either by letter or e-mail (this can be advised by telephone on request).

If required, the complaints manager may put an investigation on hold – for example while awaiting information or evidence - or if the people involved in the complaint are unavailable or unwell. This will be explained to all parties and the process re-started at the point it was stopped, as soon as reasonably possible.

The person making the complaint and the person complained about will both be informed of the result. Third parties or representatives will not receive notification of the outcome directly from SACC, unless they have been acting in an advocacy role.

The response about the outcome of the complaint will include:-

- details of the investigation
- the decision on whether the complaint was upheld or not and the reasons for the decision
- any action that will be taken as a result of the complaint and its related timeframe – for example disciplinary action; change to staff role or responsibilities; change to procedures; requirement for additional training
- if it has not been possible to complete the investigation within 20 working days, the reasons why and an expected completion date.

Any action resulting from the complaint will be managed and monitored by SACC Board.

The outcome of the complaint will also be reported to COSCA within one month of the conclusion of the process. (COSCA publish upheld complaints and the action taken in relation to its members and member organisations. SACC is a member organisation of COSCA)

### **Stage Three – Appeal - Appeals panel of independent advisors**

The appeals process is open to all parties involved in the complaints procedure.

An appeals process will commence if the person making a complaint, or the person complained against, is not satisfied with the outcome of the formal complaint at Stage 2.

This is the final stage of SACC's complaint procedure and provides an opportunity for people to have their appeal heard by a panel made up of 2 or 3 external advisers, independent of SACC.

A letter of appeal should be made to the chair of SACC Board within 10 working days of receiving the response from Stage 2. This should outline the reasons why the complainant, or the person complained against, is not satisfied with the response.

The Chair of SACC Board will

- co-ordinate the appeal stage of the complaints procedure
- acknowledge the appeal within 5 working days of receipt
- appoint external advisers

The Chair of SACC Board will respond to the complainant within 30 working days of the appeal, advising the outcome from the Appeals Panel, which is final.

This response will include:-

- the reason for the decision
- any action to be taken in light of the complaint
- if it has not been possible to complete the appeal investigation within 30 working days, the reasons why and an expected completion date.

If you are unhappy with the outcome of your appeal you can submit a complaint to COSCA under its Complaints Procedure (see below) within one month. COSCA will make sure that SACC's complaints process has been followed and that the outcome is lawful, reasonable and has been properly explained.

## External agencies

**SACC is an organisational member of COSCA (Counselling and Psychotherapy in Scotland) and its specialist training courses are validated by COSCA.**

If you are not satisfied with SACC's response to your complaint, or the outcome of your appeal, you can raise your concerns with COSCA through their Complaints Procedure.

COSCA (Counselling & Psychotherapy in Scotland)

16 Melville Terrace

Stirling

FK8 2NE

01786 475140

info@cosca.org.uk

[www.cosca.org.uk](http://www.cosca.org.uk)

**SACC is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SC044817 and is registered with OSCR (the Scottish Charity Regulator).**

If you are concerned about the Scottish Alcohol Counselling Consortium's complaint procedure or any other aspect of how SACC is run you can raise your concern with OSCR

[www.oscr.org.uk/about-charities/raise-a-concern](http://www.oscr.org.uk/about-charities/raise-a-concern)

**Note** - any complaints about alcohol counselling services should be made direct to the agency providing this service.

## Monitoring

The SACC Board will be responsible for ensuring that timescales are met for each stage of the complaints process and for ensuring adequate records are maintained. These will include: -

- name and contact details of the complainant
- details of complaint
- tracking/progress information
- outcome of the complaint and the monitoring of any action taken in response to upheld complaints
- number of complaints which include a racist incident
- number of complaints which contain an allegation of discrimination
- any improvement or changes to SACC services or policies made in response to the complaint.

## Informing the public and staff

All SACC staff, volunteers, trustees (members of the SACC board), SACC members or other workers or groups providing services on behalf of SACC will be made aware of SACC's complaints procedure.

All participants on SACC training courses and volunteers undergoing SACC's volunteer alcohol counselling supervised practice will be provided with information on SACC complaints procedure and other relevant policies.

SACC's complaints policy and procedures is available to the public at [www.scotacc.org](http://www.scotacc.org)  
The website is publicised on all SACC leaflets and printed materials.