



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



MANAGING COMPLAINTS

Good Practice Guidance for Further Education
Colleges and Work-Based Learning Providers

This good practice guide is aimed at assisting and guiding further education (FE) colleges and work-based learning (WBL) providers on how to improve their customer focus, management, reporting and definition of complaints. Providers of adult community learning (ACL) may also wish to adopt this guidance.

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MINISTERIAL FOREWORD



“ We want every learner, in every community in Wales, to have access to excellent teaching, learning and training that inspires them to achieve and progress. ”

We want every learner, in every community in Wales, to have access to excellent teaching, learning and training that inspires them to achieve and progress. This requires learning providers to use all of the information available to systematically identify areas for improvement. Complaints are a valuable source of information readily available to providers.

This guide has been developed with and for the FE sector in response to a thematic review of FE complaints procedures, carried out by Estyn in 2014/15. It also reflects earlier recommendations on complaints carried out by the National Union of Students (NUS) Wales.

Estyn’s review found that all institutions had complaints procedures in place, and that they tracked and reported on complaints. However, procedures varied too much between institutions and information from complaints were not used effectively enough to drive improvements.

This guide aims to help individual providers evaluate and improve their current complaints procedures, and bring about more consistency in the way complaints are handled across the post-16 sector, so learners can expect the same level of service wherever they choose to study and learn. An effective complaints procedure will demonstrate that feedback is genuinely welcomed, valued, and taken seriously, whatever its nature.

This guide has been put together by the Student Services network, drawing on existing best practice in the sector. I would like to express my sincere thanks to the network and all those who have provided advice, feedback and challenge in developing it.

I am also grateful to the NUS Wales and Estyn for their expert advice throughout the development of this guide. I hope you will find it relevant, practical and useful, and we welcome your feedback on the content.

Alun Davies AM

Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language

SCOPE AND PURPOSE

This guidance relates to complaints from learners, parents, service users and members of the public. We have adopted the following definition of a complaint.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more persons about the provider's action, or lack of action, or about the standard of service, which has had a negative effect on the complainant's experience.

(Adapted from the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman's 'FE Model Complaints Handling Procedure for Scotland').

The aim of this publication is to provide good practice guidance to the FE and WBL sector. Adult community learning (ACL) providers may also wish to adopt this guidance.

It recognises the established good practice within the sectors' existing complaints policies, processes and procedures. Whilst not prescriptive, the guidance will enable providers to reflect on their approach, and as a result improve their practice. This guidance sets out how serious and non-serious complaints should be handled, whilst providing a model to evaluate complaints to improve service delivery.

This guide has been compiled by practitioners in liaison with learners, NUS Wales and in consideration of Estyn's thematic report, 'How well do further education institutions manage learner complaints'. This guide will assist staff who have responsibility for handling complaints. It aims to illustrate appropriate approaches to resolving problems successfully at the earliest opportunity, and sets out the importance of monitoring and analysing complaints data to identify recurring themes and the underlying causes.

This will enable organisations to tackle customers' concerns promptly and may prevent similar situations from occurring in the future, by learning from experience. In some cases institutions will need to obtain their own independent legal advice, and this guidance is not intended to be a substitute for such advice.

It is recognised that complaints provide valuable information, which post-16 providers can use to improve customer satisfaction. Complaints give staff a first-hand account of customers' views and experiences, whilst also highlighting problems that staff may miss. Handled well, complaints can give customers confidence that matters raised will be addressed appropriately. It is recommended that providers review their policies in line with this guidance to provide consistency across sectors.

It is pivotal that each provider demonstrates the desire to resolve any complaint at the earliest possible stage to the reasonable satisfaction of the complainant.

HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

Higher Education (HE) providers are required to register with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).

Complaints about any aspect of a directly funded or franchised HE programme should be dealt with primarily under the FEI's complaints policy. If not resolved, the complaint should be elevated to the individual HEI/awarding body who will follow their own complaints procedure. In the event that the complainant remains unsatisfied, the HE provider is compelled to issue a "completion of procedures" notice which enables the complainant to approach the OIA for Higher Education:

Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education
Second Floor
Abbey Gate
57 – 75 King's Road
Reading
RG1 3AB.
0118 959 9813
enquiries@oiahe.org.uk
www.oiahe.org.uk

A suitable statement should be included in an institution's complaints policy, for example:

Complaints with regards to Higher Education programmes run by the college should primarily be pursued using the college's complaints procedure. If you remain dissatisfied following this, your complaint should be elevated to the individual awarding university or awarding body who will follow their own complaints procedure. If you remain dissatisfied, you will then be able to contact the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education.

