



RASASH Complaints Procedure (Service-Users)

1. Introduction

RASASH is committed to providing services of the highest quality. As part of this commitment, we have established a complaints and feedback procedure.

This procedure is aimed at addressing issues of practice. If there are concerns about the strategic direction or priorities of RASASH, these should be raised directly with the Chair of the RASASH Board of Trustees.

2. Policy Aims

The aim of the procedure is to ensure that individuals who use our services and/or have a working relationship with RASASH, have a clear and straightforward way to make complaints or provide feedback. RASASH aims to take a proactive and supportive approach to tackle all complaints by:

- Sharing complaints procedures with complainants
- Giving guidelines for handling the first stage of complaints
- Outlining procedures for dealing with complaints which are unresolved at the early stages

The principles underlying our policy are as follows:

- Our commitment to equality and diversity and preventing discrimination
- Complainants will be treated with respect and have their complaint taken seriously and dealt with confidentially
- Complainants will have their complaint heard promptly, be given a full explanation and an apology if RASASH has made an error or been at fault
- The complaints procedure will be part of the process of monitoring inclusion, quality, and effectiveness of RASASH's work.

3. Sharing our Complaints Procedure

Details of the complaints procedure and copies of the complaints forms will be displayed within the centre and also be available to download from our website. A copy of the complaints procedure will also be provided to all service users as part of their initial meeting.

We will ensure that information about the complaints procedure will be made available to any individual who expresses a desire to make a complaint. RASASH will endeavour to provide the procedure in other languages or formats on request where practically possible.

The public complaints procedure will outline:

- Our willingness to hear and respond to complaints informally and formally
- Internal procedures for dealing with complaints including time-scales for response
- Next steps should a complainant be dissatisfied with the outcome to date



4. Complaints by Young People or Vulnerable Adults

RASASH recognises that young people and vulnerable adults may need additional assistance to fully access their right to make a complaint. Any young person or vulnerable adult who wishes to make complaints about aspects of our services will be supported to do so.

This may involve assisting them to identify support from others such as parents, friends, teachers, or other workers who may make the complaint on their behalf. If this cannot be achieved, they will be signposted to an appropriate advocacy service as required.

The individual making the complaint will remain at the centre of all procedures and they will be listened to and consulted with at every stage.

5. Complaints by Third Parties

Complaints from Third Parties on behalf of service-users will be accepted. Any third-party complaints must obtain the informed consent of the service-user and/or take care to protect the service-user's right to confidentiality. The complaints procedure also applies to Third Parties.

6. The Procedure

Complaints must be made within twelve months of the service provided or the event complained about. RASASH will treat all complaints or notes of dissatisfaction as a learning opportunity. The procedure will be transparent and well documented in line with the Data Protection Act.

Where necessary, RASASH will apologise to survivors when we become aware of mistakes we have made (even when the survivor is unaware of the issue).

7.1 Informal Complaints

RASASH will treat all notes of dissatisfaction as informal complaints and will seek to resolve them speedily by speaking with the survivor and identifying how they feel the situation can be resolved.

Where appropriate the key worker involved will have this conversation. If this isn't appropriate a senior member of staff will initially speak with the survivor and follow this up with a conversation with the member of staff, the focus of which will be on what learning can be taken from this.

The outcome of informal complaints will be communicated to both the complainer and any staff members concerned within 10 working days.

7.2 Formal Complaints

Formal complaints should be made in writing (complaints form, letter or email) to the Manager of RASASH. The Manager will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 14 working days. Formal complaints will always be investigated by someone independent of the complaint.

An appropriate member of staff or Board member will be appointed to carry out an investigation (if the person carrying out the investigation becomes aware of a conflict of interest at any point during the investigation, they should declare this and excuse themselves). The investigation will



involve meeting with the individual who has raised the complaint, speaking with any other relevant parties, and speaking with any worker concerned.

