

Activate Community and Education Services	Procedure number:	CC-01
	Authorisation Level: Final	Issue Number: 2.4
	Implementation Date: 07/11/13	Revision Date: October 2018
Customer Complaint Procedure		

1.1 Introduction

The objective of this procedure is:

1. To provide and continue to provide a first class level of service to Activate customers and service users.
2. To describe the formal procedure for dealing fairly and consistently with customer complaints.

1.2 Application

Any staff member who becomes aware of a customer complaint must invoke this procedure immediately. Customer complaints may take the form of a discussion, email, letter or report to a third party.

Customers include funding bodies, learners attending Activate and their representatives.

1.3 Responsibility

It is the responsibility of the CEO to implement this procedure.

1.4 Process for complaint by learners, parents or customers and suppliers:

Stage 1: Informal stage

Step 1 – Notification of Complaint

The complainant should normally identify their dissatisfaction informally to an appropriate member of staff (e.g. course tutor, LSA, manager, volunteer etc). The complaint must be made as soon as possible and in any case not longer than six weeks after the reason for the complaint.

The person receiving the complaint should document the issue as they understand it. If a written statement has been submitted, this should be attached. All information is passed to the Chief Executive (CEO) or deputy within 3 hours of becoming aware that there is an issue.

If the complaint is about a particular member of staff it is a requirement that the member or staff is made fully aware of the complaint and the identity of the complainant as soon as possible, except in circumstances that will always be communicated to the CEO.

Complaints made directly to the CEO will also follow this initial procedure.

Step 2 – Appoint Responsible Person

The CEO or deputy appoints a staff member to take responsibility for managing the complaint. Where necessary this may involve an appropriately experienced individual or agency such as mediation or disagreement resolution services independent to Activate.

Step 3 – Investigation

An investigation into the complaint is carried out. This includes, at a minimum, interviewing the person making the complaint.

If the complaint relates to a service user, the staff member who had the most recent contact with the service user is also interviewed. Should the service user/parent carer require an advocate, Activate will make a referral on their behalf.

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The person making the investigation creates a document summarising their findings and hands it to the CEO as soon as they have been able to compile all the information. Intermediate reports are provided to the CEO every 48 hours.

Step 4 - Resolution

The person dealing with the complaint will investigate; in the first instance, if one of the following outcomes is possible:

- The complaint is not upheld
- An amicable solution is found that is suitable to both parties
- If some or all of the complaint is justified appropriate measures are taken
- The complaint is found to be sufficiently serious to warrant direct referral to the formal stage

The outcome of any of the above will be recorded in the complaints log.

Step 5 – Customer Response

The investigating officer calls the customer to discuss the outcome of the investigation. A written response will also be prepared within 21 working days of the complaint being made. The customer’s feedback will be sought and documented.

Step 6 – Corrective Action

If the investigation identifies that there has been a non-conformance to Activate’s procedures, then actions to rectify the non-conformance will be documented.

Stage 2: Formal Stage

Formal complaints should always be made in writing to the CEO or other senior manager if the CEO is not available, except where the complaint is directly against the CEO in which case it should be put in writing to the Chair of the Board of Trustees. Complainants must identify themselves in order that a complaint can be investigated.

The letter should state the reasons for the complaint and, if why it wasn’t unresolved at stage 1.

Steps 3 to 6 of the informal stage process are carried out.

Response times to Complaints:

All complaints, whether informal or formal, will be dealt with as quickly as possible. In the case of formal complaints to the CEO and informal complaints received by any member of the senior management team, Activate commits itself to an initial response in writing within 21 days, followed by a further more detailed response, if appropriate.

Appeals

If the complainant wishes to appeal against the decision made by the CEO, Senior Managers or Chair at the formal stage 2, the complainant can take the issue to an appeal panel of the Board of Trustees only in the following areas:

- Quality (e.g. standards of service, guidance, resources)
- Unreasonable action or Activate not doing its job properly

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Appeals are not possible for complaints if:

- They fall outside the areas set out above
- There is a more appropriate form of complaint or redress (e.g. a complaint to an exam board)
- The issue is subject to legal proceedings

The appeal panel will normally consist of up to 3 independent members of the Board of Trustees and will not involve the Chair if they have already been involved at an earlier stage.

The complainant has the right to be represented by a friend. If the friend is a legal representative, Activate should be informed of this before the panel meets. 14 days' notice will be given of an appeal hearing.

Each party is given the right to make a statement and ask questions.

The decision of the panel is binding on all parties, who must be informed of the outcome as soon as possible and within 14 days of the hearing.