CONSORTIUM, FRANCHISE AND SUB-CONTRACTING ARRANGEMENTS

Complaints should be dealt with through the individual provider's complaints process and quality assurance procedures. It is essential that resolutions, as well as the number, pattern and themes of complaints relevant to the partnership, are reported back to the lead provider, to be included within the overall complaints monitoring process.

LEARNER VOICE

Providers are committed to providing a high quality experience to all learners. Providers should encourage learners to feed back any aspects of concern or need for improvement through their:

- Learning walks
- Learner voice meetings
- Learner surveys
- Tutorials
- Learner representation on management committees
- Learner Councils and Students Unions
- Course team meetings.

Whilst these activities help staff listen and respond to the learners' needs, individuals or groups may sometimes wish to raise a complaint. These complaints are also a valuable source of information, which, if handled correctly, should lead to improvements in the quality of provision.

They should be analysed alongside other forms of student feedback in your self assessment reports, and where appropriate used in action planning meetings between staff and students to identify areas for development or improvement.

Furthermore, you should use your learner voice structures to gather learners' feedback on the complaints handling process.

This will help you evaluate how well the process works, whether learners have confidence in how complaints are handled at your institution or organisation, and identify where any improvements are needed.

DEFINITION OF A COMPLAINT

A complaint is:

An expression of dissatisfaction by one or more persons about the provider's action, or lack of action, or about the standard of service, which has had a negative effect on the complainant's experience.

(Adapted from the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman's 'FE Model Complaints Handling Procedure for Scotland').

A complaint is not:

- a routine first time request for a service
- a request for information or an explanation of policy or practice
- a disagreement with an academic judgement / assessment decision judgement
- a claim for compensation from the provider
- issues that are in court or have already been heard by a court or tribunal
- disagreement with a decision where a right of appeal exists, for example the academic appeals process
- a request for information under the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Acts
- a grievance by a member of staff
- an attempt to reopen or reconsider a complaint that has been concluded or given a final decision on (unless new evidence is brought to light or the complaints process was not followed).

Where a learner, service user or member of the public does not wish to make a complaint but rather to express dissatisfaction, their concern should be recorded so that an improvement to service can be made. Learning providers should exercise discretion when an expression of dissatisfaction should be escalated into a complaint.

The complaints procedure should not override existing legislation, policies or practices in place to deal with specific issues.

Customers should therefore be directed to the most appropriate procedures to deal with the matter e.g. Welsh language, safeguarding, quality assurance, health and safety.

COMPLAINTS POLICY

This guide provides a suggested framework of the minimum standards for a complaints policy. You will need to develop the specific detail to reflect your own organisational structures, policies and processes. The complaints policy should link with other institutional policies, legislation and external bodies.

Overview Statement

Your complaints policy should commence with an overview statement that presents your complaint handling procedures, key aims, benefits and requirements.

A good example might be:

Our aim is to provide you with a high quality standard of service in all aspects of our provision.

We strive to provide the best service possible. However, we do recognise that sometimes things can go wrong, and when they do, we would like to know about it so that we can put it right. We are committed to taking prompt action to ensure that we achieve our aim of providing a high quality service. The aim of the complaints procedure is to give you a quick yet thorough response that answers your concerns appropriately.

We annually review the nature and number of all complaints. The monitoring and review of complaints contributes to our process of self-assessment leading to an improved quality of service.

An appropriate policy:

- Defines the nature of a complaint
- Demonstrates accessibility, clarity, proportionality, and reasonableness
- Is fair, recognising independence and confidentiality
- Engages and ensures feedback to learners
- Improves the customer experience
- Articulates timescales for resolving complaints and providing feedback
- Defines who can complain and what they can complain about
- Describes how to register a concern or a complaint
- Sets out that complaints brought forward in Welsh will be treated no less favourably than those in English
- Sets out what support is available for the complainant
- Describes the organisation's complaints handling procedure
- Illustrates the process in a clear flowchart (see Appendix 1)
- Describes the handling of vexatious and anonymous complaints
- Defines the role of the Designated Complaints Officer (DCO)
- Sets out an appeals process
- Illustrates monitoring and reporting procedures
- Is easily accessible and made available to learners.

