

# **COMPLAINTS POLICY**

## **1. Scope & Purpose**

1.1 The Complaints Policy and Procedure provides the framework within which anyone who has experienced dissatisfaction with College services can raise their concerns. This includes complaints from students, parents, customers, employers, contractors, local residents, visitors, consumers of products/ancillary services and others.

1.2 It does not replace College procedures for academic appeals and disciplinary action. Those procedures should be used where appropriate.

1.3 The College is keen to ensure this policy is operated in a consistent, fair and non-discriminatory way. If you feel the handling of your complaint so far has discriminated you on the grounds of sex, transgender, marital or civil partnership status, racial group, nationality, sexual orientation, religion or belief, disability or age or social status, etc, please say so in your formal complaint.

1.4 As a college we are committed to providing excellent education and training and are looking for continuous improvement in everything we do, whether in the quality of our courses, the welfare of our students, customer satisfaction with our products and services, or in the relationships with our suppliers and neighbours. We welcome your comments and will deal with them in a friendly, fair and efficient way.

## **2. General Principles**

2.1 The College will respond to any dissatisfaction with its services fairly and promptly:

- An initial response will be provided within 10 working days
- A further more detailed response will be made if appropriate
- You may be offered a meeting with the parties involved if appropriate
- You may appeal to the Principal if you are dissatisfied with the outcome.
- Information on how to take the complaint further will be provided if you are not satisfied with the College's response

2.2 While confidentiality will be respected as far as possible, it is not normally possible to resolve complaints without disclosing details of a complaint to relevant staff in order to allow the College a fair opportunity to resolve the issue.

2.3 It is hoped that most complaints can be dealt with using the informal procedure. Where complaints are very serious or the matter has not been resolved informally, recourse to the official procedure should be followed.

2.4 Making a formal complaint will not affect the complainant's statutory rights.

## **3. Responsibilities**

3.1 All College staff has a responsibility for receiving complaints, treating them seriously, and dealing with them promptly and courteously in accordance with the procedure set out below.

3.2 Managing Director and Centre Manager have a responsibility for resolving a complaint, and leading or contributing to an investigation into a complaint when this is considered appropriate

#### **4. The Complaints Process - Stage One (Informal)**

4.1 Concerns should be raised in the first instance with the person or area concerned as soon as possible, and not later than within ten weeks of the incident. If appropriate a meeting will be offered between the person complaining and the area they are complaining about to arrive at an agreed resolution.

4.2 If a complaint is about a member of staff it should be referred to Managing Director or centre manager.

4.3 At this informal stage complaints may be made in person, by phone or by email. The complainant must be kept informed of progress at all stages, with a written or verbal response to the complaint provided within 10 working days. If the issue is not resolved to the complainant's satisfaction the complaint moves to stage 2.

#### **5. The Complaints Process – Stage Two (Formal)**

5.1 If a complainant has been through Stage 1 and remains dissatisfied they should submit their complaint in writing using the complaints form provided at the end of this document or available from Reception. This should be sent to the Centre Manager.

5.2 The Principal will investigate the complaint and decide to:

- Dismiss the complaint as unfounded, giving reasons.
- Propose an amicable settlement.
- Uphold or partially uphold the complaint, offer an apology, take appropriate steps to address the issue and to avoid a similar problem arising in future.

5.4 All complaints should be dealt with as quickly as possible. All formal complaints will be acknowledged, an initial response will be given within 10 working days and a further more detailed response provided where appropriate. All formal complaints will receive a formal written response outlining the outcome, and the right of appeal where appropriate.

#### **6. Appeals**

6.1 If a complainant remains dissatisfied with the College's response to their complaint they may appeal in writing to the Director.

6.2 The Principal will decide to:

- Uphold the original decision/dismiss the complaint as unfounded.
- Refer the complaint back to an area and propose an amicable settlement.
- Uphold or partially uphold the complaint, offer an apology, recommend appropriate steps are taken to address the issue and to avoid a similar problem arising in future.

6.3. The decision of the Director and the complainant will be advised in writing of the outcome within 5 working days.

If despite the best efforts of managers and the Director you still remain concerned, you can ask the Director for the contact details of an external independent adjudicator. However, you must have the followed stages 1-3 above before doing so. The external independent adjudicator will be panel of at least two people who have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, one of whom is independent of the management and the second one would be director/ principal of a private/ further education college.