

WILLIAM MORRIS COLLEGE

COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURE

Purpose

William Morris College (WMC) is committed to providing a quality service to all our learners and other stakeholders. Managing feedback, complaints and compliments plays an important part of continuing to improve the quality of service.

WMC is committed to ensuring that:

- People with disabilities, including those with learning difficulties, are treated fairly.
- Complaints and concerns are listened to and acted upon promptly.
- The Complaints Policy & Procedures are:
 - Easy to access
 - Open and transparent
 - Take account of individual needs
 - Provide a means of redress and improvement to service delivery.
- Complaints will be treated as useful feedback and acted on in a positive manner and used to help us shape future improvements in our services.

Duties

It will be the responsibility of the Trustees and Management Team to ensure the successful implementation of this policy. Responsibility for the application of this policy lies with all members of staff and volunteers.

Practice

A complaint is defined as *'an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard and/or quality of service, action or lack of action by the Management or its personnel, affecting an individual member or a group of staff.'*

- WMC will strive to deliver an outcome to the complainant that is fair, reasonable and based on a full investigation of facts.
- WMC will ensure that systems and procedures are operating to enable effective monitoring, audit and reporting of complaints and the outcomes of complaints.
- WMC is committed to ensuring that staff are trained in dealing with complaints and are aware that service users have the right to complain.
- WMC will provide appropriate staff with training on managing and dealing with complaints and all staff will be made aware of the Complaints Policy and Procedures as part of their induction process.
- WMC operates an Equality & Diversity Policy and this applies in all aspects of its services. When dealing with complaints, no complainant, or their representative, will be treated less favourably on the grounds of age, disability, gender (including gender reassignment), marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy. This policy and all related information can be made available in different formats on request. Formats include large print, audio and community languages.

Informal discussion

- In the first instance, within 14 days of the complaint being received, and dependent on the complaint, an informal discussion of the difficulties and concerns would be encouraged between the individuals concerned, with support from an appropriate person eg Head of Education, Head of Care or a Senior Care Co-ordinator.
- Staff will be helped and supported to use an independent and confidential advocacy service should they require it.
- Complaints from independent representatives will be heard as if the complainant was expressing the complaint themselves.
- WMC recognises that a complainant's advocate may be a family member or friend.

Informal Complaints

- It is expected that, for a variety of reasons, everyday queries, grumbles and minor disagreements will occur. These day-to-day complaints can very often be resolved relatively quickly and amicably by simply talking these things through at the time.
- Such complaints will be taken seriously but should be viewed as informal complaints and no further action is needed, other than brief details of the issue and actions being taken to prevent a recurrence of the concern.

Formal Complaints

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) *Essential Standards (Outcome 17)* sets out the expectations from an organisation regarding complaints. It is required that all registered care organisations have a Complaints Procedure.

If a complaint is not resolved satisfactorily by the means set out in *Section 7 'Informal Complaints'* or should be of a serious/urgent nature, then the concern can be expressed in writing to the Management Team, which will act according to the following procedure:

- **Acknowledgement** - On receipt of a written complaint, the complainant will receive acknowledgement of its receipt within 2 working days.
- **Verbal Complaints** - Where a complaint is made in person or on the telephone, a written record of the complaint will be made and a copy provided to the complainant within 3 working days of the complaint being received.
- **Named Contact** - A named contact person from the Management Team will be given responsibility for handling, investigating, considering and responding to the complaint.
- Depending on the area and nature of the complaint, the named person will either be the Head of Care, Head of Education or Senior Care Co-ordinator.
- **Inform Complainant of Contact Details** - Full contact details of the person responsible for handling the complaint will be given to the complainant in writing (including email and telephone contact details).
- **Support in Complaints Procedure** - The complainants (or their representatives) will receive, so far as is reasonably practical, assistance to enable them to understand the complaints procedure, including advice on how to practically make a complaint or where they may obtain assistance to make the complaint.
- **Consent for Representation** - Complaints from a representative on behalf of a learner who is over 18 years, will only be accepted where consent has been given either verbally or in writing.
- **Lack of Capacity** - Where a learner cannot complain unaided and where they are unable to give consent because they lack capacity within the meaning of the *Mental Capacity Act*, it will be understood that the representative is acting in the learner or service user's best interest.

