



Compliments and Complaints Policy and Procedures

Aisling Psychotherapies recognises that, at times, things can and do go wrong. Aisling Psychotherapies believes that it is in everyone's best interest to resolve complaints and concerns at the earliest possible stage.

This policy is intended to cover all compliments and complaints for Aisling Psychotherapies regardless of whether the compliment or complaint is received from clients, employees, contractors, or others.

Aisling Psychotherapies expresses the difference between a concern and a complaint: A concern is defined as "an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought". Aisling Psychotherapies will resolve concerns through day-to-day communication as far as possible. A complaint is "an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action". Aisling Psychotherapies intends to resolve complaints informally, at the earliest possible stage.

Complaints

This policy does not cover complaints procedures relating to:

- Safeguarding policy

Please see our separate policies for safeguarding procedures.

Key Stages of Complaints

There are THREE key stages of this Complaints Policy:

Stage One - An Informal discussion of the concern.

Stage Two – A complaint is formally made, and the clinician takes this to their supervision, and feedback on the discussion is given to the client.

Stage Three – The Complaint is formally investigated by another clinician/ supervisor who works with Aislings and is unrelated to the incident.

If you are still not satisfied with the response or outcome of a complaint and you believe there has been a breach of professional ethical guidelines. A complaint can be made to the professional governing body of the clinician. This information will be in the therapeutic/ coaching contract you give at the start of the work. If this information is unavailable, contact Aislings and we will provide it to you.

Email: laura@aislingpsychotherapies.com

Web: www.aislingpsychotherapies.com

Company number 14886028

Overarching Principles

When responding to complaints, we aim to:

- Encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible. Where this is not possible, formal procedures will be followed.
- Ensure we publicise the existence of this policy and make it available on the website and in paper format if requested. The policy aims to be simple to understand and use.
- Have representatives who will be impartial and non-adversarial when handling complaints.
- Facilitate a full and fair investigation by an independent person, where necessary
- Allow swift handling within established time limits for action and keep people informed of the progress.
- Where possible, respect the complainants' desire for confidentiality.
- Treat complainants with respect
- Keep complainants informed of the progress of the complaints process.
- Aisling Psychotherapies will aim to allow the complainant to complete the complaints procedure in full.
- Provide information to Aisling Psychotherapies so that services can be improved.
- Deal with all complaints fairly, providing high-quality service to those who complain. Where a complainant acts unreasonably, we have a procedure for managing unreasonable complaints (see Appendix A).

Investigating the Complaint

At each stage, the person dealing with the complaint should ensure that they:

- Establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved.
- Clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved.
- Meet with the complainant or contact them (if unsure or further information is necessary). Clarify if ethical guidelines have been breached.
- Clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.
- Interview those involved in the matter.
- Aisling Psychotherapies expects that complaints will be made as soon as possible after an incident arises.

Resolving Complaints

At each stage, the person dealing with the complaint should consider ways to resolve the complaint. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- an apology
- an explanation
- an admission that the situation could have been handled differently.
- an assurance that the event complained or will not recur.
- an explanation of the steps taken to ensure that it will not happen again. ● an undertaking to review Aisling Psychotherapies policies.

Monitoring Complaints

Aisling Psychotherapies will monitor the level and nature of formal complaints and review the outcomes regularly to ensure the procedure's effectiveness and make changes where necessary. Procedures for reporting will not name individuals.

Stage One: An Informal Discussion

It is the experience of Aisling Psychotherapies that most concerns and complaints can be resolved informally to the satisfaction of those who raise them. There are many occasions where concerns can be resolved quickly, providing the complainant with the benefit of an immediate response, and avoiding the need to submit a formal complaint. Any member of Aisling Psychotherapies may raise concerns depending on the type of issue to be discussed. Complaints may be made in person or by letter, telephone, or email. If the complainant is unclear who to contact or how to contact them, they should contact the email address on the website.

Aisling Psychotherapies will acknowledge informal complaints within five working days and investigate and provide a response within 4 weeks.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the discussion or is not resolved informally, it will be escalated to a formal complaint. Refer to Stage Two.

Stage Two- Formal supervisor discussion and outcome

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage One of this policy and would like the complaint to be formally investigated, the complainant must put their complaint in writing or, if the complaint has previously submitted a written request, they may now request to proceed to stage two of the process.

The written complaint should provide relevant dates, times, and the names of witnesses of events, alongside copies of any relevant documents. The complainant should also state what they feel would resolve the complaint.

Each clinician or practitioner working with Aislings will have monthly supervision with a more experienced professional each month. If a formal complaint is made and is not resolved informally, this complaint will be taken by the clinician/coach to their supervision, and the details of the case will be discussed. While the supervisor



already has a relationship with the clinician/coach, the supervisor's role is partly focused on the development of the clinician/ coach, and they are ultimately working to guide the client's work of the clinician/coach. This discussion aims to support the clinician/coach in reflecting on the complaint, learning from it, and deciding on the next steps. This discussion and its outcomes will be fed back to the client and provide accountability for the complaint.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of this stage, they can request to continue to the third stage.

