

## Institute of Family Therapy

### Complaints Policy and Procedure



#### 1. Complaints Policy

1.1 It is IFT's policy to:

- safeguard clients who use the services of IFT or of IFT members
- protect IFT staff and the reputation of the organisation
- provide a balanced and objective response in the event of a complaint against an IFT member, employee or person contracted to deliver services for IFT

1.2 In order to fulfil this policy, IFT will establish a Complaints Procedure that, according to the nature of the complaint and as set out in this document, will provide:

- a fair, thorough and transparent process for handling complaints
- a process for people to appeal against any decision or action taken by IFT as a result of a complaint made against them

1.3 A 'complaint' may take the form of:

- either a formal complaint lodged by one of the categories of people in 1.4 below
- or a situation where it has become evident to the Trustees or Director of IFT that something has occurred which is contrary to the IFT Code of Ethics, IFT Code of Practice, an IFT policy or appropriate professional practice

1.4 A formal complaint may be made by IFT, an IFT client, an IFT employee, a clinical associate, a student of IFT, a client of an IFT member or a person directly involved in the matter to which the complaint refers.

Complaints made by third parties will not be heard.

1.5 In general terms, the IFT Complaints Procedure will cover people who are working as independent therapists and are IFT members but are *not* registered with UKCP.

#### 2. Complaints Procedure

##### 2.1 Scope of the Complaints Procedure

2.1.1 This Complaints Procedure is relevant in the event of a complaint made against one of the following and indicates how a complaint should be processed in each case:

- Members of IFT
- IFT tutors
- IFT supervisors
- IFT employees
- IFT clinical associates
- Trustees of IFT  
and
- IFT as an organisation

- Notes:
1. It is possible for people to fall into more than one of the above categories, so the application of the Complaints Procedure may vary according to the detailed circumstances of the complaint.
  2. Employment by another organisation or membership of another organisation may also be relevant to how and where a complaint is heard.
  3. Further details of the application of procedures can be found in the relevant Appendix, as detailed in Section 4 below. Please refer to this to identify the procedure relevant to your complaint.

2.1.2 Complaints can be heard against any of the above in 2.1.1 in respect of:

- the delivery of training, clinical or administrative services *and/or*
- where the alleged conduct is in breach of the IFT Code of Ethics, the IFT Code of Practice or an IFT policy.

2.1.3 With any supervisors, tutors or other therapists who are employees of IFT or are working for IFT under sessional contracts – and who will be registered with UKCP – 2.1.2 can apply in respect of work being done for IFT.

Note: When they are working as therapists independently of IFT, any complaints against them will be heard under UKCP's Complaints Policy.

2.1.4 A complaint made against any category of IFT employee may be heard under IFT's Complaints Policy and Procedure *or* IFT's Conduct and Capability Procedure and the Director of IFT will deem which is appropriate.

2.1.5 If an IFT member is employed as a therapist by another organisation, such as the NHS, then the complainant will be expected:

- to have made a complaint to the member's employer first, if the service which they are complaining about was provided by that organisation, *and*
- to have exhausted the relevant complaints procedure of that organisation

*before* using the IFT Complaints Policy and Procedure.

A copy of the written outcome of that investigation will be required by IFT to determine whether IFT will progress the complaint within IFT.

However, IFT will not normally hear a complaint that has, in its opinion, already been appropriately heard under a procedure in another organisation, unless the matter relates directly to the person's fitness to be employed by or work for IFT, or remain a member of IFT. The decision to take action, or not to take action, will be taken by the Director of IFT.

2.1.6 Any complaint received by IFT against an IFT member who is also registered with UKCP, but is not an employee of IFT, will be referred directly to UKCP, who will have first responsibility for hearing the complaint.

In respect of an IFT member against whom action has been taken by UKCP in accordance with its procedures, a copy of the written outcome of that investigation will be required by IFT to determine whether IFT will progress the complaint within IFT. The decision to take action, or not to take action, will be taken by the Director of IFT.

## **2.2 Notification of complaints to IFT**

- 2.2.1 IFT members, IFT employees or therapists working for or on behalf of IFT, must inform IFT as soon as they are aware of a complaint against them

This is irrespective of whether the person is also a member of another professional membership organisation or employed by another organisation.

## **2.3 Application of the Complaints Procedure**

- 2.3.1 The detailed process to be followed in processing a complaint will vary according to the nature of the role of the person against whom the complaint is being made – see 2.1.1, above – *and* their relationship with IFT, as detailed in Section 4, below.

- 2.3.2 In *all* cases where a complaint is heard by IFT, it is expected that:

- an initial process of investigation will take place to determine the facts *and*
- unless circumstances render it impractical, the final decision on any action taken in respect of the person against whom the complaint has been made will be taken *not* by the investigating body – which will normally be the Complaints Panel – but by the Complaints Committee.

For IFT members, tutors, supervisors and clinical associates – and where the complaint is not covered by the Conduct and Capability Procedure – any decision will normally be taken by the Complaints Committee, which will consist of two members of IFT's Board of Trustees appointed to the role by the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

- 2.3.3 The Conduct and Capability Procedure is not a contractual term for IFT employees.

For IFT members, tutors, supervisors and clinical associates, the Procedures shown in the attached Appendices do not create a contractual obligation between IFT and the person in question.

IFT reserves the right to apply the Procedures in a way it feels is appropriate, in accordance with requirements of the Complaints Policy, above.

## **3. Appeals**

- 3.1 People who have been the subject of a complaint which has been heard by IFT and have had a decision taken against them will have the right to appeal in accordance with the relevant Procedure.

- 3.2 The decision will be implemented once it has been communicated to the respondent and will apply in parallel with the appeals process, but may subsequently be amended in the light of any appeal decision.

- 3.3 Appeals under the Complaints Policy and Procedure will be made to the Chair of the Board of Trustees, who will hear the appeal in person or designate another Trustee to carry out this role.

- 3.4 Appeals under the Conduct and Capability Procedure will be made to the Director of IFT and normally be heard by a designated senior manager.

- 3.5 In the event of an appeal being lodged and heard under the Complaints Policy and Procedure, the decision of the Chair or the delegated Trustee will be final.

