



# **Making a Formal Complaint**

## **About a Psychologist(s) who is a Member of The Psychological Society of Ireland**

## The Psychological Society of Ireland

The Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI) is the professional body of psychologists in Ireland. It was established to advance psychology in Ireland and to promote high professional standards in the professions.

PSI takes very seriously any complaints about the professional conduct of its members and has procedures for investigating complaints. The procedures are designed to be fair to both the person making the complaint and the psychologist(s) against whom the complaint is made (PSI cannot investigate complaints about psychologists who are not members).

PSI's Board of Professional Conduct is responsible for investigating these complaints. Some members of the Board are psychologists and others are non-psychologists.

### Making a complaint about a psychologist

#### **1. Download the Formal Complaint Form.**

Please download the Formal Complaint Form from the website, however if you have any difficulty in doing this please contact the office and they will send you a Formal Complaint Form and a copy of the procedures for investigating complaints (i.e. paragraph 37 of the Articles of Association). The rules for good practice (i.e. Code of Professional Ethics), which psychologists must follow, will also be sent to you as it may help you.

#### **2. You fill in the Formal Complaint Form.**

You must complete and sign the Formal Complaint Form (Form D2). *PSI only investigates complaints that are made in writing and signed.* You are asked to give the name of the psychologist(s) you wish to complain about and a short description of your complaint. You are asked if you can, to say which rules from the Code of Ethics you think the psychologist(s) has (have) broken.

#### **3. You send the forms to the Chairperson of the Board of Professional Conduct**

**C/O The Psychological Society of Ireland,  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Grantham House,  
Grantham Street,  
Dublin 8**

## How the investigation works

### **1. On Receipt each Complaint is Reviewed**

The Chair of the Board of Professional Conduct has a responsibility to determine if a complaint falls within the remit of the Board. This is done in consultation with the executive members of the board. The Board does recognise that complaints are made on the basis of genuine dissatisfaction regarding individuals' contact with psychologists and that complaints are not made lightly. However the board investigates only those complaints that indicate an alleged breach of the code of ethics that members of the society have agreed to practice by.

### **2. At the next possible meeting as staffing levels allow the Chairperson appoints two members of the Board of Professional Conduct to investigate your complaint.**

Both you and the psychologist(s) will receive a letter with the names of the two members (called the Investigatory Pair - IP). The psychologist will also receive a copy of your complaint.

### **3. The Investigatory Pair shall make any necessary preliminary enquiries into the allegation(s).**

This typically involves clarifying and identifying with you the articles of the code of ethics that the complaint alleges the psychologist(s) has breached.

### **4. The Investigatory Pair will write to the psychologist describing the part(s) of the Code of Professional Ethics they have identified as relevant.**

The psychologist(s) will be asked to give a written response to the complaint under the parts of the Code.

### **5. Based on all of the information they gather the Investigatory Pair will form an opinion as to whether there is a case to answer or not.**

This opinion will be reported to the Board of Professional Conduct. It is important to know that while the Board normally meets every month that this process can take a lot of time.

### **6. The Board will make the decision that will decide on the next steps.**

The Board will decide one of the following courses of action: immediately close the case, take some lesser course of action, opt to take no further action, or refer it on for Formal Panel Hearing.

## How a Formal Panel Hearing works

The Board of Professional Conduct takes responsibility for the Formal Panel Hearing. The panel is made up of four members of the Board who were not the investigatory pair or the Chair of the Board. The Chair of the Panel is always a non-psychologist.

- 1) After the hearing, the Panel decides whether there has been a breach of the Code of Ethics. If it is found that the psychologist(s) has breached the Code of Ethics the panel will make a recommendation to the Board of Professional Conduct, that the psychologist will, for example:
  - a) be reprimanded,
  - b) be required to take advice on future conduct,
  - c) be suspended or expelled from PSI's Register of Psychologists.
  - d) be suspended or expelled from PSI membership,

The Board of Professional Conduct will make a final decision in relation to an appropriate sanction. Both you and the psychologist(s) will be informed of the decision of the Board of Professional Conduct by the Council of PSI and the reasons for the decision.

- 2) If the Panel finds that the psychologist(s) has **not** breached the Code of Ethics they will recommend to the Board of Professional Conduct that they are exonerated. The Chair of the Board of Professional Conduct will write to let you and the psychologist(s) know the final decision of the Board of Professional Conduct.
- 3) Further information about Panel Hearings is contained in a separate leaflet.

The rules that govern the investigation and sanctions are contained in PSI's Articles of Association Section 37. The procedures used to investigate a complaint will always be those contained in the most recent edition of the Articles, regardless of the date of the events that give rise to the complaint. Normally, the current rules of good practice (Code of Professional Ethics) will also be used.

In order to be fair to all parties, complaints are accepted for investigation on the basis that the person who submits the complaint will give consent to the use of any relevant information, including confidential information that may arise during the investigation of the complaint.

The PSI makes every effort to ensure that, for its part, as few people as possible know about the subject of the complaint or the identity of those involved. The information is only given to the Chair and Deputy of the Board of Professional Conduct, the two members of the Board who make the initial investigation and the members of the Panel. They will treat the information received with the utmost confidentiality.