

Complaints Policy (LifeLine Institute)

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1. Executive summary

The Education Act 2002 requires maintained schools to have a complaints procedure to deal with all complaints relating to their school and to any community facilities or services that the school provides. LifeLine Projects holds a contract with the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham to provide alternative education and must therefore comply with this requirement. This policy also meets the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, part 7 that details the manner in which independent schools are required to handle complaints.

LifeLine Project's complaints policy is intended to ensure all complaints are handled fairly, consistently and wherever possible, resolved to the complainant's satisfaction.

LifeLine Institute is committed to providing an excellent service to its beneficiaries (students and parents/carers) and other stakeholders e.g. the wider community, ex-students and funders, working in open and accountable ways that build trust and respect.

LifeLine Institute improves services is by listening and responding to the views of parents/carers, students and other stakeholders, and in particular responding positively to complaints and by putting mistakes right. We are committed to dealing with complaints fairly, impartially and quickly. To ensure we meet this commitment we will:

- ensure the process for making a complaint is as easy as possible
- treat a complaint as a clear expression of dissatisfaction with our service which calls for an immediate response
- deal with complaints promptly, politely and confidentially
- aim to keep complainants informed about progress and the results of any investigation
- respond to complaints in the correct way e.g. an apology, an explanation, an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better, an assurance that the event complained of will not recur, an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again, an undertaking to review school policies in light of the complaint.
- set timescales for responding to complaints and monitor our responsiveness against these timescales
- learn from complaints and use them to improve the services we offer
- advise parents/carers, students and other stakeholders of their right to complain to a third party, if applicable.

LifeLine Institute recognises that many concerns raised will be informal, and we aim to deal with these quickly. In the first instance we would expect concerns to be raised directly with the member of staff concerned. Where concerns cannot be satisfactorily resolved informally, the formal complaints procedure should be followed.

Complaints not covered by this policy are:

- employment issues which are covered by staff grievance procedures
- any matter that is subject to legal action
- any complaint which is deemed to be vexatious or malicious following investigation.

This policy details our approach to dealing with complaints, and includes the Complaints procedure which provides clear information about how complaints will be handled.

2. Confidentiality

Correspondence, statements and records relating to complaint will be kept confidential. They will however be made to Ofsted during inspection if they request access to them.

3. Principles of the Complaints Policy

LifeLine Institute complaints policy aims to:

- encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible
- be easily accessible and publicised
- be simple to understand and use
- be impartial
- be non-adversarial
- allow swift handling with established time-limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress

- ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary
- respect people's desire for confidentiality
- address all the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary
- provide information to the senior management team so that services can be improved.

4. Stage 1: Informal Complaints Procedure

- 4.1 Informal complaints/concerns raised will normally involve a discussion directly between the parent/carer and the relevant teacher(s), or with the Lead Teacher.
- 4.2 LifeLine Institute aims to resolve informal complaints as soon as possible by establishing the cause of the complaint and what action they think needs to be taken to resolve concerns. This could be by way of providing an apology, a service, further information, or an acceptable explanation. Where complaints can be resolved immediately LifeLine Institute will undertake agreed resolution actions.
- 4.4 Responses to informal complaints will be made with **three days** of receipt of the complaint. In most instances informal complaints will not receive a formal written response.
- 4.5 LifeLine Institute staff may find it useful to complete a Complaints Action Plan (see appendix D) to address any issues raised as a result of the complaint so that improvements can be made.
- 4.6 The member of staff who has dealt with the complaint will provide the Quality Manager with details of how the complaint was resolved together with details of impact e.g. lessons learned and changes made to policy or processes. The Quality Manager will record this information in section 2 of the complaints log (see appendix C).

5. Stage 2: Formal Complaints Procedure

- 5.1 Where a parent/carer is not satisfied with the response to the informal complaint and no resolution can be achieved within five working days of the informal complaint being raised, the parent/carer may choose to make a formal complaint in writing.
- 5.2 The Lead Teacher will hear the complaint. The address for the Lead Teacher is:

Eugene Amoako
LifeLine Institute
The Vibe
195-211 Becontree Avenue
Dagenham
RM8 2UT

Telephone number: 0208 8270 6106
Email: eugeneamoako@lifelineprojects.co.uk
- 5.3 Where complaints are received from an advocate staff must ensure they ask for written confirmation that the advocate is acting on the parent/carers behalf.
- 5.4 LifeLine Institute will acknowledge receipt of formal complaints within two days of receipt.
- 5.5 In many cases this response will also report on the action LifeLine Institute has taken to resolve the issue. Alternatively, an investigation may be conducted, or a meeting convened to discuss the matter further with the parent/carer. Investigation/meetings will normally take place within **five working days** of the receipt of the formal complaint but in any case within no more than ten working days.
- 5.5 Where complaints can be resolved immediately, LifeLine Institute will undertake agreed resolution actions.
- 5.7 The Lead Teacher may find it useful to complete a Complaints Action Plan where resolution of a complaint leads to several resolution actions. The Complaints Action Plan will ensure that all actions are recorded, responsibility for actions allocated to specific members of staff and progress monitored.

