

Complaints procedure

Introduction

This procedure details an agreed set of rules and steps to be undertaken in order to resolve complaints made by any person receiving End of Life Doula support.

We always try to do our best, but when you feel we are not doing our best and there are improvements to be made, we welcome feedback and will treat any complaints raised as a serious matter.

When handling complaints, we will ensure we abide by the Equality Act 2010 which protects all individuals from discrimination due to: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, sex (gender) and sexual orientation.

Definition of a complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of End of Life Doula UK.

What constitutes a legitimate complaint?

We regard a legitimate complaint as any expression of dissatisfaction with any aspect of End of Life Doula UK which is under the control of the committee of the membership association.

Where complaints come from

Complaints may come from any individual or organisation who has a legitimate interest in End of Life Doula UK, including the public, if something is perceived to be improper. A complaint should be made in writing.

What to do if you have a complaint

We view legitimate complaints positively as they are one of the ways we have to make sure we keep improving our standards and the quality of everything that we do. We take safeguarding extremely seriously. If you have any concerns about the behaviour of one of our members, it is vital that you tell us about it immediately so that appropriate action can be taken.

If there is anything to do with End of Life Doula UK about which you feel you need to complain, please tell us as soon as possible.

All formal complaints are directed to the Chair of End of Life Doula UK (operations@eol-doula.uk) to ensure they receive a high priority. He or she will arrange for the complaint to be handled by a committee member of the End of Life Doula UK.

What we will do on receiving your complaint

- We'll listen, record your complaint and advise you how it will be handled
- We'll investigate whenever necessary
- We'll act to resolve the problem, tell you what that action is and inform you of the outcome of the investigation
- At all times we will treat you with understanding and respect. All we ask is that you do the same
- Confidential information in relation to your complaint will be handled sensitively
- We are not able to respond to anonymous complaints
- We do not deal with matters for which End of life Doula UK is not directly responsible

Please note that complaints submitted over six months after the relevant event occurred will not be processed except in exceptional circumstances.

Complaint response times

- We would appreciate your understanding that, with limited volunteer resources, we cannot always respond to your complaint immediately, although we will whenever we can
- You will receive an initial acknowledgement and/or response within ten working days of receipt of your complaint and we expect to resolve most problems in that time
- Where a more in-depth investigation is required, we aim to provide a full response within 20 working days. If there are exceptional circumstances, where that is not possible, we will advise you

What if our response does not satisfy you?

You should let us know in writing within five working days of receiving our response. The Chair of End of Life Doula UK will appoint a suitable person, external to End of Life Doula UK, to hear why you are dissatisfied. Their decision will be final.

Vexatious complaints procedure

There may be times when the complaints we receive are vexatious in nature, and this section is written with the purpose of helping to identify and handle such complaints. Whilst we endeavour to focus on an individual complaint when it is made, it is important that we take into consideration the surrounding circumstances and context, including the complainants' previous interactions with End of Life Doula UK or one of our members.

It is important to note, that if a complaint is found to be vexatious, this is a judgement placed on the complaint itself and not on the individual making the complaint. This policy is in place to ensure that, whilst any complainants making a complaint viewed as vexatious will be treated with respect, there is no detriment to clients, members or officers of End of Life Doula UK. This includes the fact that time spent dealing with complaints should be proportionate to the nature of the complaint and that the outcome of complaints being sought should be realistic and achievable by End of Life Doula UK.

What constitutes a vexatious complaint?

When deciding whether a complaint is vexatious, we will consider the following:

- Whether the main purpose or effect of the complaint itself, or the manner in which the complaint is made, is to pressurise or cause distress to any members or officers of End of Life Doula UK or to disrupt the running of End of Life Doula UK
- Whether the complaint is deemed unreasonable

When deciding whether a complaint is vexatious, we will take into account:

- Whether the complainant is making a high number of unreasonable/unjustified complaints over a short period of time
- The history of interactions between End of Life Doula UK or a member of End of Life Doula UK and the complainant
- Any failures or errors that we have made and whether these have previously been addressed and apologised for
- Whether we have correctly followed our complaints procedure when investigating previous complaints
- Whether the complainant is repeatedly adding further information or alterations to an earlier complaint which has already been investigated
- Whether the complainant is seeking information that has already been provided, or revisiting matters which have already received appropriate explanation
- The tone of correspondence – whether this is abusive or making unreasonable demands
- Whether the complainant is using a ‘scattergun’ approach in complaining to numerous members of End of Life Doula UK
- The extent of the workload required to respond to the complaint and whether this is proportionate
- Whether the complainant is pursuing the complaint after the complaint procedure has already been properly implemented and completed
- Whether the complainant is behaving in a way that causes any one or more of our members to feel distressed, humiliated or threatened

How will a vexatious complaint be dealt with?

A decision about whether a complaint is vexatious will be made by the Chair of End of Life Doula UK who will consider the complaint and may seek advice from one or more other Directors of End of Life Doula UK. If a complaint is not judged to be vexatious it will be dealt with as per End of Life Doula UK’s complaints procedure.

If a complaint is judged to be vexatious

If it is decided that a complaint is vexatious, the Chair of End of Life Doula UK will respond directly to the complainant explaining the reasons for this decision, and explaining that the complaint case will subsequently be closed with no further action being taken. The Chair of End of Life Doula UK, in consultation with the other Directors of End of Life Doula UK, will also make a decision regarding the potential need for applying a restriction on communication from the complainant.

Any decision regarding whether a complaint is vexatious will refer only to the specific complaint. In the event that the complainant continues to be, or goes on to be, offered support from End of Life Doula UK, any further complaints from the same individual will be considered.