

Association for Psychological Accreditation

Association for Psychological Accreditation



EMPATHY
CONGRUENCE
UNCONDITIONAL POSITIVE REGARD

#theapaway

Home of The International Psychological Standards & Accreditation Council

APA Complaint Protocols



Complaint Protocols

Our promise to you

We will:

- Abide by our company values and act with integrity, openness, honesty, fairness, and respect
- Act with the highest standards
- Listen, learn, and grow from every experience
- Manage ALL complaints, whether relating to members or officials, in accordance with the complaint protocol

How to complain

If you feel that an APA employee or member has fallen short of the high standards you should expect, you have a right to make a complaint.

We take all complaints seriously and will discuss the details with you directly to find a fair and balanced solution to every complaint.

You can contact us to make a complaint:

- By telephone: Call our customer service team on 0208 556 4984
- By email: support@apa-accreditation.co.uk
- In writing: Ayanay Psychological Accreditation,
11 – 13 Cambridge Park, Wanstead, London E11 2PU

How long do I have to make a complaint?

We ask, that you contact us within a month of you finding out you have reason to complain. In exceptional circumstances, we may be able to accept your complaint after this deadline. This will be discussed with the Senior APA Executive during the direct conversation of enquiry.

What happens when I've made a complaint?

We will acknowledge your complaint within 48 hours of receiving it. All Action Plans will have an initial 20-working day Resolve or Report Cycle. You will be kept informed at every stage, or as agreed in the action plan.

The 20-working day 'Resolve or Report' Cycle, is managed in a 4 Phase Process.



Phase 1

- Overview
- Conversation of Enquiry – Complainant

Phase 2

- The Member must submit a formal written response to the Notice of Enquiry.

Phase 3

- Formal Conversation of Enquiry with the Member.

Phase 4

- Conclusion Report to be issued to the member and the Complainant within 5 working days or No later than the due date.

We will aim to resolve all complaints as quickly, fairly, and effectively as possible. If a complaint cannot be resolved in the first 20 working day cycle, both parties will be informed on the final day and within 48 hours a Dedicated Complaint Handler (DCH) will be appointed, and a new action plan will be drawn up and submitted to both parties.

The DCH's aim is to resolve your complaint within 30 Working days. Therefore, the DCH Action Plan will include pre-set contact points and details of any additional information required from either party. It will be for parties to respond to such information requests within the timeline stated. Failure to comply with a DCH request, without explanation, will be deemed as a disengagement from the process and can be considered in the complaint outcome decision made by the DCH.

Where Complaints require greater investigation.

In situations where a complaint clearly requires detailed investigation, the initial conversation of enquiry will identify this, and the action plan will be created to reflect this need.

Options available to APA in such circumstances include:

- Dedicated Complaint Handler can lead the complaint from the outset
- Timeline can be adjusted with pre-set updates built into the action plan
- Independent review

Resolution Options

Dedicated Complaint Handlers will have a range of options available to them to assist in securing a resolution, up to and including mediation. Mediation will be a costed option, and this will be at the expense of the parties involved.



APA's Conclusion Options are:

- Upheld
- Urgent Action Required
- Unfounded
- Advisory Note - APA has developed the Advisory Note option to support Ethical and Professional development where such opportunities arise. They are not Sanctions, Mandatory Requirements or Inferred Penalisation.

Right of Appeal

If you wish to appeal a complaint outcome decision made by a DCH, you can request a complaint review by a Senior APA Executive.

Options available to APA in such circumstances include:

- Full review
- Process review
- Re-investigation (should additional information have come to light)

The Right to Appeal will be held open for one calendar month, from the date of the complaint outcome decision.

If you or either party remain dissatisfied when you receive APA's response, you can ask for your complaint to be reviewed by the full Membership Advisory Group. The review will be completed within 20 working days. The decision of the Membership Advisory Group is final and there is no further right of appeal.

Complaints made regarding breaches of our Ethical & Professional Conduct Protocols.

Complaints of this nature are particularly serious, as they can impact on the whole profession.

These complaints will always be led by a Senior APA Executive and a Dedicated Complaint Handler, with the complaint outcome decision being made by the Membership Advisory Group.

