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| Name of Policy | Complaints & Comments Policy |
| Date Approved | 7th December 2023 |
| Review Date | September 2026 |

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| 1.Responsibility for approval of policy | Limerick Youth Service Board |
| 2.Responsibility for implementation | Limerick Youth Service Staff (staff members, full-time/part-time/sessional and volunteers) |
| 3.Responsibility for ensuring review | CEO / HR Manager |

# **Statement**

Limerick Youth Service is committed to providing a high standard of service to members of the public, parents, volunteers, young people, suppliers and stakeholders with whom we engage. We are committed to giving careful attention and a courteous, timely response to your (comments, recommendations, complaints and compliments) on any aspect of the way we do things so that we can learn from them and continuously improve our service. You can do this in person, by telephone, email, or letter. We also recognise that from time to time we may not be achieving our high levels of service. Therefore, our aim is to gain information to enable us to improve and meet your needs and rectify any matter of concern. In the first instance, Limerick Youth Service hopes that complaints would be handled informally. In the event that a complaint cannot be handled informally within the service, we advise individuals to follow the procedure set out in this policy.

**Scope:** This policy applies to all staff in the Organisation and covers complaints in relation to the service, employees or other aspects of our operations.

Limerick Youth Service aims to fulfil the following values in all aspects of our work:

* Learning, Creativity & Innovation
* Young People at the Centre of all that we do.
* Community based, integrated and collaborative
* Equality, Inclusion & Diversity

**Definition of a Complaint**

A complaint is defined as any expression of dissatisfaction whether justified or not about any aspect of Limerick Youth Service operations, services or the conduct of our employees.

# **Complaint Handling Procedure**

If you have a concern or complaint, there is a procedure in place as follows:

1. **Local Resolution – Informal**

Where possible we endeavour to resolve all complaints informally. We aim to ensure making a complaint is as easy as possible and to deal with it promptly and politely. This should ideally be done in person by raising it with the person you are dealing with or if necessary a manager. If the complaint is against a member of staff and the complainant feels it is unsafe to reach out for direct resolution then the complainant should request to speak to staff member’s manager. If the manager has a direct or indirect involvement in the matter being complained of, the complaint will be passed to the HR Manager (or, if necessary, another person who has had no involvement in the matter).

He or she will provide whatever assistance to the person making the complaint and try to resolve it at the point of contact.

However, there may be instances where time is needed to look into the complaint and in these circumstances we will respond within 5 working days. If the member of staff cannot help, they will explain why and you can then ask for the complaint to be formally investigated.

1. **Formal**

There are certain times when a complaint cannot be handled informally. A complaint can be made in any of the ways below:

* The person making the complaint can ask for a copy of our complaint form from the person with whom they are already in contact.
* The complainant can get in touch with our Complaints Officer sineadn@limerickyouthservice.org or 0831736481
* Access the form on our website at <https://limerickyouthservice.com/resources-publications/>
* See form in Appendix A of this policy

**Dealing with A Complaint**

* All complaints will be formally acknowledged within 5 working days
* We will be deal with a complaint in a fair, open and impartial manner.
* If a person is making a complaint on behalf of another person, we will need their agreement to the person acting on their behalf.
* Where a complaint concerns a member of staff, we will address the situation with due regard to our obligations as an employer and the rights of the employees, the terms governing their conditions of employment and the procedures outlined in the staff handbook.
* If a complaint is made against the CEO a representative of the Board (usually the chairperson) will conduct an investigation and ensure appropriate management and recording of the complaint.
* The organisation will assess the complaint and the level of risk posed. If a matter concerns an immediate risk to safety or security the response will be immediate and will be escalated appropriately.
* We will confirm that the issue raised in the complaint is within the control of the Organisation.
* The complaint will be assessed and determined if an investigation is needed. If the complaint is straightforward, generally a manager or appropriate person from the Organisation will be appointed to investigate the concern and the Complainant will be advised accordingly.
* We aim to resolve concerns as quickly as possible and expect to deal with them within 30 working days or sooner.
* The person making the complaint will be kept informed of the progress of the complaint.

**Investigation**

If the complaint is more complex we will:

* Advise within this timeframe why we think it may take longer to investigate.
* Provide regular updates every 20 days or sooner on any progress made.

We will ensure that the person(s) investigating the complaint are in no way involved in the complaint, are not related to the complainant or any staff members involved in the complaint.

The person(s) investigating the complaint will aim first to establish the facts and all relevant evidence.

The extent of the investigation will depend on how complex and how serious the issues raised are. In some instances we may ask to meet with the complainant to discuss the matter further.

If the complaint is serious we may seek an Individual external to the organisation to investigate.

If the complaint raises potentially serious matters, then legal advice may be sought, and the complaints procedure will be will no longer be used as an investigative process by the organisation.

