



the british  
psychological society  
promoting excellence in psychology

## WIDER PSYCHOLOGICAL WORKFORCE (WPW) REGISTER

# Complaints procedure: Guidance for the public

We have a complaints procedure to ensure we respond to complaints about people on the WPW Register swiftly and professionally, and that we protect the public who are using the psychological services of the people on the WPW Register.

This document sets out:

1. What to do first
2. Who we can consider complaints about
3. What we do, and don't, investigate
4. What you need to do to raise your concern with us
5. What we do with the information you give us
6. How we investigate
7. Possible outcomes
8. How to contact us

## 1. WHAT TO DO FIRST

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If you think someone is in immediate danger, then you should call the police.

If you have any concerns with the care or service you have received from one of our registered professionals, it is important to tell the professional or other management staff at their place of work if at all possible. This will give them the opportunity to put things right and is generally the most effective method of resolving a complaint.

If you choose to submit your complaint to us, we will always check with the employer to see what they know, and we will ask them to investigate the matter first as they are best placed to do so.

## 2. WHO WE CAN CONSIDER COMPLAINTS ABOUT

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We only have the authority to consider complaints about individual people who are on the WPW Register, or who are a member of the British Psychological Society. We cannot consider complaints about organisations.

You can check who is on the [Wider Psychological Workforce Register](#). We can check if the person you want to raise a concern about is a member for you.

WPW REGISTER

If the complaint is about a person who is not on the register and is not a member of the Society, then we cannot investigate the complaint and we will tell you that.

### 3. WHAT WE DO, AND DON'T, INVESTIGATE

We investigate concerns about the safety or effectiveness of a registrant's work – we call this their 'fitness to practise'. We will investigate when there is, or may be, a risk to people who are using psychological treatment or services provided by a registrant.

Everyone listed on the register has agreed to abide by our Fitness to Practise Framework, as well as our *Member Conduct Rules*. Many registrants will also be subject to their employer's rules and codes. For each case we will investigate whether the registrant has complied with the relevant rules and codes.

We look at every case individually.

These are some of the issues that are likely to be investigated:

dishonesty, fraud or abuse of trust or position, including not maintaining professional boundaries with a service user;

exploitation of a vulnerable person;

failure to act in the best interests of service users;

serious breaches of a service user's confidentiality or data protection requirements;

committing reckless or deliberately harmful acts;

serious or repeated mistakes in service user care;

where a registrant's performance in their role has harmed service users or put them at risk of harm;

violence, sexual misconduct or indecent behaviour;

a caution or conviction for a criminal offence.

health conditions that are not being managed and affect the delivery of treatment and care and safety of service users;

an adverse finding by another regulatory body;

fraudulent or incorrect entry onto the BPS Register, or

other equally serious activities which affect public confidence in the profession.

However, there are other issues that we do not investigate. For example, we cannot:

get involved in a client's clinical care or social care arrangements;

deal with complaints about the level of service provided by an organisation;

reverse the decision of another organisation or body;

make a registrant or organisation change the content of a report;

get involved in matters which should be decided by a court, including disagreement with a professional report or other expert evidence presented in court;

arrange refunds or compensation, or get involved in the fees charged for private treatment;

make a registrant apologise; or

provide legal advice.

If you are not sure whether we can address your concern, but you think that people might be at risk of harm, we would prefer that you contact us than do nothing.

#### 4. WHAT YOU NEED TO DO TO RAISE YOUR CONCERN WITH US

We can respond most quickly if you fill out our WPW Register Concerns form. We ask you to tell us about:

the person you are raising a concern about;

what your concern is (what happened and when, if anyone else was involved etc.); and

how we can get in touch with you.

In cases where you believe public safety is at risk you should make a referral to us immediately, even if not all the information is available to you.

You can submit a complaint as a group of people who all have the same concern, but, please choose someone from the group to act as a representative for the group, so that we have one consistent person to communicate with during the process, and please tell us that you are acting on behalf of a group.

#### 5. WHAT WE DO WITH THE INFORMATION YOU GIVE US

We will only use the information that you give us to investigate your concerns, and we will protect your identity where possible. Depending on the issue, it might not be possible to do this and still investigate your concern effectively, or it may not be in your best interests or those of the Society.

If this is the case, we will explain the situation to you, tell you who we think we should share the information with, and ask your permission.

## 6. HOW WE INVESTIGATE

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We ask our Investigatory Panel to consider the evidence, to talk to people involved and to make a decision on whether the complaint should be upheld. The Panel is made up of between three and six experienced psychology professionals who are familiar with the work that registrants do, and who are able to judge when a registrant may not be 'fit to practise'.

The Panel will decide on an outcome appropriate to ensure that the public remain safe.

## 7. POSSIBLE OUTCOMES

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If a complaint is upheld, the Investigatory Panel may apply one of the following sanctions:

Removing the registrant from the register;

Suspending the registrant from the register for a period of time;

Issuing a formal written warning to the registrant;

Imposing conditions of continued registration (for example training)

Which one they apply will depend on the severity of the case, the existence of any previously upheld complaints, and the need to protect the public.

If the complainant, registrant or employer are not satisfied with the outcome of the case, they may request a Review of the case under certain conditions.

## 8. HOW TO CONTACT US

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You can email us using: [complaints@bps.org.uk](mailto:complaints@bps.org.uk)

You can write to us at:

The British Psychological Society  
St Andrews House  
48 Princess Road East  
Leicester, LE1 7DR

Or if these methods don't suit you, you can call us on our dedicated complaints line:  
0116 252 9919.

## SUMMARY OF THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

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### ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT

**The Complaints Team** will receive a complaint or self-referral, check that it is an issue we can investigate, record it, and let you know we have received it, within five working days.



### INITIAL ASSESSMENT

**The Complaints Manager** will consider which rules and codes are relevant, and whether the case is high-risk. For high-risk cases we may impose an interim suspension on the registrant if it is needed to protect the public.



### INFORM RELEVANT PARTIES

**The Complaints Manager** will inform the registrant, their employer and any other relevant parties (for example the police) that the complaint has been received.



### PREPARE FOR INVESTIGATION

**The Complaints Manager** will gather information about the case and present an initial summary for the Chair of our Investigatory Panel to decide if the case is worthy of investigation. High-risk cases will always be investigated.



### INVESTIGATE THE CASE

**The Investigatory Panel** will consider the evidence, request interviews with those involved, as they see fit, and will decide on whether the case is upheld, and how severe the case is.



### OUTCOMES

**If the case is upheld**, the Panel will decide on a sanction and explain its reasons.

**If the case is not upheld**, the Panel will explain its reasons.

Either way, the relevant parties, including the registrant, will be informed.



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