**SERVICE USERS COMPLAINTS POLICY**

At Free To Talk we are committed to providing excellent customer service for our clients and Counsellors and a supportive learning environment for Counsellors.

We encourage constructive feedback from all the people who use our services, and we invite all to tell us about their experiences – including complaints.

We take all complaints seriously and will do everything we can to put things right and reach a satisfactory outcome for all.

**COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

**Making a Complaint**

If you have a complaint – whether it’s about FREE TO TALK, a counsellor, or a member of our team – please speak to the individual directly in the first instance, where possible.

Alternatively, you can put a complaint in writing:

* By post to Free To Talk, 20 Eastcote Street. London SW9 9BY
* Via email to [info@kemifoarin.com](mailto:info@kemifoarin.com) When emailing, please mention in the subject bar the department to which your complaint applies.

**Front of House Complaints**

* If your complaint relates to front of house services or the building, the Front of House Lead is the person to contract which is Free To Talk CEO Ms Kemi Folarin. Please set out your reasons – including any relevant supporting evidence – and indicate the outcome you desire.
* **Counselling Services Complaints:** If your complaint is about a counsellor, please contract your counsellor first to discuss the issue.

**How To Make A Complaint**

**Stage 1**

If you wish to make a complaint, you must do so within one month of the date on which the event occurred – or within one month of the date on which you could reasonably be expected to have known about the matter.

A complaint may only be made by a service user or a group of service users, not by a third party or representative, and can only be made anonymously if there is sufficient evidence to support it. Anonymous complaints are rare and treated with caution.

You are encouraged to raise matters less formally with the individual concerned. For example, if you have a complaint about the building, please speak to the front of house team. If you have a problem

with your counsellor, please discuss it with them in the first instance. They will take your complaint seriously and will do everything they can to resolve the matter.

**Stage 2**

If the matter cannot be resolved informally, and you have written a formal letter/email of complaint to the Manager, they are responsible for responding to you within five working days.

They may wish to interview you and any other person they deem relevant (unless you do not wish to be interviewed). They will make a formal report within two weeks of receiving the complaint.

The report must set out the evidence collected, the Manager’s conclusions – including whether they uphold the complaint – and any recommendations they deem appropriate.

**Getting Advice**

At the interview you have the right to be accompanied by a person of your choosing.

**Treatment of Complainants**

You may have reservations about making a complaint. However, at FREE TO TALK we take complaints seriously and view them as a means of improving the services we provide.

All employees involved in a complaint are required to respect the confidentiality of information and documents generated as a result of the complaint, and not to disclose any information to people who are not involved with the matters in question.

**Outcome of the Complaint**

The report from the Manager will indicate the actions they deem appropriate if the complaint is upheld, or partially upheld.

**Stage 3**

If you have received the Manager’s formal report and are dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint, you have the right to take the matter further by writing to the CEO within 21 days of receiving the report. You must include a copy of the report and state the reasons why you are not satisfied.

The CEO will undertake a further investigation, again interviewing you (unless you do not wish to be interviewed) and receiving further information as they deem appropriate. The CEO will write a report within one month of receiving your complaint – setting out their conclusions, whether the complaint is upheld, and any further actions to be taken.

Please note that if you have not received the report from the CEO within the one month required – and they have not informed you of the need to extend that date, and the reasons for extending – you are entitled to raise your complaint.

If you are still not satisfied, you can contact the BACP directly if it is a counselling complaint

BACP, 15 St Johns Business Park, Lutterworth, Leicestershire LE17 4HB. www.bacp.co.uk

**Further information**

If you require further information about our complaint’s procedures, you can contact Free To Talk

Front of House Lead by phone. As a member of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) we aide by the BACP’s Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions, which includes the Professional Conduct Procedure. If you do not feel that the above options are appropriate, or you wish to take things further, please

BACP directly: 15 St Johns Business Park, Lutterworth, Leicestershire LE17 4HB. www.bacp.co.uk