- 5.8 Following resolution, a formal letter of response will be sent to the parent/carer/nominated advocate. The letter will provide, where applicable, an apology, further information, or an acceptable explanation. LifeLine Projects' aims to resolve formal complaints within 10 working days from receipt of the complaint.
- 5.9 The Lead Teacher will provide the Quality Manager with details of how the complaint was resolved, details of impact e.g. lessons learned, changes made to policy or processes together with a copy of the Complaints Action Plan if completed. The Quality Manager will record this information in section 2 of the complaints log (see appendix C) and file a copy of any action plan with the complaint.

6. Stage 3: Panel Hearing

- 6.1 Where the parent/carer/nominated advocate remains unsatisfied with the response or outcome of a formal complaint they can progress to a final panel hearing.
- 6.2 The Director of Young People will chair the panel hearing.
- 6.3 The reason for the panel hearing must be clearly stated in writing (letter or email) and sent to the Lead Teacher. The Lead Teacher's address is:

Eugene Amoako
LifeLine Institute
The Vibe
195-211 Becontree Avenue
Dagenham
RM8 2UT

Telephone number: 0208 8270 6106
Email: eugeneamoako@lifelineprojects.co.uk

- 6.4 Timescales for panel hearings are:
- requests for panel hearings must be made within 5 working days from the date of the letter of response to the formal complaint
 - LifeLine Institute will ensure parents/carers are given reasonable notice of panel hearing dates. A minimum of 5 working days will be given
 - Panel hearings will normally be held within **10 days** of the request for a hearing.
- 6.5 A panel hearing will be appointed by the Director of Young People. The panel will consist of at least three people who are not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint. One member of the panel will be independent of the management and running of LifeLine Institute.
- 6.6 Parents are allowed to attend panel hearings, and be accompanied, if they wish.
- 6.7 The hearing panel can:
- dismiss the complaint in whole or in part
 - uphold the complaint in whole or in part
 - decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
 - make findings and recommendations.
- 6.8 A copy of the panels findings and recommendations will be:
- provided to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about
 - available for inspection on the school premises by the Lead Teacher.
- 6.9 The panel hearing will provide a written response letter that details the outcome of the hearing panel. This will be sent within 5 working days of the panel hearing being held.
- 6.10 A copy of the finding/recommendations will be made available for inspection at LifeLine Institute by the Director of Young People.

- 6.11 The Director of Young People will provide the Quality Manager with details of how the complaint was resolved, details of impact e.g. lessons learned, changes made to policy or processes together with a copy of the Complaints Action Plan if completed. The Quality Manager will record this information in section 2 of the complaints log (see appendix C) and file a copy of any action plan with the complaint.

The decision at the end of this stage is final.

7. Responsibilities

7.1 Trustees

Trustees have a duty of prudence and a duty of care (Charity Commission, March 2012). As such, they are responsible for strategy and management control. Trustees support the creation of a culture which allows anticipation and response to adverse events/trends as well as opportunities.

7.2 Chief Executive Officer

The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for implementing LifeLine Project's strategy, policies and processes throughout the organisation and for ensuring a complaints management system is in place.

7.3 Executive Directors

Directors are responsible for:

- Developing and encouraging good beneficiary care practice within their teams.
- Ensuring staff under their management are clear about their responsibilities under the the Complaints policy and procedures.
- Leading on the complaints panel hearing process.

7.4 Quality Manager

Is responsible for:

- Maintaining an annual complaints log that is filed on the 'S' drive.
- Publishing and submitting to SMT details of complaints received in the monthly Quality scorecard.
- Producing an annual report for SMT that summarises complaints received, trends arising from complaints and the impact of complaints on LifeLine Institute.

7.5 Internal Auditors

Are responsible auditing and reporting on complaints at internal audit e.g. that complaints have been resolved, notified to the Quality Manager, dealt with within stated timescales, and any changes made as a result of the complaint have been effective.

7.6 Managers

Managers are responsible for:

- Developing and encouraging good beneficiary care practice within their teams.
- Ensuring staff under their management are clear about their responsibilities under the the Complaints policy and procedures.
- Recording all complaints received.
- Promptly responding to complaints, informal and formal.
- Informing the relevant Director of requests for panel hearings.
- Informing the Quality Manager about complaints received and details of progress about their resolution/outcome of complaint.

7.7 Staff

All staff are responsible for:

- Practising good customer care in their day to day work with beneficiaries.

