



# **Complaints & Compliments Policy**

## **1. Introduction**

The Link Charitable Trust (LCT) aims to provide high-quality, responsive, user-led services and projects. To ensure this, we need to take account of the views and wishes of those we are here to support. We welcome every opportunity to monitor and improve our service. Having a complaints and compliments policy and a clear procedure for resolving complaints is one way of doing this.

## **2. The importance of compliments and feedback**

Compliments and feedback are valuable, welcome and important. When they are received, in writing, they will be recorded. Compliments and feedback enable LCT to:

- understand that our service/project is being provided to all our stakeholders' satisfaction;
- provide feedback to our staff, volunteers, funders and service users;
- influence our organisational and service development strategy;
- inform our continuous improvement cycle.

Compliments should be acknowledged promptly, ideally within 5 days of receipt, and should be forwarded to our main office email ([office@linkct.org.uk](mailto:office@linkct.org.uk)), so that they can be tracked, shared and where appropriate, acted upon. If consent is obtained from all parties associated with the compliment then these may be used in our fundraising activities and via our external media channels.

## **3. The importance of complaints**

LCT recognises that it is very important for people to be able to complain and feel safe doing so. All feedback about our services is helpful to us to make sure that our services are of the highest possible standard.

Whilst complaints are encouraged, it is important not to see them as being about apportioning blame. They are about listening to each other. The purpose is to enable everyone concerned to move forward, making any changes that might be necessary.

It is important that complaints are handled fairly for everyone involved. Having a complaints procedure is part of the organisation's responsibility towards those who use our services, to protect them against bad practice. The organisation also has a responsibility towards workers and volunteers so that they are not victimised or unnecessarily blamed.

Under this complaints and compliments policy we aim to deal effectively with complaints to ensure that:

- complaints are dealt with efficiently and are properly investigated;
- complainants are treated with respect and courtesy;
- complainants receive, as far as possible, assistance to help them understand the procedure and advice on where to get such assistance;
- complainants receive a timely and appropriate response;
- complainants are told the outcome of the investigation of their complaint;
- where applicable, necessary action is taken.

## **4. Scope**

This procedure is for users of our services, applicants to our services, their carers, volunteers and members of the public. It is not for paid workers, who may use LCT's Grievance Procedure instead.

A complaint can be made by a person on behalf of a service user, who is known as a representative, if the service user:

- has asked the representative to act for them;
- is unable to make the complaint themselves because of a physical incapacity or lack of capacity (Mental Capacity Act 2005).
- has passed away.

Usually, we will only investigate complaints that are either:

- made within \*six months of the event, or
- made within six months of you realising that you had something to complain about, as long as that is not more than \*twelve months after the event itself.

\*This time limit does not apply if it can be shown that there were good reasons for not making the complaint earlier and it is still possible to investigate the complaint properly.

## **5. Implementation**

All staff, volunteers and trustees are required to read and digest the policy, as part of the induction process. The policy is stored on LCT's intranet for staff to access, and can be referred to at any time.

## **6. Complaints process**

### **Making a complaint**

Complaints can be received regarding any specific action (or lack of action) taken by LCT. Examples might include a decision taken by a member of staff, the information we have published or provided, service delivery and support or any matter over which LCT has control and for which it has responsibility. The procedure cannot be used for matters not related to LCT's work or over which LCT has no control or responsibility.

If the complaint involves the member of the Senior Management Team (SMT) responsible for managing complaints, this will be managed by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Where the complaint involves the CEO, this will be managed by the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

LCT reserves the right to refuse to investigate a complaint in cases where the person making the complaint persistently refuses to follow the complaints procedure or is threatening, abusive or violent towards staff or trustees investigating the complaint.

The procedure cannot be used to make complaints about a worker's general character but can be used to complain about something they have done, or failed to do.

Once the complaints procedure is completed, the matter will be considered closed and not re-investigated unless significant new information comes to light.

### **What can you expect as a result of making a complaint**

All complaints are taken seriously. The outcome may be that LCT reviews processes or makes changes based on the findings of the complaint, or it may be that the complaint is not upheld. You will always be given a written response to your complaint.

