

Essex & Southend LINK

POLICY: Complaints

DATE: January 09

VERSION: Version 1 / Draft 5 / Final

APPROVED BY: Countywide Coordinating group

REVIEW DATE: June 09

Complaints Policy

INTRODUCTION

The Essex and Southend LINK welcomes anyone to judge what we do, how we do it and how well we do it. This means that we actively invite feedback as an opportunity to evaluate our practice, make improvements and take remedial action as needed. This policy provides the means of redress if anyone feels they have a reason to pursue a complaint. All matters will be taken seriously and investigated thoroughly. Our approach will be responsive, methodical and we are committed to reaching a resolution as quickly as possible ideally at the first stage through informal resolution. All complaints received will be logged and monitored.

SCOPE OF POLICY

This policy is intended to cover any complaint that relates to the work, or conduct of the participants, of the Essex & Southend LINK. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that there is one process for raising and dealing with complaints. Certain complaints will not be covered by this policy and in these instances the complainant will be referred accordingly.

For example, Essex and Southend LINK staff are employed by a Host Organisation and any complaints received that relate to them must be dealt with through the relevant procedures of the Host Organisation.

WHAT IS A COMPLAINT?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, either written or spoken. A complaint can be made by an individual or a group. You may wish to complain if you are not satisfied with the way that you or another have been treated or if you feel any aspect of the Essex and Southend LINK warrants investigation.

HOW DO I COMPLAIN?

All complaints will be taken seriously and should be raised in accordance with the following procedures. Every endeavour will be taken to agree a mutually agreeable solution with the complainant within a reasonable timescale. A complainant may at all times be accompanied by a colleague/friend.

The four stages are:

Stage one (Informal)

Speak to the relevant Locality/Theme/Issue/Countywide Group Chair and / or Group Coordinator (subject to availability and at choice of complainant) who will discuss your complaint with you and try to resolve the complaint informally. If the complaint relates to the Group Chair or Coordinator then the LINK Manager should be contacted – contact details are supplied at the end of this document.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied then there are three further stages to go through to try and resolve the problem. If you need any advice at any stage, please let a member of the LINK staff know and every reasonable effort will be made to provide what is needed.

Stage two (Formally registering a complaint)

If you are not satisfied with the response you have received at stage one (informal) you should then use stage two of this procedure.

1) Outline the details of your complaint by letter, fax, email, or audio tape and send it to the Locality/Theme/Issue/Countywide Group Chair and / or Group Coordinator (subject to availability and at choice of complainant) marked 'private and confidential'. If the complaint is about the Group Chair or Coordinator then you need to address it to the Chairperson of the Countywide Coordinating Group of Essex and Southend LINK (marked strictly private and confidential) unless it is about that person when it should be addressed to the LINK Manager.

Your complaint will be acknowledged by letter within five working days from the date it is received. The letter will contain the following information:

- Name, address and telephone number of the person who will investigate the complaint
- The date the investigation will start
- What support you can receive during the process of the complaint, e.g. in terms of making information accessible, availability of interpreters/translators if needed etc.

2) You will receive a full written response to your complaint within 20 working days from the start of the investigation from the person

appointed to investigate the complaint. The response will include the following information:

- Details of the investigation
- A decision about whether the complaint was upheld or not
- The reason for the decision
- Details of any redress, if appropriate.
- Any other action that may be taken in light of the complaint
- If it is not possible to provide a full answer to your complaint within 20 working days, the letter will outline reasons why and give a date by which a full answer is expected

Stage three (Appeal)

1) If you are not satisfied with the response to your complaint then outline the reasons for your dissatisfaction by letter, fax, email, or audio tape within 10 working days of receiving it to the Chair of the Countywide Coordinating Group - or LINK Manager if the complaint relates to the Chair.

2) An Appeals Panel normally of three members, including a Locality Chair person, will be convened to consider your appeal. The Countywide Coordinating Group Chair will be responsible for ensuring the panel is appropriately representative. Panel membership will be restricted to people who have had no previous involvement in the complaint.

3) Members of the Appeals Panel will:

- read through the necessary papers
- speak to relevant individuals involved with the complaint
- make a final decision.

4) The LINK will write to you within 20 working days of receiving your appeal to confirm:

- the final decision about the complaint
- the reason for the decision
- details of any redress, if appropriate
- any action that may be taken in light of the complaint.

Misbehaviour and suchlike

Participation/membership of the LINK is a statutory right. However, if a complaint of misbehaviour is upheld then reasonable steps will be taken to overcome the disruption. Depending upon the circumstances this may involve confirmation by a vote in a public meeting. Any abuse or violence against a member of staff or participant/member will not be tolerated and any illegal actions will be prosecuted.

Review of the process

1) If once you have been through stages one to three of the complaints procedure, you are not satisfied that the process has been followed properly or that your complaint has been treated fairly (e.g. by giving you insufficient opportunity to represent your view or ensuring all the relevant people are involved in the investigation), then you can outline the reasons for your dissatisfaction by letter, fax, email, or audio tape within 20 working days of receiving the Appeals Panel report to our Host organisation (CEMVO) to request a review of the complaints handling process, not a further investigation of the complaint.

2) The nominated CEMVO representative will make arrangements for a review of the complaint-handling process, and will inform you of how the review will be carried out.

3) The decision of the process review will be final. CEMVO will communicate in writing within 20 working days of receiving your appeal:

- whether or not the procedure has been followed properly and fairly
- the reason for the decision
- the redress, if appropriate, which will be offered to you e.g. an apology, additional help or directing to other sources of advice or support
- what action may be taken in light of the review.
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TIME LIMITS

In circumstances where time limits cannot be met due to unforeseen circumstances, complainants will be notified in writing.

THE MONITORING & REVIEW OF THIS POLICY

All complaints received will be logged and the following details recorded:

- Details of complainant including contact information
- Nature of complaint & date received
- Outcome of complaint

This information will be collated and the data shared on a quarterly basis with the Countywide Coordinating group.

We intend to review this policy regularly and make any necessary changes to it based on the feedback received. We would value any comments you have that may make this procedure more effective or user friendly. Any information received will be treated in confidence. Contact the Policy and Research Coordinator – contact details available at the back of this document.

Contact details:

Essex and Southend LINK Contact details:

Chelmsford Office:

1 Bond Street, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 1GD
Tel: 01245-490733 Fax:

Southend Office:

6 Nelson Street, Southend on Sea, Essex SS1 1EF
Tel: 01702-350477

Project Manager: 01245 490733
Mid- Essex Chair/Coordinator: 01245 490733
West Essex Chair/Coordinator: 01245 490733
South East Chair/Coordinator: 01702 350479
North East Chair/Coordinator: 01245 490733
South West Chair/Coordinator: 01245 490733

**Locality Chair / Coordinator, Chairperson Countywide
Coordinating Group & Project Manager**

C/O Chelmsford LINK Office (marked Strictly Private & Confidential)
Details of Chairs and Coordinators of Issue, Theme and any other
groups will be given on notices of meetings and will also be available
from either of the LINK's Offices, as detailed above.

Host Organisation:

CEMVO London Office:

Boardman House, 64 Broadway, Stratford, London E15 ING
Tel: 020 8432 0000
FAO Chief Executive

Policy & Research Coordinator:

1 Bond Street, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 1GD
Tel: 01245-490733 E-mail: Rosalind.PEEK@cemvo.org.uk

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