CNHC Complementary & Natural Healthcare Council

FRAMEWORK

Informal Resolution Framework

Version 1
Live from November 2026

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CYBER ESSENTIALS CERTIFIED PLUS

FRAMEWORK

How we resolve suitable complaints early and informally

An early, proportionate way to resolve complaints that do not raise a risk to the public, before they reach our formal procedures.

1 Introduction

1.1 Not every complaint needs a formal investigation. Many arise from misunderstandings, communication difficulties, administrative issues, dissatisfaction with service, or isolated concerns that can be resolved through explanation, clarification, learning or corrective action.

1.2 This framework gives us a way to resolve suitable complaints early, while making sure that any complaint that may involve a risk to the public goes through our formal procedures.

1.3 It applies to complaints about CNHC registrants that are suitable for informal or facilitated resolution and do not present a risk to public protection. It operates between receiving a complaint and starting a formal investigation, and supports paragraph 14.3 and Appendix 5 of our **Detailed Procedures for Dealing with Complaints**.

1.4 The framework supports proportionate regulation, efficient use of resources, a better experience for complainants, better engagement with registrants, early learning and improvement, and public protection.

INFORMAL RESOLUTION: STEP BY STEP

1. **Complaint received**
2. **Early resolution assessment** — Suitable or not
3. **Early Resolution Officer** — Appointed
4. **Resolution activities** — Information, apology, corrective action, discussion
5. **Resolution agreement** — Recorded and checked — normally 4 weeks
6. **Case closed** — Or escalated to the formal process

2 Early resolution assessment

2.1 Every complaint is assessed to decide whether it is suitable for informal resolution. The assessment is made by the Head of Operations and Governance, or a nominated officer, normally within **7 days** of receiving the completed complaint form.

2.2 We assess each complaint against these criteria. They are the same criteria as Appendix 5 of the Detailed Procedures.

Generally suitable for informal resolution	Not suitable for informal resolution
Communication concerns	Serious harm, or a risk of harm, to a client
Delays in responding to clients	Safeguarding concerns

Generally suitable for informal resolution	Not suitable for informal resolution
Administrative errors	Sexual misconduct, abuse of trust or boundary violations, or predatory or manipulative behaviour
Record-keeping concerns that do not present a safety risk	Criminal allegations, dishonesty or fraud
Website or advertising concerns	Lapses in professional competence, or other serious breaches of the Code
Client dissatisfaction arising from a misunderstanding	Findings by a statutory regulator
Isolated concerns where learning can be shown	Serious concerns about the registrant's health, or alcohol or substance misuse
	Repeated complaints suggesting a pattern, including more than two similar complaints resolved informally
	Any concern presenting a significant risk to public protection

2.3 The criteria are a guide. Where a complaint has features of both columns, we will treat it as not suitable. We record the reasons for every assessment.

2.4 The outcome of the assessment is that the complaint either:

A. goes to informal resolution (section 3); or

B. goes directly to our formal procedures.

2.5 If the assessment suggests there may be an immediate risk to the public, we will tell the Registrar straight away so that an Interim Order can be considered.

3 Agreement to informal resolution

3.1 Where the complaint is made by a client of the registrant, or by someone acting for a client, we will ask the complainant to agree before we offer informal resolution to the registrant.

3.2 Where the complainant is another practitioner, or a member of the public with no personal experience of the registrant, we do not need their agreement. They cannot ask for this decision to be reviewed.

3.3 We will then ask the registrant whether they agree to informal resolution. If either the complainant (where their agreement is needed) or the registrant does not agree, the complaint goes to our formal procedures.

4 Early Resolution Officer

4.1 Where a complaint is suitable and agreed, we will appoint an Early Resolution Officer. They will:

- act impartially
- engage with both parties

- clarify the issues
- gather relevant information
- explore possible resolution options
- record outcomes
- identify anything that needs to be escalated

4.2 In their first discussion with the complainant, the Officer may establish the nature of the concern, the outcome the complainant wants, whether they have raised it with the registrant, and whether an explanation or apology might resolve it.