#### 4. Identification of the appropriate procedure for hearing complaints

Category	Prime Procedure	Appendix
IFT members who are not registered with UKCP	IFT Complaints Policy & Procedure	1
IFT tutors, supervisors and other therapists when working on behalf of IFT, either as employees or on sessional contracts – see Notes 1, 2 and 3 below	IFT Complaints Policy and Procedure	2
IFT tutors, supervisors and other therapists when working as therapists independently of IFT – see Notes 1, 2 and 3 below	UKCP	3
IFT members who are also registered with UKCP	UKCP	3
IFT Clinical associates – see Note 4	IFT Complaints Policy and Procedure	4
IFT as an organisation	IFT Complaints Policy & Procedure	5
IFT Trustees	IFT Complaints Policy & Procedure	6
Other IFT employees – eg, admin staff – not covered elsewhere	IFT Conduct & Capability Procedure	N/A

Notes: 1. IFT tutors:

- are all UKCP members
- may also be IFT members
- have no client contact in their role as IFT tutors
- will, additionally, work as therapists independently of IFT

2. IFT supervisors:

- are all UKCP members
- may also be IFT members
- have regular client contact on behalf of IFT, but only in their role as supervisors of clinical associates
- will, additionally, work as therapists independently of IFT

3. Therapists with IFT contracts of employment, or with sessional contracts:

- will be UKCP members
- may also be IFT members

4. IFT clinical associates:

- are not employees of IFT
- are not UKCP members
- are not IFT members
- have client contact only in the presence of an IFT supervisor

## Appendix 1

### Complaints Procedure against IFT members who are not registered with UKCP

- Notes:
- 1, This Procedure applies to those IFT members who are *not* employed by IFT or contracted to provide services to IFT, *and* are *not* members of UKCP.
  2. It applies only to IFT members' work as professional systemic therapists.
  3. Complaints against IFT members who are also registered with UKCP will be heard first by UKCP – see Appendix 3.

#### 1. Timescale

- 1.1 A complaint must be lodged as soon as practically possible. The maximum time-limit for lodging a complaint is **one year** from the alleged breach.
- 1.2 However, IFT reserves the right to deny the complaint if, in the opinion of the Trustees, the time taken to lodge the complaint has been unacceptably long in all the circumstances.

All records, except for the details of the formal complaint, the formal response, the decision made by any panel, any appeal and record of sanction, will be kept for 2 years. The formal records will be kept for 5 years.

#### 2. Stages of the Procedure

- 2.1 There is a two-stage procedure: the Informal Stage and the Formal Stage.

The Formal Stage may be followed by an appeal.

#### 3. Administration of the Procedure

- 3.1 As soon as IFT is aware that a complaint has been made, the complainant should be provided by the IFT Administration Office with a copy of the Complaints Policy and Procedure and a copy of this Appendix. It will be a requirement of IFT that any complaint against a member of IFT follows the Complaints Policy and Procedure.

A copy of the Code of Ethics and Code of Practice should also be provided to the complainant, together with any IFT policy relevant to the complaint.

The respondent should be given copies of the same documents when a complaint has been made.

- 3.2 The Formal Stage of the Procedure – Stage 2 – will be administered by the IFT Director unless the complaint is in respect of the Director, in which case a person appointed to the Complaints Panel by the Chair of the Board of Trustees will take the IFT Director's position in the Complaints Procedure.

#### 4. Stage 1 – Informal stage of the Complaints Procedure

- 4.1 The objective of the informal stage is to encourage the amicable and timely resolution or mediation of complaints without recourse to formal proceedings.

- 4.2 Before pursuing a complaint, the complainant will be expected to have received and read a copy of the Complaints Procedure and other relevant documents, as identified in 3.1, above.

The complainant will then be expected to attempt to resolve the issue informally with the respondent.

- 4.3.1 Where this is not practicable, or the complainant feels unable to approach that person directly, it will still be desirable to seek to achieve an informal resolution, wherever possible.

To facilitate this, the Director of IFT will designate a 'responsible person' with whom the complainant will be invited to discuss the problem and its potential resolution. The 'responsible person' is likely to be one of the following:

- the relevant Director, supervisor or person accountable for the work of the person against whom the complaint is being made – the 'respondent' – *or*
- an independent person appointed by IFT *or*
- where the complaint relates to a teaching or course-related problem, the Course Chair, or the complainant's personal tutor or supervisor

- 4.4 If it is not practical to apply this approach, or it has not been possible to reach an informal resolution by means of it, a summary of the complaint – and, where relevant, details of any proposed solution – will be prepared by each of:

- the complainant *and*
- if a 'responsible person' was engaged in attempting to achieve an informal solution, also by that person

- 4.5 The complainant, the respondent - and, where relevant, the 'responsible person' – are advised to make contemporaneous notes of the various stages of their involvement in the matter, in particular relating to the:

- date and nature of the incident giving rise to the complaint
- date(s) and nature of the steps taken to raise the complaint and seek a resolution
- date(s) and nature of any action taken and responses given

## **5. Stage 2 – Formal stage of the Complaints Procedure**

### **5.1 Objective of the formal stage**

The objective of the formal stage of this Procedure is to help address any remaining dissatisfaction on the part of the complainant and to help reach a prompt resolution of the complaint where informal steps have failed.

### **5.2 Initiating the formal stage**

Complaints can be heard in respect of:

- the delivery of training, clinical or administrative services *and/or*
- where the alleged conduct or behaviour is in breach of the Code of Ethics, the Code of Practice or an IFT policy.

The complainant should submit the summary referred to in 4.4 above to the Director of IFT, explaining clearly which Code and/or Policy was, in the complainant's view, breached, or where the delivery of the service, in the opinion of the complainant, fell below an appropriate standard. This must be done within 14 days of the completion of the informal stage, unless exceptional circumstances render this impractical.

The Director will have the right not to continue with proceedings if, in the Director's opinion, there has been an inappropriate delay in submitting the formal complaint or there is inadequate clarity as to the nature and cause of the complaint.

The Director of IFT should also obtain a copy of the 'responsible person's' summary.

### **5.3 Acknowledgement**

The Director of IFT will, within 10 working days, acknowledge the receipt of the complaint in writing and either confirm that it falls within the scope of IFT's Complaints Procedure or explain why it does not.

In the event that Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure is to be followed, the Director of IFT will forward a copy of the complaint to:

- the complainant
- the respondent
- the Complaints Panel
- The 'responsible person', where one was involved
- the Chair of the Board of Trustees

and explain to all parties the process and timetable to be followed.

### **5.4 Investigation of the formal stage**

All formal complaints will be independently investigated by a Complaints Panel, normally consisting of two people: the Director of IFT and a senior member of the Management team.

When a Stage-2 complaint has been received and accepted by IFT, the respondent will have 14 days from receipt by them of the complaint to respond in writing to the Director of IFT.

The Complaints Panel will conduct such interviews and review such documentation as it considers necessary to undertake its investigation.

The Complaints Panel will be responsible for producing a report for the Complaints Committee – which will normally be formed of two Trustees appointed by the Chair of Board of Trustees – summarising its findings and conclusions.

### **5.5 Investigation interviews**

Interviews will be arranged by the Complaints Panel, as necessary, with the complainant, the respondent and any other party who, in the opinion of the Complaints Panel, may have relevant evidence. Documentary evidence may also be sought and reviewed by the Complaints Panel.

The objective of the interviews will be to establish, in a thorough and dispassionate matter, the facts of the case. Any conclusions drawn by the Complaints Panel, following an analysis of the evidence obtained, must be supported by that evidence.

## **5.6 Evidence**

All evidence submitted by the complainant and the respondent will be available to the other party involved in the complaint. The Director of IFT will ensure that this process is followed.

Evidence may be submitted only in one, or both, of two forms:

- notes of formal interviews relating to the complaint
- other written information relating directly to the complaint

Any decision required as to the acceptability or otherwise of evidence submitted will be taken by the Complaints Panel.

## **5.7 Notes of investigation interviews**

Notes will be taken of all interviews conducted in relation to the complaint. The Complaints Panel will have a note-taker, who may be one of the two Panel members, who will produce a factual record of each interview. The Director of the IFT will be responsible for submitting these documents to the parties involved.

## **5.8 Representation**

The complainant and respondent may be accompanied by a 'supporter' at any investigatory interview called in relation to the complaint. The supporter may not speak in support of the complainant/respondent, ask questions of the Complaints Panel or respond to questions put. They may, however, discuss the case with the complainant/respondent in any agreed adjournments.

## **5.9 Gross misconduct**

5.9.1 Where the complaint alleges gross misconduct – see below – the respondent may, at the discretion of the Director of IFT, have their membership suspended whilst the matter is being investigated. The suspension will not imply any presumption of wrong-doing, but will be taken to protect all the parties involved.

5.9.2 Examples of potential gross misconduct include: theft; serious damage to property; fraud; incapacity for work due to being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs; physical violence or intimidating behaviour; bullying or harassment; sexual misconduct; dishonesty; falsification of records; unauthorised and inappropriate disclosure of confidential information.

This list is given for the purposes of illustration and is not intended to be exclusive.

## **5.10 Non-attendance at interviews**

In the event of a person failing to attend a scheduled investigation interview, the Complaints Panel may:

- proceed with the hearing in the absence of the person *or*
- re-arrange a meeting to a future date not more than 28 days in advance, *or*
- terminate the proceedings

These decisions are at the discretion of the Complaints Panel.

### **5.11 Notification of the Complaints Panel's findings**

The Complaints Panel shall be required to complete its investigation on the complaint and report its findings and conclusions in writing to the Complaints Committee as quickly as reasonably possible.

### **5.12 Decision-making process**

It will be the responsibility of the Complaints Committee to review the findings of the Complaints Panel and reach a decision on what action, if any, should be taken in respect of the respondent. As part of this process, they will interview the respondent and discuss the findings of the Complaints Panel with him/her. They may also deem it necessary to interview other people in connection with the Complaints Panel's findings before reaching a decision.

The Complaints Committee will notify the parties of their decision, together with the imposition of any sanctions, as quickly as reasonably possible and no more than 28 days from receipt of the findings of the Complaints Panel.

### **5.13 Sanctions against IFT members**

Should a complaint lodged against an IFT member be heard by IFT and, following an investigation, the complaint be found, one or more of the following sanctions may be implemented by the Complaints Committee:

- A note is put on the membership file for one year
- Additional specific training/supervision is undertaken. Written evidence will be required from the member and trainer/supervisor on satisfactory completion of the training/supervision
- Membership is suspended while additional specific training/supervision is undertaken. Written evidence will be required from the member and trainer/supervisor on satisfactory completion of the training/supervision
- Membership is revoked by resolution of the Trustees of IFT. The resolution of the Trustees will be determined on the grounds that, in their reasonable opinion, the member's continued membership is detrimental to the Charity.
- In cases of gross misconduct, membership of IFT may be terminated without recompense
- Such other sanction is implemented as, in the opinion of the Complaints Committee, is appropriate in all the circumstances
- Where appropriate, the Trustees may apply a time limit to the application of any sanction.

The Complaints Committee will notify the respondent in writing as soon as their decision has been made.

The decision as to the satisfactory completion of any sanctions imposed will be made by the Director of IFT and confirmed in writing to the respondent.

## **6. Appeal against the recommendation of the Complaints Committee**

- 6.1 The respondent will have 14 days from the date of receipt of the Complaints Committee's decision to appeal to the Chair of the Board of Trustees against the recommendation and must state the specific grounds for the appeal.
- 6.2 Appeals can be heard on the following grounds:
- Where there is relevant new evidence which was not available at the time of the original investigation *or*
  - Where the Complaints Procedure is considered not to have been applied correctly *or*
  - Where the sanction is considered to be disproportionate to the findings of the complaint and is not felt to be fair in all the circumstances
- 6.3 The Chair of the Board of Trustees will be provided by the Director of IFT and the Complaints Committee with the relevant background papers considered in the investigatory and decision-making processes.
- 6.4 It will be at the discretion of the Chair of the Board of Trustees as to how the appeal is conducted. This may, or may not, involve seeking additional information and/or interviewing any party.
- 6.5 The Chair of the Board of Trustees will make a decision on the appeal and notify the respondent, in writing, within 14 days of receipt of the appeal.
- 6.6 The decision of the Chair of the Board of Trustees will be final.

If the decision of the Complaints Committee is upheld by the Chair of the Board of Trustees, any sanctions imposed or remedial action will continue to apply.

If the decision of the Complaints Committee is amended by the Chair of the Board of Trustees, such action as is necessary will be implemented from the appropriate date.

## **7. Expenses**

Travel expenses incurred in lodging a complaint will not normally be paid.

When a complainant, respondent or other party is specifically requested to attend an interview, travel expenses can be reimbursed.

## Appendix 2

### **Complaints procedure for complaints made against IFT tutors, IFT supervisors and other therapists when working on behalf of IFT, either as employees or on sessional contracts**

- Notes:
1. They will all be members of UKCP and may also be members of IFT.
  2. A complaint made against a person covered by Appendix 2 that applies to their *work on behalf of IFT* will be heard under IFT's Complaints Policy and Procedure. This is irrespective of their membership, or otherwise, of IFT and UKCP although dependant on the circumstances, IFT may also refer the matter to UKCP.
  3. In the situation in Note 2, above, it will be for UKCP to decide whether to hear a case in addition to its being heard under IFT's Complaints Policy and Procedure.
  4. If the complaint against the person applies *to work that is done independently of IFT*, whether or not this is during a period when the person is either employed by IFT or under a sessional contract, the case will be heard first in accordance with UKCP's procedures. This applies equally to those who are IFT members and those who are not. See Appendix 3.
  5. All complaints made against other IFT employees will be heard under IFT's Conduct and Capability Procedure.

#### **1. Scope of complaints**

Complaints may be made in accordance with Section 1.3 of the Complaints Policy and 2.1.2 of the Complaints Procedure.

#### **2. Timescale**

- 1.1 A complaint made in respect of work as an employee of IFT must be lodged as soon as possible. The maximum time-limit for lodging a complaint will normally be one year from the alleged offence, unless circumstances indicate that this was not realistically practical. It will be for the Director of IFT, or the Chair of the Board of Trustees, as appropriate, to decide whether the complaint should still be heard if it is lodged more than ~~one~~ month after the alleged offence.
- 1.2 All records, except for the details of the formal complaint, the formal response, the decision made by any panel, any appeal process and the record of the sanction imposed, will be kept for 2 years. The formal records will be kept for 5 years.

#### **3. Administration of the Procedure**

There is a two stage procedure: the Informal stage and the Formal stage. The Formal Stage may be followed by an appeal.

- 3.1 As soon as IFT is aware that a complaint has been made, the complainant should be provided by the IFT Administration Office with a copy of the Complaints Policy and Procedure and a copy of Appendix 2. It will be a requirement of IFT that any complaint against a member of IFT follows the Complaints Policy and Procedure.

A copy of the Code of Ethics and Code of Practice should also be provided to the complainant, together with any IFT policy relevant to the complaint.

The respondent should be given copies of the same documents when a complaint has been made.

- 3.2 The Formal Stage of the Procedure – Stage 2 – will be administered by the IFT Director unless the complaint is in respect of the Director, in which case a person appointed to the Complaints Panel by the Chair of the Board of Trustees will take the IFT Director's position in the Complaints Procedure.

#### **4. Stage 1 – Informal stage of the Complaints Procedure**

- 4.1 The objective of the informal stage is to encourage the amicable and timely resolution or mediation of complaints without recourse to formal proceedings.
- 4.2 Before pursuing a complaint, the complainant will be expected to have received and read a copy of the Complaints Procedure and other relevant documents, as identified in 3.1, above.

The complainant will then be expected to attempt to resolve the issue informally with the respondent.

- 4.3 If this is not practicable, or the complainant feels unable to approach that person directly, the complainant should without delay discuss the problem and its potential resolution with an appropriate 'responsible person', following consultation with the Director of IFT, who will be responsible for allocating the 'responsible person'. The 'responsible person' will be:
- the relevant Director, supervisor or person accountable for the work of the person against whom the complaint is being made – the 'respondent' – *or*
  - an independent person appointed by IFT *or*
  - where the complaint relates to a teaching or course-related problem, the Course Chair, or the complainant's personal tutor or supervisor
- 4.4 If it is still not possible to reach an informal resolution, a summary of the complaint and the attempted solution will be prepared by each of:
- the complainant *and*
  - if the matter was referred to a 'responsible person', also by that person
- 4.5 The complainant, the respondent and, where relevant, the 'responsible person', are advised to make contemporaneous notes of the various stages of their involvement in the matter, in particular relating to:
- the date and nature of the incident giving rise to the complaint
  - the date(s) and nature of the steps taken to raise the complaint and seek a resolution
  - the date(s) and nature of any action taken and responses given

#### **5. Stage 2 – Formal stage of the Complaints Procedure**

##### **5.1 Objective of the formal stage**

The objective of the formal stage of this Procedure is to help address any remaining dissatisfaction on the part of the complainant and to help reach a prompt resolution of the complaint where informal steps have failed.

##### **5.2 Initiating the formal stage**

Complaints can be heard in respect of:

- the delivery of training, clinical or administrative services *and/or*

- where the alleged conduct or behaviour is in breach of the Code of Ethics, the Code of Practice or an IFT policy.

The complainant should submit the summary referred to in 4.4 above to the Director of IFT, explaining clearly which Code and/or Policy was, in the complainant's view, breached, or where the delivery of the service, in the opinion of the complainant, fell below an appropriate standard. This must be done within 14 days of the completion of the informal stage, unless exceptional circumstances render this impractical.

The Director will have the right not to continue with proceedings if, in the Director's opinion, there has been an inappropriate delay in submitting the formal complaint or there is inadequate clarity as to the nature and cause of the complaint.

The Director of IFT should also obtain a copy of the 'responsible person's' summary.

### **5.3 Acknowledgement**

The Director of IFT will, within 10 working days, acknowledge the receipt of the complaint in writing and either confirm that it falls within the scope of IFT's Complaints Procedure or explain why it does not.