ROLE OF THE DESIGNATED COMPLAINTS OFFICER

You should have a trained individual identified as a Designated Complaints Officer (DCO) who is responsible for the appropriate handling of all complaints.

The role of the DCO is to ensure matters are resolved as quickly as possible in line with your organisation's complaints policy. It is good practice for the DCO to attempt to establish what resolution would ultimately satisfy the complainant(s) at the outset.

The DCO should:

- Have suitable seniority within the organisation to ensure processes are carried through, and to make judgements and decisions as necessary with regard to how best to treat individual circumstances
- Be independent and impartial with no vested interest in the outcome
- Have authority to act and appoint an investigating officer (IO), who should also be independent and impartial
- Be able to draw any inferences and be able to identify and respond to any themes arising from complaints. This involves looking beneath the surface to try and identify the root of the problem
- Take responsibility for monitoring and reporting upon all complaints received and provide feedback to learners, staff and the governing body
- Be able to raise awareness of the complaints process and referral arrangements across the institution
- Provide an annual report to the governing body which outlines appropriate information and includes recommendations arising from findings (including all complaints, whether or not they were upheld)
- Foster and encourage suitable training for learners and staff by the appropriate departments across the institution
- Ensure that the matter is referred appropriately, dealt with in accordance with any relevant statutory requirements, and under the relevant policy e.g. Welsh Language Standards, Health and Safety, Safeguarding/Prevent etc.

COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE

Accessibility

You should ensure that all applicants, learners and service users are made aware of the complaints procedure and are reasonably able to access and understand it.

The complaints procedure should be made available and easily accessible to everyone in English and Welsh via your website and other routes which may include, support apps, learner/staff portals or virtual learning environments (VLEs), student or course handbooks, diaries, and referred to in all material that promotes provision and or services. Points of access should be made known to all learners, staff and customers.

The complaints procedures should be made available at the first point of contact with the institution, be that at enquiry, application, interview, induction, enrolment or upon accessing services. Typically, customers who pay for services for example training salons, catering facilities and sport resources, should be informed of the complaints procedure prior to accessing the service.

The language used within the complaints guidance should be simple and easily understood. It must make clear to the reader what constitutes a complaint and what does not. In addition it is good practice to publish an 'easy read' version for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities, lower levels of literacy and those whose first language is not English or Welsh.

Tiered Approach and Definition of Complaints

Almost all complaints guidance advocates a three-tier model for complaints handling. This involves timely front-line resolution as an overarching principle. Complaints can be received and resolved by any member of staff; however, occurrences of this nature should routinely be reported to the DCO so that an appropriate record can be kept centrally. Some providers use an electronic logging system in which to record complaints.

STAGE 1

Frontline resolution (Non Serious, Low Risk, Low Profile)

For issues where circumstances are straightforward and can be easily resolved, requiring little or no investigation.

STAGE 2

Investigation (More Serious, High Risk, High Profile)

For issues that have not been resolved at the frontline or that are complex or 'high risk' requiring further investigation or referral under another policy.

STAGE 3

Appeal

For issues that have not been resolved to the reasonable satisfaction of the complainant.

Categorisation of Complaints

STAGE 1 – FRONTLINE RESOLUTION (NON SERIOUS, LOW RISK, LOW PROFILE)

In these circumstances the aim is to provide a prompt solution to the problem raised without referral or burdensome process, within five working days at most.

Complaints at this stage can be received and resolved by any member of staff, as long as they are not the subject of the complaint. If they are the subject of the complaint they must refer the matter to another appropriate member of staff.

Stage 1 complaints may be made in person, on the telephone, by email, online, or by someone acting on the complainants behalf in English or Welsh. Every attempt should be made to resolve the matter as close to the first point of contact as possible, and complaints brought forward in Welsh should be treated no less favourably than those made in English.

Upon receiving a complaint it is important to establish as soon as possible:

- the exact nature of the complaint
- what outcome the complainant is seeking
- whether you can deliver the complainants desired outcome, or not
- if you can't resolve the complaint, is there anyone else who can at this stage? and if not
- whether it should be escalated to Stage 2.

The member of staff who received the complaint should inform the DCO of the particulars so it may be recorded for analysis and monitoring of recurring themes, and service improvement. It is good practice to use a standard proforma, database or logging system to ensure accurate and consistent recording.

