Learning and Enterprise College Bexley

Compliments, Complaints and Comments Policy

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Table of contents

1.0 Introduction
2.0 Scope
3.0 Our guiding principles
4.0 Complaints
- 4.1 Making a complaint
- 4.2 Stages in making a complaint
- 4.3 Dealing with a complaint
- 4.4 Monitoring complaint
  - 4.4.1 Stage 1 – Manager's investigation
  - 4.4.2 Stage 2 – Independent investigation
  - 4.4.3 Stage 3 – Principal's investigation
  - 4.4.4 Stage 4 – Local Government Ombudsman investigation
- 4.5 Timescales for Response
- 4.6 Time Limit for Making a complaint
- 4.7 Local Government Ombudsman
- 4.8 Types of complaints
  - 4.8.1 Anonymous complaints
  - 4.8.2 Complaints Received via Councillors or MPs
  - 4.8.3 Complaints About Staff
  - 4.8.4 Unreasonable Learner and Vexatious Requests
- 4.9 Outcomes
  - 4.9.1 Redress
  - 4.9.2 Expediting Cases
- 4.10 Confidentiality
- 4.11 Reporting and learning from complaints
- 4.12 Equality

5.0 Compliments & Comments
- 5.1 What is a compliment?
- 5.2 What is a comment?
- 5.3 Compliment & Comment Procedure
  - 5.3.1 Stage 1 -Review
  - 5.3.2 Stage 2 -Transmission
- 5.4 Reporting and learning from compliments and comments

6.0 Appendix
Process Flow chart

1.0 Introduction

This Policy outlines how the Learning Enterprise College Bexley will deal will Compliments, Complaints and Comments from learners, members of the public and stakeholders.

The College strives to achieve the highest standards of Customer Service. We recognise that the way we manage complaints, compliments and comments is an essential part of it. Receiving feedback from people using our services, gives us the opportunity to resolve any issue raised and improve the quality of our delivery.

2.0 Scope

This policy will be used for all complaints made by learners, parents/carers and members of the public. A complaint can also be made by:

- a representative acting on behalf of a child
- a representative acting on behalf of someone who is unable to make the complaint themselves because of physical or mental incapacity
- a representative where they have been asked to act on behalf of a learner
- a representative acting on behalf of someone who has died

Contact details of the complainants will be required to effectively investigate the complaint.

The Compliments, Complaints and Comments can also be informed by the Learners Forum and the Learners Survey.

This policy will not be used for internal complaint from staff. For this matter, please refer to the HR Policies available from the London Bexley Borough website.

3.0 Our Guiding Principles

- We will put the complainant at the heart of the process, showing empathy and understanding for the issues they raise.
- We will be open-minded and flexible in our approach while operating within our policies and procedures and funding requirements.
- If we have made a mistake or something has gone wrong, we will put it right as soon as possible.
- We will aim to resolve complaints at the earliest opportunity.

- Our responses will be open and honest, based on the evidence available, address all elements of the complaint, and provide clear explanations for decisions made.
- We will ensure every complainant are treated equally and that everyone receives the same level of service irrespective of age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, race, religion or belief. We will ensure our complaints process is easily accessible to all complainants.
- We will use complaints information in a positive way to identify training requirements, improve processes and share learning to prevent similar occurrences in future.

4.0 Complaints

4.1 What is a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about a standard of service (whether justified or not) which requires a response.

A complaint could be in relation to any of the following examples:

- There has been a misrepresentation on one of our course or courses
- We have failed to deliver a service
- Our processes or policy have not been followed
- Our staff have been rude, unhelpful, or not conducted themselves correctly

This is not an exhaustive list.

4.2 What is Not a complaint?

Informal issues:

We encourage all of our staff to work with complainants and try to resolve any dissatisfaction without the need to use the formal complaints process. In many cases we can resolve an issue very quickly - by putting the problem right straight away and to our complainants' satisfaction. We consider these types of cases as informal issues. However, when a complainant is unhappy about the way that an issue or request was handled, this should be dealt with under the Learning & Enterprise College Bexley's Compliments, Complaints, Comments Policy.

4.3 How can complaints be made?

Complainants can make a complaint via our online form available on the LECB website, within the Customer service tab. We encourage any learners, parents/carers, member of the public who has a concern to make contact with us straight away. Early complaints give us the best opportunity to resolve an issue quickly. Complaints can be made via the form on our website.

