

The Institute of Trichologists

Raising a Concern Complaints Process

Raising a Concern
Complaints Process

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Concerns About a Trichologist

As a UK regulator of Trichology, we investigate concerns and complaints about Institute of Trichologists (IOT) Trichologists that are made by patients, their families, members of the public or other healthcare professionals, including fellow Trichologists.

Our clear processes to investigate allegations against IOT Trichologists are specifically designed to protect the patients and the public who you feel might be at risk. All IOT Trichologists must be registered with us and follow the standards within our [Code of Practice](#) before they can practise, which sets out clearly the expected professional and personal behaviour of Trichologists. If we establish that a registered IOT Trichologist falls below the standards expected of them, then their practice could be prohibited or restricted. We may also remove a Trichologist from the register, which means that they can no longer practise as an IOT Trichologist.

How To Make a Complaint

This section provides information on how to complain about an IOT Trichologist. Please note, we can only consider complaints against IOT registered Trichologists – you can check on our search function on the “[find a trichologist page](#)” on our website.

If you are concerned that someone may be calling themselves an IOT Trichologist but is not registered with us, please contact us via email at admin@trichologists.org.uk or telephone 020 4532 6465, and a member of the team will be happy to assist you.

We advise you read the following sections in full before making a complaint.

Who Can Complain?

Anyone can make a complaint or raise a concern about an IOT registered Trichologist. This includes; patients, their families, members of the public and other healthcare professionals, including fellow Trichologists.

When Should I Complain?

All IOT registered Trichologist must have a complaints procedure in their practice and deal with complaints promptly and fairly. So it may be worth trying to solve the problem first with the IOT registered Trichologist. If you are not satisfied with how they deal with your complaint, they must tell you that you have the right to complain to us. We fully appreciate that you might prefer to contact us straight away. To do so, please continue reading this page to find out how.

What Complaints Can The Registration Council Deal With?

- Treatment, care or advice given by an IOT Trichologist
- Any aspect of the professional or personal behaviour of an IOT Trichologist
- The physical or mental health of an IOT Trichologist

What Complaints Can The Registration Council Not Deal With?

- Complaints against clinics or companies - this is because we regulate individual IOT Trichologists
- Refund of fees/payment matters
- Compensation requests

Compensation or Refund of Fees

All IOT Trichologists must have insurance to cover claims made against them and will provide details if you ask them. For more information about compensation or a refund of fees you could contact a solicitor or [Citizens Advice](#).

Complaints That Do Not Relate to Fitness to Practice

We will not usually investigate allegations of the following matters. This is because legally they are not complaints of unprofessional conduct or professional incompetence. Please note that this is not an exhaustive list.

- Complaints solely about business disputes
- Complaints solely about employment, contracts or business premises
- Complaints solely about fees or costs of treatment unless there are allegations of dishonesty or an intent to deceive or mislead
- Complaints brought solely to remedy a private grievance which does not raise issues of public protection, patients' safety or the reputation of the profession
- Vexatious complaints (a complaint that is entirely without merit and is made with the intention of causing inconvenience, harassment or expense to the IOT trichologist)
- Complaints which solely relate to a registrant's personal life unless the complaint: has the potential to bring the profession into disrepute; could potentially affect public confidence in the profession; relates to a conviction in the United Kingdom for a criminal offence; relates to a physical or mental condition which seriously impairs a registrant's ability to practise as an IOT trichologists; or raises issues of public protection or patient safety
- Minor or single complaints about note taking or record keeping unless there is evidence of "incompetence or negligence to a high degree"
- Complaints which lie solely within the jurisdiction of another regulator and which should have been made to that regulator
- Complaints which amount to a difference of professional opinion and do not raise issues of public protection or patient safety.

How Long Will The Complaints Process Take?

This will depend on the details of the complaint. We aim to investigate complaints in as short a time as possible. Sometimes cases can take longer than a year before they are complete. If you need more information about the complaint process or if you are unable to complete the complaints form, or require assistance to do so, please contact us via email at admin@trichologists.org.uk or telephone 020 4532 6465 and a member of the team will be happy to assist you.

If you have read the information above and would like to make your complaint, please complete our [online form](#).

