Policy number	**1.02**
Subject	Compliments, Suggestions and Complaints Policy
Directorate responsible	**Quality Assurance**
Date last reviewed/by whom	October 2026 – Anthony Heppell Director of Quality and Safeguarding
Date to be reviewed	October 2027

Policy

Linkage Community Trust (The Trust) is committed to providing high-quality services for all our students, people we support, their families and key stakeholders and we welcome their feedback. The views of students, people we support, and their families are important to us and help us ensure our services are

consistently meeting people's needs.

These procedures can be made available using a variety of mediums such as hard copy, web pages, audio, and Easy Read, on request.

Compliments

The Trust welcomes all feedback and is pleased to receive compliments. It is always good to know that what we do is appreciated and to hear about people's positive experiences. This helps us know how well we perform, to say thank you to the staff concerned, and to continuously improve the quality of our services. We will share compliments with the staff members concerned and use them to share good practice within our organisation.

Suggestions

Often people feel more comfortable about suggesting improvements rather than complaining formally. Anyone receiving services, and their friends/ family, may make a suggestion which is equally helpful and can also be acted upon in order to develop and improve our services, and make The Trust experience the best it can be.

If anyone wishes to submit feedback or suggestions to The Trust, they are welcome to do so either:

- In person at a service
- By telephone
- By email via letusknow@linkage.org.uk
- Through a member of our staff
- People we Support / Students can raise through keyworker meetings/ discussions
- Through an advocate or representative

Complaints

We realise that sometimes things can go wrong, and complaints offer opportunities to listen, to respond and to improve. As an organisation that is committed to continuous improvement, complaints are a valuable tool for improving the quality of the service we provide. If you are unhappy with any of our services, it is important that you let us know as soon as possible. Although we will investigate historic complaints, due to the length of time that has passed and the potential for knowledge fade from key stakeholders, we advise that where concerns relate to events that occurred a significant time ago, the Trust will consider whether a fair and proportionate investigation

remains possible, taking into account factors such as available evidence, the nature of the concerns and the reason for any delay in reporting. Complaints will be considered by an appropriate senior manager or Director who is independent of the matters being complained about before a decision is made on whether a proportionate investigation can be undertaken.

If a complaint alerts us to possible abuse or neglect, we will inform the Local Authority's Safeguarding Team. The safeguarding team will decide how to investigate and monitor outcomes.

Anyone affected by the way Linkage provides its services to people we support, or students, can make a complaint. A representative may complain about the affected person if they cannot make a complaint themselves. If you are not happy about making a complaint yourself and you do not know someone who can talk or write to us on your behalf, we will be happy to find someone from an independent organisation to act as an advocate for you.

You can complain:

- In person
- By telephone
- By email via complaints@linkage.org.uk
- Through a member of our staff
- People we support / Students can raise through keyworker meetings / discussions
- Through an advocate or representative

Where a complaint is made verbally, the Trust will create a written record of the concerns raised and provide a copy to the complainant alongside the acknowledgement correspondence within 5 working days.

You should complain as soon as you can after the date on which the event occurred or came to your notice. The longer people leave it to complain, the more difficult it may be to conduct a comprehensive investigation. But we understand there may be good reason for not making the complaint sooner and despite the delay be assured we will investigate the complaint effectively and fairly.

We deal with anonymous complaints as far as practicable (given the required anonymity) under the same procedure. We use anonymous complaints as with all complaints to continually improve our services and their delivery to those we are commissioned to support. If you decide to provide contact details, we can inform you of the outcome of our investigation.

Procedure

1. Compliment

If The Trust receives a compliment, a record will be made by the Quality Team, and an acknowledgment sent within 5 working days of receipt. The compliment will then be forwarded to the appropriate Manager, who will share it with relevant members of the team.

2. Suggestion

Where a concern has been raised and actions have already taken place to resolve, Linkage will discuss the matter with the complainant and agree if this becomes a formal complaint or suggestion. If The Trust receives a suggestion, a record will be made by the Quality Team, and an acknowledgment sent within 5 working days of receipt. The suggestion will then be shared with the appropriate manager, who will in turn share with relevant members of the team any actions that will need to be addressed and / or any processes that require a review.
Actions will be followed up by the Quality Team to ensure compliance and completion.

3. Complaints

If The Trust receives a complaint, it is important that the issue is dealt with as quickly as possible. Although the Manager has overall responsibility for dealing with all complaints made about their service, because we believe that each complaint can help us improve across all the organisation, our internal processes require us to investigate centrally, alongside the relevant management teams, and this also offers a level of independence, depending on the subject matter of the complaint.

Complaints concerning members of the Executive Leadership Team, the Chief Executive, Trustees or the Chair will be referred to an appropriate independent senior officer, Trustee or external investigator as determined by the Chair of Trustees, or where appropriate the Vice Chair.

Complaints could include:

- an aspect of Linkage's policy
- the way a person we support, or student has been treated
- the provision and accessibility of a service

We are committed to ensuring that everyone encountering our services is aware we have an effective and responsive policy and procedure for responding to complaints.

Stage 1 – The Complaint

The recipient of the complaint will refer to the Quality Team within 24 hours of its receipt. The Quality Team will acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days and give you the name and contact details of the person with primary responsibility for investigating. We will keep you informed about the progress of the investigation. We aim to have all complaints finished within 28 working days unless we agree a different time scale with you. When we have finished investigating, we will write to you with:

- details of our findings.
- confirmation as to whether your complaint is upheld, partially upheld, or not upheld. If it is upheld or partially upheld an apology as well as our proposals to resolve your complaint; and
- consequential action we have/will take.

Once you have had the opportunity to digest our findings, we will be happy to arrange to meet with you if you are not happy with the response and actions. We really want different viewpoints to be understood and considered by keeping communication open. We want to maintain a positive working relationship, and we believe that having constructive communication currently is key to the success of all services, ensuring we have the very best interests of each person we support or student at the heart of everything.

However, at this stage if you feel you need to appeal the outcome, please let us know as soon as possible, normally within 20 working days, although the Trust may accept appeals outside this timeframe where there is good reason to do so, and we will revisit the investigation and outcome within 28 days of receipt.

Stage 2 – The Appeal

The appeal will be reviewed by a person who has not previously been involved in the investigation and who has appropriate seniority and independence, and you will be notified of who the appeal has been allocated to.

These procedures can be made available using a variety of mediums such as hard copy, web pages, audio, and Easy Read, on request.

We are committed to ensuring that the use of the complaints procedure does not result in any prejudicial or discriminatory action for the complainant, or anyone connected with them. All complaints will be treated seriously and fully investigated fairly and sensitively.

The Trust recognises that, on rare occasions, complaints may be unreasonable, persistent or abusive in nature. Any decision to restrict or manage such complaints will be proportionate, documented and authorised by an appropriate Director.

Stage 3 – Further Escalation

Once we have dealt with your complaint, if you are unhappy with the outcome, you can refer your complaint to

- The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) provides a free independent service
- ESFA;
- Department for Education;
- Local Authority;
- CQC;
- Ofsted;
- Charity Commission (in limited circumstances).

Depending on the nature of the service and complaint, complainants may also have access to other regulators, commissioners or external review bodies.

You can contact the LGSCO. Ombudsman at:

Tel: 0300 0610614

Website: www.lgo.org.uk

The LGSCO will not normally investigate a complaint until the provider has had an opportunity to respond and resolve matters.

Where Linkage Services are registered with and regulated by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), the CQC cannot get involved in individual complaints about providers but is happy to receive information about services at any time.

Where Linkage Services are registered and regulated by Ofsted, Ofsted cannot get involved in individual complaints but is happy to receive information about services at any time.

4. Recording and Monitoring

All compliments, suggestions and complaints will be logged by the Quality Team, who will report to the Executive Leadership Team and the Board of Trustees. Themes, trends and lessons learnt from compliments, suggestions and complaints will be reviewed regularly by the Executive Leadership Team and Board of Trustees to support continuous improvement.

If the complaint relates to any issues covered by the policies or procedures below, please refer to the relevant document instead of this procedure, to ensure your complaint is dealt with appropriately.

- Student / Person we support Anti-Bullying (for students and people we support wanting to report harassment or bullying)
- Student Disciplinary Procedures (for students who are subject to College Disciplinary Procedures).

Matters relating to whistleblowing or safeguarding will be referred to other procedures. Concerns about safeguarding will be brought to the attention of the appropriate Director and the Director of Quality & Safeguarding, who may delegate the complaint to another appropriate manager.

At any stage during the process, if you are not happy with the way The Trust is dealing with your complaint you can contact the Director of Quality & Safeguarding, via Complaints@linkage.org.uk. If your complaint relates to a placement, you may also choose to complain to the commissioner of the placement.