

Complaints, Suggestions and Compliments Policy and Procedure

Purpose

To ensure that The Greenhouse has an effective system in place to manage complaints, suggestions and compliments.

To ensure that The Greenhouse complies with any legal requirements, regulations, guidelines and best practice.

Scope

The following roles may be affected by this policy:

- All staff

The following Learners may be affected by this policy:

- All Learners

The following stakeholders may be affected by this policy:

- Bluestones Medical Complex Care
- Awarding Organisations
- Regulators
- Employers
- Public
- External Learners

Objectives

To improve the quality of the Learner's experience.

To ensure that all complaints and suggestions are promptly addressed, resolved and shared within the agreed timescales to ensure that lessons are learned and that the learning improves service quality and delivery.

Policy

Complaints

The Greenhouse understands complaints to be an expression of dissatisfaction requiring a response, communicated verbally, electronically, or in writing. Complaints may be made by any Learner, their Employer or any person using The Greenhouse.

The Greenhouse takes complaints seriously. We will aim to put things right that have gone wrong and learn lessons to avoid the problem happening again. This policy sets out the framework for how The Greenhouse will achieve this. The detail of how The Greenhouse will do this will be found in the associated procedures.

The Greenhouse will comply with legislation, national guidelines, regulation and best practice when managing complaints and suggestions. A systematic approach will be taken with all aspects of complaints and suggestions.

- Complaints made or concerns raised by staff will be addressed via the grievance process if the complaint or concern relates to them individually, or via the Whistleblowing procedure where a protected disclosure is made
- The Greenhouse understands its statutory obligations in respect of the Duty of Candour and will ensure it follows the agreed policy and procedure

The Greenhouse will ensure that its complaints and compliments process is fair and transparent and does not discriminate directly or indirectly because of the following:

- Age
- Being or becoming a transsexual/transgender person
- Being married or in a civil partnership
- Being pregnant or on maternity leave
- Disability
- Race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- Religion, belief or lack of religion/belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

The complainant will feel free to complain without fear of reprisal and will be treated with courtesy, respect and compassion. The Greenhouse will ensure that the process for how to make a complaint and the feedback given to the complainant are provided in a way that meets the Accessible Information Standard and are in a format that the Learner can understand.

Seeking Views and Engaging with Learners and Employers

The Greenhouse will seek out opportunities to obtain feedback from Learners, Employers and stakeholders. The Greenhouse will act with sensitivity, integrity and professionalism by treating individuals who do complain or make a suggestion with compassion, courtesy and respect. The Greenhouse will protect the Learners right to confidentiality. The Greenhouse will ensure that alternative methods of communication are available so that the complaints and suggestions procedures are accessible for Learners who experience difficulties with communication or whose first language is not English.

Staff will undertake training on how to manage complaints in line with their roles and responsibilities.

The Greenhouse understands that it can be difficult to separate a complaint from a concern and, therefore, The Greenhouse will follow this policy when there is any dissatisfaction with the service.

A full record will be held of all complaints received regardless of the level of seriousness and means of communication. This approach allows an open and transparent culture around raising concerns in the earliest stage to allow resolution. A record of the complaint will also be held in the Learners file and will be reported in line with contractual or regulatory requirements.

Safeguarding Concerns

Where a complaint or concern is raised that relates to a Learner being harmed or likely to be harmed, The Greenhouse will follow its Safeguarding Policy and Procedures in addition to the complaints procedures, seeking advice and guidance from the Safeguarding Lead and escalating concerns in line with The Greenhouse Procedure.

Roles and Responsibilities

All Staff

It is acknowledged that all staff working within The Greenhouse may be presented with an individual wishing to raise a concern or complaint at any time. Therefore,

staff need to be able to manage this in a sensitive, structured and timely manner. In order to do this, staff will:

- Be trained on induction and as a routine measure to ensure knowledge is embedded and refreshed around the complaints procedure
- Have access to the complaints procedure
- Be provided with the opportunity to reflect and learn from complaints as a means of developing and driving quality care
- Appreciate that any feedback from Learners or their employer that is of concern needs immediate resolution, where possible, to a mutual satisfaction. ILP's & TNA will be updated to reflect the planned changes to support for qualification and apprenticeship. Failing to do this may result in a complaint.
- Be clearly advised that, when presented with a complaint, swift escalation to Head of Centre is necessary and that purposefully withholding or concealing concerns expressed by Learners or their employers may lead to disciplinary action.

Management Team at The Greenhouse

- The management team at The Greenhouse is responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy, regulations, improvement planning and for having arrangements in place to provide relevant reports and information regarding complaints
- Head of Centre is the main point of contact for the receipt, investigation and management of complaints within The Greenhouse, However, this may be delegated to a senior member of staff within The Greenhouse who holds the experience, knowledge and competence to investigate and manage complaints
- The Greenhouse will ensure the procedure for raising a complaint is accessible and displayed prominently in The Greenhouse website and in Learner Handbook and guides. Alternative languages and formats will be available on request.

