NLTE Complaints Policy

Policy Title: Complaints Policy
Organisation: NLTE
Policy Owner: Samantha coxon-smith
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1. Introduction

At NLTE, we are committed to providing a safe, supportive and high-quality educational environment where learners can achieve their full potential.

We recognise that concerns or complaints may arise from time to time. We welcome feedback as an opportunity to improve our provision and strengthen relationships with learners, parents/carers, referring schools, local authorities and other professionals.

We aim to resolve concerns promptly, fairly and respectfully through an open and transparent process.

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2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Provide a clear and accessible complaints procedure.
- Resolve concerns fairly and promptly.
- Promote positive communication between all parties.
- Ensure complaints are handled consistently and professionally.
- Improve the quality of our provision through learning from feedback.
- Ensure complainants are treated with dignity and respect.
- Maintain confidentiality throughout the complaints process wherever possible.

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3. Legal and Regulatory Framework

This policy is informed by the following legislation, statutory guidance and regulatory requirements, as applicable to NLTE:

- Education Act 2002.
- Independent School Standards, where applicable.
- Equality Act 2010.
- Human Rights Act 1998.

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE).
- Working Together to Safeguard Children.
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).
- Data Protection Act 2018.

NLTE will ensure that complaints are managed in accordance with any additional contractual, regulatory or commissioning requirements that apply to its provision.

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4. Who Can Make a Complaint?

A complaint may be made by:

- Parents or carers.
- Learners.
- Referring schools.
- Local Authorities.
- Social workers.
- Other professionals involved with the learner.
- Members of the public directly affected by NLTE's provision.

Anonymous complaints will be considered where sufficient information is provided. However, anonymous complaints may be more difficult to investigate fully or respond to in detail.

Where a complaint is made on behalf of another person, NLTE may need to confirm that the complainant is authorised to act on that person's behalf, particularly where personal or confidential information is involved.

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5. Principles

NLTE is committed to ensuring that:

- Every complaint is taken seriously.
- Complaints are handled fairly, objectively and impartially.
- People raising concerns are treated respectfully.
- Complaints are investigated without unnecessary delay.
- Outcomes are communicated clearly.
- Appropriate records are maintained.
- Lessons learned from complaints are used to improve practice.
- No individual will be treated unfairly for raising a genuine concern.
- Confidentiality is maintained wherever possible and appropriate.
- Safeguarding and the welfare of children and young people remain a priority.

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6. Informal Resolution

Where appropriate, most concerns should initially be addressed through informal discussion.

Individuals are encouraged, where possible, to raise their concerns directly with the relevant member of staff. This provides an opportunity for the issue to be clarified and resolved quickly without the need for a formal investigation.

Staff receiving an informal concern will aim to:

- Listen carefully and respectfully.
- Clarify the nature of the concern.
- Establish the facts as far as reasonably possible.
- Seek an appropriate and proportionate solution.
- Resolve matters promptly.
- Record the concern where appropriate.

An individual will not be required to pursue an informal resolution where the nature or seriousness of the concern makes this inappropriate.

If a concern cannot be resolved informally, or the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may submit a formal complaint.

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7. Stage One – Formal Complaint

Formal complaints should normally be made in writing to the Director.

A formal complaint should include, where possible:

- The complainant's name and contact details.
- Details of the complaint.
- Relevant dates and times.
- The names of individuals involved, where known.
- Any relevant supporting evidence or documentation.
- Details of any steps already taken to resolve the matter.
- The outcome being sought.

NLTE recognises that not all complainants will be able to provide a written complaint without support. Reasonable adjustments will be considered where required.

7.1 Acknowledgement

The Director will acknowledge receipt of a formal complaint within five working days.

The acknowledgement will normally confirm:

- That the complaint has been received.

- Who will be responsible for investigating it.
- The anticipated timescale for the investigation.
- Any further information required from the complainant.

7.2 Investigation

The complaint will be investigated fairly and objectively.

The investigation may involve:

- Reviewing relevant records and documentation.
- Speaking with the complainant.
- Speaking with staff or other individuals involved.
- Reviewing relevant policies and procedures.
- Considering supporting evidence.
- Establishing the facts of the matter as far as reasonably possible.

The Director will seek to ensure that the person investigating the complaint has no inappropriate conflict of interest.

7.3 Outcome

A written response will normally be provided within twenty working days of receipt of the formal complaint.

The response will, where appropriate:

- Summarise the complaint.
- Explain the investigation undertaken.
- Set out the findings.
- Confirm whether the complaint is upheld, partially upheld or not upheld.
- Explain any actions or improvements that will be taken.
- Explain how the complainant may request a review if they remain dissatisfied.

Where additional time is required, the complainant will be informed of the reason for the delay and provided with an updated timescale.

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8. Stage Two – Review

If the complainant remains dissatisfied following the Stage One outcome, they may request a review.

A request for review should normally be submitted within ten working days of receiving the Stage One outcome.

The request should explain the reasons why the complainant believes the matter has not been satisfactorily resolved.

Where possible, the review will be undertaken by an appropriate senior representative who has not previously investigated the complaint.

The review will consider:

- Whether the complaint was investigated fairly and objectively.
- Whether the appropriate procedures were followed.
- Whether relevant evidence was considered.
- Whether the outcome was reasonable based on the available evidence.
- Whether any further action is appropriate.