There will be no pre-set timeline for investigations of this type of complaint and APA reserves the right to seek legal advice regarding disclosure of the investigation and where public protection is in question. APA reserves the right to report concerns to the police and



follow their guidance. Be aware, this can mean that APA does not inform the member directly of an investigation into alleged illegal activity.

Any member who finds themselves the subject of legal proceedings or investigation, (criminal or civil law, except for parking offences and claims of a financial nature) should declare it to APA at the first possible opportunity. Failure to openly declare will be seen and acted upon, as a breach of the Ethical & Professional Protocols.

Class Action Complaints

Where multiple independent complaints are received, APA reserves the right to connect the complaints and treat them as a 'Class Action Complaint'. The process will work exactly as stated above. The only difference is that there will be multiple sources of information.

Appealing a decision regarding breaches of the Ethical & Professional Conduct Protocols.

As all Complaint Outcome Decisions in this category are made by the Membership Advisory Group, should a member wish to appeal they can request an executive ruling by appealing to the Chief Executive Officer.

What we cannot look into:

There are some things we can't deal with through our service complaints process. Examples are

- Any decisions already made under our Ethical & Professional Conduct Protocols
- Any attempt to have a previous complaint reconsidered

If your concerns can't be dealt with under our service complaint policy, we will contact you and explain the reason why.

If things have gone wrong, we will:

- Accept, acknowledge, and explain what went wrong
- Consider developing processes or providing specific training to prevent the same problem in the future

Publicising a Complaint Under Investigation

All complaints are deemed Private and Confidential whilst under investigation. Any party engaged in an APA Complaint investigation will be expected to maintain the confidentiality



of the complaint. It is highly damaging for details of complaints, that are under investigation to be made public. The court of public opinion is not part of the APA Complaint Protocol. Parties that breach the confidentiality of the complaint protocols will automatically have the complaint ruled against them.

Professionals that breach confidentiality in relation to a complaint, as in any other breach of confidentiality, would be acting unethically and would also face sanction, due to unethical conduct.

Members of the public that chooses to breach confidentiality, remove any integrity of the investigation into their complaint. APA will, therefore, rule a complaint as unproven and cease the investigation.

Publicising Complaint Outcome Decisions

It is APA's policy that not every complaint outcome decision warrants public exposure. However, where legal advice suggests that a member presents a risk to the public, APA reserve the right to terminate a members' affiliation. APA also acknowledges that it may be appropriate in some circumstances for the Disclosure and Barring Service, Disclosure Scotland and/or other relevant authorities and employers, if applicable, to be notified. (NB APA will NOT publish details of any such termination. Only that x member has been removed from the membership on grounds of Ethical & Professional Conduct Protocol breaches where a risk to the public was legally advised). APA will only take this course of action following legal or police advice. The measure of risk will be assessed by civil law standards not criminal law. This means a member will not have the protection of APA, based on not having been found guilty in a court of law. APA will act to protect the public, based on probability of risk.

External Complaints Notification

Occasions can arise where a member is wronged by a fellow professional, not connected to APA. In such situations, APA offers our members the option of support, in pursuing their external complaint. APA acknowledges 2 types of external complaint:

Type 1: Non-legal Complaints

Non-legal complaints refer to complaints to a governing or membership body. If you feel, as an APA member, that you have been wronged by a fellow professional, APA encourages you to exercise your right to make a complaint, to that professional's governing body or membership body, should no governing body be constituted.



Type 2: Legal Complaints

Where evidence and legal and / or police guidance is presented to APA. (When professionals cross the line of legality, APA will ethically safeguard clients and protect the integrity of the profession.) When an APA member is wronged and is the victim of illegal acts, APA will endorse their right to take the advised legal action.

We take all requests seriously and will discuss the details with you directly to find a fair and balanced solution to every complaint.

Protecting APA Members

When it is brought to the attention of the APA Executive that members of APA are being subjected to sustained malicious harassment, from individuals that promote themselves as therapeutic professionals, they will be supported by APA.

APA wishes to make it clear that no one who carries out such actions can ethically or morally claim to be a therapeutic professional.