### **Complainant confidentiality**

All complaints, informal and formal, will be treated in a confidential manner. As part of an investigation, it may be necessary to speak with staff or volunteers working at the LCT or with other service users. Any concerns about this should be raised at the meeting with the person conducting the investigation.

### **Informal procedure (stage 1)**

If you have a complaint to make about any aspect of our organisation, we ask that you first try to sort out the problem informally with those directly involved.

At times, people may want an opportunity for their concerns to be listened to before entering into a formal complaints process. LCT colleagues will check with people who have indicated they have a concern whether they want an opportunity to be listened to. This provides a space for concerns to be heard and responded to before going into our formal complaints procedure. At any point, the person will have the right to raise a Stage 1 informal complaint if they do not feel the opportunity to listen resolved their concerns.

To make an initial complaint (Stage 1), please speak to or email the individual(s) concerned or their line manager and we will endeavour to satisfy your complaint and let you know of any remedial action that is to be taken.

If you don't know who to contact or do not wish to contact the individual involved, please email: [office@linkct.org.uk](mailto:office@linkct.org.uk)

All complaints will be acknowledged by the member of staff to whom you communicated your complaint within 3 working days from the date it is received.

In order for us to resolve your issue to the best of our ability, please include as much detail as possible regarding your complaint, including any relevant communications or documentation. We aim to respond to informal complaints within 7 working days.

### **Formal procedure (stage 2)**

If you are not satisfied with the response you receive at Stage 1, or you would prefer your complaint to be formally investigated, you can request your complaint to be escalated to stage 2, either through your contact at stage 1, or directly to the Senior Management Team at: The Link Charitable Trust, Office 16, The Palace Hub, 28-29 Esplanade, Redcar, TS10 3AE or via email at [ioffice@linkct.org.uk](mailto:ioffice@linkct.org.uk), marking your correspondence as Private and Confidential.

A formal complaint can be made verbally by telephone, in person or electronically, via email or audio file. Where the complaint is made verbally, LCT will make a written record of the complaint and provide a copy to the complainant.

The complaint will be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt. The acknowledgment will include:

- An invitation to meet and discuss the complaint;
- Who will be investigating the complaint;
- How the investigation will be handled – the response should state what the investigation will be focused on;
- A time for the investigation to be concluded. This should be 20 working days. However, some cases may take longer and the complainant will be made aware of this;
- A copy of the complaints policy.

You are welcome to be accompanied to this meeting (or any subsequent meetings) by a friend or supporter but not someone directly involved in the matter being investigated.

The investigating manager may also need to speak to other staff or service users before making a response to your complaint.

A full written response will be provided within 20 working days from the date of the acknowledgement. Should there be any delays, you will be advised of the delay and the reason in advance.

## **Appeals process**

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the formal complaint, you have the right to appeal. An appeal must be made within 14 days of receiving the written response to the Formal Complaint.

To appeal, please outline the reasons for your dissatisfaction in writing to the Chief Executive Officer at The Link Charitable Trust, Office 16, The Palace Hub, 28-29 Esplanade, Redcar, TS10 3AE, or electronically by emailing [hannah@linkct.org.uk](mailto:hannah@linkct.org.uk).

A review of the investigation will take place, which may include further enquiries where applicable. The Chief Executive Officer will write within 20 working days of receiving the appeal to give a final decision. Where the formal complaint involves the CEO, The Chair of the Board of Trustees will review the complaint.

## **7. Other policies for consideration**

This policy should be read in conjunction with our policies and guidelines on Data Protection, Whistleblowing and Volunteering which are all complimentary.

## **8. Additional advice**

LCT will make every effort to ensure that your complaint is responded to in line with the principles outlined in this policy. However, if you are dissatisfied with LCT's complaints process, you can contact the Charity Commission, who will be able to comment on whether they may be able to advise on the matter. The Charity Commission can be contacted at: <https://forms.charitycommission.gov.uk/>

Adopted by Board of Trustees	15th July 2015
Last Review Date	29th August 2025
Next Review Due	29th August 2027

## Complaints form

Name:	Address:
Telephone number:	Mobile number:
E-mail address:	Date:

Please write the nature of your complaint in the box below

Signed:
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For office use only
Logged by:
Date:
Action taken: