

POLICY ON MANAGING DIFFICULT SITUATIONS WITH CLIENTS

1. Definition

The Sue Lambert Trust is committed to providing a consistent, high quality service to all its clients, based on their individual needs.

However there will be difficult or challenging situations where the Trust will have to consider whether it can continue to provide a service given issues being presented by the client. There will also be occasions when the client requests or expects a service which the Trust cannot provide. This Policy sets out the Trust's position on managing such situations.

2. Key aims

The key aims of this Policy are:

- To ensure that there is a framework in place to manage challenging and difficult situations when working with clients
- To ensure that there is consistency and fairness when managing these situations with clients and that no client is denied support without adequate cause
- To ensure that the welfare of staff and volunteers is being considered and appropriate measures are in place to maintain the wellbeing of staff and volunteers when working with clients
- To ensure that clients are aware of their responsibilities and are clear on the repercussions if they do not meet their responsibilities
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3. Key principles

This policy is based on the following key principles:

- That there will be transparency and openness – clients will be given clear, factual information about the reasons for any decision made about them (whilst taking account of any safeguarding requirements)
- That decisions will be fairly applied – the framework for managing difficult situations will be applied consistently, but will take into account the individual circumstances surrounding any case
- That the organisation has a duty of care to its staff and volunteers

4. Key issues

4.1 Professional boundaries

Our staff and volunteers are required to develop relationships with clients so that they can work with them effectively. This relationship must remain professional at all times – as set out within our Professional Boundaries Policy.

It is not appropriate for staff/volunteers to have contact with clients outside the allocated times (unless as agreed for cancellations/rescheduling of

appointments) – this will be explained to clients when they first start working with volunteers or staff.

However we recognise that some clients may not appreciate this and may sometimes ask for support/contact above that which is agreed and/or appropriate. Where this occurs we will issue verbal and written warnings to the client in the first instance advising that we may withdraw the service if the issue persists. In extreme circumstances where the problem persists we will withdraw the service from the client. We will write to the client advising this will happen and the reasons why (see Guidelines for further information):

4.2 Suicide and self-harm

We recognise that a number of our clients may have suicidal thoughts or use self-harm as a way of managing their situation, and that they may wish to discuss this with their counsellor or support worker.

Our Safeguarding Policy sets out details of where it would be appropriate and required to report these matters to the Safeguarding Board. Where there is no requirement to report the matter then the counsellor or support worker will consult with the Clinical Lead/Clinical Supervisor and follow procedures as set out within the Managing Difficult Situations Guidelines.

We will continue to provide the counselling service and manage the situation as required by the particular circumstances surrounding each case. However it will be stressed to the staff/volunteers that they are not responsible for preventing or managing likely harm to clients outside the standard expectation that they will work with the client to help them to make decisions in their best interest.

4.3 Complaints and feedback

The Sue Lambert Trust recognises that feedback and complaints from clients is a useful way to learn from mistakes and improve our services. No client will have their service withdrawn or cut back as a result of raising a complaint about the organisation or the services they have received, irrespective of whether the complaint is upheld or not.

However where the complainant continues to complain persistently about an issue after the matter has been investigated and resolved, or where the client raises ongoing/ persistent complaints which take a large amount of time and resource to manage then the service may be withdrawn. The client will be warned prior to this, and procedures as set out within the Managing Difficult Situations Guidelines will be followed.

Complaints and Feedback will be managed as per the Complaints and Feedback Policy.

4.4 Inappropriate behaviour

Staff and volunteers have the right to work in a safe and secure environment. Inappropriate behaviour from clients such as verbal or physical aggression, threatening behaviour, harassment, sexual harassment, false complaints or allegations, or stalking will not be tolerated.

Where there is inappropriate behaviour from a client then the matter will be considered on a case by case basis, however it should be noted that where there is a risk to staff or volunteers the service will be withdrawn. Every attempt will be

made to communicate the reasons behind this to the client where possible without increasing risks to staff and workers.

The organisation may take whatever steps required to protect the staff/volunteers – including barring access, changing telephone numbers, and taking legal action as required and appropriate.

4.5 Counselling services

The Sue Lambert Trust offer a non-time limited person centred counselling service. The aim of the counsellors is to work with each individual taking account of the issues that affect them, without making judgements and without putting time limits in place. The counselling will end following agreement that it is appropriate to do so between the counsellor and the client. Where short term counselling has been offered, clients will receive up to 12 sessions at which point they may finish, extend or go back onto the waiting list.

However there will be situations where the counsellor and/or the organisation has the discretion to withdraw the counselling service. These will be considered on a case by case basis in consultation with the Clinical Lead in the following circumstances:

- Where it is agreed that despite a significant number of counselling sessions being delivered (minimum 6 months) there is no clarity as to what the client wishes to achieve, and/or there is no progress in achieving agreed aims
- Where there is concern about the views/attitudes of the client and potential risks to others – cases such as these will be considered taking into account safeguarding guidelines and the British Association of Counsellors and Psychotherapists (BACP) ethical guidelines, with any concerns being reported to the appropriate authorities as appropriate
- Where the behaviour of the client towards the counsellor is having a negative impact on them (e.g. where a client is making inappropriate comments, or placing unreasonable demands on the counsellor)
- Where a client cancels appointments frequently without due cause – the decision whether to cancel the appointment will be at the discretion of the counsellor when the client has failed to attend a minimum of 3 planned sessions during any 3 month period.

5. Monitoring and Review

5.1 This policy will be subject to an annual 'Healthcheck review' to ensure that it complies with statutory and regulatory requirements and is working in practice. If the 'healthcheck' identifies an issue then the policy will be subject to full review.

5.2 This policy will be subject to full review at least once every three years

6. Related guidance, policy and procedures:

- **Managing Difficult Situations Guidelines**
- **Professional Boundaries Policy**
- **Safeguarding Policy**
- **Complaints and Feedback Policy**