4.3 In their first discussion with the registrant, the Officer may establish whether further information can be provided, whether corrective action would be appropriate, and whether the registrant is willing to engage.

5 Resolution options

5.1 The Early Resolution Officer will consider the most appropriate option or options:

Option	What it involves
A. Information and explanation	The registrant provides further information, their rationale, an account of events and relevant records where appropriate. We share this with the complainant to address the concern.
B. Acknowledgement and apology	The registrant acknowledges the concern, shows insight, explains what they have learned and offers an apology. An apology is not treated as an admission of misconduct.
C. Corrective action	The registrant agrees to take corrective action, such as updating records, improving consent processes, changing website content, completing relevant CPD or improving communication. We may ask for evidence that it has been done.
D. Facilitated discussion	We arrange a structured discussion between the complainant and the registrant to reach a resolution. Taking part is voluntary for both.

6 Resolution agreement and timescales

6.1 When the parties reach a resolution, the Early Resolution Officer will record what has been agreed, including any corrective action, the date by which it will be done, and any evidence the registrant will send us.

6.2 We normally expect informal resolution to be completed within **four weeks** of both parties agreeing to it. We may extend this where there is good reason, for example to allow a course to be completed.

6.3 We will check that any agreed corrective action has been completed before we close the case.

7 Closing the case

7.1 When the complaint has been resolved, we will write to the complainant and the registrant to confirm that the case is closed and what was agreed.

7.2 Informal resolution is not a finding against the registrant, and it is not published. We keep a record of it, and it may be taken into account if we receive further complaints of a similar kind.