In practice, it should be possible to resolve most complaints at frontline resolution much quicker than the permitted five working days, however in exceptional circumstances an extension may be required e.g. if staff are on leave. Extensions should be authorised by the DCO, and only if they believe it will lead to a frontline resolution, and the complainant informed of the altered timescale. This should be no more than ten working days.

STAGE 1 – COMPLAINTS AND OUTCOMES COULD INCLUDE:

| COMPLAINT | OUTCOME |
|--|--|
| A learner complains that his course has been cancelled without notice. | The member of staff who received the complaint gives an on the spot apology and an immediate refund. They then report the particulars to the DCO to record. |
| A learner complains about the quality of the meal she has just brought in the canteen. | The member of staff who received the complaint gives an immediate apology and refund. They then report the particulars to the DCO to record. |
| A nearby resident writes complaining of learners littering her garden. | An appropriate member of staff looks into the matter immediately, has the litter cleared right away and arranges for the area to be monitored. They then write to the complainant apologising for the littering, explaining what action has been taken. They then report the particulars to the DCO to record. |

If matters cannot be resolved quickly, or become recurrent, a Stage 2 Investigation should be launched.

STAGE 2 – INVESTIGATION (MORE SERIOUS, HIGH RISK, HIGH PROFILE)

This may be a situation which was not resolved at Stage 1, is more complex and where more consideration has to be given before providing a solution or compromise. Where a complaint is identified to be of particularly high risk, or high profile, while it can still be managed within the complaints procedure, it is good practice that notification is also sent to a senior post holder or Principal to keep them informed of progress.

Providers should adopt a suitable model of risk assessment.

It is much easier to investigate complaints when things are still fresh in people's minds; therefore it is recommended that you only consider complaints that have arisen in the past 6 months. However you may decide to consider a complaint outside of this timescale where there is a valid reason why the complainant did not raise the issue sooner, or where a complaint has been made but not identified and treated as a formal complaint.

To demonstrate good practice, the DCO should appoint an independent investigating officer (IO) who will:

- record the details of the complaint on the complaints system
- acknowledge the complaint, normally within five working days of receipt
- ensure that the complaint is investigated thoroughly and resolved as quickly as possible, normally within 15 working days from receipt of the complaint
- meet with the complainant so they have the opportunity to fully express their concerns and the outcome they want to achieve
- meet with any relevant members of staff and witnesses to discuss the details of the complaint from their perspective
- keep the complainant informed of progress at every stage
- inform the complainant of any variation to the timescales e.g. if mediation is considered appropriate it may be necessary to alter the timescales
- inform the complainant of the outcome in writing, explain how and why they came to their decisions and provide details of the appeals process.

Complaints defined as potentially being of high risk or high profile could involve:

- an allegation of corruption against an employee
- a claim of dereliction of duty by an employee
- a claim of personal injury that has incapacitated the customer
- a potentially significant risk to the provider's operations
- a claim of discrimination with due regard to protected characteristics as set out in section 149(7) of the Equality Act 2010
- an allegation of significant harm or abuse, or where there is a suspicion that someone may suffer significant harm

- serious service failure, for example major delays in providing, or repeated failures to provide, a service
- significant and ongoing press interest.

This list is not exhaustive, and in completing your own policies and procedures, you may wish to illustrate more examples of, or more guidance on, high risk/high profile complaints.

As with Stage 1 complaints it is important to establish at the outset:

- the exact nature of the complaint
- what outcome the complainant is seeking; and
- whether this is realistic and/or achievable.

It is important to recognise that the complainant might have lost trust and confidence in the organisation, and someone who the organisation believes to be independent might not necessarily be viewed as such by the complainant. Therefore the organisation needs to reassure the complainant that bringing forward a complaint will not disadvantage them in anyway, and it will be taken seriously and investigated thoroughly without making any assumptions or foregone conclusions.

It is also important to manage expectations; if the outcome the complainant is hoping for is not realistic or achievable, you should inform them as soon as possible.

Some issues may be more appropriately considered under alternative processes rather than under the Complaints Procedure. For example:

- a concern about a decision made by an academic body regarding student progression, academic assessment and awards
- dissatisfaction about the outcome of an academic misconduct or disciplinary process
- a concern about a decision made under other specific regulations, such as fitness to practice
- matters relating to the Student Finance Wales (SFW), which has its own complaints procedures.

