



Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy and Procedure

Date: January 2024
Review Date: January
2025

Scope

For the avoidance of doubt and unless expressly stated to the contrary any reference to Little Gate Supported Employment (LITTLE GATE) should be treated as including Little Gate College and Little Gate Farm and any reference to client/participant should be treated as including a Student of Little Gate College. This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, users of the provision and third parties of LITTLE GATE. It forms part of the commitment of LITTLE GATE to creating a

stimulating, supportive and inclusive environment for all, free from discrimination, harassment, and bullying.

Purpose

LITTLE GATE is committed to providing a professional service to the highest standards. We welcome feedback from all individuals and organisations that work with us and use our services. We expect everyone to be treated with respect and dignity and invite compliments to show our team that we are appreciated.

LITTLE GATE acknowledges that occasionally things may go wrong. Complaints can be a valuable tool and provide us with the opportunity to listen, respond and improve our services.

This policy sets out the responsibilities of all Trustees including College Trustees and employees, together with the way in which compliments, comments or complaints should be made.

Aim

The aims of this policy are to:

- ensure everyone knows how to provide feedback and how a complaint will be handled
- be investigatory and not adversarial, allowing for impartiality
- be open and accountable
- act fairly and proportionately
- ensure complaints are dealt with fairly and within clear time-frames
- bring about a resolution as swiftly as possible
- provide information to the Trustees, the Senior Leadership Team including the Head of College to improve our service and celebrate success.

Confidentiality

Student/Work Trainee/Young Ranger information and personal documents relating to members of staff is confidential. Please refer to the LITTLE GATE data policies

As far as possible LITTLE GATE will ensure all complaints are confidential. However there is a statutory duty for the organisation to notify specific agencies about certain serious types of complaints, e.g. allegations of professional misconduct and criminal offences. Where this is the case it will be discussed with the complainant before the information is released. It must also be appreciated that the investigation process may reveal the source of the information and a statement from the complainant may be required.

Compliments and Comments

Verbal

All feedback is welcome, we are pleased to receive compliments which do not have to be in writing. They help us to know how LITTLE GATE is performing and say thank you to any staff concerned. We will share any verbal compliment with the member of staff and also log your comments.

If you wish to have an informal discussion, please make an appointment with a member of staff.

Written

If you wish to provide a compliment via written feedback, this can be emailed to Operations Manager Niki Ashley nikiashley@littlegate.org.uk

Alternatively, you can write to the following:

Niki Ashley
Little Gate Farm
Horseshoe Lane
Beckley
East Sussex TN31 6RZ

COMPLAINTS

Stage 1 – Raising a Concern

Verbal concern

Wherever possible, concerns should be discussed with a member of staff or the Head of College, Head Of Supported Employment, Head of Little Gate Farm and Head of Finance and Fundraising. Most concerns can and should be addressed and resolved in this way. Verbal complaints will be recorded in the complaints register and assigned a unique reference number. The outcome will also be recorded here.

Any concerns relating to safeguarding of students will be reported to the Safeguarding Lead and the Head of College. Any concerns relating to the safeguarding of Young Rangers or Work Trainees need to be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. The safeguarding policy will then be followed in each instance.

Often, individual client or student complaints may be expressed through behaviour changes. As such, where this is happening, staff will closely monitor these instances and take action where appropriate.

Occasionally a resolution is not reached on the matter or is too serious to be resolved in this way. In these circumstances the following formal process should be followed.

Stage Two – Making a Formal Complaint

Any complaint received in writing or via email will be treated as a formal complaint. All formal or unresolved frontline complaints received by LITTLE GATE will be reported to and copied to the line manager within 48 hours of receipt.

A standard complaint form is attached at Annex A but complaints will also be received in all formats.

Written complaints should be received within 3 months of the incident in question.

Next Steps

Please include as many details as possible and attach any supporting information. Please also detail, if there are any witnesses that will need to be called to a meeting or to provide additional information.