In the event that Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure is to be followed, the Director of IFT will forward a copy of the complaint to:

- the complainant
- the respondent
- the Complaints Panel
- The 'responsible person', where one was involved
- the Chair of the Board of Trustees

and explain to all parties the process and timetable to be followed.

### **5.4 Investigation of the formal stage**

All formal complaints will be independently investigated by a Complaints Panel, normally consisting of two people: the Director of IFT and a senior member of the Management team.

When a Stage-2 complaint has been received and accepted by IFT, the respondent will have 14 days from receipt by them of the complaint to respond in writing to the Director of IFT.

The Complaints Panel will conduct such interviews and review such documentation as it considers necessary to undertake its investigation.

The Complaints Panel will be responsible for producing a report for the Complaints Committee – which will normally be formed of two Trustees appointed by the Chair of the Board of Trustees – summarising its findings and conclusions.

### **5.5 Investigation interviews**

Interviews will be arranged by the Complaints Panel, as necessary, with the complainant, the respondent and any other party who, in the opinion of the Complaints Panel, may have relevant evidence. Documentary evidence may also be sought and reviewed by the Complaints Panel.

The objective of the interviews will be to establish, in a thorough and dispassionate matter, the facts of the case. Any conclusions drawn by the Complaints Panel, following an analysis of the evidence obtained, must be supported by that evidence.

## **5.6 Evidence**

All evidence submitted by the complainant and the respondent will be available to the other party involved in the complaint. The Director of IFT will ensure that this process is followed.

Evidence may be submitted only in one, or both, of two forms:

- notes of formal interviews relating to the complaint
- other written information relating directly to the complaint

Any decision required as to the acceptability or otherwise of evidence submitted will be taken by the Complaints Panel.

## **5.7 Notes of investigation interviews**

Notes will be taken of all interviews conducted in relation to the complaint. The Complaints Panel will have a note-taker, who may be one of the two Panel members, who will produce a factual record of each interview. The Director of IFT will be responsible for submitting these documents to the parties involved.

## **5.8 Representation**

The complainant and respondent may be accompanied by a 'supporter' at any investigatory interview called in relation to the complaint. The supporter may not speak in support of the complainant/respondent, ask questions of the Complaints Panel or respond to questions put. They may, however, discuss the case with the complainant/respondent in any agreed adjournments.

## **5.9 Gross misconduct**

5.9.1 Where the complaint alleges gross misconduct – see below – the respondent may, at the discretion of the Director of IFT, have their membership suspended whilst the matter is being investigated. The suspension will not imply any presumption of wrong-doing, but will be taken to protect all the parties involved.

5.9.2 Examples of potential gross misconduct include: theft; serious damage to property; fraud; incapacity for work due to being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs; physical violence or intimidating behaviour; bullying or harassment; sexual misconduct; dishonesty; falsification of records; unauthorised and inappropriate disclosure of confidential information.

This list is given for the purposes of illustration and is not intended to be exclusive.

## **5.10 Non-attendance at interviews**

In the event of a person failing to attend a scheduled investigation interview, the Complaints Panel may:

- proceed with the hearing in the absence of the person *or*
- re-arrange a meeting to a future date not more than 28 days in advance, *or*

- terminate the proceedings

These decisions are at the discretion of the Complaints Panel.

#### **5.11 Notification of the Complaints Panel's findings**

The Complaints Panel shall be required to complete its investigation on the complaint and report its findings and conclusions in writing to the Complaints Committee as quickly as reasonably possible.

#### **5.14 Decision-making process**

It will be the responsibility of the Complaints Committee to review the findings of the Complaints Panel and reach a decision on what action, if any, should be taken in respect of the respondent. As part of this process, they will interview the respondent and discuss the findings of the Complaints Panel with him/her. They may also deem it necessary to interview other people in connection with the Complaints Panel's findings before reaching a decision.

The Complaints Committee will notify the parties of their decision, together with the imposition of any sanctions, as quickly as reasonably possible and no more than 28 days from receipt of the findings of the Complaints Panel.

#### **5.15 Sanctions against IFT tutors, supervisors and therapists**

Should the complaint lodged be heard by IFT and, following an investigation, the complaint be found, one or more of the following sanctions may be implemented by the Complaints Committee:

- Additional specific training/supervision is undertaken. Written evidence will be required from the respondent and trainer/supervisor on satisfactory completion of the training/supervision
- Termination of sessional contracts
- IFT Membership (if applicable) is suspended while additional specific training/supervision is undertaken. Written evidence will be required from the member and trainer/supervisor on satisfactory completion of the training/supervision
- Membership is revoked by resolution of the Trustees of IFT. The resolution of the Trustees will be determined on the grounds that, in their reasonable opinion, the member's continued membership is detrimental to the Charity.
- In cases of gross misconduct, membership of IFT may be terminated without recompense
- Such other sanction is implemented as, in the opinion of the Complaints Committee, is appropriate in all the circumstances
- Where appropriate, the Trustees may apply a time limit to the application of any sanction.

The Complaints Committee will notify the respondent in writing as soon as their decision has been made.

The decision as to the satisfactory completion of any sanctions imposed will be made by the Director of IFT and confirmed in writing to the respondent.

All respondents will be UKCP registered and therefore IFT will inform UKCP of any sanction implemented. IFT will include the information about any sanction implemented in references requested for employed staff.

## **8. Appeal against the recommendation of the Complaints Committee**

- 6.1 The respondent will have 14 days from the date of receipt of the Complaints Committee's decision to appeal to the Chair of the Board of Trustees against the recommendation and must state the specific grounds for the appeal.
- 6.2 Appeals can be heard on the following grounds:
  - Where there is relevant new evidence which was not available at the time of the original investigation *or*
  - Where the Complaints Procedure is considered not to have been applied correctly *or*
  - Where the sanction is considered to be disproportionate to the findings of the complaint and is not felt to be fair in all the circumstances
- 6.3 The Chair of the Board of Trustees will be provided by the Director of IFT and the Complaints Committee with the relevant background papers considered in the investigatory and decision-making processes.
- 6.5 It will be at the discretion of the Chair of the Board of Trustees as to how the appeal is conducted. This may, or may not, involve seeking additional information and/or interviewing any party.
- 6.5 The Chair of the Board of Trustees will make a decision on the appeal and notify the respondent, in writing, within 14 days of receipt of the appeal.
- 6.6 The decision of the Chair of the Board of Trustees will be final.