APA members have the unique option, within the therapeutic community, to be supported when they have a complaint against an external body. The External Complaints Notification is there to provide members with support in times of such need. Where appropriate this support can and will include active intervention, and communication as well as joint working with other agencies. APA will not tolerate members being harassed, bullied, stalked, or threatened and when such actions are undertaken by fellow professionals, APA has, is, and will always act to protect its members.

Such actions towards peers and fellow professionals shows a clear disregard for the principles of the therapeutic role. This highlights a stark question as to the suitability of a professional to work consistently with clients in a safe and professional manner. We call on all membership bodies to join APA in imposing a zero-tolerance policy on such activity.

Professionals that have received such treatment should never feel abandoned by their membership body.

A mindset that attacks a fellow professional through malicious harassment, online trolling, digital stalking, abusive or menacing phone calls and / or SMS messaging, etc, is clearly in need of improving their own coping skills.

Furthermore: Where a professional publicly presents behaviours and actions that are either unethical or unprofessional towards clients, APA members, or risk bringing the reputation of the therapeutic sector in to question, APA reserves the right to act to protect against such unethical, unprofessional, and in cases potentially illegal actions.



Whistleblowing Protocols

Whistleblowing is classified by the UK Government as follows:

“ Whistleblowing is the term used when a worker passes on information concerning wrongdoing. In this guidance, we call that “making a disclosure” or “blowing the whistle”. The wrongdoing will typically (although not necessarily) be something they have witnessed at work.

To be covered by whistleblowing law, a worker who makes a disclosure must reasonably believe two things. The first is that they are acting in the public interest. This means in particular that personal grievances and complaints are not usually covered by whistleblowing law.

The second thing that a worker must reasonably believe is that the disclosure tends to show past, present or likely future wrongdoing falling into one or more of the following categories:

- Criminal offences (this may include, for example, types of financial impropriety such as fraud)
- Failure to comply with an obligation set out in law
- Miscarriages of justice
- Endangering of someone’s health and safety
- Damage to the environment
- Covering up wrongdoing in the above categories

Whistleblowing law is located in the Employment Rights Act 1996 (as amended by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998).

It provides the right for a worker to take a case to an employment tribunal if they have been victimised at work or they have lost their job because they have ‘blown the whistle’.”

APA believes that the motivation for ‘Whistleblowing’ is often, in a large part to protect and prevent harm. APA see’s this motivation as a positive opportunity to

- Elevate the organisations effective functioning
- Provide the safest possible environment for disclosures
- Increase the effectiveness of the organisation
- Create the most robust and efficient Voluntary Support Platform in the Sector



APA holds true to its founding principles of Empathy, Congruence, and Unconditional Positive Regard. These principles extend to and include APA's approach to reports and disclosures of wrongdoing within the organisation.

APA's highly robust and transparent protocols for Complaint Handling are industry leading and as such APA's response to Whistleblowing reports must demonstrate clear and effective protections for the 'Whistleblower', any potential victim of such wrong doing, (whether the victim be, an individual, group, organisation or other such entity), and APA itself.

The APA Executive hereby gives a firm and consistent commitment to act in full accordance with legal guidelines, legal precedent, and APA's own policies and guidelines.

APA believes that all persons connected to the organisation should, at all times, be comfortable to disclose experiences and interactions that they feel would constitute a need to inform.

Those with such knowledge and experience should be confident that they will be treated with respect, understanding and protected from any negative engagement. Whistleblowers will be met with Empathy, Congruence and Unconditional Positive Regard. The information disclosed and subsequent investigation will be treated in all best practice and within the parameters of APA's Ethical & Professional Conduct Policy, alongside APA's Complaint Handling Protocols and underpinned by the additional measures as stated in the Whistleblowing Response Protocols.

Raising a Complaint or Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing is intended to be the protected space for employees, and those connected to the function of the organisation. However, APA believes that anyone with evidence of organisational wrong doing, that would meet the elements of

- Criminal offences (this may include, for example, types of financial impropriety such as fraud)
- Failure to comply with an obligation set out in law
- Miscarriages of justice
- Endangering of someone's health and safety
- Damage to the environment
- Covering up wrongdoing in the above categories

Should be afforded the same protections as an employee who highlights the same information. This ensures that such evidence can be brought to light, irrespective of who is able to share the evidence.