4.4 Complaint procedure

Learning & Enterprise College Bexley Complaints Procedure is a four stage complaints process. Our aim is for all complaints to be resolved at the earliest possible opportunity and ideally at the first point of contact in the relevant service area. We do understand there are occasions when local resolution cannot be achieved and a more detailed investigation and review at a more senior level is required. We encourage all of our staff to work with complainants and try to find a resolution to expressions of dissatisfaction without the need to use the formal process wherever possible.

4.4.1 Stage 1 – Manager's Investigation

On receipt of a formal complaint via our website, it will be logged by the Quality Manager, and we aim to send an acknowledgment to you within two working days. We expect you to provide specific details of the reason for your complaint and details of the outcome you require as a resolution to your complaint.

In some cases, further information is needed about the complaint in order for the college to fully investigate the matter. If further details are required, we will contact you and ask for more information.

We may not be able to progress your complaint until this information is provided – we will let you know if this is the case.

At Stage 1, the complaint will be investigated by a manager, who will liaise with the relevant manager(s), as appropriate.

In some cases, the Manager will contact you to discuss the complaint and explore how it might be resolved to your satisfaction. We will not always be

able to take the action you wish but we will do our best to explore the possible options.

We aim to provide a written response to you within 15 working days.

If the complaint is about the Quality Manager, a more senior member of the service will handle the complaint.

4.4.2 Stage 2 – Independent investigation

If you remain dissatisfied following receipt of the Stage 1 response, you can request that your complaint is progressed to a review at Stage 2 of the Learning and Enterprise College Bexley's Compliments, Complaints, Comments Procedure. The request for a review of a complaint should be made within 20 working days from receipt of the Stage 1 response.

We will ask you to explain why the initial Stage 1 response has not resolved your complaint and what outcome you require as a resolution to your complaint. We aim to send an acknowledgment to a Stage 2 complaint within two working days of receipt.

At Stage 2, a team of managers independent from the area concerned by the complaint will complete a thorough review of your complaint and the steps taken at Stage 1 to investigate and resolve it. A member of this team may contact you to discuss your Stage 2 complaint, so they have a clear understanding of why you remain dissatisfied and the possible options for resolving the matter.

We aim to provide a written response to you within 15 working days.

In some cases, we may be unable to resolve your complaint.

This may be the case if either:

- You have not explained which aspects of the Stage 1 response you disagree with and why, to allow the college to further investigate your complaint, or
- There are no clear outcomes identified that could resolve your complaint. In these cases, we will progress your complaint to Stage 3 -Principal's investigation.

4.4.3 Stage 3 – Principal's investigation

If you remain dissatisfied following receipt of the Stage 2 response, you can request that your complaint is progressed to a review at Stage 3 of the Learning and Enterprise College Bexley's Compliments, Complaints, Comments Procedure. The request for a review of a complaint should be made within 20 working days from receipt of the Stage 2 response.

We will ask you to explain why the initial Stage 1 and 2 responses have not resolved your complaint and what outcome you require as a resolution to your complaint. We aim to send an acknowledgment to a Stage 3 complaint within two working days of receipt.

At Stage 3, the Principal will complete a thorough review of your complaint and the steps taken at Stage 1 and 2 to investigate and resolve it. The Principal may contact you to discuss your Stage 2 complaint, so they have a clear understanding of why you remain dissatisfied and the possible options for resolving the matter.

We aim to provide a written response to you within 15 working days.

In some cases, we may be unable to resolve your complaint.

This may be the case if either:

- You have not explained which aspects of the Stage 1 and 2 responses you disagree with and why, to allow the college to further investigate your complaint, or
- There are no clear outcomes identified that could resolve your complaint. In these cases, we will advise you to contact the Local Government Ombudsman if you wish to pursue the matter further. You will be transfer to the Stage 4 - Local Government Ombudsman investigation.

4.4.4 Stage 4 – Local Government Ombudsman investigation

Please refer to 4.7 for further guidance on this stage.

4.5 Timescales for Response

We will respond to complaints within the following timescales wherever possible. If for any reason we are unable to respond within these timeframes, we will contact the complainant to explain the reason for the delay and give a date for when a response will be provided. In the event of a complain related to Safeguarding or Child protection, the matter will be immediately referred to the Safeguarding Officer.