Stage Three – Formal Investigation

At this point, the Director of Aisling Psychotherapies will nominate a representative of Aisling Psychotherapies as the investigating officer.

The investigating officer will acknowledge the complaint in writing within five working days.

The investigating officer will speak to the necessary individuals, interview witnesses, and/or take statements from those involved. This could take up to 4 weeks or more.

Written records of meetings, telephone conversations and other documentation will be kept. Once the facts have been established, the Director of Aisling Psychotherapies, where appropriate, will arrange to meet the complainant to discuss the outcome of the investigation. This meeting will be held within 20 working days from the date the response to the complaint was sent to the complainant. The complainant may be accompanied at the meeting by a friend, relative or representative. The complainant should inform Aisling Psychotherapies of the identity of their companion in advance.

In certain circumstances, Aisling Psychotherapies may need to refuse a request for a particular individual to attend any such meeting – for example, if there is a conflict of interest. If this is the case, Aisling Psychotherapies will notify the complainant as soon as they know, so the complainant can arrange alternative accompaniment.

A letter outlining the outcomes of the investigation will be sent to the complainant within five working days of the meeting. The letter will include details of how to escalate the complaint to Stage Three if the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome at Stage Two.

If the complaint is against the Director of Aisling Psychotherapies, Stage Two will be carried out by the representative.

Closure of Complaints

Very occasionally, Aisling Psychotherapies may feel that it needs, to close a complaint where the complainant is still dissatisfied.

- Aisling Psychotherapies will do all we can to help resolve a complaint, but sometimes it is simply not possible to meet all the complainant's wishes.
- For this reason, we are entitled to close correspondence (including personal approaches, as well as letters and telephone calls) on a complaint where we feel that we have taken all reasonable action to resolve the complaint and the complaint has exhausted our official process.

Record Keeping

Aisling Psychotherapies will record the progress of all complaints, including information about actions taken at all stages, the stage at which the complaint was resolved, and the outcome and action taken by Aisling Psychotherapies because of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint was upheld). The records will also include copies of letters and emails, and notes relating to meetings and phone calls.

This material will be treated as confidential and held centrally.

This is except where the secretary of state (or someone acting on their behalf) or the complainant requests access to records of a complaint through a freedom of information (FOI) request or under the terms of the Data Protection Bill.

Records of complaints will be kept for a minimum of 7 years.

Learning Lessons

The Aisling Psychotherapies representative will review any underlying issues raised by complaints where appropriate and, respecting confidentiality, determine whether there are any improvements that Aisling Psychotherapies can make to its procedures or practice to help prevent similar events in the future.

Compliments and Suggestions

Aisling Psychotherapies welcomes compliments and suggestions and recognises their importance in celebrating and recognising the success of our service and opportunities for improvement. We will engage with the clients to support service development and improvement. We will share feedback with clinicians/coaches. Compliments may be made in person or by letter, telephone, or email. If the individual is unclear about who to contact or how to contact them, they should contact the address or email on the website.



Appendix A: Aisling Psychotherapies Policy for Vexatious Complainants

Introduction

Aisling Psychotherapies is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially and to providing a high-quality service to those who complain. However, we do not expect clinicians/coaches to tolerate unacceptable behaviour and will take action to protect from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

Aisling Psychotherapies defines vexatious complainants as 'those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with Aisling Psychotherapies would cause significant disruption to the safe and effective operation of Aisling Psychotherapies, harass or threaten any member of Aisling Psychotherapies, or engage in vexatious complaints by seeking to re-open matters that have already been the subject of a concluded complaints procedure.

Where a complainant acts unreasonably, the Director may at any time inform the complainant that the complaints procedure has been exhausted and has come to an end because of the conduct of the complainant.

Vexatious Complaints

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 cooperate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved.
- refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaint's procedure.
- insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice.
- introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be considered and commented on or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their timescales.

- makes unjustified complaints about clinicians/coaches trying to deal with the issues and seeks to have them replaced.
- changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds.
- repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed).
- refuses to accept the investigation findings into that complaint where Aisling Psychotherapies complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed.
- seeks an unrealistic outcome.
- makes excessive demands on Aisling Psychotherapies' time through frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email and telephone while the complaint is being dealt with.

A complaint may also be considered unreasonable if the person making the complaint acts in a manner which is:

- malicious.
- aggressive.
- threatening, intimidating or violent.
- made using abusive, offensive, or discriminatory language.
- made knowing the complaint to be false.
- made using falsified information.
- otherwise made using conduct, which is intended to intimidate, harass or is otherwise similarly inappropriate.

Communications

Whenever possible, the Director will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally before applying an 'unreasonable' determination. If the behaviour continues, the Director will write to the complainant explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it.

For complainants who excessively contact Aisling Psychotherapies, causing a significant level of disruption, we may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after 6 months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately, and the police will be informed. This may include banning an individual from Aisling Psychotherapies.



Signed by Director: *Laura Pattison*

To be reviewed: December 2024

Amendments

Date	Amendment Made	By whom
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