

KENT SEXUAL ASSAULT AND ABUSE SERVICES

SERVICE USER COMPLAINTS POLICY

Approved by: Board of Trustees

Review cycle: Annual

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1. Introduction

Kent Sexual Assault and Abuse Services (KSAAS) is committed to providing high-quality, trauma-informed support to all service users. We recognise that feedback — including complaints — is essential to improving our services, strengthening trust and ensuring accountability.

We aim to respond positively to all complaints, ensuring that any shortcomings are addressed and not repeated. This policy sets out how service users can raise concerns and how KSAAS will respond.

2. Purpose

This policy ensures that:

- Service users can raise concerns easily and safely.
 - Complaints are handled fairly, consistently and within agreed timeframes.
 - Responses are respectful, transparent and appropriate.
 - Learning from complaints informs service improvement.
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3. Definitions

A **complaint** is defined as:

Any expression of dissatisfaction — however made — about KSAAS, its services, or the actions or conduct of a staff member or volunteer, which requires a formal response.

A **service user** includes anyone accessing or attempting to access KSAAS services.

4. Principles

KSAAS's complaints process is guided by the following principles:

- **Accessibility** – Complaints can be made easily and without fear of negative consequences.
 - **Respect** – All complainants are treated with dignity and compassion.
 - **Timeliness** – Complaints are acknowledged and responded to within agreed timeframes.
 - **Confidentiality** – Information is handled sensitively and in line with data protection law.
 - **Fairness** – Complaints are investigated impartially.
 - **Learning** – Complaints inform service development and improvement.
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5. Responsibilities

KSAAS will:

- Acknowledge formal complaints in writing.
- Respond within the timeframes set out in this policy.
- Handle complaints sensitively, reasonably and confidentially.
- Take appropriate action where required.

Complainants are asked to:

- Submit complaints in writing, normally within eight weeks of the issue arising.
 - Raise concerns promptly and directly with the CEO in the first instance.
 - Provide clear information about the issue and any steps already taken.
 - Allow KSAAS time to respond within the stated timeframes.
 - Recognise that some matters may be outside KSAAS's control.
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6. Monitoring and Reporting

- Trustees will receive an **anonymous annual summary** of formal complaints and outcomes.
 - All formal complaints will also be discussed with trustees as they arise to ensure oversight and accountability.
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7. Complaints Process

7.1 Stage 1 – Formal Complaint to the CEO

Write to the CEO, clearly marking your correspondence **“Formal Complaint”**. Include:

- Details of the complaint
- The impact on you
- The outcome or remedy you are seeking

Send by post to:

Kent Sexual Assault and Abuse Services
[Insert address]

Or by email to:

[Insert email address]

Timeframes:

- Acknowledgement within **10 working days**

- Full response within **25 working days**
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7.2 Stage 2 – Review by the Chair of Trustees

If you are dissatisfied with the Stage 1 response, you may request a review by writing to the **Chair of Trustees** at the same postal or email address.

Timeframes:

- Acknowledgement within **10 working days**
- Full response within **28 working days**

If the Chair is unavailable, another trustee will conduct the review.

7.3 Complex or Extended Investigations

Some complaints may require more detailed investigation. In such cases, you will receive an **interim response** explaining:

- What is being done
 - Who is handling the matter
 - When a full reply can be expected
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7.4 If Your Complaint Remains Unresolved

If you remain dissatisfied after the Chair's response, you may contact:

The Charity Commission

Charity Commission Direct
PO Box 1227
Liverpool
L69 3UG

Further information is available at:
<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity>

8. Confidentiality and Data Protection

- All complaints will be handled in line with KSAAS's confidentiality policy and UK GDPR.
- Information will only be shared with those directly involved in investigating or responding to the complaint.

- Records will be stored securely and retained in accordance with KSAAS’s data retention schedule.
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9. Accessibility

KSAAS is committed to ensuring that:

- Complaints can be made verbally, in writing or with support.
 - Reasonable adjustments are available for disabled service users.
 - Interpreting or translation support can be arranged where needed.
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10. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if legislation, guidance or organisational practice changes. The Board of Trustees is responsible for approving updates.

Appendix A – Contact Details

Kent Sexual Assault and Abuse Services

[Insert address]

[Insert email]

[Insert phone number]

Chair of Trustees

[Insert contact details]

Charity Commission

<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity>
