



LifeLine
Projects

Complaints and Compliments Policy

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1. Introduction

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. 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 and Compliments policy is intended to ensure all complaints are handled fairly, consistently and wherever possible, resolved to the complainant's satisfaction and provide a way of sharing compliments with staff.

We are committed to providing an excellent service to students, parents/guardians and other stakeholders e.g. the wider community, ex-students and funders.

2. Complaints Policy

2.1 Purpose

LifeLine S improves services by listening and responding to the views of parents/guardians, students and other stakeholders, by 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 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/guardians, students and other stakeholders of their right to complain to a third party, if applicable.

This 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.

We recognise 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 vexatious or malicious following investigation.

2.2 Confidentiality

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

3. Complaints Procedure

3.1 Stage 1: Informal Complaints Procedure

- a. Informal complaints/concerns raised will normally involve a discussion directly between the parent/guardian and the relevant teacher(s), or with the Project Leader.
- b. We aim to resolve informal complaints as soon as possible by establishing the cause of the complaint and what action 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 we will undertake agreed resolution actions.
- c. 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.

3.2 Stage 2: Formal Complaints Procedure

- a. If a parent/guardian choose to or where they are 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/guardian may choose to make a formal complaint in writing.
- b. The Lead Teacher will hear the complaint.
- c. The contact details for the Lead Teacher are shown below:

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

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

- d. Where complaints are received from an advocate, staff must ensure they ask for written confirmation that the advocate is acting on the parent/guardians behalf.
- e. We will acknowledge receipt of formal complaints within **two days** of receipt.
- f. In many cases the acknowledgement will also report on the action we have taken to resolve the issue.
- g. Alternatively, an investigation may be conducted, or a meeting convened to discuss the matter further with the parent/guardian. 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**.
- h. Where complaints can be resolved immediately, we will undertake agreed resolution actions.
- i. Following resolution, a formal letter of response will be sent to the parent/guardian/nominated advocate. The letter will provide, where applicable, an apology, further information, or an acceptable explanation. We aim to resolve formal complaints within **10 working days** from receipt of the complaint.

3.3 Stage 3: Panel Hearing

- a. Where a complainant remains unsatisfied with the response or outcome of a formal complaint they can progress to a final panel hearing.
- b. The Director of Young People will chair the panel hearing.
- c. The reason for the panel hearing must be clearly stated in writing (letter or email) and sent to the Lead Teacher – see 3.2 (c) for contact details.
- d. 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
 - we will ensure parents/guardians 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.
- e. 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 The School.
- f. Parents are allowed to attend panel hearings, and be accompanied, if they wish.
- g. 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.

A copy of the panel's findings and recommendations will be provided to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about.

- h. 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.
- i. A copy of the findings/recommendations will be made available on school premises for inspection by the Director of Young People.

The decision at the end of this stage is final.

4. Recording and Monitoring Complaints

All complaints received within the scope of this policy must be notified to relevant manager where appropriate, and to the manager's line manager within two days of receipt.

The relevant member of staff/manager will record details of the complaint in the complaints log (see Appendix C) and include details of how the complaint was resolved and the impact of lessons learned e.g. changes made to policy or processes, together with a copy of the complaints action plan if completed, and any other documentation associated with the complaint. The log will be filed in the complaints folder on the 'S' drive.

5. Compliments

The purpose of this Compliments procedure is to ensure that compliments received from students, young people, parents/guardians, local authorities, staff and others are properly recorded, acknowledged (where appropriate) and conveyed to the individuals being thanked and other staff.

Compliments and expressions of appreciation are valuable in monitoring the effectiveness of our provision and can provide useful examples of good practice which can be shared throughout the organisation to encourage our staff to continue to provide, and improve on, an excellent service to students.

We are committed to providing the best possible service that we can and we encourage positive feedback from our students, their parents/guardians and staff. We have developed this procedure to explain our approach to handling compliments.

5.1 What is a Compliment?

A compliment is an expression of satisfaction made by an individual about the service they received. A compliment may be made in relation to an individual, a team or LifeLine Projects' as a whole.

The compliment can be from any individual who engages in our services or is in receipt of a service.

5.2 How can a Compliment be given?

An individual wishing to make a compliment can do so either:

- In person when visiting LifeLine School
- By phone
- By e-mail Eugene Amoako at eugeneamoako@lifelineprojects.co.uk
- By letter by writing to:

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

The compliment will then be passed on to the relevant member of staff within three working days along with their line manager.

6. Responsibilities

6.1 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.

6.2 Director of Young People

Is responsible for:

- Developing and encouraging good student care within alternative education provision.
- Ensuring staff under their management are clear about their responsibilities under the the Complaints and Compliment policy and procedures.
- Leading on the complaints panel hearing process.

6.3 Quality Manager

Is responsible for:

- Ensuring complaints are recorded in the complaints log that is filed on the 'S' drive.
- Raising any risks associated complaints with the CEO.
- Identifying and sharing good practice.

6.4 Lead Teacher

- Promptly responding to formal complaints.
- Informing the Director of Young People about requests for panel hearings.
- Recording all complaints received in the complaints log, including lessons learned and, where relevant, complaints action plans.

- Informing the Quality Manager about complaints received and details of progress about their resolution/ outcome.
- Providing feedback to staff on compliments received and, where identified, sharing best practice across the staff team/LifeLine Projects.

6.5 Project Leader

The Project Leader is responsible for:

- Developing and encouraging good beneficiary care practice within alternative education provision.
- Ensuring staff under their management are clear about their responsibilities under the the Complaints policy and procedures.
- Promptly responding to informal complaints.
- Recording all informal complaints received in the complaints log, including lessons learned and, where relevant, complaints action plans.
- Informing the Quality Manager about informal complaints received and details of progress about their resolution/ outcome.
- Providing feedback to staff on compliments received and, where identified, sharing best practice across the staff team/LifeLine Projects.
- Ensuring complaints records are available to Ofsted during inspections.

6.6 Staff

All staff are responsible for:

- Practising good customer care in their day-to-day work with students.
- Assisting students by providing details of how to make a complaint.
- Promptly responding to informal complaints.
- Informing the relevant Manager of formal complaints received.
- Implementing best practice.

7. 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.

8. Implementation and monitoring

8.1 Implementation

Once approved, this policy will be available on SharePoint and the previous versions of the policy and associated documents removed. Lifeline maintains an electronic archive of all policy documents.

8.2 Monitoring implementation and effectiveness

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

Standard	Monitoring process
Review of complaints received at relevant meetings e.g. scorecard meetings, team meetings	Complaints log on 'S' drive completed.

9. 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/attachmentdata/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>).

10. Related documents

None.

11. 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 School (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 School, 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/guardian.

12. 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
7	08/02/17	Julia Ward	Pending approval	Annual update and check to ensure compliance with school regulations

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.