If the complainant requires help to complete the form, they may wish to ask someone to transcribe and complete the form on their behalf. LITTLE GATE staff can assist if requested.

Formal written requests will be acknowledged by LITTLE GATE within 5 working days. The response will detail the person dealing with the complaint and the date by which a full response will be received.

Investigation

All formal complaints will be responded to in writing within 21 working days. On rare occasions where this is not possible, an update on progress and an explanation of the reason for delay will be provided in writing.

The letter will acknowledge receipt of the complaint and outline what LITTLE GATE understands the complaint to be. It will respond to the concerns raised, or explain what the next steps are to continue to resolve the concern if resolution is not immediately possible. It may outline improvements or actions being taken where appropriate.

Students and clients may only be interviewed where appropriate and if accompanied by an adult advocate representative.

Complainants should limit the numbers of communications with the College; the Farm and Supported Employment while a complaint is being processed. It is not helpful if repeated correspondence is sent (either by letter, phone, email or text) as it could delay the outcome being reached.

Outcome

Within 10 days of sending the acknowledgment of the complaint, the complainant will receive a written decision of the complaint or an explanation of why a decision could not be reached in the timeframe. In the event of the latter a reasonable date will be provided by which the written outcome of the investigation will be forwarded. The outcome may be one of the following”

- uphold the complaint in whole or part with an explanation and/or apology
- explanation of steps taken to ensure the situation does not reoccur
- a review of this policy and/or LITTLE GATE systems and procedures
- dismiss the complaint in whole or part with an explanation

Stage Three – Appeal

If the complainant wishes to appeal the outcome of the investigation into their complaint, they must complete the form at Annex B and write to the Trustees within 15 working days of receiving the written decision. Any additional supporting evidence, not submitted with the original complaint, should also be attached, together with the names of any witnesses that parties wish to call.

If assistance is required to complete the form, the complainant may wish to ask someone to transcribe and submit the form on their behalf. If requested, staff can also help.

The request for an appeal will be acknowledged, in writing, within 5 working days. Trustees will consider the appeal and determine whether further face to face interviews are necessary. Where witnesses have been identified, the Trustee will always meet with these persons.

Trustees will write to the complainant within 15 working days from the date of the acknowledgment letter. The decision letter will set out one of the following:

- that no further action will be taken by LITTLE GATE
- specify changes to the Stage Two written response and actions

Legal Proceedings

A complaint will cease to be investigated where the complainant states, either verbally or in writing, that they intend to pursue a resolution by way of proceedings in a court of law, or if they advise they have appointed a solicitor to act on their behalf. In such cases, the complaint must be referred immediately to the CEO and Board of Trustees.

Complaint Documentation

The investigating manager will maintain a complaint file securely. A summary complaint log will also be kept which details the following information for each complaint.

- The date the complaint was received
 - The name and contact details of the complainant
 - The person to whom the complaint refers
 - A summary of the complaint
 - Date the acknowledgement letter was sent
 - Date the response letter was sent
 - Outcome of the complaint (satisfied/dissatisfied)
 - Any further follow up action
- The complaint log must be kept securely to ensure that confidentiality is observed. It may be accessed senior managers as part of internal quality assurance processes. A copy of all formal complaints together with the acknowledgement letter and response letter must be sent to the Operations Manager Niki Ashley
nikiashley@littlegate.org.uk

Dealing with unreasonable complaints/complainants

Complaints will be dealt with fairly and impartially, and LITTLE GATE will not normally limit the contact complainants have with them. However, LITTLE GATE will not tolerate unacceptable behaviour towards staff, and will take action to protect staff from that behaviour, including that which is abusive, offensive or threatening.

Unreasonable complainants are defined as ‘those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the organisation, or hinder the organisation’s consideration of their or other people’s complaints’.

