



SOUTH COAST PSYCHOLOGY

Mānaukātanga . Aotearoa

Complaints Policy

1. Purpose

This policy outlines how South Coast Psychology (SCP) manages complaints related to the services provided by our staff and contractors. We are committed to addressing concerns promptly, fairly, and respectfully to maintain high-quality service delivery and continuous improvement.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all complaints (whether lodged as a formal complaint or not) received from clients, patients, their families or advocates, contractors, staff, other stakeholders (such as 3rd-party payers), and the general public regarding any aspect of the services provided by our contractors or company staff. Complaints related to employment matters fall under Human Resources policy and procedure.

3. Principles

- **Accessibility:** Complaints can be made verbally, in writing, by phone, email, or through a designated online channel.
- **Respect and fairness:** All complaints will be treated seriously, confidentially, and with respect for all parties involved.
- **Natural justice and restorative justice:**
 - The person about whom a complaint is made has the right to be informed of the nature and details of the complaint, and the identity of the complainant.
 - Where possible and appropriate, SCP supports implementation of restorative justice approaches (e.g. agreement to undertake remedial training, facilitated restorative justice meeting, documented apology).
- **Documentation:**
 - All complaints are to be documented; therefore if a verbal complaint is received, the relevant Manager or their appointee will record in writing the substance of the complaint and seek the complainant's verification of accuracy and functional completeness.
 - All investigations are to be documented for reference of South Coast Psychology.
 - All complaint outcomes are to be documented; complainant and any other involved stakeholders to be appropriately advised.
- **Transparency:** Complainants will be informed about the process, expected timeframes, and outcomes.
- **Timeliness:** We aim to acknowledge complaints within 3 working days and resolve them as quickly as possible, usually within 20 working days.

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| Version | Version 1 | Scheduled review | Jun 2026 |
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- **Ethics and practice standards:** Complaints will be evaluated and managed in relation to any relevant general specifications made known to Providers/Staff by South Coast Psychology in addition to the professional ethical and practice standards, and code of conduct (if it exists) specific to the professional affiliation of the Provider/Staff concerned.
- **Continuous improvement:** Complaints will be used to identify service improvements and prevent recurrence.

4. How to make a complaint

Complaints can currently be made directly to South Coast Psychology via:

- Phone: 027 216 7482
- Email: admin@southcoastpsychology.co.nz
- Mail: 95 Turner Street RD 3 Wyndham 9893
- In person: 123 Tweed Street Invercargill (by appointment)

If assistance is needed to make a complaint, support is available upon request.

5. Complaints handling procedure (overview)

Step 1: Receipt and acknowledgement

- All complaints will be logged immediately upon receipt.
- The complainant will receive written acknowledgment within 3 working days, including:
 - Confirmation the complaint has been received
 - The name and contact details of the person managing the complaint
 - An outline of the complaints process and expected timeframes
 - An invitation to discuss the complaint if desired

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Step 2: Assessment and investigation

- The complaint will be assessed to determine its nature, urgency, and the appropriate response.
- Investigations will be conducted fairly and impartially, involving relevant contractors or staff as needed.
- If the complaint involves multiple parties or external agencies, cooperation will be sought to resolve the issue.

Step 3: Resolution and response

- A written response will be provided, normally within 20 working days outlining:
 - Findings of the investigation
 - Any actions taken or proposed
 - Options for further review or escalation if the complainant is not satisfied

Step 4: Follow-up and improvement

- Where appropriate, follow-up contact will be made to ensure the complainant is satisfied with the resolution.
- Complaints will be reviewed regularly to identify trends and inform quality improvement initiatives.

6. Confidentiality and privacy

All complaints and related information will be handled in accordance with privacy laws and confidentiality obligations. Information will only be shared with those directly involved in the complaint investigation and resolution.

7. External review

If a complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, they may be referred to external bodies such as:

- The Health and Disability Commissioner (HDC)
- Professional registration bodies (e.g., Medical Council, Professional Board)
- Advocacy services (e.g., Mental Health Advocacy Service)

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8. Responsibilities

- **Managing Partner / Complaints Officer:** Overall responsibility for ensuring this policy is implemented and complaints are managed effectively.
- **Contractors and Staff:** Required to cooperate with investigations and uphold professional conduct.
- **Complainants:** Encouraged to provide clear information and engage constructively in the process.

9. Policy review

This policy will be reviewed annually or as required to ensure it remains effective and compliant with relevant legislation and best practice guidelines.

References:

- Health and Disability Commissioner complaint process (HDC)
- New Zealand Ministry of Health guidelines on complaints
- Australian Council on Safety and Quality in Health Care – Complaints Management Handbook
- Best practice principles from mental health service providers

9. Approved by: Diane Gillespie (Director)

Date: 27/6/2025

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