Stage	Timetable (working days)	Responsibility for Response
Stage 1- Manager's Investigation	15	Relevant Manager
Stage 2- Independent investigation	15	Relevant Manager independent from the area concerned
Stage 3 -Principal's investigation	15	Principal
Stage 4 -Local Government Ombudsman	Directed by LGO	Director/Chief Executive

4.6 Time Limit for Making a complaint

Complainants must register the complaint within twenty-eight days of the incident occurring as the College cannot investigate complaints retrospectively. Managers must respond to stage 1 of the complaints process within 15 working days. Complainants cannot use this procedure to complain if a debt collection process is being followed or they have not already filed a complaint within seven days of the issue. Where we are satisfied that there are good reasons for the delay, and it is still possible to investigate the complaint effectively, we will apply discretion to the time limit.

4.7 Local Government Ombudsman

If a complainant is not happy with the way in which we handled their complaint or with our response, they may ask the Local Government Ombudsman to look into their complaint. The Ombudsman will not normally look into a complaint if we have not had an opportunity to resolve it through our own complaints

process first. Enquiries from the Local Government Ombudsman will in most cases be coordinated by the Council's Complaints Support Team and handled by the relevant Deputy Director and the Principal.

4.8 Types of complaints

4.8.1 Anonymous complaints

We will deal with anonymous complaints where they involve individual or public safety, corruption, waste or other impropriety and where we have sufficient information to allow an investigation to proceed. We will immediately act on an anonymous complaint or comment that relates to vulnerable people of those who might be at risk.

4.8.2 Complaints Received via Councillors or MPs

Where Councillors or MPs make a complaint on behalf of a constituent, we will deal with the complaint following our normal processes and keep the Councillor or MP informed of progress.

4.8.3 Complaints About Staff

We will ensure that staff members who are the subject of a complaint, or who may have a clear conflict of interest, will not handle or respond to the complaint.

4.8.4 Unreasonable Learner and Vexatious Requests

We are committed to dealing with complaints fairly and in line with our complaints' procedures. Occasionally we encounter individuals who demonstrate unreasonable behaviour. This behaviour can result in individuals placing unnecessarily excessive demands on the time and resources of our staff whilst a complaint or issue is being looked into. We have a separate procedure on how we manage learners who may be unreasonable, unreasonably persistent or vexatious. The "Procedure for Unreasonable Student Behaviour Relating to Complaints and Vexatious Requests" is available from the Council website.

4.9 Outcomes

4.9.1 Redress

We will offer redress where we believe that this will best serve the interests of the complainant and College. When considering any redress, we need to be fair, consistent, and mindful of public money. Any redress will be at the discretion of the Learning & Enterprise College Bexley. In cases where the Ombudsman has recommended redress, we are committed to following the advice and timescales of the Ombudsman to the best of our ability.

4.9.2 Expediting Cases

In exceptional circumstances where the relationship between us and a complainant has broken down to a point where a resolution is not possible, we may seek to close the case without completing all the stages within the complaints process, or we may expedite the case to a final response stage. If this becomes necessary, we will advise the complainant of the reasons for this, and the options open to them. Similarly, we may also liaise with the Local Government Ombudsman and ask them to consider a case before it has exhausted our complaints process. It will be entirely at the discretion of the Ombudsman whether or not they accept the referral.

4.10 Confidentiality

All responses to complaints at all stages will be sent in writing to the complainant unless specifically requested otherwise. We will maintain the confidentiality of all personal information, and not disclose it outside the College without the prior permission of the complainant, unless legally obliged to do so.

4.11 Reporting and learning from complaints

We are committed to learning from complaints and using complaints information to drive efficiencies and improvements in our processes and service.

We will keep records on each complaint received including:

- the type of compliment or comment

- staff member concerned
- timescales
- outcomes

All learning will be recorded and reported back to the Senior Leadership Team of the College.

4.12 Equality

We will ensure our complaints process is easily accessible to all complainants. We will provide an easy-to-read version of the process and make this available on our website and as a leaflet. We are committed to equality and diversity in employment practice and service delivery. We don't think equalities work should be a "tick box" exercise - it should be about making real improvements to how our services are delivered. Our aim is to ensure that all complainants are confident of receiving fair treatment and equality opportunity irrespective of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, sexual orientation, race, sex and religion or belief

5.0 Compliments & Comments

5.1 What is a compliment?

A compliment is an expression of praise concerning a service received.

5.2 What is a comment?

A comment is a suggestion for how a service can be improved.

5.3 Compliment & Comment Procedure

5.3.1 Stage 1 -Review

On receipt of a compliment or a comment via our online form on the LECB website, within the Customer service tab, it will be logged by the Quality Manager, and we aim to send an acknowledgment to you within two working days. We expect you to provide specific details in your compliment or comment.