Complaints involving safeguarding matters, disclosure of matters of public interest, serious concerns such as alleged fraud, maladministration or unlawful activities should be directed to the DCO immediately for referral to take place under the appropriate policy and be referred to the appropriate Designated Senior Person such as Assistant Principal, Safeguarding Lead or Governance Officer.

Following initial investigation, complaints regarding the conduct of a member of staff should be dealt with in accordance with the provider's human resources procedures, if appropriate. The complainant should be informed that the matter has been progressed but not the nature of the progression.

Handling Anonymous Complaints

Providers value all their customers and feedback, and this means that all complaints including anonymous submissions will be treated appropriately and action taken to consider them further, wherever it is possible to do so. In principle providers will consider an anonymous complaint if it gives enough information so as to enable further enquiries. If sufficient information is not available, the complaint will be recorded and no further action taken. A judgement not to pursue an anonymous complaint may be made by the DCO and should be clearly recorded and ought, where possible, to be based on pre-defined criteria. If an anonymous complaint contains serious allegations it should be referred to the relevant designated senior person (DSP).

Vexatious Complaints

Complainants will be advised by the DCO where it is felt that the nature or number of complaints made by them is deemed to be vexatious. The DCO will seek advice on this determination from a senior post holder as appropriate. A vexatious complaint can be defined as 'manifestly, unjustified, inappropriate, or improper use of a formal procedure'.

Vexatious complaints may be:

- Those where the evidence indicates a personal grudge, for whatever reason and the complainant is targeting their correspondence towards a particular staff member against whom they have a personal enmity.
- Where unreasonable persistence is applied in attempting to reopen an issue which has already been addressed and concluded.
- Those using abusive or aggressive language (going beyond the level of criticism that a provider or its staff should reasonably expect to receive).

Mediation

When dealing with complaints that are more complex where customers and other interested parties have become entrenched in their position, you may consider using mediation as a means of resolution. This could involve the use of in-house trained staff or professional mediators.

Within their complaints policies, providers may wish to provide more detail about who within their institution would conduct the mediation and the format. The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) Mediation in the Workplace programme is noted to be an excellent course and is run in many locations on a monthly basis. See www.acas.org.uk/mediation for more information.

Withdrawn Complaints

There may be situations that are reported that resolve themselves, or where the complainant does not wish to pursue their complaint. The DCO will act appropriately should the complaint raise merit further action, referral or investigation.

Appropriate action may be:

| COMPLAINT | OUTCOME |
|--|--|
| A learner complains that their register has not been marked which may lead to a loss of grant payment. | On investigation the register has been marked prior to the payment run and the learner therefore drops the complaint and no further action is required from the DCO. |
| A member of the public raises a serious issue regarding a member of staff. | The matter is recorded and an investigation launched. The complainant subsequently withdraws their complaint, however the potential seriousness of the issue is enough to trigger further action and referral. |

STAGE 3 – APPEAL

If the outcome of the investigation at Stage 2 does not reasonably satisfy the complainant, they may opt to appeal. However, the right of appeal may only be considered if there is new evidence, which was not made available at an earlier stage or where the complainant feels that the investigation was not carried out fairly or thoroughly, and/or the findings were not borne out by the evidence. Appeals must be submitted within 15 working days of receiving the response to the Stage 2 Investigation. Directions should be provided within the complaint outcome letter on how to appeal and what evidence needs to be provided.

The appeal lies with the principal/senior post holder or designated representative of the provider, who has the discretion to consult with other staff and the complainant as required.

They should ensure that:

- all details are recorded, as with Stage 1 and 2 complaints
- the appeal is acknowledged within five working days of receipt
- ensure that the appeal is investigated and resolved quickly, normally within 15 working days from receipt of the appeal
- keep the appellant informed of progress throughout the investigation
- if an appeal meeting is deemed appropriate write to the appellant with one week's notice
- inform the appellant of any variation to the timescales; and
- inform the appellant of the outcome in writing, explaining how and why decisions were reached.

The appeal process will be determined by the circumstances; this could include:

- paper based review of process
- meeting with the complainant
- consideration of new evidence
- alternative means of resolution.

Representation at an appeal meeting

Should an appeal meeting become necessary, it should be conducted by an independent senior post holder accompanied by an appropriate manager dependent upon the specialism required.

Ideally, an appeal meeting should take place within 15 working days from receipt of appeal at a mutually convenient time.