The Protocols

APA believes that the integrity of any organisation is shown best on how it responds when it is under pressure. Circumstances that require a whistleblower to come forward are a clear indicator, that an organisation is under pressure.

Once a Whistleblowing disclosure is made, APA's response is critical to ensuring an effective process is delivered.

APA has designed the Protocols to maximise several key factors:

1. Ease of Disclosure
2. Protection of Source
3. Integrity of Investigation
4. Effectiveness of Escalation (Where required)
5. Ethical & Professional Recovery
6. Transparency of Learning

APA is mindful of the impacts of a whistleblowing disclosure, we therefore, facilitate a Confidentiality Package to ensure that the source is protected and the organisation can investigate without risk of evidence of wrong doing being lost, destroyed or in any way compromised. This Confidentiality Package will be reviewed as part of the Ethical & Professional Recovery.

Phase 1

Ease of Disclosure

Anyone with evidence or a suspicion of wrong doing covered by 1 or more of the 6 Whistleblowing elements, can contact APA

Directly:

- Direct report of Whistleblowing via:
 - By telephone Call our service team on 0208 556 4984
 - By email support@apa-accreditation.co.uk
 - In writing APA Ltd, 11-13 Cambridge Park Wanstead, London, E11 2PU

Indirectly:

There are several ways first contact can be made indirectly.

1. Open Contact Thursday

APA operates weekly confidential appointments with the APA CEO. Booking an Open Contact Thursday appointment and discussing the concerns with the CEO.



2. Contacting any Member of the APA Team.

All APA team members have a Duty of Care and a responsibility to act as the Person of First Contact, for Whistleblowing Reports.

3. Contacting an appropriate external authority

APA acknowledges that often the confidence to highlight such wrong doing can be a difficult step to take. This can mean that external reporting to an appropriate authority feels a more comfortable option. Therefore, a report of Whistleblowing, via an appropriate external authority, will be accepted by APA as a valid disclosure that will activate the Whistleblowing Protocols.

Phase 2:

Protection of Source

It is imperative that from the moment of disclosure, there is a full and consistent process of Information Collection:

Source details are a part of the that information. This information must be held in the strictest of confidence and limited to a maximum of 2 people within the organisation.

Where possible, the source details should not be recorded digitally or shared in communication until completion of any investigation, and then only if sharing the source details is appropriate.

Anonymising a Whistleblowing source at the beginning of the process and minimising the digital footprint of the sources identity, is designed to limit risks of impeding or otherwise interfering with the integrity of an investigation.

Therefore, at the Point of Disclosure all Communication will be managed by Team member that received the disclosure. (1st Responder)

Phase 3:

Integrity of Investigation

Investigations involving evidence or suspicion of elements covered by 'Whistleblowing' often come into 2 categories.

- Blatant and Clear
- Complex and Concealed



Whichever type of scenario is in question APA will investigate within the bounds of the law and our Ethical & Professional Conduct Protocols.

The role of the 1st Responder will be a conduit for all information, evidence and communication (to and from the Source).

Once a disclosure is made the 1st Responder will work with an appropriate Investigation Supervisor. This will be a member of the APA Core Torchbearer team that is not deemed by the source to be compromised or involved in matter at hand.

The 1st Responder and Investigation Supervisor will be the only people to know the identity of the source.

The Role of the Investigation Supervisor is to ensure that any evidence, information or communication relating to the investigation is validated, verified and appropriately managed.

Communication relating to the investigation will not be shared with anyone unless it is deemed appropriate to increase the investigation team. (Confidentiality of the Source will remain in place in this instance)

Investigation Time Line

It is ill advised to pre-set a dedicated Time Line for whistleblowing investigations. However, All 1st Responders and Investigation Supervisors will work to explore the extent, and impact of any wrong doing, with all due diligence, effective focus and urgency.

Any investigation must have a clear and accurate outcome.

- Proven
- Not Proven
- Unfounded

APA's course of action following any investigation must remain consistent and appropriate to the findings of the investigation.

The Investigation Supervisor will have the ultimate responsibility for assigning an outcome to the investigation. The 1st Responder will have the opportunity to contribute and submit their thoughts regarding the evidence and their interactions with the source.

Confidentiality during the investigation

without details of the disclosure being made public.