If the decision of the Complaints Committee is upheld by the Chair of the Board of Trustees, any sanctions imposed or remedial action will continue to apply.

If the decision of the Complaints Committee is amended by the Chair of the Board of Trustees, such action as is necessary will be implemented from the appropriate date.

## **9. Expenses**

Travel expenses incurred in lodging a complaint will not normally be paid.

When a complainant, respondent or other party is specifically requested to attend an interview, travel expenses can be reimbursed.

## Appendix 3

### Complaints procedure against IFT members who are also registered with UKCP

- Notes:
1. The IFT Complaints Policy and Procedure is referred to in Section 7 of the IFT Membership Regulations
  2. All complaints against IFT members who are also registered with UKCP will be heard first in accordance with UKCP procedures.  
  
However, in the case of IFT members who are also IFT employees and/or are IFT tutors and supervisors, Appendix 2 will apply.
  3. Where action has been taken by UKCP in accordance with its procedures in a situation covered by Note 2 above, IFT reserves the right to implement action in accordance with the relevant Appendix of the Complaints Policy and Procedure independently of any action taken by UKCP. The decision to invoke IFT's Procedure, or not, will be taken by the Director of IFT.
  4. In implementing any action in accordance with Note 3, above, IFT may rely on the findings or report produced by UKCP. A copy of the written outcome of that investigation will be required by IFT to determine whether IFT will progress the complaint within IFT.

#### 1. Timescale

A complaint in respect of work done by an IFT member who is also a member of UKCP must be lodged with UKCP, by the complainant, as soon as practically possible. The maximum time-limit for lodging a complaint will be as laid down in UKCP's procedures.

If the complaint is lodged directly with UKCP, the person against whom the complaint has been made must notify IFT as soon as practically possible.

#### 2. Application of the procedure

The complaints procedure will be applied first by UKCP.

Once a decision has been made by UKCP, IFT reserves the right to take action under Appendix 1 of the IFT Complaints Policy and Procedure, dependent on all the circumstances of the case.

## Appendix 4

### Complaints procedure against clinical associates

- Notes:
1. Clinical associates (students) are not IFT employees, or members of IFT or registered with UKCP.
  2. It is expected that the most likely source of complaint against a clinical associate will be from a client.
  3. In all counselling sessions with clients, they will be accompanied by an IFT supervisor who will have sole responsibility for the conduct of the session and the clinical associate.

In the event of inappropriate conduct or clinical practice by the clinical associate, the supervisor will take appropriate action to correct it or suspend the session.

4. Any complaint against a clinical associate will be treated as a complaint against the supervisor although, dependent on the specific circumstances, action may also be taken in respect of the clinical associate.

#### 1. Scope of complaints

A complaint may be made in accordance with Section 1.3 of the Complaints Policy and 2.1.2 of the Complaints Procedure.

#### 2. Timescale

A complaint made in respect of a counselling session conducted by a clinical associate must be lodged as soon as possible. The maximum time-limit for lodging a complaint will normally be one year from the alleged offence, unless circumstances indicate that this was not realistically practical. It will be for the Director of IFT to decide whether the complaint should still be heard if it is lodged more than one year after the alleged offence.

#### 3. Administration of the Procedure

Once the complaint against the supervisor has been heard, it will be for the Director of IFT to determine what action, if any, is appropriate in respect of the clinical associate in accordance with their training contract.

Please refer to Appendix 2 for administration of the procedure of a complaint against an IFT supervisor.

## Appendix 5

### Complaints Procedure against IFT as an organisation

- Notes:
1. It is the objective of IFT to provide a high-quality service to members and clients.
  2. However, it is recognised that people involved in using the services of IFT or of its members may feel that they wish to bring a complaint about some aspect of the organisation's operations or of the delivery of its services.  
  
This Appendix covers the processing of complaints which do not relate to an individual IFT member or IFT employee or person engaged to work on behalf of IFT, but to action taken by IFT as an organisation.
  3. Complaints against IFT as an organisation will be referred to the Director of IFT.
  4. Where a complaint is being heard or has already been heard against an individual in accordance with the relevant Appendix, a complaint on the same or a closely-related matter will not normally be heard against IFT as an organisation, unless the complaint relates to matters of policy, management or process which have not already been covered in a previous complaint.
  5. It will be for the complainant to establish that the complaint is different from any previous complaint made and can properly be covered only at the organisational level. If need be, the decision on whether to hear the complaint will be referred to the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

#### 1. Timescale

- 1.1 A complaint must be lodged as soon as practically possible. The maximum time-limit for lodging a complaint is one year from the alleged offence.
- 1.2 However, IFT reserves the right to deny the complaint if, in the opinion of the Trustees, the time taken to lodge the complaint has been unacceptably long in all the circumstances.

All records, except for the details of the formal complaint, the formal response, the decision made by any panel, any appeal and record of sanction, will be kept for 2 years. The formal records will be kept for 5 years.

#### 2. Stages of the Procedure

There is a two-stage procedure: the Informal Stage and the Formal Stage.

The formal stage may be followed by an appeal.

#### 3. Administration of the Procedure

As soon as IFT is aware that a complaint has been made, the complainant should be provided by the IFT Administration Office with a copy of the Complaints Policy and Procedure and this Appendix.

It will be a requirement of IFT that any complaint against IFT as an organisation follows the Complaints Policy and Procedure.

A copy of the Code of Ethics and Code of Practice may also be provided to the complainant, if relevant, together with any IFT policy relevant to the complaint.

Stages 1 and 2 of the Procedure will be co-ordinated by the Director of IFT.

#### **4. Stage 1 – Informal stage of the Complaints Procedure**

- 4.1 The objective of the informal stage is to encourage the amicable and timely resolution or mediation of complaints without recourse to formal proceedings.
- 4.2 Before pursuing a complaint, the complainant will be expected to have received and read a relevant documentation provided by IFT, as identified in 3, above.

The complainant will then be expected to attempt to resolve the issue informally with IFT. The Director of IFT will be responsible for making appropriate arrangements for this to take place, dependent on the nature of the complaint.