5.3.2 Stage 2 -Transmission

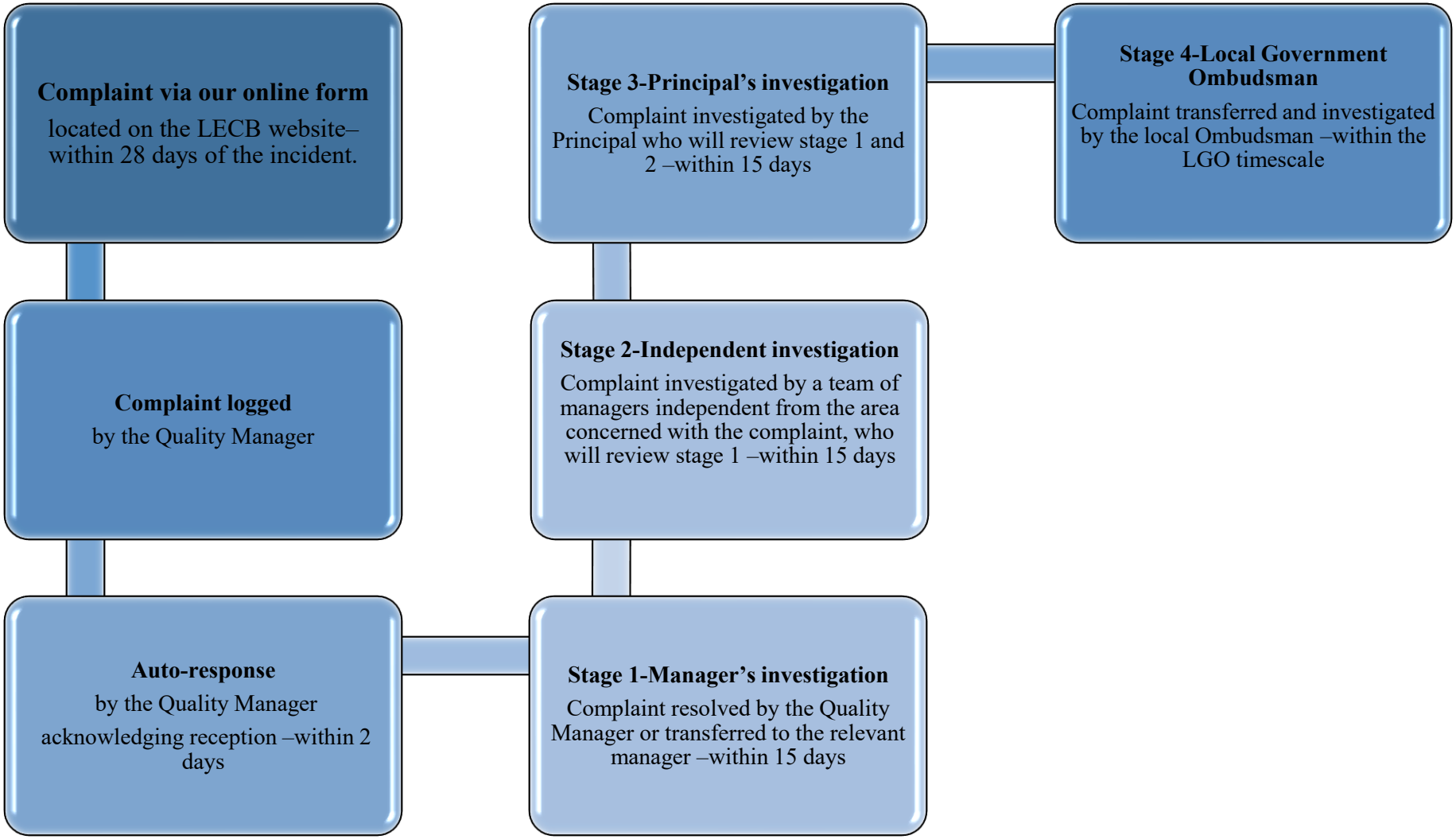
Information relating to the compliment will be transmitted to the staff member it relates to. We may publish praise and comments in our Staff Newsletter.

5.4 Reporting and learning from compliments and comments

We are committed to learning from compliments and comments and using the information to drive efficiencies and developments in our processes and services.

We will keep records on each compliment and comments received including:

- the type of compliment or comment
- staff member concerned
- timescales
- outcomes

All learning will be recorded and reported back to the Senior Leadership Team of the College during the twice monthly SLT Operational meetings, and at the Governance meeting three times a year. Data recorded will inform the Quality Improvement Plan, the Self-Assessment Report.

6.0 Appendix 1: Process Flow chart