The appellant should be issued with a notice of the appeal meeting one week in advance. They should be informed that they have the right to bring someone with them e.g. a student union representative, a friend, a family member or advocate; however, they are not permitted to bring a legal representative.

Reasonable adjustments must be made as necessary e.g. where English is a second language or there is an identified additional learning need. Notes of the meeting should be taken, and upon the conclusion of the meeting the senior post holder will consider the evidence and come to a decision. They will then inform the appellant of the outcome in writing within 10 working days. This decision is final and the matter is considered closed.

In absentia

In the absence of the appellant, an appeal panel may opt to hear an appeal if suitable notice has been given. The findings must be recorded and the appellant notified of the outcome.

RECORDING AND REPORTING DOCUMENTATION

All complaints, even if they are anonymous or withdrawn, and the resolution of such, must be recorded appropriately, with complaints anonymised for reporting purposes.

It is important that where an expression of dissatisfaction is received it is also recorded to ensure that there is an opportunity to improve services.

Recording

At each stage the DCO should ensure that the following information has been recorded for reporting purposes:

- complainant name
- date complaint received
- date received by DCO
- investigating officer
- how the complaint was received (in person, in writing, on the phone etc)
- nature of complaint (this should include the names of any staff involved)
- area of complaint e.g. department
- stage of complaint
- stage progression dates (if applicable)
- related actions
- outcome
- date closed.

Reporting

The DCO should also ensure that:

- anonymised complaint resolutions are cascaded to appropriate team meetings in a timely manner
- a termly report is provided to the senior leadership/management team
- feedback is provided to learner councils, student unions and/or course representatives
- an Annual Report is considered by the provider's Governing Body as specified within the Governance Code. The findings need to be quantitative, qualitative and include generic trends/themes, areas of concern and include recommendations on how to address them. They should also include any lessons learnt for the provider
- self-assessments (SARs) include a summation of complaints, emerging trends and how they have informed and improved the learner experience.

RECORDING AND REPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Performance indicators

It is good practice to produce performance indicators that may include:

- the total number of complaints received
- the number of complaints considered at each of the stages
- the number and percentage of complaints that concluded within the appropriate timescale
- the average time in working days to resolve Stage 2 complaints
- the number and percentage of complaints where an extension to the 15 working days' timeline has been agreed
- the percentage of complaints resulting in an appeal
- a statement outlining changes or improvements to services or procedures as a result of lessons learnt from complaints
- a measure to assess complainant satisfaction with the complaints service provided, as opposed to their satisfaction with the outcome of the complaint.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

You should ensure that comprehensive awareness raising sessions for all staff are delivered on how to recognise, refer, record and handle complaints.

As a minimum, all staff should feel sufficiently confident to deal with complaints as close to the point of service as possible. They should act with integrity and in the most appropriate way to achieve an early resolution.