**Outcome:**

Following the formal investigation of a complaint, we will let the complainant know what we have found via the preferred form of communication. We will explain how and why we came to our conclusion(s). Where no grounds for the complaint are found, the person making the complaint will be notified and information detailing the next stage will be provided. We will outline the appeals process as part of the complaint response.

**Appeal**

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the response to the complaint, then there is the opportunity to appeal it. The appeal must be submitted within 5 working days. The appeal is handled by someone who was not involved in the original complaint process and normally a Senior Manager/CEO. The decision of the appeal is final and the complainant will be considered to have exhausted all avenues.

**Roles & Responsibilities**

Staff:

* Aware of and familiar with the Complaints handling policy and procedures
* Helping Individuals access the complaints process and where necessary helping Individuals make a complaint.
* Record all complaints whether formal or informal using appendix a on this document.
* Respond to the complainant in a timely manner to prevent the loss of any details.
* Capture all relevant information including name, contact details, nature of the complaint, date, time etc. to ensure that the issue can be resolved.
* Advise Manager that a complaint has been received and report to Line Manager any unresolved concerns
* Ensure a report is sent to the complaints officer for recording
* Maintain confidentiality of the information

Manager

* Ensure all staff are familiar with the policy
* Support staff in addressing a complaint
* Ensure fair procedures are applied if a complaint is against a staff member.
* Regularly monitoring the number, nature and outcome of complaints as part of the continuous quality improvement process

**Record of Complaints and Confidentiality:**

An accurate and detailed record of each complaint is kept for a period of 2 years from the date the complaint has been dealt with. Complaint information is stored confidentially and is only accessed by the Complaints Officer and individuals authorised by the CEO.

**Complaint not within the scope of the Organisation:**

Any complaints not within the scope of the Organisation to investigate will be referred appropriately. For example:

* If there are child safeguarding concerns relating to a complaint, the designated liaison person is informed, and the child protection policy of the service is followed.
* If a complaint involves a potential criminal offence, An Garda Siochana is notified

**What we expect from a Complainant**

We believe that all complainants have the right to be heard, understood and respected. However, we also consider that our staff have the same rights. We, therefore, expect you to be polite and courteous in your dealings with us. Unreasonable complainant behaviour will not be tolerated, such as if the complainant is aggressive, threatening, or makes excessive or inappropriate demands from the staff member, their line manager, the Complaints Officer, or anyone else they interact with in Limerick Youth Service about their complaint. Unreasonable complainant behaviour includes unreasonable persistence, unreasonable demands, unreasonable lack of cooperation, unreasonable arguments, threats, intimidation or abuse. Staff should record such behaviour.

If we do not succeed in resolving your complaint , you may complain to the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is independent and can look into your complaint if you believe that you or the person on whose behalf you are complaining:

* Have been treated unfairly or received a bad service
* Have been disadvantaged personally

Tel: 016395600

Email: ombudsmand@ombudsman.ie

[www.ombudsman.ie](http://www.ombudsman.ie)

The Office of the Ombudsman,

18 Lower Leeson Street,

Dublin 2

**Data Protection:**

All personal information is held in accordance with the Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003.

**Appendices:**

Complaint Form

Complaint Appeals Form

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|   **Complaint Form** |  |  |
| Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Address: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Phone: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  |  |  |
| Is the complainant a: *Customer*  Parent Young person *Supplier Other*  |  Other  |  |
| Preferred method of communication \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |  |  |
| Date and time complaint was made \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date and Time of Incident (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |  |  |
| Name or person to whom complaint was first made *(Please list all persons involved)*  |  |  |
| **Details of Complaint**  |  |  |
| What outcome would the complainant wish to result from their complaint? |  |  |
| **To be completed by Complainant:**Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |  |  |

If you have any supporting documents to support your concern/complaint, please attach them with this form. When completed please return this form to: sineadn@limerickyouthservice.org or post HR Department, Limerick Youth Service, Northside Youth Space, Ballynanty, Limerick.

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| **Complaint Appeals Form** |  |  |
| Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Address: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Phone: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Email: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |  |  |
| **Is the complainant a:** *Customer*  Parent Young person *Supplier Other* |  Other  |  |
| Date and time complaint was made \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date and Time of Incident (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |  |  |
| Name or person to whom complaint was first made *(Please list all persons involved)* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |  |  |
| **Details of Complaint**  |  |  |
| Briefly Describe how the complaint was addressed and why you were not satisfied.  |  |  |
| To be completed by Complainant:Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |  |  |
| If you have any supporting documents to support your concern/complaint, please attach them with this form .When completed please return this form to:sineadn@limerickyouthservice.org or post: HR Department, Limerick Youth Service, Northside Youth Space, Ballynanty, Limerick.  |  |  |