Phase 4:

Effectiveness of Escalation (Where required)

Once an outcome is recorded by the Investigation Supervisor, Irrespective of the outcome the Investigation report and evidence must be declared to the full APA Executive Team. Who will within 72 hours produce an initial response to report, with a full formal response being produced within 7 working days.

It is prudent to remember that there may be circumstances where it is appropriate for the Investigation Supervisor to take immediate escalatory action and inform legal authorities prior to informing the Executive Team. In such cases, the Executive Team may not be party to details of the investigation.

The course of action following an investigation once a full formal response from the Executive Team has been completed will move as follows:

A Disclosure is Proven

When a Whistleblowers disclosure has been proven APA will

- I. Report and share the investigation findings with the appropriate authorities
- II. Release a public statement Thanking the source for highlighting the wrong doing, accepting, acknowledging and apologising for the operational failures to prevent the situation.
- III. Initiate a full operational review of factors involved in the situation.
- IV. Take any appropriate disciplinary action.

A Disclosure is Not Proven

When a Whistleblowers disclosure has not been proven APA will

- I. Inform the Membership that a disclosure had been made, investigated and found to be Not Proven.
- II. Initiate a critical operational review, to test the robustness of APA Policies and Procedures to ensure maximum protections are in place.
- III. Ensure the source is invited to take part in the review.

A Disclosure is Unfounded

When a Whistleblowers disclosure is discovered to be Unfounded APA will.

- I. Inform the Membership that a disclosure had been made, investigated and found to be unfounded.
- II. Release a Public Statement that a disclosure had been made, investigated and found to be unfounded.



NOTE: Making a false, or malicious disclosure, would constitute a highly Unethical & Unprofessional act. This would result in a direct investigation, as to the motives and intent behind such an action.

APA reserves the right in such instances to invoice the source for the costs, associated with making an unfounded disclosure.

Phase 5

Ethical & Professional Recovery

Following any investigation there will be impacts that must be responded to, both large and small, seen and unseen. The emotional and physical impacts on those affected by a whistleblowing investigation cannot be overlooked.

APA is committed to effectively supporting all those affected by such circumstances, while also ensuring that the organisation is able to recover.

Phase 6

Transparency of Learning

APA is committed to ensuring that any whistleblowing event, is an opportunity for learning. The organisation will therefore produce a dedicated report following any Whistleblowing event, that outlines the details of the Investigation, the outcomes, the measures of recovery and the lessons learned.

APA will make such reports available on request with copies issued to all parties involved in the initial event.

Executive Commitment

The APA Executive hereby, commits to upholding the Whistleblowing Protocols and Pledges to deliver a working environment, conducive to the effective communication and investigation of any perceived wrong doing that would activate these protocols.

Core Torchbearers Pledge

APA's Core Torchbearers pledge to maintain a functional neutrality in any and all Whistleblowing Investigations. Upholding these protocols and APA's Ethical & Professional Conduct Protocols to ensure that any perceived wrong doing or risk of wrong doing is appropriately reported, managed and resolved.

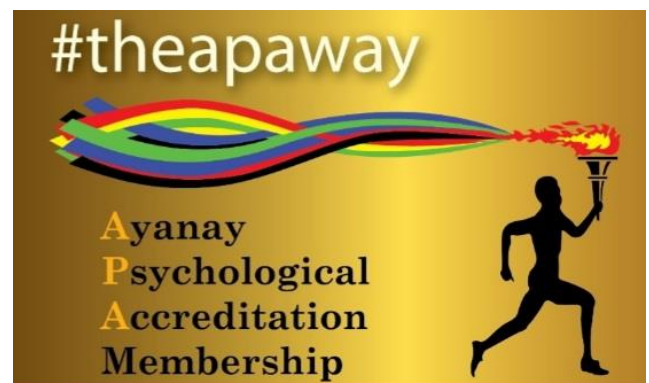


Members Duty of Care

All APA Members carry a Duty of Care in respect of reporting perceived risks related to the Whistleblower elements:

- Criminal offences (this may include, for example, types of financial impropriety such as fraud)
- Failure to comply with an obligation set out in law
- Miscarriages of justice
- Endangering of someone's health and safety
- Damage to the environment
- Covering up wrongdoing in the above categories

A new approach for new results



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