

Process for Registrants with Complaints Managed by another Accredited Register Holder

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to outline the process that needs to take place if a complaint is raised against a counsellor who is a registered member of the Association of Counsellors (ACC) and where this complaint arises within another Accredited Register of the Professional Standards Agency (PSA).

There are a number of professional counselling bodies that hold a PSA accredited register and it is most likely that complaints against an ACC registrant will arise within one of these registers. However, it is also possible that complaints can arise from one of the other PSA accredited registers, for example relating to the Complementary and Natural Healthcare Council (CNHC) or the UK Board of Healthcare Chaplains. All complaints, even those relating from non-counselling registers, may be relevant to a Registrants' (registered members) counselling practice and therefore should be subject to this process. For ease of reference organisations holding an Accredited Register with the PSA are referred to as "professional bodies" in this document.

Essential Information for ACC Registered Counselling Members

What you need to do.

- If you are formally notified by another professional body that a complaint has been made against you, please immediately notify ACC's Registrar by emailing registrar@acc-uk.org. Also you must notify your insurance company and supervisor.
If you do not receive an acknowledgement of your email within five working days please ring the head office using the contact details on the website.
- You will be required to liaise with the Chair of ACC in relation to the complaint and comply with any requests for information.

What you can expect.

- Once notified of the complaint, the Chair of ACC will contact you to explain the process and to answer any questions that you have.
- The Chair will be responsible for managing a process of risk assessment and compliance to regulations according to the guidelines set out below.
- You will be kept informed of any action taken by ACC in relation to the complaint

Summary of Responsibilities

ACC Registrants are responsible for contacting ACC's Registrar as soon as they receive notification by another professional body that a complaint has been made against them.

Please e-mail registrar@acc-uk.org

ACC Registrants are also responsible for complying with all instructions given to them by ACC in relation to the investigation and management of the complaint.

ACC's responsibility is to make clear to all ACC Registrants their obligations to notify ACC about all complaints received about their practice within other professional bodies.

ACC are responsible for publishing their policy with regard to complaints arising from other professional bodies.

ACC are responsible for assessing the risk to members of the general public in relation to the complaint against a Registrant within another professional body and to comply with their obligations under the PSA's Accredited Registers scheme to notify members of the public about any complaints against ACC Registrants that are upheld and/or attract sanctions.

Actions following Notification of Complaint (made against an ACC Registrant within another professional body that holds an Accredited Register with the PSA)

On receiving **notification of a complaint** concerning an ACC Registrant where the complaint relates to their membership of another professional body the Registrar will notify the Chair.

The Chair of ACC will be responsible for the following actions.

1. Consulting with the other Professional Body as to who will conduct the investigation and potential hearings if a joint complaint has been notified to both ACC and the other Professional Body
2. Investigating the nature of the complaint and whether or not the member has been suspended pending the complaint hearing
3. Assessing the risk to members of the public of the Registrant continuing in counselling practice with the ACC
4. Notifying ACC's Register Advisory Panel (RAP) of the complaint, the assessed risk and proposed mitigating actions (for example putting a notice on the Registrants register entry that a complaint is under investigation)
5. Determining (with guidance from RAP and the PSA if required) the appropriate action for ACC to take in relation to the Registrant
6. Notifying the Registrant of the action that ACC are intending to take
7. Informing the Registrant of their responsibilities to keep ACC informed of the progress of the complaint process as managed by another professional body.

Appropriate Actions that the Chair can take, depending on the nature of the complaint and degree of risk associated with it are:

- suspending the ACC member and hiding their details from the on-line **Find a Counsellor (FAC)** function pending the outcome of the complaint hearing by the professional body
- placing a comment in the sanctions area of **Check the Accredited Register** against the members register entry so that it is seen publicly notifying that there is a complaint under investigation with another *named* professional body and also hiding their details from **FAC**
- taking no action until the complaint hearing outcome is known

Actions following Notification of the Outcome of the Complaint from the other Professional Body (where the complaint is upheld in any part)

The Chair will be responsible for ensuring that:

1. All public areas of the website where members of the public can access the Registrants name are annotated so that they clearly show the Registrant has had a complaint upheld against them from a professional body, with a link to the complaint outcome and sanctions. These include **Check ACC Register; Find A Counsellor** and **Complaint Hearing Outcomes**
2. These notices and links are removed once notification has been received from the professional body that the sanction has been complied with satisfactorily or when the member notifies ACC of this and it is corroborated by the other Professional Body
3. When a Registrant has been suspended from practice this is noted in the sanctions area of **Check ACC Register** and they are removed from **Find A Counsellor** for the duration of the suspension
4. When a Registrant has had their registered membership revoked by a professional Counselling body, to note this in the sanctions area of **Check the Accredited Register** and **Complaints Outcome** for up to 5 years
5. When a Registrant has had their registered membership revoked by a professional body that is allied to counselling, to consider removing the Registrant from ACC's register in consultation with RAP and with the PSA
6. The Registrant is notified of these actions prior to them taking place