The review is not normally intended to repeat the entire investigation unless new evidence or significant concerns about the original process are identified.

A final written response will normally be provided within twenty working days of receiving the request for review.

The decision following the review will normally be considered final within NLTE's internal complaints procedure.

Where an external appeal, regulatory route or commissioning arrangement applies, the complainant will be informed of any relevant further options.

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9. Complaints Relating to Safeguarding

Complaints involving safeguarding concerns will be dealt with in accordance with NLTE's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and relevant statutory safeguarding procedures.

Where appropriate:

- The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will be informed immediately.
- Appropriate safeguarding procedures will be initiated.
- External agencies may be notified, including the relevant Local Authority safeguarding service or other statutory agency where necessary.
- Information will be shared in accordance with safeguarding and data protection requirements.
- The welfare and best interests of the child or young person will remain the overriding priority.

Safeguarding concerns must never be delayed because they form part of a complaint.

Where a complaint concerns the conduct or actions of the DSL, the matter should be referred to an appropriate senior member of NLTE who can ensure that the safeguarding concern is dealt with independently and appropriately.

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10. Confidentiality

Complaints will be handled sensitively and confidentially.

Information will only be shared with individuals who need access to it in order to investigate, manage or resolve the complaint, or where disclosure is required by law, safeguarding responsibilities or another legitimate purpose.

NLTE will ensure that complaint records are stored securely and managed in accordance with applicable data protection legislation.

Complainants should also respect the confidentiality of information shared with them during the complaints process.

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11. Unreasonable or Persistent Complaints

NLTE recognises that, on occasion, a complainant may pursue a complaint in a manner that places unreasonable demands on staff or the organisation.

Examples may include:

- Repeated complaints about the same issue after the complaints process has been completed.
- Repeatedly providing information that has already been considered.
- Aggressive, threatening or abusive behaviour.
- Excessive or unreasonable communication.
- Making unreasonable demands on staff time or resources.
- Refusing to accept the outcome of a properly conducted investigation without providing new evidence.
- Repeatedly changing the nature of the complaint.

Where appropriate, the Director may decide to:

- Limit communication to one nominated point of contact.
- Agree reasonable methods and frequency of communication.
- Respond only where new information or evidence is provided.
- Limit correspondence to matters that have not already been addressed.
- End correspondence where all reasonable steps have been completed.

Any decision to restrict communication will be proportionate and will not prevent legitimate new concerns from being considered.

NLTE will not use this section to prevent an individual from raising a genuine safeguarding concern or other legitimate concern.

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12. Equality and Accessibility

NLTE is committed to ensuring that the complaints process is accessible and does not disadvantage any individual.

Reasonable adjustments will be considered to support individuals who may experience difficulty accessing or participating in the complaints process.

Support may include:

- Alternative communication formats.
- Assistance with completing complaint documentation.
- Additional support during meetings.
- Meetings with an advocate or representative.
- Interpreter or translation services where appropriate.
- Adjustments to communication methods or meeting arrangements.

No individual will be disadvantaged because of a protected characteristic or because they require reasonable adjustments to participate in the complaints process.

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13. Complaints Involving Staff

Where a complaint concerns the conduct or actions of a member of staff, the complaint will be investigated fairly and objectively.

Staff members who are the subject of a complaint will be given an appropriate opportunity to respond to the allegations.

Where a complaint raises potential disciplinary or employment matters, NLTE may need to address these separately under the relevant internal procedures. Information relating to confidential employment matters will not normally be disclosed to the complainant.

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14. Recording and Record Keeping

NLTE will maintain appropriate records of complaints, including:

- The nature of the complaint.
- The date the complaint was received.
- Actions taken during the investigation.
- Evidence considered.
- Relevant correspondence.
- The outcome.
- Any actions or improvements identified.
- The date the complaint was closed.

Records will be retained securely and in accordance with NLTE's data protection and records management requirements.

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15. Monitoring and Review

The Director will monitor complaints to identify:

- Recurring themes or issues.
- Areas requiring improvement.
- Training and development needs.
- Potential policy or procedural changes.
- Opportunities to improve the learner experience.
- Any risks requiring further action.

Complaint records and trends will be reviewed regularly while maintaining appropriate confidentiality.

Where appropriate, learning from complaints will be incorporated into NLTE's quality assurance and continuous improvement processes.

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16. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure that it remains effective, proportionate and compliant with relevant legislation, statutory guidance and regulatory requirements.

The policy may also be reviewed following:

- Significant changes to legislation or statutory guidance.
- Changes to NLTE's provision.
- Significant complaints or emerging themes.
- Recommendations arising from external reviews or inspections.

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17. Statement of Complaints Principles

At NLTE:

- Every concern deserves to be heard.
- Complaints provide opportunities to improve our provision.
- Individuals raising concerns will be treated fairly and respectfully.
- Investigations will be conducted objectively and professionally.
- Safeguarding remains central to all decision-making.
- Positive relationships are strengthened through open communication.
- Complaints will be handled promptly and transparently.
- Learning from complaints supports continuous improvement.

NLTE is committed to listening, responding and learning. Our complaints process is designed not simply to resolve individual concerns, but to ensure that feedback contributes to the ongoing development and improvement of our educational provision.