- **Progress** - The complainant, or their representative, will be kept informed about the progress of the investigation and documentation will be available on request in other languages and formats.
- **Resolution** - The expected turnaround time of the complaint is **30** working days.
- **Completion of investigations** - All complaint investigations will be completed within 6 months, unless there is a different deadline which is agreed with the complainant and there are exceptional circumstances.
- **Complaints Log** - The following information will be recorded in a complaints log:
 - Initial details of the received complaint (including the subject matter)
 - Outcome of the complaint
 - Details of reasons for any delay ie where the investigation takes longer than the agreed period
- **Multi-Agency involvement** - Appropriate steps will be taken to co-ordinate a response to a complaint that involves multi-agency work.

Unresolved Complaint/Dissatisfaction with Outcome

If the issue remains unresolved or the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, the complainant can appeal in writing within **14 days** of the outcome to:

- The Chair of the Trustees of WMC.

If the issue is still unresolved or the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome from the previous responders, the complainant can ultimately appeal in writing to:

- The Ombudsman.

In such complaint cases, WMC ensures a response to a formal complaint can be expected from the Management Team within **15 days** with the aim of resolving the issue within an additional **15 days**.

Complaints involving allegations of Abuse

- Should the complaint involve allegations of, or suspected abuse, of children or vulnerable adults, the matter should be dealt with according to the procedures set out in WMC Safeguarding Policies and Gloucestershire Safeguarding policies.
- All complaints will be investigated and records will be kept of the complaint and of the response to it.
- As far as possible, all complaints will be treated in confidence. The name of the person complaining will not be divulged any more than is absolutely necessary within WMC.
- Complainants must appreciate that if their complaint involves another learner or a member of staff, it may be very difficult to investigate this without talking to those being complained about.
- WMC is aware that relatives, in particular, can be reluctant to express concern for fear of causing bad feeling and repercussions.
- It is important to recognise that bad feeling can also arise when a concern or grievance remains unspoken and unresolved.
- This would work against one of the basic principles of WMC which is to foster mutual understanding and help among all staff.
- Learners, as well as anyone who has a legitimate interest in their wellbeing, are encouraged to voice their concerns.

External Bodies

- WMC acknowledges the right of the complainant to raise concerns with various bodies and recognises its duty to publicise these rights.
- WMC would always welcome the opportunity to address any complaints internally prior to the involvement of other bodies.
- In the event that a complaint is not resolved under WMC Complaints Policy, complainants may wish to refer their complaint to one or more of the following external organisations:

Chair, Board of Trustees
William Morris College

CQC National Customer Service Centre
Citygate, Gallowgate, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 4PA Tel: 03000 616161

OFSTED
Royal Exchange Buildings, St Ann's Square, Manchester M2 7LA Tel: 0300 1233 155

Monitoring Complaints and Effectiveness

- To ensure compliance at operational level, the Management Team will receive feedback on the application of the policy from learners, volunteers and staff.
- A measure of the effectiveness of this policy will be a review of the number of Concerns and Formal Complaints made to the Trustees, or issues arising from the implementation of the policy.
- The views of learners, volunteers and staff, as reflected in their responses to questionnaires, will also be considered.
- The policy will be reviewed by the Trustees annually after initial implementation and on a regular basis thereafter in light of the needs of WMC.

Dissemination

This document will be readily available throughout WMC and will be brought to the attention of all staff and volunteers through their induction. An easy read version will be available for learners. In addition, the policy will be more widely publicised via notice boards and internal handbooks.

Related Documents

- Grievance Procedures
- Wrong-doing Policy (Whistle blowing)
- Safeguarding Policy