If a complaint involves an employee or volunteer, they will be informed of the existence of the complaint and given details of the nature of it. Where this could result in disciplinary action being taken, the staff member will be advised of this, and the disciplinary procedure will be followed and appropriate support put in place for the staff member.

Wherever possible the complainer will be informed of the outcome within 28 working days of the complaint being received. Staff will be advised of the outcome within the same timescales. If further time is required for the investigation the individual and staff member will be notified at this point that this is the case.

At this stage we will communicate that;

- The complaint is being taken seriously;
- The reason for the time extension;
- The expected date for the final response;

Once the complaint has been fully investigated, the person carrying out this investigation will decide whether to uphold the complaint or not and any action that needs to be taken by RASASH. This will be communicated to the individual who has made the complaint as well as the staff member(s) involved.

The complainer will be advised they have the right to appeal and should do so in writing to the Chair of the Board.

If a complaint is unsubstantiated or caused by misunderstanding, support will be given to the worker or volunteer.

RASASH is aware that the complaints process may lead to the possibility of litigation, if we are in any doubt about the action, we will seek legal advice. Should we become aware of any legal action the complaints process will pause pending the outcome of the legal investigation.

7.3 Appeal

If complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, they have 28 days in which to appeal in writing to the Board.

No one involved in hearing the original complaint will be involved in hearing the appeal (this may require the appointment of an independent panel to hear the appeal). The complainant should set out their reasons for appealing i.e. the decision was based on incorrect information, additional information is available, or the individual is dissatisfied with the action to be taken.



The Board will review the initial complaint and outcome with the individual and further discuss the matter. They will then provide a decision of the appeal within 28 working days of receiving the complaint.

When all internal complaints procedures have been exhausted and complainants are not satisfied with the outcome, individuals can be directed to the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR).

Contact details will be displayed on complaints forms within RASASH premises and online.

7.4 Discontinued Complaints

The complaint process will be discontinued should the complainant fail or refuse to participate in the complaints process at any stage without a reasonable reason for doing so, or if the complainant formally withdraws their complaint by writing to the Manager indicating they wish to do so. Should this happen, a letter will be issued to the complainant (within 14 working days of receipt) advising them of the discontinuation and if the complaint involved a staff member or volunteer they will also be advised in writing.

7. Recording and Monitoring Complaints

All complaints will be recorded (in line with the Data Protection Act) and they will be monitored by the Manager and Board. This will assist RASASH to understand service users' views and the improvements they would like to see. For each complaint a record will be kept of:

- The note taken by the member of staff complained to at the informal resolution stage
- The written record of the formal complaints procedure
- The written record of any appeal
- All correspondence with the complainer

Records will also include:

- The number and type of complaints
- How quickly they were dealt with
- The action was taken as a result of a complaint
- Any changes to services made as a result of a complaint

8. Confidentiality

All complaints are treated confidentially. The senior management team will be aware of complaints and, if the complaint is about a specific member(s) of staff, then the staff member(s) involved, will be aware that a complaint has been received and is being dealt with.

If a complaint is serious then the fact a complaint has been made should be communicated by the Manager to the Board (at this stage the Board will not be provided details of the nature of the complaint, they will only be informed that a complaint has been received and given the potential timescales for dealing with this). As per our confidentiality policy, the complainants' permission will be sought before any identifying information is shared.



9. Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints may be reported, investigated, or acted upon as the person receiving the complaint sees fit. This will depend on the seriousness of the issue raised, the credibility of the complaint, the prospects of being able to investigate the matter, and fairness to any individual mentioned in the complaint. We do, however, encourage those who complain to say who they are so that we can respond fully to the complaint and let them know the outcome.

10. Aggressive or Obsessive Complaints

We want to deal fairly and honestly with complainers and to ensure that other service users, staff, and RASASH as a whole do not suffer detriment from persons making vexatious complaints. The Manager will refer complaints which they consider vexatious to the Board of RASASH, who will decide whether such complaints are to be treated as being vexatious. If so, the Chair of RASASH will write to the complainer advising that the complaint is to be treated as vexatious. If necessary, the Trustees may request that RASASH's solicitor write to the vexatious complainer to inform them that their behaviour is considered to be unacceptable.