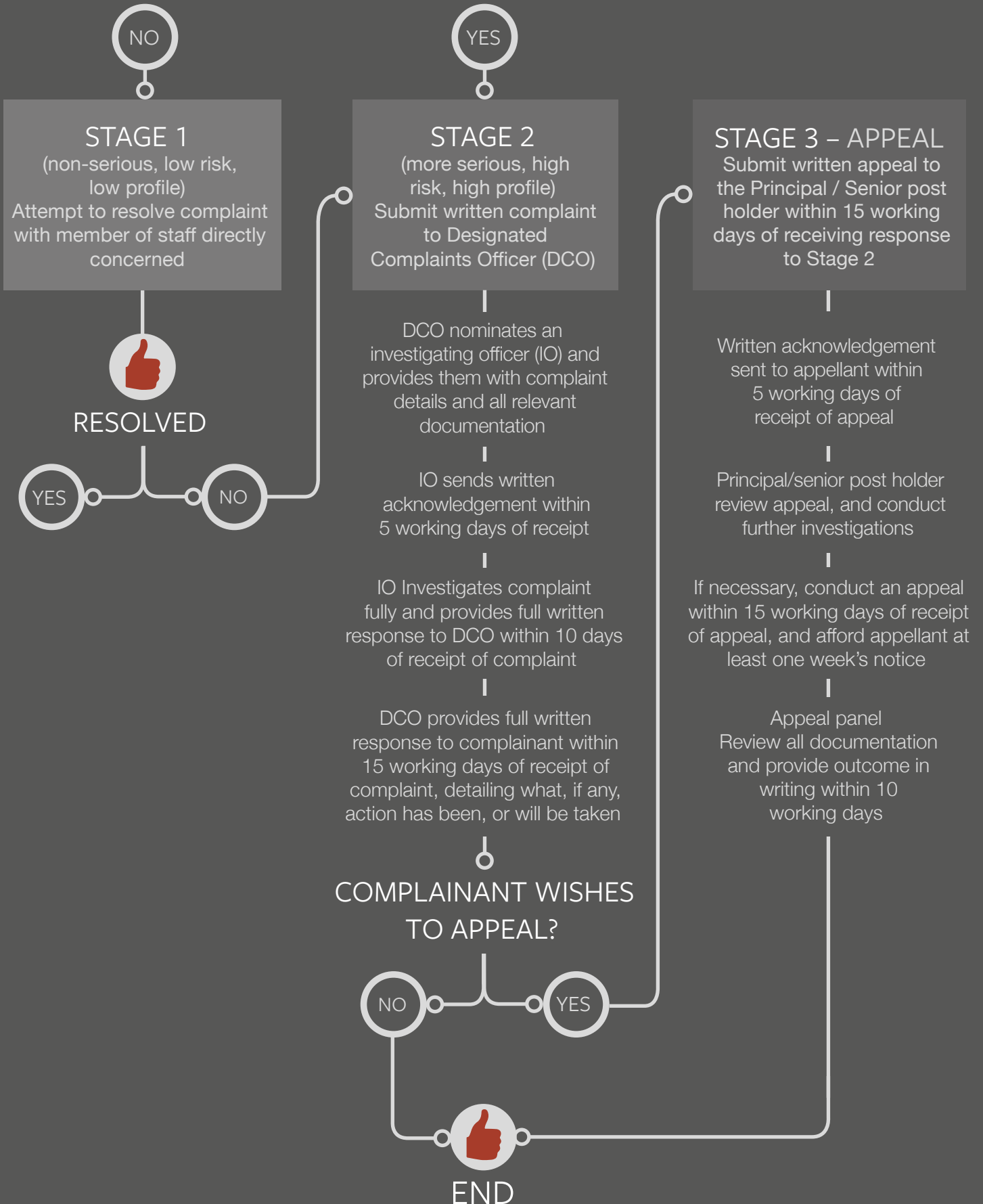
You should ensure that staff:

- are informed of complaints procedures during induction
- receive appropriate training to ensure complaints are handled consistently across the organisation
- receive an annual update at an appropriate briefing
- receive a timely update on any changes
- know how to access the services of the DCO
- understand their responsibility for recording complaints
- know where the complaints policy and procedures reside
- foster a culture of openness and integrity when dealing with complaints
- feed back to learners on action taken
- understand how listening and responding appropriately to complainants improves service delivery and builds confidence in the provider's management of issues.

APPENDIX 1 – POLICY FLOWCHART



FORMAL COMPLAINT



APPENDIX 2 – LEARNER’S QUICK GUIDE

Complaints Procedure

You can make your complaint in person, by phone, by e-mail or in writing. We have a three stage complaints procedure; we will always try to resolve your complaint quickly at the frontline in the first instance. But if it is clear that the matter will need a detailed investigation, we will tell you and keep you updated on our progress. If you are still unhappy following investigation you may be able to appeal. You will not be disadvantaged in anyway for bringing a complaint forward. It will be taken very seriously and investigated thoroughly by someone independent of the situation.

STAGE 1 – FRONTLINE RESOLUTION

- We will always try to resolve your complaint quickly, within five working days if we can.

STAGE 2 – INVESTIGATION

- We will look at your complaint immediately at this stage, if it is clear that it is complex or needs detailed investigation.
- We will acknowledge your complaint within five working days.
- We will give you our decision as soon as possible. This will be after no more than 15 working days unless there are further considerations or mediation is required. If so timescales may alter but you will always be informed of this.

STAGE 3 – APPEAL

- You may have the right to appeal if you have new evidence that was not available at an earlier stage or you feel the investigation was not carried out fairly, thoroughly or in accordance with the complaints procedures.
- You must submit your appeal within 15 working days of receiving the response to the Stage 2 Investigation.
- We will acknowledge your appeal within five working days and give you our decision in writing within 15 working days.
- If we decide an appeal meeting is necessary we will give you one week’s notice.