A complaint/complainant may be regarded as unreasonable if the complainant:

- Refuses to articulate their complaint, or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance and being invited by the Head of College, Head of Little Gate Farm, Head of Finance and Fundraising, Head of Supported Employment or Trustees or CEO to resubmit their complaint;
- Refuses to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved;
- Refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of a complaints procedure;
- Insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with this Compliments and Complaints Policy or with good practice;
- Introduces trivial or irrelevant information which the complainant expects to be considered and commented on, or raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales;
- Makes unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to resolve a complaint, and seeks to have them replaced;
- Changes the basis of their complaint as the investigation proceeds;

- Repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed);
- Refuses to accept the findings of the investigation into a complaint, where the Compliments and Complaints Policy has been fully and properly implemented and completed;
- Seeks an unrealistic or unachievable outcome;
- Makes excessive demands on the Organisation's time by frequent, lengthy, complicated and stressful contact with staff regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email or by telephone while the complaint is in process;
- Refuses to cease behaving unreasonably, despite being asked to in writing by staff;
- Makes a complaint knowing it to be false;
- Makes a complaint using falsified information;
- Publishes information in relation to a complaint in the media, including but not limited to social media websites and newspapers;
- Behaves maliciously face-to-face, by telephone or in writing or electronically;
- Behaves aggressively face-to-face, by telephone or in writing or electronically;
- Uses threats, intimidation or violence face-to-face, by telephone or in writing or electronically;
- Uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language face-to-face, by telephone or in writing or electronically.

Whenever possible, the CEO, trustees or Senior Leadership Team including the Head of College will discuss any concerns with the complainant informally if their behaviour is deemed to be unreasonable. If the unreasonable behaviour continues the complainant will be written to, explaining that their behaviour is unreasonable and asking them to change it. For complainants who excessively contact LITTLE GATE causing a significant level of disruption, the college LITTLE GATE may specify methods of communication and limit the number of contacts that can be made in a communication plan. This will usually be reviewed after 6 months.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the CEO or Trustees will contact the police immediately, and will write to the complainant outlining their concerns and actions taken and stating that the police have been contacted. Actions taken may include banning an individual from the premises.

Where it has been decided that a complaint is unreasonable, and is satisfied that the complainant has not resubmitted their complaint despite being given the opportunity to; or that the complainant is behaving unreasonably, despite being asked in writing by the organisation to cease this behaviour, they may dismiss the complaint and consider it to be resolved through lack of co-operation by the complainant, and the process to be completed.

Training

All staff will receive customer care training on induction. This includes awareness on how to assist people to make a complaint if they wish.

Complaint Monitoring

Complaints will be reported monthly as a key performance indicator. Managers should review complaints on a three monthly basis to determine any trends. Where a trend occurs, e.g. complaints about staff attitude, Managers must ensure actions are taken to prevent further complaints of this nature. Company complaint trends will be analysed and detailed monthly on the Quality Indicator reports provided to senior managers. Trends and any actions required will be discussed and agreed by the senior management team meetings. Serious complaints or those that have moved towards legal proceedings will also be reported to the Board of Trustees on a regular basis

Responsibilities

Senior managers involved in complaint handling are responsible for ensuring compliance to this policy This policy will be updated annually.

Signed by trustee		Signature	Date
Signed by CEO	Name	Signature	Date

Reviewed by	Date	Changes made	Next review date



Standard Complaints Form (Annex A)

Please complete this form and return it to Andrea Randall-Smith – CEO

If the complaint is about the CEO, please return it to John Hassell - Chair of Trustees.

Your name:

Your contact address:

Your email address:

Your home telephone number:

Your mobile telephone number:

Please provide details of your complaint, including the dates and times of any incident that has occurred.

What actions you have taken so far to try and resolve your complaint.

What remedy are you seeking and /or what would you like the outcome of your complaint to be.

Contd. overleaf

Signature:

Date:



Complaints Appeal (Annex B)

Please complete this form and return it for the attention of The Trustees at Little Gate.

Your name:

Your contact address:

Your home telephone number:

Your mobile telephone number:

Your email address:

Please provide additional supporting evidence, not submitted with the original complaint, should also be attached, together with the names of any witnesses that parties wish to call.

Contd. overleaf



Signature:

Date: