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## **Oakwood Psychology Services Complaints Procedure (from May 2018)**

As part of our commitment to ensuring the quality of our services and facilities, the following procedure explains how we aim to deal with complaints efficiently, fairly and without discrimination. The procedure comprises two stages: Informal and Formal.

### **Who can make a complaint?**

Any person who is affected by, or likely to be affected by and action, omission or decision made by any worker retained by Oakwood Psychology Services; or by the organisation as a whole. Complaints can also be made by a person acting on behalf of a client who is aged under 19 years of age; a client who lacks capacity as defined by the Mental Health Act 2005(a); or a client who has died.

### **Definition of a complaint**

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction or concern with any aspect of the service, including (but not limited to): worker performance relating to client care; facilities and amenities; administrative systems and processes.

### **When can a complaint be made?**

A complaint must be made as soon as possible after the event(s), action(s), or lack of action(s) of concern, up to six months after the event(s), or the date when the event(s) came to the attention of the complainant.

### **How do I raise an informal complaint/concern?**

Informal complaints/concerns can be made in writing (e.g. letter, email) or verbally to any worker at Oakwood Psychology Services. The worker will endeavour to resolve the complaint directly with you, or, with your consent, pass the matter to a Clinical Lead or the Service Director for advice or handling. A record of the complaint will be made including the name of the complainant, what the complaint was about, what steps were taken to respond to the complaint and whether the complainant was happy that the complaint was resolved.

### **How do I make a formal complaint?**

Only if an informal complaint process has been completed but has not been resolved to the complainant's satisfaction should the formal complaints process be used. Formal complaints/concerns can be made in writing (e.g. letter, email) or verbally to Caroline Vermes, Service Director ([cvermes@oakwoodgroup.org](mailto:cvermes@oakwoodgroup.org)), or Joanne Blezard, Clinical Lead ([jblezard@oakwoodgroup.org](mailto:jblezard@oakwoodgroup.org)). The complaint should be accompanied by the reasons why attempts to resolve the matter informally have been unsatisfactory. Details of the complaint should be supported by evidence where possible. A valid email address or postal address for us to send the written response is required.

### **What happens to my complaint?**

Your complaint will be acknowledged within three days, either verbally or in writing. Further information may be requested from you to assist the investigation. A thorough and objective investigation will be conducted. A response will be sent to you including an explanation of how the complaint has been investigated; the findings of the investigation, and any actions to be taken as a result of the investigation. Depending on the outcome of the investigation, it may transpire that no action can or will be taken. A response detailing the outcome will normally be sent in writing, either by post or email, within 20 working

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**Oakwood Psychology Services Limited**  
Director: Caroline Vermes MEd, MBACP (Accred)  
Company Number: 9191591  
Registered Office: c/o Bennett Verby,  
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days of the date the complaint was received. If we are unable to complete the investigation within 20 days you will be notified of this with an explanation why the investigation requires longer to complete, and the anticipated timeframe. A record of the complaint will be made including the name of the complainant, what the complaint was about, what steps were taken to respond to the complaint and whether the complainant was happy that the complaint was resolved.

### **How is my complaint stored and who knows about it?**

Formal complaint letters, our response and any other correspondence relating to the complaint are stored for six years by us in a secure electronic file. The lawful reason for processing this data is performance of our contractual requirements. Formal complaints do not comprise part of a clinical record. Anonymised complaint records are reported to the NHS and the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP). They may be discussed anonymously with relevant workers on the Oakwood team, our insurers, external consultants such as clinical supervisors; or professional bodies such as BACP. Informal complaints are reported anonymously to the NHS and discussed by the Oakwood team, but we do not hold detailed records on these unless they form part of a therapeutic process that is noted in your clinical record, in which case these are handled in accordance with our Security Notice which is available at <https://www.oakwoodhouse.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Oakwood-Psychology-Services-Privacy-Notice-Clients-and-Public.pdf>

### **Can I make an anonymous complaint?**

Anonymous complaints can be made informally by filling in a comment card and placing it in the box in the waiting area, without supplying person identifiable information. However, if a response is requested we need to know how to contact the complainant in writing. There may be situations where the complainant wishes to raise concerns about a particular worker without the worker being told who made the complaint. If so this needs to be explained in the complaint. The investigation will take this request into account but we cannot guarantee anonymity in complaints handling.

### **Escalation**

If the complainant believes the response provided by Oakwood Psychology Services has not been handled fairly or properly in accordance with these procedures the complainant may choose to refer the complaint to:

- a) the Health Service Commissioner (Health Service Ombudsman), where the complaint relates wholly or in part to health
- b) the British Psychological Society and/or the Health and Care Professions Council where the complaint relates to the conduct of a registered psychologist
- c) the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy where the complaint relates to the conduct of a registered counsellor

All complaints will be used by Oakwood Psychology Services to learn how to improve the service and will contribute to our commitment to providing excellent care for our clients.

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