

**Making a Complaint about an Irish Association for Counselling and
Psychotherapy Counsellor/Psychotherapist:
Information for the Client**

Introduction

Wherever possible or appropriate, you are encouraged to directly approach your Counsellor/Psychotherapist to discuss and attempt to resolve your complaint, difficulty or dissatisfaction.

If a resolution is not forthcoming following personal contact or personal contact is not feasible or is inappropriate, you can make a formal complaint.

Who can make a complaint?

IACP can accept complaints from:

- Clients
- A parent or guardian representing a child under eighteen
- A representative for an adult who lacks physical or mental capacity

IACP can deal with complaints about:

- A therapeutic service (including Counselling or psychotherapy) provided by an IACP Accredited/Pre-Accredited member (Pre-Accredited members are qualified Counsellors/Psychotherapists working towards Accreditation with the IACP)

IACP cannot :

- Investigate complaints about individuals who **were not IACP members at the time of the event** about which you are making the complaint
- Investigate complaints which have already been dealt with by the IACP whether discontinued or not by the Complainant
- Make a Counsellor/Psychotherapist apologise to you
- Provide a detailed explanation of what happened to you. This can only come from the Counsellor/Psychotherapist
- Provide you with financial compensation or aid you in seeking a financial compensation claim
- Provide you with legal or professional advice or representation

Is this a Complaint?

During Counselling/Psychotherapy, it is not unusual to experience periods of difficulty or dissatisfaction with your Counsellor/Psychotherapist. Always try to talk this through with your Counsellor/Psychotherapist. Most Counsellors/Psychotherapists welcome this discussion and can resolve most issues.

It is appropriate to make a complaint when you believe the Counsellor/Psychotherapist has not behaved ethically in accordance with the IACP Code of Ethics and Practice.

You can access the Code of Ethics and Practice by visiting the following link:

www.iacp.ie/complaints

The IACP Code of Ethics is available to download on the bottom left hand side of this page in the Downloads section.

If your complaint is regarding a Counsellor/Psychotherapist who is employed in an organisation which has its own Complaints Procedure, we ask you to process your complaint via that organisation before submitting your complaint to the IACP. The Complaints Administrator will ask for a written complaint report from the employer before initiating the IACP Complaints Procedure.

If you are involved in court action relating to the case or the matter of the complaint, the IACP Complaints Process must be deferred until court action is fully completed.

Complaints are taken very seriously and will be processed carefully according to the IACP Complaints Policy and Procedure.

You can find the link to the Complaints Procedure here (www.iacp.ie/complaints).

Getting advice about making your complaint

If you have a complaint to make, read the information on this page carefully and download the Complaint Form or request that the form is emailed/posted to you.

You can contact the Complaints Committee Administrator via email at iacpcomplaints@iacp.ie

Please download and complete the IACP Complaint Form by accessing the following link:

www.iacp.ie/complaints

The Complaint Form is available to download on the bottom left hand side of this page in the Downloads section. Please complete electronically or print and complete by hand. When completed please submit your complaint by email attachment or post.

The Administrator can give you advice regarding:

- whether it *appears* that you have grounds to complain (this does not mean that your complaint will be accepted or that the Complaints Committee will uphold the complaint)
- making your complaint
- how the complaint is processed

Please be aware that the Complaints Administrator serves both the Complainant, that is you the Client, and the IACP Complaints Committee and so, must remain unbiased. The Administrator cannot give you an opinion or judgement on the substance of the complaint or the possible outcome of a complaint.

Advocacy Groups/Support Organisations to assist Complainants in making a complaint to the IACP

Irish Advocacy Network
Smithfield Business Centre,
Suite 1.9, The Distillers
Building,
New Church Street
Dublin 7
01 8728684
admin@irishadvocacynetwork.com
www.irishadvocacynetwork.com

EPIC (Empowering Young People in
Care in Ireland)
7 Red Cow Lane,
Smithfield,
Dublin 7.
01 872 7661
info@epiconline.ie
www.epiconline.ie

National Advocacy Service for
people with disabilities
Citizens Information Board,
43 Townsend Street,
Dublin 2
01 605 9000
info@ciboard.ie
www.citizensinformationboard.ie

Pavee Point
46 North Great Charles Street
Dublin 1
01 8780255
info@pavee.ie

www.paveepoint.ie

Irish Hospice Foundation
Morrison Chambers (4th floor),
32 Nassau Street,
Dublin 2.
(01) 6793188
info@hospice-foundation.ie
www.hospice-foundation.ie

How the complaint is processed – what YOU, the Complainant, will be asked to do

IACP accepts complaints in writing via email or letter. You will be directed to the Complaint Form and asked to submit your complaint on this form. You will be asked to provide your consent to sharing your complaint with the Counsellor/Psychotherapist concerned. This action is an essential part of the Complaints Procedure, and without your permission, we cannot process your complaint.

We treat all information with careful adherence to the confidentiality of all parties concerned.

These are the steps that are followed by the Complaints Administrator and the Complaints Committee

- We pass your completed and signed Complaint Form to the IACP Complaints Committee for discussion at the next meeting
- Meetings are held monthly (except August)
- You will be kept informed and updated regarding the status of your complaint as it progresses
- If you have a valid complaint, your complaint will be processed according to the IACP Complaints Procedure which is as follows:

The Complaints Committee shall via the Administrator:

- Inform the Counsellor/Psychotherapist that a complaint has been made;
- Request permission to send correspondence by email attachment;
- Forward the completed Complaint Form to the Counsellor by email attachment or registered post;
- The Counsellor will be asked to respond with their comments and observations in writing, by post or by email attachment, and informed that this correspondence, in full, will be made available to you, the Complainant. The Counsellor will be asked to provide this response within four weeks of receipt of the completed complaint;

- You will be informed that your complaint has been sent to the Counsellor who has been asked to respond;
- The Counsellor's response is forwarded to the Complaints Committee Members and discussed at the subsequent meeting. Receipt of the response is acknowledged by the Administrator;
- The Complaints Committee may at this stage look for further information from either party if required;
- The Counsellor's response will be sent to you for observations and comments. You will be asked to send in any observations and comments you may wish to make within four weeks of receipt of the Counsellor's response;
- Your response is forwarded to the Complaints Committee Members and discussed at the subsequent meeting. Receipt of your response is acknowledged by the Administrator.
- Your comments are then made available to the Counsellor who is given an opportunity to respond in writing;
- Once the Complaints Committee is satisfied that it has all the relevant information, the Complaints Committee will adjudicate and will communicate the determination to you the Complainant and to the Counsellor / Psychotherapist concerned in the complaint case.

The record retention limit for complaints files is seven years from the date the complaint is finalised.

How correspondence is managed:

With your permission correspondence is managed by email. All letters are sent by email attachment unless otherwise requested, in which case they will be sent by standard post. If sensitive documents are being posted they will be sent by registered post.

Special circumstances:

Couple Counselling:

When a complaint is made about couple Counselling, it is important to note that the Counsellor will need to have the consent of both partners in order to answer the complaint. Where only one partner makes the complaint, and the other partner does not give consent, the Counsellor may only divulge information relating to the Complainant.

Child Protection:

Under current legislation the IACP has a duty and responsibility to inform Tusla of any matters regarding the safety of children or vulnerable adults that arise while processing a complaint. The Complainant will be notified by the Administrator of any report made to Tusla.

GDPR:

The IACP is committed to compliance with GDPR throughout the complaints process.