Compliments and Suggestions

The Greenhouse welcomes compliments and suggestions and recognises their importance in celebrating and recognising the success of its service and opportunities for improvement. We will engage with a wide range of stakeholders in addition to Learners to support service development and improvement. We will share feedback with our staff.

Raising Complaints

Procedure

A complaint can be received by The Greenhouse either verbally or in writing and can be made by:

- Learners
- Employers
- Member of the public

The Greenhouse will ensure that Learners are given information on how to make a complaint and the process once a complaint has been made, including any agreed timescales.

Time Limits for Submitting a Complaint

Complaints should be submitted within 12 weeks of the incident or concern arising.

The time limit, however, can and should be waived, if:

- It is still practical and possible to investigate the complaint (the records still exist and the individuals concerned are still available to be questioned, etc.) and
- The complainant can demonstrate reasonable cause for delay in making the complaint. It is at the discretion of the manager of the service if the time limit can be set aside.

Complaints Procedure:

Step 1

When a complaint is raised to staff, staff will make an effort to resolve it immediately to the satisfaction of the complainant.

Step 2

Staff will apologise for the fact that there was the need to complain in the first instance and explain the complaints process as described in the procedure steps.

Step 3

Staff will report the complaint to the most senior member of staff (HOC) on duty and the complaint will be logged. If the complaint relates to that individual, the staff member will report the complaint to the member of staff who is next in line in seniority.

Step 4

Formal acknowledgement of all complaints received (whether verbal or written) will be sent within 3 working days to the complainant. This could be via letter or email. The Greenhouse will have a local system in place to manage out-of-hours and weekend complaints received.

The acknowledgement will include:

- An invitation to meet and discuss the complaint
- Who will be investigating the complaint
- How the investigation will be handled - the response should state what the investigation will be focused on
- A time limit for the investigation to be concluded. This should be 28 days. However, some cases may take longer and the complainant will be made aware of this
- The complaints procedure and contact details of bodies that can be accessed in the event of dissatisfaction with the outcome of the investigation

Step 5

Following a full investigation, a response letter will be sent and this will include the following:

- A summary of the issue from the complainant's point of view
- Details of the evidence and sources consulted in order to investigate the issue fully and fairly.
- A presentation of the findings for each issue clearly and concisely described

- A conclusion, stating clearly whether the issue is 'upheld', 'partially upheld' or 'not upheld'; unless it is ineligible, in which case the reason for this will be given, e.g. out of time or out of jurisdiction
- An explanation of the outcome and whether any remedial action or learning points arise from the investigation of that issue
- An apology where the issue is upheld and shortcomings or failings have been found
- The complainant's rights if not satisfied with the outcome to refer to The Local Government and Awarding Organisation
- A signature from the responsible individual or sent by email in their name

Step 6

The complaint will be closed once confirmation has been received that there is satisfaction with the outcome. In the event of dissatisfaction, The Greenhouse will support the complainant to access further support.

The Complaints Log

A record will be held of all complaints raised and contain the following information:

- Each complaint received
- Subject matter and outcome
- Details of any reason for delay where investigations took longer than the agreed response period
- The date the report of outcome was sent to the complainant

Where complaints relate to a Learner, a copy of the complaint will be held in their learner file so that the Learner can have access at any time.

Where complaints are raised by telephone, the log will include the date and time of the call and this will be followed up with written confirmation of the areas discussed. Where a complaint indicates the potential abuse of Learners, safeguarding policies will be followed.

Where complaints are to be shared as part of learning, the complaint will be anonymised so there is no identifiable Learner information, in line with UK GDPR and data protection law.

Investigations

All investigations will be managed by using the following approach:

- Investigating the fact
- Assessing evidence
- Review of records
- Interviewing those involved

Where necessary, advice and support will be sourced via senior managers within the organisation. The complaint must be investigated by a member of staff with the knowledge, experience and seniority to undertake the investigation robustly.

Confidentiality of information will be considered at all times and staff will adhere to the confidentiality policies and relevant codes of practice.

If an investigation of a complaint results in disciplinary action against staff within The Greenhouse, the complaint will continue to its conclusion. The complainant will be informed that the investigation has led to the disciplinary process, but the details of the outcome or ongoing investigation will remain confidential.

One Complaint, One Response

Where more than one organisation is involved in learners qualification journey, they, or their representative, will be able to complain to any of them and The Greenhouse will contact the other organisations, carry out a joint investigation and provide a single joint response. Learners must not have to contact each organisation separately.

If someone complains and The Greenhouse is not responsible for the service complained about, rather than turning the complainant away, The Greenhouse will share the concerns with the correct organisation(s). It will be necessary to obtain the individual's permission to do this. If the person prefers that their complaint is not shared with another organisation (or organisations), The Greenhouse will signpost

them to the right organisation instead and provide the person with their contact details.

