



Complaints Policy and Procedure

March 2024

Date of Review: March 2026

Introduction

Eating Distress North East (EDNE) aims to always provide high quality service. If someone is unhappy about any aspect of EDNE's service, or have suggestions to make it better, we want to know.

If you have a complaint to make, we would like you to tell us about it so that we can improve services for the future and promote a culture of ongoing learning.

We aim to handle complaints quickly, effectively and in a fair and honest way. We take all complaints seriously and use valuable information from complaints to help us improve the service we provide.

We treat all complaints in confidence. EDNE will not withdraw or reduce services because someone makes a complaint in good faith. We are not defensive and/or immediately assume that we are responsible for someone's dissatisfaction but welcome the opportunity to hear where we could improve.

This policy is for use by anyone who wishes to make a complaint about EDNE services, and to support EDNE staff to understand the procedure to follow if they are contacted by someone wishing to submit a complaint.

It is not intended for use by internal staff who should follow EDNE's Grievance Policy.

Procedure

Step One: formal complaint.

If someone wishes to make a formal complaint, they can do so in writing by contacting the relevant EDNE staff member they are in contact with. Or, if preferred, by emailing enquiries@edne.org.uk with the subject header 'Complaint'.

Depending on the nature of the complaint it will in the first instance be passed to the relevant Manager. For example, if the complaint is about our Counselling or Group Work, this should go to the Counselling Lead. If the complaint is about another aspect of our work, it should go to the CEO. If the complaint relates to the Counselling Lead it should be sent directly to the CEO.

The Counselling Lead/CEO will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within five working days and investigate the complaint within four weeks. They must update the complainant within four weeks and every four weeks following until resolution.

Investigation process

- The Counselling Lead/CEO will review all the information recorded relating to the complaint, and all the relevant policies and procedures.
- Where necessary and appropriate the Counselling Lead /CEO will arrange to meet with the complainant/relevant staff member to establish further facts.
- The Counselling Lead/CEO will produce a report establishing all the facts of their findings, recommendations, including changes in policy and practice, additional training or disciplinaries.
- During this process a decision will be taken as to whether any external organisation now needs to be notified that a complaint has been raised or needs to be notified that it has been resolved.
- At all times a circle of confidentiality will be maintained, and documents and communications stored securely in a protected folder on EDNE's SharePoint system.

Step Two: escalation.

If the Counselling Lead has dealt with the complaint in the first instance and the complaint is not resolved to the complainant's satisfaction, they have the right to ask for it to be reviewed by the CEO by emailing the CEO at anne.fry@edne.org.uk.

The CEO will acknowledge receipt of the escalated complaint within five working days and investigate the complaint within four weeks. They must update the complainant within four weeks and every four weeks following until resolution.

The CEO will review the documentation from Step One and any relevant policies and procedures. They may arrange to meet with the complainant/relevant staff. The CEO will produce a report detailing their findings and recommendations, including changes in policy and practice, additional training or disciplinaries.

There is no further escalation once the complaint has been investigated by the CEO.

Complaints against the CEO or Board Members

If the complaint is about the CEO or a member of the Board of Trustees then the complaint should be sent in writing, marked 'Confidential', to the Chair of Board at the EDNE postal address.

On receiving a complaint, the Chair will acknowledge receipt within five working days wherever possible. The Chair will arrange to meet separately with the complainant and the CEO/board member as soon as practically possible.

The Chair will investigate any evidence and reach a decision and make a written report within four weeks. The complainant will be notified in writing of the decision. Where the complaint is upheld, the Chair will

discuss appropriate action with the CEO. If necessary, disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with EDNE Disciplinary and Grievance procedure.

A report outlining the action taken, but not the detail of the complaint, will be submitted to the next Board meeting by the Chair.

Additional Responsibilities

- The Counselling Lead/CEO must review all complaints received at Service Review Meetings to establish if there are any patterns.
- The CEO will update the board regarding how many complaints had been received in their bi-monthly report.
- The Board of Trustees must sign off the External Complaints Policy and Procedure.
- The Chair of the Board of Trustees must investigate complaints regarding the CEO.

The Charities Commission

The Charities Commission investigates complaints relating to serious risk of harm to the charity or people it was set up to help.

<https://forms.charitycommission.gov.uk/raising-concerns/>