Complaints Procedure

Carla Cowling Counselling

Practice	Carla Cowling Counselling
Policy owner	Carla Cowling
Professional body	British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)
Version	1.0
Effective / review date	October 2026
Next review	October 2027, or sooner if BACP procedures or practice change

1. Purpose

Carla Cowling Counselling aims to provide a safe, ethical and professional service. I welcome clients raising concerns about their experience and will take concerns seriously, respond respectfully and, where appropriate, try to resolve matters promptly. This procedure explains how a concern or complaint can be raised.

2. Raising a concern informally

Where a client feels able to do so, I encourage them to raise concerns with me at the earliest opportunity. Many concerns can be explored and resolved through an open discussion. Raising a concern will not affect a client's right to be treated respectfully or to make a formal complaint.

3. Making a formal complaint

A formal complaint should normally be made in writing to Carla Cowling and should, where possible, explain what happened, the concern being raised, any relevant dates or circumstances, and what the person would like me to consider or respond to. If a person has difficulty making a complaint in writing, I will consider reasonable ways of making the process accessible.

4. Acknowledgement and response

I will normally acknowledge a formal complaint within 5 working days. I will consider the issues raised carefully and may ask for further information where this is genuinely necessary. I will aim to provide a written response within 20 working days of receiving sufficient information to consider the complaint. If more time is reasonably required, I will explain this and provide an updated timescale.

5. How a complaint will be considered

I will approach complaints openly and fairly. Depending on the circumstances, I may review relevant records, consider the counselling agreement and other applicable practice policies, seek appropriate professional or

legal advice, and discuss the matter in clinical supervision while maintaining confidentiality as far as possible. I will keep an appropriate record of the complaint, my consideration of it, any response provided and any action taken.

6. Candour and learning

If I identify that something has gone wrong, I will be open about this and consider what action is needed to reduce or repair harm, where possible. This may include an explanation, an apology where appropriate, a change in practice, further training or supervision, or another proportionate action. Complaints and concerns will also be used as an opportunity to reflect on and improve the service.

7. BACP complaints process

Carla Cowling is a BACP member and works in accordance with the applicable BACP Ethical Framework. Clients will be informed that BACP has a Professional Conduct Procedure for complaints or concerns about BACP members. A person does not lose access to BACP's process by first raising a concern directly with me. Current information, eligibility requirements and the BACP complaint form are available on BACP's website.

8. Confidentiality and data protection

Information relating to a complaint will be handled sensitively and stored securely. Information may be discussed in clinical supervision or shared with professional advisers, insurers, BACP or another appropriate body where this is necessary and lawful. Personal information will be handled in accordance with the Carla Cowling Counselling Privacy Notice and applicable data-protection requirements.

9. Complaints involving safeguarding or immediate risk

If a complaint raises a safeguarding concern, risk of serious harm, alleged criminal conduct or another matter requiring urgent action, the relevant safeguarding or emergency procedure may take priority over the ordinary complaint timescales.

10. Fairness and boundaries

I will aim to communicate respectfully throughout the process and expect the same in return. I may set reasonable boundaries around repetitive, abusive, threatening or otherwise inappropriate communications, while ensuring that a genuine complaint is still considered fairly.

11. Contact

Complaints should be addressed to: Carla Cowling, Carla Cowling Counselling. The current contact method published for the practice may be used. For complaints about a BACP member, clients can also use BACP's Professional Conduct information and complaint process.

12. Review

This procedure will be reviewed annually and sooner where necessary following changes to BACP's Professional Conduct Procedure, the BACP Ethical Framework, relevant law or the services provided by Carla Cowling Counselling.

BACP information

BACP's Ethical Framework states that clients should be encouraged to raise concerns at the earliest opportunity and informed of applicable complaints processes, including BACP's Professional Conduct Procedures. BACP's current Professional Conduct Procedure and complaint form should be checked on the BACP website for the latest requirements.

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