- 4.3 If it is still not possible to reach an informal resolution, a summary of the complaint and the attempted solution will be prepared by each of:
- the complainant *and*
  - the Director of IFT
- 4.4 The complainant and the relevant parties at IFT are advised to make contemporaneous notes of the various stages of their involvement in the matter, in particular relating to:
- the date and nature of the incident(s) giving rise to the complaint
  - the date(s) and nature of the steps taken to raise the complaint and seek a resolution
  - the date(s) and nature of any action taken and responses given

#### **5. Stage 2 – Formal stage of the Complaints Procedure**

##### **5.1 Objective of the formal stage**

The objective of the formal stage of this Procedure is to help address any remaining dissatisfaction on the part of the complainant and to help reach a prompt resolution of the complaint where informal steps have failed.

##### **5.2 Initiating the formal stage**

The complainant should submit the summary referred to in 4.3 above to the Director of IFT, explaining clearly which Code and/or Policy was, in the complainant's view, breached. The Director will have the right not to continue with proceedings if, in the Director's opinion, there is inadequate clarity as to the nature and cause of the complaint.

The Director of IFT should also obtain a copy of the 'responsible person's' summary.

The complainant should submit the summary referred to in 4.4 above to the Director of IFT.

##### **5.3 Acknowledgement**

The Director of IFT will, within 10 working days, acknowledge the receipt of the complaint in writing and either confirm that it falls within the scope of IFT's Complaints Procedure or explain why it does not.

In the event that Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure is to be followed, the Director of IFT will forward a copy of the complaint to:

- the complainant
- the Complaints Panel
- the Chair of IFT Trustees

and explain to all parties the process and timetable to be followed.

#### **5.4 Investigation of the formal stage**

All formal complaints will be independently investigated by a Complaints Panel, normally consisting of two people: the Director of IFT and a senior member of the Management team.

When a Stage-2 complaint has been received and accepted by IFT, the respondent will have 14 days from receipt by them of the complaint to respond in writing to the Director of IFT.

The Complaints Panel will conduct such interviews and review such documentation as it considers necessary to undertake its investigation.

The Complaints Panel will be responsible for producing a report for the Complaints Committee – which will normally be formed of two Trustees appointed by the Chair of the Board of Trustees – summarising its findings and conclusions.

#### **5.5 Investigation interviews**

Interviews will be arranged by the Complaints Panel, as necessary, with the complainant and any other party who, in the opinion of the Complaints Panel, may have relevant evidence. Documentary evidence may also be sought and reviewed by the Complaints Panel.

The objective of the interviews will be to establish, in a thorough and dispassionate manner, the facts of the case. Any conclusions drawn by the Complaints Panel, following an analysis of the evidence obtained, must be supported by that evidence.

#### **5.6 Evidence**

Evidence submitted by the complainant and other parties will normally be available to all the parties involved in the complaint. The Director of IFT will ensure that this process is followed.

#### **5.7 Notes of investigation interviews**

Notes will be taken of all interviews conducted in relation to the complaint. The Complaints Panel will have a note-taker, who may be one of the two Panel members, who will produce a factual record of each interview.

The Director of the IFT will be responsible for submitting copies of the notes of any meeting to the participants of that meeting.

## **5.8 Representation**

The complainant may be accompanied by a 'supporter' at any investigatory interview called in relation to the complaint. The supporter may not speak in support of the complainant/respondent, ask questions of the Complaints Panel or respond to questions put. They may, however, discuss the case with the complainant/respondent in any agreed adjournments.

## **5.9 Notification of the Complaints Panel's findings**

The Complaints Panel shall be required to complete its investigation on the complaint and report its findings and conclusions in writing to the Complaints Committee as quickly as reasonably possible.

## **5.10 Decision-making process**

It will be the responsibility of the Complaints Committee to review the findings of the Complaints Panel and reach a decision on what action, if any, should be taken. As part of this process, they may also deem it necessary to interview other people in connection with the Complaints Panel's findings before reaching a decision.

The Complaints Committee will notify the parties of their decision, together with details of any action which is required, as quickly as reasonably possible and no more than 28 days from receipt of the findings of the Complaints Panel.

## **6. Appeal against the recommendation of the Complaints Committee**

- 6.1 The complainant will have 14 days from the date of receipt of the Complaints Committee's decision to appeal to the Chair of the Board of Trustees against the decision and must state the specific grounds for the appeal.
- 6.2 Appeals can be heard on the following grounds:
  - Where there is relevant new evidence which was not available at the time of the original investigation *or*
  - Where the Complaints Procedure is considered not to have been applied correctly *or*
  - Where the action required by the Complaints Committee is considered to be inadequate, in the view of the complainant in terms of addressing the perceived problem
- 6.3 The Chair of the Board of Trustees will be provided by the Director of IFT and the Complaints Committee with the relevant background papers considered in the investigatory and decision-making processes.
- 6.4 It will be at the discretion of the Chair of the Board of Trustees as to how the appeal is conducted. This may, or may not, involve seeking additional information and/or interviewing any party.
- 6.5 The Chair of the Board of Trustees will make a decision on the appeal and notify the respondent, in writing, within 14 days of receipt of the appeal.
- 6.6 The decision of the Chair of the Board of Trustees will be final.

If the decision of the Complaints Committee is upheld by the Chair of the Board of Trustees, action required by the Complaints Committee will continue to apply.

## **7. Expenses**

Travel expenses incurred in lodging a complaint will not normally be paid.

When a complainant or other party is specifically requested to attend an interview, travel expenses can be reimbursed.