Who is Responsible for Complaint Resolution at The Greenhouse?

All efforts will be made by the Head of Centre to resolve all complaints within The Greenhouse.

If a Learner does not wish to raise a complaint directly to management within The Greenhouse, in the first instance, staff will try and sensitively establish their reasons why and aim to resolve and address any concerns that present.

The Greenhouse recognises the importance of Learners being able to speak freely and raise a concern or complaint regarding anyone in the organisation, including all The Greenhouse staff. Learners are provided with information relating to who to contact in the event that this is necessary.

Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints will be investigated in the same way as named complaints. They will be logged and any corrective action necessary will be taken and also logged.

Unresolved Complaints

In the event that a Learners feels that their complaint is unresolved, there are several bodies that can support or will need to be informed to assist with this:-

- Bluestones Medical Complex Care (internal staff)
- Awarding Organisations
- Department of Education

Vexatious Complaints

Occasionally, The Greenhouse may receive complaints that are vexatious in that they cause considerable disruption to the work at The Greenhouse, disproportionate cost and time to handle, and impact the wellbeing of staff (because of the way the complaint is made or because of its repetitive nature).

The Greenhouse will ensure that it meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 to make 'reasonable adjustments' for disabled Learners. In some circumstances, Learners may have a disability that makes it difficult for them to either express themselves or communicate clearly and/or appropriately.

Where there is an indication that this may be the case, The Greenhouse will consider the needs and circumstances of the Learner or complainant in the first instance and use this information to inform any decisions that are made.

Where appropriate, The Greenhouse will consider complaints to be vexatious but would not label an individual complainant as vexatious. Even if The Greenhouse decides that an individual's complaint about the service is vexatious, that does not preclude that person from making a formal complaint. The Greenhouse would still consider any such complaints in line with the usual procedures, as outlined in this policy.

To help decide whether a complaint is vexatious The Greenhouse will consider the full history and context of interactions with the individual making the complaint and will look at both the nature of the complaint and the manner in which it is made. The particular issues that will inform a decision will include whether:

- The primary purpose and/or effect of the complaint is to disturb, disrupt and or/pressurise The Greenhouse, its staff or an individual member of staff.
- The primary purpose and/or effect of the manner in which the complaint is made is to disturb, disrupt and or/pressurise The Greenhouse its staff or an individual member of staff.
- The complaint is otherwise clearly unreasonable.

If at any point in the handling of a complaint a member of staff believes it meets the criteria to be deemed vexatious, it must be referred to Head of Centre with a summary of why it is thought to be vexatious.

The Head of Centre will consider the complaint, seek external advice if appropriate, and will either declare the complaint as being vexatious or not. Where a complaint is not deemed to be vexatious it will be returned to the appropriate point in the complaints handling process.

If a complaint is deemed to be vexatious, the Head of Centre will respond directly to the complainant explaining why it is thought to be so and will explain that the complaint will be closed with no further action. The Head of Centre will also consider if the making of a vexatious complaint also requires the application of a restriction on communication following unreasonable behaviour.

The decision to declare a complaint as vexatious will be recorded in the complaints register for future reference.

Any declaration that refers to the specific complaint being vexatious and any further complaints from the same individual will still be considered.

If any individual wishes to challenge a decision made in relation to this policy, and all attempts to resolve the complaint locally have been unsuccessful, details of the Complaints Team for the Awarding Organisation or Main Provider will be shared with the complainant.

Compliments

Receiving compliments is an opportunity to celebrate and recognise success. The Greenhouse will ensure that:

- All compliments are shared with staff and displayed in a public area to highlight good practice
- Compliments are anonymised or permission is sought before displaying them
- The number of compliments received is logged as part of a quality assurance programme
- Verbal, positive feedback from Learners and Employers is also deemed a compliment and will be recorded and shared with colleagues
- Compliments form a core agenda item at staff, learner and employer meetings

Suggestions

Suggestions can be made verbally or in writing and generally are in response to seeking a means of changing practice for the better.

- Suggestions are not complaints, but in some circumstances, if they are not considered or actioned, they could lead to a complaint


- When suggestions are raised in meetings or as part of a conversation, these will be documented and then outcomes of such suggestions recorded to show consideration
- Staff will be encouraged to share their suggestions, or suggestions received by learners and employers, with the Head of Centre
- The Head of Centre will consider implementing a suggestions system to encourage comments from learners, employers and visitors

Audit and Evaluation

The Greenhouse will monitor, review and analyse all information received about the service as a means of continuously reviewing performance, quality and safety.

The Greenhouse will also:

- Share themes and trends with all staff working for The Greenhouse
- Ensure that staff are trained to deal with complaints and understand the procedure for managing complaints.



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