The Investigation Process

This section explains what happens once a complaint has been made and describes our investigation process in more detail. The way we investigate complaints is designed to make sure everything is fair, open and done in the public interest. This means that once our complaints procedures start, everything must be done in a set way.

Following receipt of your complaint, we will:

- Write to you within seven days to tell you we have received your complaint
- Tell you if we can deal with your complaint
- Tell you who is dealing with your complaint and how to contact them
- Give you detailed information about what will happen next

Sometimes, in serious cases where there appears to be an immediate risk to the public, the Registration Council may ask for a Trichologist to be prevented from seeing patients while a complaint is being considered. This means that a special council can meet and impose an interim suspension of the Trichologist's registration pending investigation.

As part of our investigation, we will:

- Write to the Trichologist to tell them about your complaint. We must give them a copy of your complaint (and any other relevant documents) so that they know the details. If you are worried about this, please tell us
- If the Trichologist provides a response to your complaint, we will send you a copy, so that you can comment if you would like to. If you provide any comments, we will give a copy of your comments to the Trichologist
- Ask you to agree to us obtaining a copy of your health records (if they are relevant to your complaint)
- Invite you to make a statement of evidence (statement). If you agree we will normally arrange for a member of our team to telephone you to go over the details of your complaint and draft the statement
- If you prefer not to make a statement, that will not be a problem. The Registration Council will rely on your complaint documentation and your complaint will be investigated in the normal way

What Does the Registration Council Do?

When we have gathered together all the relevant information about your complaint, it will be considered in private by the Registration Council. The ['Registration Council Decision Making Guidance'](#) is for the Registration Council to take into account when considering the outcome of a case. If it is agreed that the Trichologist's fitness to practise (see below) may be in question, the complaint will be referred for a formal hearing. More information on the formal hearings process can be found [here](#).

What is Fitness to Practise?

Being fit to practise means that a Trichologist must have the skills, knowledge, health and character to do their job safely and effectively. [The Code of Ethics](#) sets out the professional standards that Trichologists must uphold in order to be IOT registered to practise in the UK.

Guidance for Registrants

Registrants may consult with the IOT policy and procedure documents to be informed what will happen if a complaint is made against them. The RC will also write to the registrant to request information and keep them informed of the on-going developments. This is not a substitute for legal advice. The IOT cannot give you legal advice or tell you how to respond to a complaint. You should contact your professional indemnity insurer immediately if informed that you have a complaint about your conduct or practice.

How will I be informed of the Registration Council's decision?

We will write to you to let you know the Registration Council's decision and its reasons. This will vary on the complexity of each case, but a decision should be made within 2-3 months.

Hearings

This section provides more information about formal hearings of the IOT Registration Council.

About Hearings

As part of our duty to protect the public we hold hearings into cases about IOT Trichology professionals. A hearing is a formal proceeding where members the Registration Council consider the allegations of a complaint referred by the Investigating Council. There are usually three council members, one of whom may be a Trichologist. An independent legal representative will also sit with the council to offer legal advice.

Hearings are usually held in public. This means that anyone can attend. Sometimes a hearing, or part of a hearing, may be held in private if confidential or intimate information is to be considered; or if the case involves a child or a vulnerable adult.

The case is argued by two legal teams - the IOT is represented by a legal representative. Usually the Trichologist will also have a legal representative to put their case in response to the allegations.

During a hearing, the council will listen to all the evidence and decide whether the trichologist is guilty or not guilty of unacceptable professional conduct. If they believe that the Trichologist is at fault, then the council will impose a sanction. The purpose of a sanction is not to punish the Trichologist but to protect the public.

If a Trichologist is found to be of 'unacceptable professional conduct' or 'professional incompetence' the council can issue a:

- Written warning- Caution the Trichologist with a formal written warning which will remain on file a period of time, to be determined by the panel.
- Conditions of Practice Order - place a restriction, or conditions, on the Trichologist's registration (for example, that the Trichologist works under supervision or has further training). There may also be a requirement to return to panel for review.
- Suspension order - suspend the Trichologist's registration for a period of time, to be determined by the panel.

- Removal from the Register - The Trichologist's name is removed from the register permanently.

If a Trichologist is currently subject to a sanction, you will be able to see this when you search for their name on the register.