## Appendix 6

### Complaints procedure for complaints against Trustees in their capacity as Trustees

- Notes:
1. Trustees will be either:
    - Members of IFT who are elected at the AGM or
    - Co-opted Trustees who are appointed by the Trustees
  2. All Trustees agree annually, in writing, to abide by the Code of Ethics and Code of Practice and are expected to abide by all IFT policies which are relevant to their role as Trustees and, if relevant, as practising therapists.
  3. Complaints made against a Trustee in *his/her capacity as a Trustee, or against the Trustees as a whole*, will be heard in accordance with this Appendix.
  4. Complaints made against a Trustee in his/her role as therapists *working independently of IFT* and as a member of IFT and/or UKCP will be heard in accordance with Appendices 1 or 3, as appropriate.
  5. Where action has been taken by UKCP in accordance with its procedures in a situation covered by Note 4, above, IFT reserves the right to implement action in accordance with this Appendix independently of any action taken by UKCP. The decision to invoke IFT's Procedure, or not to, will be taken by the Chair of the Board of Trustees.
  6. In implementing any action in accordance with Note 5, above, IFT may rely on the findings or report produced by UKCP. A copy of the written outcome of that investigation will be required by IFT to determine whether IFT will progress the complaint within IFT.
  7. If the Trustee is employed as a therapist by another organisation, such as the NHS, and the complaint relates to their work as a therapist, then the complainant will be expected:
    - to have made a complaint to the Trustee's employer first if the service which they are complaining about was provided by that organisation, *and*
    - to have exhausted the relevant complaints procedure of that organisation

A copy of the written outcome of that investigation will be required by IFT to determine whether IFT will progress the complaint within IFT.
  8. IFT will not normally hear a complaint that has, in its opinion, already been appropriately heard under a procedure in accordance with Notes 5 or 7 above unless the matter relates directly to the Trustee's fitness to act as Trustee of IFT or be a members of IFT. The decision to take action, or not, will be taken by the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

#### 1. Timescale

- 1.1 A complaint made against a Trustee in his/her capacity as a Trustee must be made to the Chair of the Board of Trustees as soon as practically possible and usually within one month of the alleged offence.
- 1.2 The Chair of the Board of Trustees reserves the right to deny a complaint if, in his/her opinion, the time taken to lodge the complaint has been unacceptably long in all the circumstances.

## 2. Administration of the Procedure

As soon as the Chair of the Board of Trustees is aware that a complaint has been made, he/she will:

- contact the complainant and take appropriate steps to determine clearly the details and basis of the complaint
- contact the relevant Trustee to notify him/her of the complaint and provide a copy of the Complaints Policy and Procedure and relevant Appendix, together with any Code or policy document which may be relevant
- determine whether the complaint refers to the Trustee's role as a Trustee or as a therapist – see Notes 1 to 8, above – and notify the relevant parties accordingly.

If the matter refers to the Trustee's work in their capacity as a Trustee – see Note 3, above – the following procedure will apply.

## 3. Stages of the Complaints Procedure

The objective of the procedure will be for the Chair of the Board of Trustees to resolve the complaint, as far as is possible, by speedy and informal means, including discussion with the Trustee as to how this can be achieved. Actions set down in the informal stage of Appendices 1 and 2 may be followed by the Chair.

Exceptionally, and if resolution by informal means cannot be achieved, the formal stage of the Procedure will be initiated.

Prior to this, the Chair will prepare a summary of the actions taken under the informal stage.

## 4. Formal stage of the Complaints Procedure

### 5.1 Objective of the formal stage

The objective of the formal stage of this Procedure is to help address any remaining dissatisfaction on the part of the complainant and to help reach a prompt resolution of the complaint where informal steps have failed.

### 5.2 Initiating the formal stage

The complainant should submit a formal complaint to the Chair of the Board of Trustees, stating clearly the nature and causes of the complaint.

### 5.3 Acknowledgement

The Chair of the Board of Trustees will, within 10 working days, acknowledge the receipt of the complaint in writing and explain to all parties the process and timetable to be followed.

### 5.4 Investigation of the formal stage

All formal complaints will be investigated independently by a Complaints Panel, normally consisting of two Trustees or other people nominated for this role by the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

The Complaints Panel will conduct such interviews and review such documentation as it considers necessary to undertake its investigation.

The Complaints Panel will be responsible for producing a report for the Complaints Committee – which will normally be a special meeting of the Trustees – summarising its findings and conclusions. The Chair of the Board of Trustees will be responsible to designating the Trustees involved in the Complaints Committee where it is deemed appropriate not to involve all the Trustees.

#### **5.5 Investigation interviews**

Interviews will be arranged by the Complaints Panel, as necessary, with the complainant and any other party who, in the opinion of the Complaints Panel, may have relevant evidence. Documentary evidence may also be sought and reviewed by the Complaints Panel.

The objective of the interviews will to establish, in a thorough and dispassionate matter, the facts of the case. Any conclusions drawn by the Complaints Panel, following an analysis of the evidence obtained, must be supported by that evidence.

#### **5.6 Evidence**

Evidence submitted by the complainant and other parties will normally be available to all the parties involved in the complaint. The Director of IFT will ensure that this process is followed.

#### **5.7 Notes of investigation interviews**

Notes will be taken of all interviews conducted in relation to the complaint. The Complaints Panel will have a note-taker, who may be one of the two Panel members, who will produce a factual record of each interview. The Director of the IFT will be responsible for submitting these documents to the parties involved.

#### **5.8 Representation**

The complainant may be accompanied by a ‘supporter’ at any investigatory interview called in relation to the complaint. The supporter may not speak in support of the complainant/respondent, ask questions of the Complaints Panel or respond to questions put. They may, however, discuss the case with the complainant/respondent in any agreed adjournments.

#### **5.9 Notification of the Complaints Panel’s findings**

The Complaints Panel shall be required to complete its investigation on the complaint and report its findings and conclusions in writing to the Complaints Committee as quickly as reasonably possible.

#### **5.10 Decision-making process**

It will the responsibility of the Complaints Committee, which will normally consist of at least four Trustees, including the Chair of the Board of Trustees, to review the findings of the Complaints Panel and reach a decision on what action, if any, should be taken. As part of this process, they may also deem it necessary to interview other people in connection with the Complaints Panel’s findings before reaching a decision.

The Complaints Committee will notify the parties of their decision, together with details of any action which is required, as quickly as reasonably possible and no more than 28 days from receipt of the findings of the Complaints Panel.

**6. Appeals**

There is no procedure for an appeal against the decision of the Board of Trustees.

**7. Expenses**

Travel expenses incurred in lodging a complaint will not normally be paid.

When a complainant or other party is specifically requested to attend an interview, travel expenses can be reimbursed.