

# Complaints Policy and Procedures

Last review date: April 2026

Next review date: April 2028

## 1. Introduction

Eating Distress North East (EDNE) is committed to delivering safe, compassionate, and high-quality therapy and wellbeing services for people experiencing eating distress. We welcome complaints as an opportunity to learn, grow, and improve. We will never withdraw, reduce, or restrict services because someone makes a complaint in good faith.

## 2. Scope of This Policy

This policy applies to service users, carers, referrers, the public, and partner organisations. Staff grievances must follow EDNE's Grievance Procedure.

## 3. Our Principles

EDNE will handle complaints in an accessible, fair, transparent, confidential and learning-focused way. We will bring trauma-informed practice to our handling of complaints procedures, meaning we will uphold principles of:

- **Safety** - The physical, psychological, and emotional safety of service users and staff is prioritised.
- **Trustworthiness** - Transparency exists in an organisation's policies and procedures, with the objective of building trust among staff, service users and the wider community.
- **Choice** - Service users are supported in shared decision-making, choice, and goal setting to determine the plan of action they need.
- **Collaboration** - The value of staff, service user and carer experience are recognised in overcoming challenges and improving the system.
- **Empowerment** - Efforts are made to share power and give service users, staff, and carers a strong voice in decision-making, at both individual and organisational level.

- **Cultural Consideration** – Inclusion, diversity, and equity are actively respected by recognising the cultural, social, and historical factors that shape each person’s experiences.

#### **4. Safeguarding**

If a complaint suggests risk of harm, in line with our safeguarding policies, safeguarding procedures will take priority over complaint timelines.

#### **5. Raising a Concern (Informal Stage)**

Concerns may be raised informally either with a member of staff or an appropriate manager. If they cannot be resolved, or the person wants a formal process, Step One begins.

#### **6. Step One – Formal Complaint**

Complaints may be submitted in writing or verbally.

Depending on the nature of the complaint it will in the first instance be passed to the relevant Manager. In some circumstances this may be the Chief Executive.

EDNE will acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days. EDNE will investigate the complaint within four weeks and must update the complainant within four weeks and every four weeks following until resolution.

#### **7. Investigation Process**

- The relevant Manager will review all the information relating to the complaint, and all relevant policies and procedures.
- Where necessary and appropriate the Manager will arrange to meet with the complainant/relevant staff member to establish further facts.
- The Manager will produce a report establishing all the facts of their findings and recommendations, including changes in policy and practice, additional training or disciplinary measures if required.
- During this process a decision will be taken as to whether any external organisation needs to be notified that a complaint has been raised.
- At all times confidentiality will be maintained, and documents and communications stored securely in a protected folder on EDNE’s SharePoint system. Access to this folder is limited to key senior staff.

## **8. Step Two – Escalation**

If unsatisfied with Step One, complainants may ask the Chief Executive to review the complaint.

The Chief Executive 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 Chief Executive will review the documentation from Step One and any relevant policies and procedures. They may arrange to meet with the complainant/relevant staff.

The Chief Executive will produce a report establishing all the facts of their findings and recommendations, including changes in policy and practice, additional training or disciplinary measures if required.

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

## **9. Complaints About the Chief Executive or Trustees**

If the complaint is about the Chief Executive 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 Chief Executive /board member as soon as practically possible. It may be necessary for the Chair to ask another trustee to support them with the complaint investigation process to ensure a timely resolution.

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 Chief Executive. If necessary, disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with EDNE's 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.

## **10. Support During the Process**

Complainants:

- May bring a supporter to attend meetings with them.
- Will be regularly kept updated about the progress of their complaint.
- Be asked which communication and meeting methods they prefer.

## **11. Monitoring, Learning, and Governance**

- Patterns of complaints are reviewed at internal Service Review Meetings.
- The Chief Executive reports complaints received in their quarterly report to the Board of Trustees.
- The Board of Trustees must sign off the External Complaints Policy and Procedure.