

COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Drafted	May 2013
Date approved by Board	19 th June 2023
Adopted	
Reviewed	January 2015 January 2018 June 2023
Date of next review	January 2026 (or before, in the event of an update to legislation)

Complaints Policy Statement

Somerset and Avon rape and sexual abuse support (SARSAS) is committed to providing a high-quality service to all of our service users, staff, volunteers and management committee members. SARSAS welcomes feedback on all the services it provides and will take all comments seriously and take action where necessary to deal with any issues. SARSAS recognises that complaints are a valuable aid to improving practice and service standards. All formal complaints will be investigated appropriately and complainants will be kept fully informed about the progress and result.

This Complaints Policy and Procedure is aimed at providing a fair and effective complaints framework for service users, volunteers and trustees. It is not for dealing with staff grievances and issues, which should be dealt with through our staffing and volunteer policies and procedures. Whilst this policy is not for dealing with disciplinary matters, if any aspect of the complaint investigation identifies a staff or volunteer performance issue, the disciplinary process will be followed.

Complaints may also be made on behalf of others, provided that the person knows and consents to the complaint being made – or from someone acting on behalf of a person who is unable by reason of physical or mental incapacity to make that complaint themselves.

Definition:

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction with SARSAS's services, a member of staff, a volunteer or trustee (in relation to their work with SARSAS), whether justified or not, that requires a formal response.

SARSAS's responsibility will be to:

- Acknowledge the formal complaint in writing
- Respond within a stated period of time
- Deal reasonably and sensitively with the complaint
- Take appropriate action if required

Monitoring and reporting:

Trustees of Somerset and Avon rape and sexual abuse support will receive an anonymised report of complaints received at each board meeting where applicable.

Confidentiality:

Every attempt will be made to ensure that both the complainant and SARSAS maintain confidentiality. However, the circumstances giving rise to the complaint may be such that it may not be possible to maintain confidentiality. Should this be the case, the situation will be explained to the complainant.

Responsibilities and Accountability:

It is the Chief Executive Officer's (CEO) responsibility to ensure that this policy and its implementation comply with all legal, statutory and good guidance requirements, to monitor the response and investigation of all complaints, and keep the Board of Trustees informed.

The Head of Services (or in their absence the delegated person) can act as the investigating officer for major and serious complaints about standards and quality of service. Operational Managers may act as the investigating officers for minor complaints and be responsible for the investigation and will work with the CEO and Head of Services to ensure satisfactory resolution of the complaint. All staff and volunteers are responsible for cooperating with the development and implementation of the policy and any investigations. In an incidence where a complaint requires escalation, the CEO will then conduct a further investigation.

There may be rare occasions when SARSAS chooses not to respond to a complaint at all. These include:

- When a complaint is about something that SARSAS has no direct connection to. SARSAS may choose to reply to clear its name but is not obliged to.
- When someone unreasonably pursues a complaint that SARSAS has already responded to. They will be given escalation points but SARSAS may choose not to reply again, SARSAS will always inform the complainant of our decision to do this.
- When a complainant is being obviously abusive, prejudiced or offensive in their manner.
- When a complainant is harassing a staff member or volunteer.
- When a complaint has clearly been sent to SARSAS and numerous other organisations as part of a bulk mailing or email. In this instance SARSAS can chose whether it is necessary for to reply or not.
- SARSAS cannot respond to complaints made anonymously. However, SARSAS will investigate the complaint and use the information to improve services as appropriate.

Formal Complaints Procedure

SARSAS believes that if an individual has a problem with or a concern about any of its services, this is normally best dealt with informally and as quickly as possible by

the individual or service involved. However, if this does not resolve the issue to the complainant's satisfaction, SARSAS has a formal Complaints procedure to ensure that the matter is investigated and resolved.

If you are unable to resolve the issue informally and wish to make a formal complaint you can contact SARSAS by phone, letter or email and request a copy of the formal complaints procedure:

SARSAS, PO BOX 2942, Bristol, BS1 9EU, Tel: 0117 929 9556

Email: info@sarsas.org.uk

Making a complaint will not affect you being able to receive a service with us.

When making a formal complaint, you will be asked to provide the following information by email or letter:

- The reason for your complaint
- Where and when it happened
- The name(s) of anyone involved (if known)
- What outcome you are hoping for
- Your contact details (name, address, daytime telephone number and/or email)

We will always try to resolve the problem as quickly as possible and we will acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days. We will notify you of when we will next contact you either with a proposed resolution or update. The target time for responding in full to a complaint is 20 working days. However, if the issue is complicated it may not be possible to resolve it within this period but any delay will be explained within this timeframe.

The outcome of any investigation will be communicated to the complainant in writing with details of any action taken and a timescale for implementation (if applicable and appropriate). Only appropriate members of staff and the Board of Trustees will also receive a copy of the report.

If the complaint relates to the CEO, or if you are not happy with the resolution of your complaint, you can bring this to the attention of the Chair of the Board of Trustees. Please set out clearly in writing the details of the complaint, and (where relevant) explain why you were not satisfied with our response and what you would like us to do to put things right:

The Chair of the Board of Trustees
SARSAS,
PO BOX 2942,
Bristol,
BS1 9EU

The Chair will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing within 10 working days. The Chair will investigate the issues and respond to the complainant within a further 20 working days of acknowledging receipt of the complaint.

Alternatively, if you do not feel completely satisfied by our response and believe the issue is serious then you can contact The Charity Commission at the address below. Further information can be found at <http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk>.

Registered charity in England and Wales. Charity number 1126682. Company number 6738639

The Charity Commission,
PO Box 1227,
Liverpool,
L69 3UG

Appendix 1 - Complaints Form

Please send to; PO BOX 2942, Bristol, BS1 9EU

Mark - Private & Confidential

Name	
Address	
Telephone Number	
Email address	
Tell us more about your complaint: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The reason for your complaint• Where and when it happened• The name(s) of anyone involved (if known)	
Ideally what would you like SARSAS to do about your complaint?	
Date complaint sent	
Signature	