

Adult Community Learning - London Borough of Camden

Complaints Policy & Procedure

We want to make Camden Adult Community Learning a better Service – a place where everyone has a chance to succeed and where nobody gets left behind.

Together, we will create a place that works for everyone, and where everybody has a voice. We will make sure we put communities and residents at the heart of everything that we do.

In order to do this, we encourage you – our learners, staff, community groups and any other group or individual that uses or are affected by our services to get in touch when things go wrong. When they do go wrong, we need to know so we can put them right and learn from our mistakes.

This policy and procedure sets out how we handle complaints from our residents in a simple and timely way that is open and transparent.

Camden Council's definition of a complaint is:

'When someone lets us know that they are unhappy with our service and they want us to take action to resolve it'.

The following steps are applied to all complaints received:

Good complaint handling means:

- Getting it right
- Being resident-focused
- Being open and accountable
- Acting fairly and proportionately
- Putting things right
- Doing it in a timely way
- Learning from complaints
- Seeking continuous improvement

Adult Community Learning - London Borough of Camden

Complaints Policy & Procedure

Stages of complaint

ACL's aim is to resolve complaints for our learners and staff as quickly and as simply as possible and initially this is done informally. If a complaint has not been dealt with satisfactorily then the formal procedure is started.

Stage 1

- The local resolution stage
- Dealt with directly by the officers and managers responsible for the service.
- Emphasis is on trying to reach a resolution. If that resolution is not reached, the resident has the right to escalate matters to stage 2

Stage 2

- The review or appeal stage
- Dealt with by complaints officers who have not been involved previously [or in the case of statutory social care services, by an independent investigator]
- The process is overseen and monitored by the centralised information and records management [IRM] service

The principle focus at all stages is to provide a high quality response that resolves all the issues you raise and finds a suitable outcome for you in a timely way.

How are we going to do this?

We will:

- Ensure that the complainant/s have a fair and effective way to provide feedback about our services
- Respond to feedback in a fair, consistent and professional manner
- Make the complaints experience as simple as possible
- Resolve any issues and find a suitable outcome
- Ensure our complaint policies are up to date and consistent with relevant legislation and standards

Adult Community Learning - London Borough of Camden

Complaints Policy & Procedure

When we receive a complaint, we will:

- Acknowledge the complaint
- Contact you to ensure we have listened and understand the complaint
- Offer translation and interpretation services to those of you whose first language is not English
- For children and young people appoint an advocate to support the process if requested using an external and appropriate advocacy service
- Tell you the name of the officer or team dealing with the complaint and in consultation with you agree when the response will be ready
- Contact you to discuss the complaint and agree in consultation with you what we are going to do
- Investigate the complaint and do what we say we will do to resolve the complaint
- Keep you informed and notify you if there is a delay and commit to a new timescale in which you will receive a response
- Contact you to tell you what we have done and why we have done it (the outcome and reasons for the decision)

For stage 2 complaints:

We will also:

- Ask you why you are dissatisfied with the response at stage 1
- Try to deal with the dissatisfaction to your satisfaction BEFORE it goes to stage 2
- If there are no grounds to investigate at Stage 2, contact you to explain our decision
- If there are grounds for stage 2 then follow the above procedures again from the start

In our responses where applicable:

We will:

- Acknowledge when things go wrong
- Apologise
- Improve procedures so similar problems do not happen again

How long will it take?

We will discuss your concerns with you and agree timescales with you and keep you updated on the progress of your complaint. The following are guidelines which we will follow although some complaints may be resolved sooner than this and others that are more complex may take longer.

- All stages (acknowledgement) - 2 working days
- Stage 1 - 10 working days (Extended to 20 working days in complex cases)
- Stage 2 - 25 working days (Extended to 65 working days in complex cases)

Adult Community Learning - London Borough of Camden

Complaints Policy & Procedure

What do you need to do?

We ask that you:

- Submit the complaint within 12 months after the date of the incident
- Submit a request for a stage 2 review within 28 calendar days of the stage 1 response

We will not accept a complaint outside of these timescales except where exceptional reasons for the delay can be demonstrated.

If we receive persistent malicious, rude, offensive or vexatious communications that we consider to be unreasonable behaviour, we may:

- refuse to handle the complaint (and close the complaint)
- if the resident is a tenant, refer to the Ward Manager for tenancy action
- take legal action
- implement the unreasonable behaviour policy

Examples of a complaint

- Failure to follow process
- Failure to follow the council's own policy
- Significant or repeated failure to provide a service
- Failure to do what we said we would do
- Failure to respond

Format of complaint

We accept complaints in a variety of formats, including, e-form, phone, letter, email and in person.

When we are unable or may not investigate a complaint

- We may not investigate if legal proceedings are pending. The complaints manager will decide whether to investigate each case on an individual basis having taken legal advice when necessary
- We cannot investigate any complaints where the Court has made a decision about the subject of the complaint
- We cannot investigate when the complaint is not about Camden Council or a contractor or partner acting on our behalf