Complaints Policy/ Procedure

Glow Education Project views complaints as a potential to learn and to highlight the areas of our service that may not be meeting the needs of our beneficiaries or where quality could be improved. By dealing with complaints and communicating in more detail and providing explanations, we endeavour to prevent situations escalating and this will mean most complaints can be speedily resolved.

It is acknowledged that taking any informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage will reduce the numbers that develop into formal complaints. The underlying principle of the procedure is that concerns will be handled, if at all possible, without the need for formal procedures. The requirement to have a complaints procedure will not in any way undermine efforts to resolve the concern informally. It is expected that most issues will be capable of resolution on the spot.

The formal procedures will only be used when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further. Complaints which will be dealt with under the Formal Complaints Procedure must be received in writing.

A Senior Manager will oversee the operation of the procedure and will organise any investigation.

**Aims of Complaints Procedure**

This complaints procedure 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
* provide a confidential process
* address all the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary
* provide information to the leadership team to improve services

**Investigating Complaints**

At each stage, the person investigating the complaint will:

* establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved
* clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved
* meet with the complainant or contact them (if unsure or further information is necessary)
* clarify what the complainant feels would put things right
* interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
* conduct the interview with an open mind
* keep notes of the interview

**Resolving Complaints**

At each stage in the procedure Glow Education Project will keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

* 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 Glow Education Project policies in light of the complaint

Complainants will be encouraged to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage. An admission that Glow Education Project could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence.

Areas of agreement between the parties will be sought. It is also of equal importance to clarify any misunderstandings that might have occurred as this can create a positive atmosphere in which to discuss any outstanding issues.

**Vexatious Complaints**

If properly followed, it is hoped that this procedure will limit the number of complaints that become protracted. However, there will be occasions when, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the panel (depending on the circumstances of the case) is able to inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

**Time Limits**

Complaints will be considered, and resolved, as quickly and efficiently as possible and realistic and workable time limits will be set for actions within each stage. However, where further investigations are necessary, new time limits can be set and the complainant sent details of the new deadline and an explanation of the reasons for the delay.

At each stage it will be clarified exactly who will be involved, what will happen, and how long it will take. There may, on occasion be the need for some flexibility; for example, the possibility of further meetings between the complainant and the member of staff directly involved and further investigations may be required by a senior manager after a meeting with the complainant.

**Step One – Informal**

We encourage all complainants to make the initial complaint on an informal basis and it is hoped that the vast majority of complaints are dealt with at this informal stage. We will try to resolve the issue as soon as possible with the person concerned, preferably on the same day or within 14 days of the complaint being made.

**Step Two – Formal**

* In the event of the problem not being resolved between the complainant and the member of staff or the person concerned (respondent), or if the complainant wants the matter dealt with by a more senior person, they should ask to speak to a Senior Manager. This will usually be a verbal communication.
* The appropriate Manager will investigate the complaint and respond, ideally, within seven working days. This will probably be verbally, followed by an explanatory letter.

N.B. If the complaint is about a Senior Managers the complaint should be referred to another Senior Manager.

**Step Three – Formal Written**

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response then they should write to a Senior Manager within two weeks of the reply, received from the process in Step Two.

* The Senior Manager acknowledges the complaint within 48 working hours.
* The Senior Manager investigates the complaint. The Senior Manager will keep the complainant informed of progress and any possible delays.
* A written response from the Senior Manager is made to the complainant within 28 days of the complaint being made.

**Step Four – Panel Review Hearing**

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response after stage three then within 14 days they can request a Panel Review Hearing. This panel hearing will take place within 28 days of receiving the request.

* The panel hearing will consist of three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint.
* One person on the panel will be independent of the management and running of the Glow Education Project.
* All parties will be given 14 days’ notice of the Review meeting and the opportunity to submit papers to the panel. These will be included with the written notice of the meeting.
* Both complainant and respondent may bring a person of their choice for support and a parent/carer may attend the panel hearing and be accompanied if they wish.
* The Panel Review Hearing should be as informal as possible. It is important that the complainant and respondent should be present at the meeting together.
* Witnesses are only required to attend for the part of the hearing in which they give their evidence
* After introductions, the complainant is invited to explain their complaint, and be followed by their witnesses
* The Senior Manager may question both the complainant and the witnesses after each has spoken
* The Senior Manager is then invited to explain Glow Education Project’s actions and be followed by Glow Education Project’s witnesses
* The complainant may question both the Senior Manager and the witnesses after each has spoken
* The Committee may ask questions at any point
* The complainant is then invited to sum up their complaint
* The Senior Manager is then invited to sum up Glow Education Project’s actions and response to the complaint.
* The Chair explains that both parties will hear from the Committee within a set timescale
* After the complainant and the respondent have stated their case they leave together. They should be advised that the panel may telephone them to seek any clarifications that may arise.
* The panel will then consider their action in private and write to the complainant, the respondent (where relevant) and the Proprietor outlining their findings and recommendations.

Glow Education Project will keep written records of all formal complaints and their outcomes, whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage, when a complaint is submitted in writing or whether they proceeded to a panel hearing, and what action was taken as a result of a complaint.

Any complaints can should be made to; mmendez@gloweducationproject.com

Policy updated: January 2023