

Complaints Policy of Berkshire Family Mediation

Introduction:

The service complies with the requirements of the Family Mediation Council.

1. The service will deal promptly and courteously with any complaint, formal or informal, made to the service. The cause of any problem of which a client has complained will be investigated. If appropriate, redress will be offered, and any unsatisfactory procedure will be corrected.
2. The service values the views of service users and will endeavour always to use views in a constructive and responsive manner. We recognise that mediation can be a painful experience for users and will strive to take individual situations into account when responding to comments or complaints about the service. It is therefore appropriate to acknowledge the client's complaint, whether or not the complaint is justified.
3. All users are invited to comment on the service received by means of a feedback questionnaire when the case is closed.
4. All users are made aware of the opportunity to complain: basic information is contained on our website and at the bottom of all email communication. A detailed procedure is available on request.
5. A complaint is defined as an 'expression of dissatisfaction'. This might include a written complaint, a verbal complaint or a comment in a feedback questionnaire but it does not include 'checkbox' answers on the questionnaire. All expressions of dissatisfaction will be responded to in the way outlined in the complaints procedure.

Person appointed to handle each complaint:

1. Complaints about the logistics or handling of referrals, appointments and/or correspondence will be dealt with by the Operations Manager, in consultation with any relevant members of staff.
2. Complaints about the process of intake or mediation will be handled by the Professional Practice Consultant, Aideen Mattimore, in consultation with any staff involved.
3. Complaints about any of the above people (in their roles as Operations Manager or Professional Practice Consultant) will be handled initially by the other

Manager, or by the Chair of the Board, in consultation with any staff member/s involved. The Chair of the Board must be informed.

In all cases, if the complaint is addressed to a staff member, the relevant manager will decide, in consultation with that staff member, who is the most appropriate person to respond to the complainant, what the response should be and the means by which the complainant will be contacted. If the complaint is addressed to the manager, he or she will respond to the complainant.

Timescale:

The complaint should be acknowledged in the first instance within three working days, and a timescale given for investigation and response. This should not normally exceed 15 working days.

Unresolved complaints:

Where a complaint remains unresolved, the matter should be referred to the Chair of the Board, who will decide on the appropriate action, in consultation with any staff member and manager involved. A further response should be made within one month.

If the matter still remains unresolved, the complainant may be invited to contact the mediator's member organisation and details will be provided.

Upheld complaints:

If a complaint is found to be justified, BFM will offer appropriate redress and/or correct its practices as necessary.

If a complaint is upheld such that disciplinary proceedings are activated against a mediator, the member organisation will be notified.