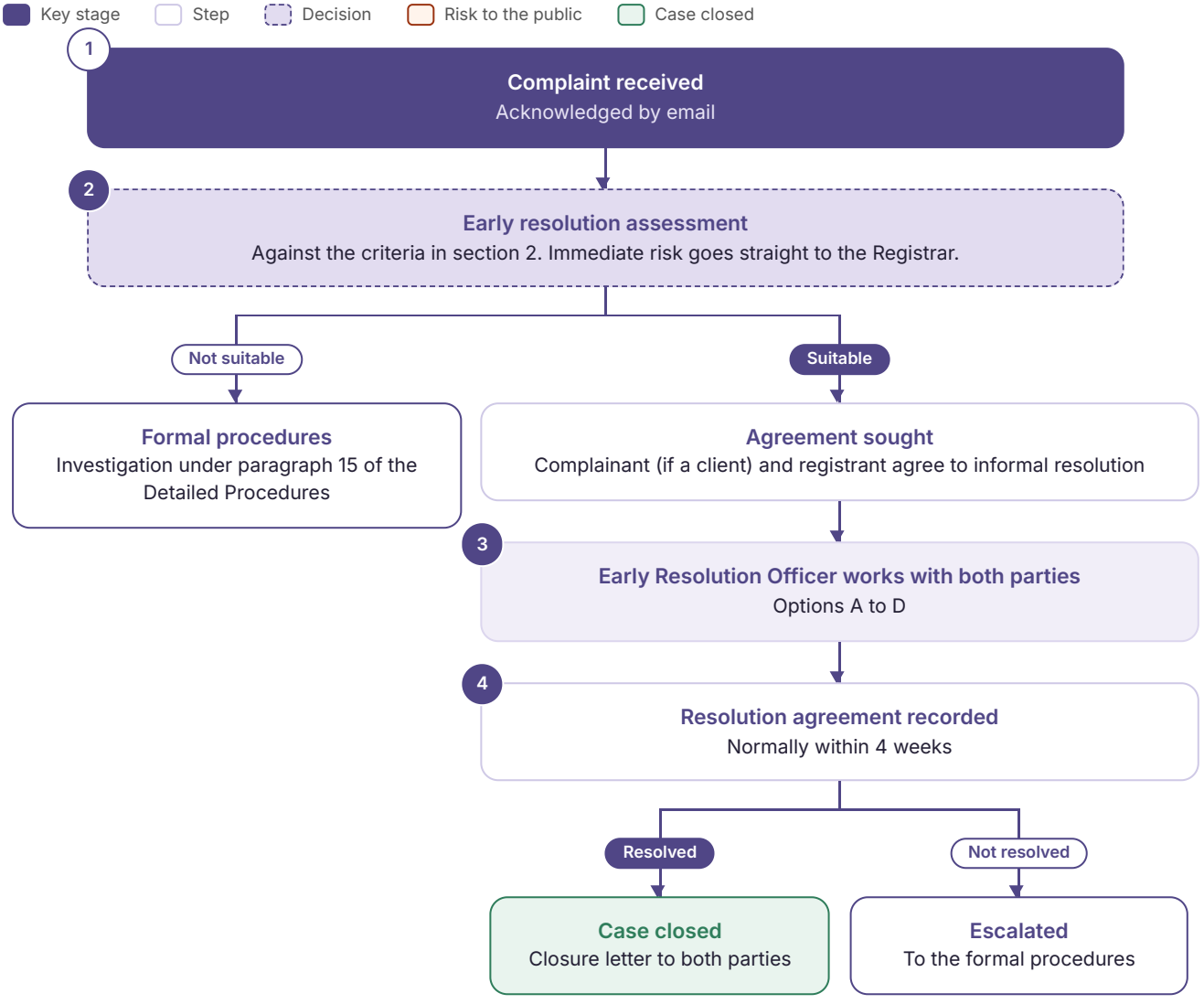
8 Escalation to the formal procedures

8.1 A complaint will move to our formal procedures if:

- **a.** the complainant (where their agreement is needed) or the registrant does not agree to informal resolution;
- **b.** the parties cannot reach a resolution within the timescale;
- **c.** the registrant does not complete agreed corrective action;
- **d.** information emerges that changes the nature of the complaint; or
- **e.** a risk to the public is identified at any point.

8.2 We will tell both parties why the complaint has been escalated. Anything said in a facilitated discussion will not be used as evidence in the formal procedures, but documents and records provided may be.

HOW INFORMAL RESOLUTION WORKS



9 Safeguards

- Taking part is voluntary. Nobody will be pressured to agree to informal resolution or to a particular outcome.
- A complainant can withdraw their agreement at any time, and the complaint will then be assessed for the formal procedures.
- An apology is not an admission of misconduct.
- The Early Resolution Officer is impartial and does not decide whether the registrant has breached the Code.
- We will make reasonable adjustments, for example by holding discussions by telephone or video, or in writing.
- We know that a complaint can be stressful for both complainants and registrants. The Early Resolution Officer is the point of contact for both during informal resolution, and each has a named contact if the complaint is escalated. Our complaints leaflet (section 13) lists independent organisations that can offer support.

10 Records, monitoring and reporting

10.1 We keep a record of each assessment, the reasons for it, what was agreed and the outcome, in line with our Record Retention Schedule.

10.2 We monitor how many complaints are resolved informally, how long it takes, how many are escalated, and feedback from complainants and registrants. We report this to the Board each year as part of our complaints reporting, and audit a sample of assessments to check the criteria are applied consistently.

11 Review

11.1 We will review this framework every two years, or sooner if the Detailed Procedures change.

Document control

Version	1
Status	Live from November 2026
Replaces	The earlier draft of the Informal Resolution Framework, and Appendix 5 of the 2017 Detailed Procedures. Sections 6 to 10 are new.
Owner	Head of Operations and Governance
Approved by	The Head of Operations and Governance and the Chief Executive (shared with the Board for information)
Classification	Public
Date approved	October 2026
Effective from	November 2026
Next review	October 2028

Questions about this document: email **complaints@cnhc.org.uk** (our main contact method) or telephone 020 3327 2720.