- Assisting beneficiaries by providing details of how to make a complaint.
- Promptly responding to informal complaints.
- Informing the relevant Manager of formal complaints received.

8. Specialist and competent person advice

LifeLine Projects will provide access to specialist or expert advice when required. This may be achieved through directly employing such individuals or entering into a contract for services.

9. Implementation and monitoring

9.1 Implementation

All staff will have access to this policy on SharePoint.

9.2 Monitoring implementation and effectiveness

For this policy, the following monitoring processes are in place.

Standard	Monitoring process
Monthly summary of complaints received reported	Monthly internal audit scorecard report submitted to SMT meetings includes complaints received
Annual log of complaints maintained including number of complaints received, actions taken and whether timescales met	Annual Summary of Complaints report submitted to SMT

10. Dissemination of and access to the policy

Once approved, this policy will be available on SharePoint and the previous versions of the policy and associated documents removed. The Quality Manager will keep a record of this. All staff will be notified of the change in the staff newsletter – the LifeLine Monitor.

11. Review, updating and archiving of the policy

LifeLine Institute maintains an electronic archive of all policy documents; this can be accessed via the Quality Manager.

12. References

The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Part 7

School Complaints Toolkit 2014 Departmental advice for maintained schools, maintained nursery schools and local authorities

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/346867/School_Complaints_Toolkit_2014.pdf

Education Funding Agency's 'Creating an Academy Complaints Procedure' (academies must meet the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2014, Part 7 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/setting-up-an-academies-complaints-procedure/putting-in-place-a-complaints-procedure>).

13. Related documents

None.

14. Definitions

The following list is a description of the meaning of key terms used in this policy.

Term	Description of Term
Advocate	An advocate seeks to ensure that people, particularly those who are most vulnerable in society, are able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have their voice heard on issues that are important to them. • Defend and safeguard their rights. • Have their views and wishes genuinely considered when decisions are being made about their lives.
Complaint	A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction received either informally or formally about the standard of service, actions, or lack of actions, by LifeLine Institute (or our partners) affecting an individual beneficiary, group of beneficiaries or other stakeholders.
Complainant	A beneficiary, or any of the following acting on behalf of that beneficiary, who is receiving or has received services of any kind from LifeLine Institute, or our partners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ person (or nominated advocate) ○ organisation ○ institution/authority/professional body ○ elected member (MP etc).
Complaints log	A database that tracks the key elements of complaints received, and their resolution, in order to identify potential trends or concerns and to produce reports.
Formal complaint	A formal complaint can occur where: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of an informal complaint and expressly requests to raise a formal complaint (this can still be done verbally) • a written complaint is received.
Informal complaint	A verbal complaint from a parent/carer.

15. Version Control Sheet

Version	Date	Author(s)	Status	Comment
1 to 3	N/A	N/A	Approved	Historic issues 2006 to 2012
4	N/28/05/2012	N/A	Approved	Initial issue of new format
5	10/02/2013	N/A	Approved	Updated to show monitoring procedure
6	07/12/2015	Julia Ward	Approved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General rewrite of policy • Merged clients complaints procedure (Work Programme) and Customer Complaints Procedure, both dated January 2013 into this once policy

Appendix A – Equality Impact Assessment

See separate document.

Appendix B – Fit for Purpose Checklist

See separate document.

Appendix C - Complaints Log

Section 1											Section 2											
Complaint Details					Nature of complaint (see key below)						Resolution			Compliant within LL timeframe?			Impact					
Complaint No:	Directorate	Lead staff member	Name of complainant	Date of complaint	Informal/Formal	*Quality	*Delivery	*Decisions	*Conduct	Brief Outline	Date of completion	Yes	No	If No, why not	Yes	No	How many days/weeks/months delay?	Reason for delay	Lessons learned	Changes made (to policy/procedure/other)	Recompense made	

Key to nature of complaint:

Quality	Complaints about: 1. The alleged failure to carry out a service to an appropriate standard. 2. The quality of a resource (e.g. building/equipment) that do not fall into a health and safety category dealt with elsewhere.
Delivery	Complaints about LifeLine's provision and/or arrangements made for delivery of a service.
Decisions	Complaints about how decisions on the provision of a service are made as well as those expressing disagreement with the outcome.
Conduct	Complaints about the alleged failure of staff to adhere to appropriate standards of behaviour and to follow relevant policies and procedures.

Appendix D – Complaint Action Plan

Name of Programme/Support Service							
Complaints: These should where appropriate be shared with teams and actions addressed in relevant policies							
Action to address area(s) for improvement	Intended outcomes	Resources required	Target completion date	Monitoring activities (including review dates)	Person(s) responsible	Progress to date	Where relevant, added to QIP (yes/no)?