11. Training and Information

The Complaints Policy will form part of the induction programme for all new workers, with all workers receiving a copy of the policy. RASASH in the implementation of this policy will identify any training requirements for workers.

12. Monitoring and review

RASASH will monitor and review this policy every three years as part of the cycle of policy review and when there are relevant changes in legislation or circumstances.



RASASH COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

RASASH aims to provide a quality service to all. We welcome any comments or suggestions on how we can improve our service. However, there may be times when survivors using our service will be dissatisfied and may wish to make a complaint.

This procedure exists for any service-user who is unhappy with the service received and who feels a situation has not been resolved. Complaints can also be made about the conduct of workers. No one will be discriminated against as a result of making a complaint.

This procedure explains:

1. How you can complain
2. Who to contact
3. How we will respond

Please let us know if you require this form in another format e.g. large font or another language.

How to make a complaint

You may complain informally or formally about any aspect of our service.

Informal complaint

It may be that a complaint can be dealt with and resolved informally through discussion with one of our workers. If this is not appropriate or you are unsatisfied with the outcome, you can submit a formal complaint.

Formal complaint

You can submit a formal complaint by:

- **By email:** to info@rasash.org.uk putting 'Complaint' in the subject heading
- **Writing:** to the RASASH Manager at: RASASH, c/o MacLeod & MacCallum, 28 Queensgate, Inverness, IV1 1DJ
- **By telephone:** Call 01463 257 657 and ask for the Manager.

A RASASH worker independent of the issue can be allocated to help you write a complaint or you may have a worker from another agency support you with this. Alternatively, you might wish to seek support from an external advocacy service, such as Citizens Advice Bureau. Whatever you decide, we will do our utmost to facilitate your complaint.

There may be circumstances where it does not feel appropriate to submit a complaint to the RASASH Manager. In these cases, you can contact the Chair of the Board (contact details below).

Anonymous complaint

It is possible to submit a complaint anonymously and we will accommodate this wherever possible. There may be some circumstances that it is not possible to adequately investigate and respond to an anonymous complaint. We therefore encourage those who complain to say who they are so that we can respond fully to the complaint and let them know the outcome.



What happens when a complaint is made?

On receiving a complaint RASASH Manager will:

- Contact you within 14 working days by letter, email, or phone
- Discuss the complaint with you and if you wish to have someone to support you
- Investigate the complaint thoroughly
- Address the complaint sensitively, transparently, and impartially
- Contact you by letter, phone, or email within 28 working days, to inform you of the outcome/progress of the investigation.

Possible Outcomes of Complaints

The outcomes of a complaint will depend on the nature of the complaint made.

- Complaints about a staff member/volunteer:
 - Findings may not be upheld
 - An apology
 - Training recommended
 - Disciplinary action
 - Changes to policies
- Complaints about the building:
 - If we can fix it we will
 - Apologies made
 - Policies/procedures amended

Right of Appeal

If you are not satisfied with the outcome, you can appeal to the RASASH Board who will go over the complaint and outcome with you, with the possibility for further discussion if necessary. After investigation, you will be informed in writing about the outcome. The decision at this point marks the end of our internal complaints process.

If you are still not satisfied with our internal complaints process or outcome you can contact **OSCR on 01382 220446**.

Aggressive or Obsessive Complaints

We take complaints seriously and will address these impartially, fairly, and sensitively. However, there may be rare instances when a complaint is aggressive, obsessive, or made in bad faith. The Manager will refer such complaints to the Board of RASASH. If the Board deems a complaint to be aggressive or obsessive, they will notify the complainer accordingly.

While extremely rare, RASASH cannot tolerate aggressive, violent, or unsafe behaviour towards staff or other service-users. If this occurs, access to our services may be suspended while an investigation takes place. This may result in you not being able to access our services for a specific time or in some cases indefinitely. Such decisions will be made by the Board.