

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) For Clients and Members of the Public

These will be placed on ACC's website

What is ACC?

The Association of Christians in Counselling and Linked Professions (ACC) is a professional body that holds an accredited register of counsellors and psychotherapists. Being on the ACC register means that a counsellor has met the required professional standards and agrees to work within ACC's Ethics and Practice framework. ACC is accredited by the Professional Standards Authority (PSA), the UK body that oversees professional registers in health and care.

When might I want to raise a concern or make a complaint?

You might consider raising a concern or complaint if something about your counselling experience felt unsafe, unhelpful, harmful, or wrong, and you have not been able to sort out the problem with your counsellor/psychotherapist. You do not need to be certain that something was "wrong" in order to raise your concerns. Part of ACC's role is to look at what took place and decide whether it can or should be looked at further.

Who can make a complaint?

Anyone can raise a concern or make a complaint about an ACC-registered counsellor or psychotherapist. This includes clients or former clients, family members or carers, employers or organisations, and members of the public with relevant concerns.

What kinds of concerns can ACC look at?

ACC can consider concerns that relate to counselling or psychotherapy practice, professional behaviour affecting a counsellor's fitness to practise, or possible breaches of ACC's Ethics and Practice standards or membership terms and conditions. ACC cannot investigate matters that fall outside its remit, such as complaints about non-members.

Is there a time limit for making a complaint?

Complaints are usually considered if they are made within three years of the events concerned. However, historic complaints may still be considered if there are concerns about ongoing risk or public safety, or if there are other relevant circumstances that would be considered.

How do I raise a concern or make a complaint?

ACC aims to make it as straightforward and supportive as possible to raise a concern.

- You can begin by contacting ACC for information or guidance if you are unsure whether to proceed.
- If you decide to go ahead, you will be asked to complete a complaints form, which is available on ACC's website.
- If you need help completing the form or require reasonable adjustments for accessibility or vulnerability, ACC staff can support you. Once your form is received, ACC will acknowledge it and explain the next steps.

You do not need legal knowledge or professional language to raise a concern – what matters is sharing your experience as clearly as you can.

What happens after I raise a concern?

ACC will acknowledge receipt of your concern and assess whether it can be considered under its complaints process. If it can, ACC will decide how best to respond based on the level of potential risk or harm. You will be kept informed about what is happening and what to expect next.

How will my concern be handled?

Concerns are handled in a proportionate way. Lower-level concerns may be addressed through feedback to the counsellor, providing them with an opportunity to learn from the experience and make adjustments. More serious concerns may involve a panel of people reviewing the counsellor's practice, and the most serious subject to a formal investigation and Fitness to Practise hearing. ACC will determine which process applies and why.

Will the counsellor know I have made a complaint?

If they are a member of ACC, then yes, they will be informed that a complaint has been received. Fairness requires that counsellors are informed about concerns raised about them and allowed to respond. ACC manages this sensitively and with care, and professional counsellors accept that clients are able to raise a concern about their practice.

Will my information be kept confidential?

ACC treats complaint information as confidential. Information is shared only with those directly involved in handling the complaint, or where necessary for safeguarding, legal, or regulatory reasons. People involved in investigating and hearing complaints sign confidentiality agreements and information about complaints is held securely on ACC's systems.

What if there are safeguarding concerns?

If ACC identifies concerns about safety or serious risk of harm to anyone, it has a duty to act in the public interest. This may include sharing information with

safeguarding authorities or temporarily restricting a counsellor's practice while concerns are explored.

Will I receive support during the process?

ACC cannot directly provide emotional support, such as therapy. However, you may attend any meetings with a support person, request reasonable adjustments, and be signposted to appropriate sources of support.

What outcomes are possible?

Outcomes may range from no further action, through learning or development requirements, to sanctions such as suspension or removal from the register in serious cases.

Can decisions be reviewed or appealed?

Yes. ACC has clear processes for independent review and appeal to ensure fairness, accountability, and transparency.

Final reassurance

Raising a concern can take courage. ACC is committed to handling concerns with care, clarity, fairness, and respect, while fulfilling its responsibility to protect the public and uphold professional standards.