

# Complaints and Compliments Policy and Procedures

Version 6: 30<sup>th</sup> July 2020



Established by



Supported by



## Policy

This policy provides the framework within which anyone who has experienced dissatisfaction with LFE can raise their concerns. It explains how staff should deal with complaints from learners, parents, clubs, community trusts (CTs), key partners and other stakeholders. It also embraces the recording, reporting and celebration of written compliments about LFE.

This policy does not replace procedures for disciplinary or grievances action. Those procedures should be used where appropriate.

### LFE's Mission statement

Inspiring young people through football and providing them with an outstanding education programme that empowers them to reach their full potential in life.

The activity undertaken is underpinned by **core values** that are intended to demonstrate our professionalism and commitment to learners, clubs, CTs, key partners and each other. LFE staff will always:

- be respectful
- be supportive of one another
- be inclusive
- act professionally
- be innovative and creative

### Our goals

LFE is a learning organisation and values the learning opportunity presented by complaints that enable us to make changes and improve our services.

LFE has set the following targets:

- to receive no more than **three** written complaints per calendar year
- to receive at least **10** written compliments per calendar year
- to resolve all recorded complaints within an average of **20** working days

### Standards of Service

LFE will respond to any dissatisfaction with its services fairly and promptly:

- an initial written response to all complaints will be provided within **four working days**
- a full written response to all complaints will be provided within **15 working days** (this does not necessarily mean the complaint will be resolved within this timescale); if we need longer to investigate, we will tell the complainant when they can expect a reply
- the complainant may be offered a meeting with the parties involved if appropriate
- the complainant may appeal to the Chief Executive if they are dissatisfied with the outcome
- information on how to take the complaint further will be provided if the complainant is not satisfied with the Chief Executive's response

The 'Welcome to the Apprenticeship Programme' and 'Welcome to the Community Trust Study Programme' online guides, online Club Guidance Book, Student Handbook, Club Guide to Online Induction, LFE website and the Scholarship Agreement set out the standards and services learners, clubs and CTs can expect LFE to provide, as well as learner and club/CT responsibilities.

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Anyone not satisfied with the level of service should feel able to approach relevant staff to address their concern promptly and directly. Every attempt should be made to resolve complaints informally through a dialogue with those immediately concerned.

## Responsibilities and Accountabilities

1. All staff who might receive complaints relating to their area of work have a responsibility for treating them seriously and deal with them promptly and courteously in accordance with the procedure set out below.
2. The Quality Improvement Manager is responsible for producing evaluation reports for analysis.
3. Members of the Senior Management Team and Regional Officers (ROs)/CT Study Programme 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 Chief Executive is responsible for resolving complaints which have reached the appeals stage and may nominate the Chief Education Officer or another senior manager if they have not been previously involved to investigate.
5. The Board is responsible for dealing with referrals after the appeals stage where a complainant remains dissatisfied with how their complaint has been dealt with by LFE.
6. The Chief Executive is accountable for ensuring the effective implementation of this policy and procedure.
7. The Board may become directly involved if a complaint is directed against the Chief Executive.

## Documentation

- written complaints (letters and e-mails)
- written responses (letters)
- annual evaluation report

## Procedures for Dealing with Complaints

### Stage One (Informal)

1. If the nature of the complaint is a safeguarding issue, then the **Safeguarding (Child and Vulnerable Person Protection) Policy** takes precedence and those procedures are followed instead.
2. Complaints from apprentices should be directed in the first instance to the obligations set out in their **Scholarship Agreement** (Clause 11), which advises learners to address the complaint with the member of club staff responsible for dealing with complaints. Similarly, Study Programme learners should inform the relevant member of CT staff for any grievances.
3. The complainant (if a learner) should be encouraged, **where appropriate**, by the appropriate member of LFE staff, to raise the complaint in the first instance directly with the person/s involved (or that person's line management) as soon as possible.
4. If this course of action resolves the complaint to the satisfaction of the complainant (i.e. without LFE's involvement), then the member of staff dealing with it records it on their own club/CT work records, as it is not officially a verbal complaint to LFE. Therefore, it is not treated as a formal complaint.
5. However, where a learner feels they need to address their concern or complaint directly with LFE (acting as an independent broker), every reasonable effort should be made by LFE to resolve the complaint promptly.
6. Complaints connected to learners, their parents/carers, clubs, CTs or education providers should normally be directed to the relevant RO/CT Study Programme Manager. If the complaint is not connected to their area of work, then it is directed to the relevant member of LFE staff for that area of work. If the person who would normally be responsible for a complaint is not available, it is directed to their immediate line manager.

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7. Any complaints received from learners in relation to **child protection** issues are referred directly to **The EFL Safeguarding Manager** and dealt with in line with their safeguarding policies and procedures.
8. Complainants are advised that, while confidentiality will be respected as far as possible, it may not be possible to resolve complaints without disclosing details of a complaint to relevant staff in order to allow LFE a fair opportunity to resolve the issue.
9. Where a parent/carer makes a complaint on behalf of a learner, the parent/carer should inform the learner about making the complaint to enable LFE to try to resolve it. Where the parent/carer feels this is not appropriate, the Chief Executive will decide whether or not LFE is able to progress it. If the Chief Executive decides LFE cannot progress it, then the initial complaint will be recorded, and an initial response made.
10. Written complaints are recorded in the Complaints Log held on the shared drive by the Quality Improvement Manager and then further updated via updates to the Quality Improvement Manager from the members of staff managing further stages of the complaint, as appropriate. E-mails, attachments (e.g. Word documents) and scanned letters relating to the complaint will be filed on the shared-drive alongside the Complaints Log.
11. An initial written response to all written and verbal complaints will be provided within **4 working days**. If LFE needs longer to investigate, the complainant will be informed of when they can expect a reply.
12. A full written response to all complaints will be provided within **15 working days**.
13. The above timescales do not necessarily mean the complaint will be resolved within those timescales.
14. The complainant may be offered a meeting with the parties involved if appropriate.
15. If a complaint is about an LFE member of staff, the complainant should ask to be referred to their immediate line manager (this would be the Chief Executive if the complaint is about a member of the SMT).
16. The complainant must be kept informed of progress at all stages. All outcome letters should be copied to the relevant parties. If the issue is not resolved to the complainant's satisfaction the complaint moves to stage 2.

## **Stage Two (Formal - up to Chief Education Officer or SMT member level)**

1. If the RO/CT Study Programme Manager or other staff are unable to resolve the issue it should be referred to the Chief Education Officer or SMT member.
2. If a complainant has been through Stage 1 and remains dissatisfied they should be advised to submit their complaint in writing or by email (if this has not already happened) to the Chief Education Officer or SMT member dependent on the nature of the complaint.
3. All letters of complaint addressed to the Chief Executive should in the first instance be forwarded to the Chief Education Officer or SMT member for action.
4. The senior manager dealing with the complaint will investigate 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 circumstance arising in future
5. All formal complaints will receive a formal written response outlining the outcome, and the right of appeal where appropriate.

## **Appeals (Chief Executive)**

1. If a complainant remains dissatisfied with the LFE's response to their complaint they may appeal in writing to the Chief Executive.
2. The Chief Executive's nominated representative, who should be a manager not previously involved in the case, will investigate the complaint and the LFE's response and report to the Chief Executive.

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3. The Chief Executive 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 be taken to address the issue and to avoid a similar circumstance arising in future

4. The decision of the Chief Executive is final, and the complainant will be advised in writing of the outcome within **5 working days**.

5. The Chief Education Officer or SMT member, whichever has not previously been involved with the case, will deal with the appeal if the Chief Executive is not available.

### **Taking a Complaint Further**

If a complainant remains dissatisfied with LFE's response following appeal they should ask the LFE Chief Executive to take their complaint to the LFE Board.

### **Procedure for Recording Compliments**

On receipt of a compliment, the member of staff responsible for the area of work involved forwards it to the Quality Improvement Manager who files it in the 'Compliments and Complaints' folder within Outlook, and then forwards it to the SMT for information.

### **Record Keeping and Reporting**

1. All LFE staff should maintain a clear record of all complaints dealt with. All written and verbal complaints managed by LFE are logged in the Complaints Log, where progress can be tracked and managed effectively, and outcomes analysed.
2. A record of all appeals and outcomes will also be kept in the Complaints Log.
3. The above enables LFE to monitor progress and produce an annual report, for analysis of complaints and compliments by the QIG (which includes the SMT). This includes trend analysis, establishing if any lessons can be learnt and to make recommendations for improvement.
4. Where considered significant, report recommendations are converted into improvement actions within a Quality Improvement Plan for continuous improvement purposes.



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