

<b><u>Policy Title</u></b>	NCG Complaints Policy
<b><u>Policy Category</u></b>	Compliant
<b><u>Owner</u></b>	Steve Wallis
<b><u>Group Executive Lead</u></b>	Chris Payne
<b><u>Date Written</u></b>	May 2019
<b><u>Considered By</u></b>	Executive and QA Leads
<b><u>Approved By</u></b>	Corporation
<b><u>Date Approved</u></b>	July 2019
<b><u>Equality Impact Assessment</u></b>	The implementation of this policy is not considered to have a negative impact on protected characteristics
<b><u>Freedom of Information</u></b>	This document will be publically available through the Groups Publication Scheme.
<b><u>Review Date</u></b>	June 2021
<b><u>Policy Summary</u></b>	The purpose of the NCG Group Policy Framework is to specify policy direction for the Group on the development, authorisation, publication, communication and review of Group-wide policies. This will ensure the Group has consistent standards for all staff to follow when developing and publishing up to date Policy statements. All official policy documents must comply with this policy framework.

<b><u>Applicability of Policy</u></b>	<b><u>Consultation Undertaken</u></b>	<b><u>Applicable To</u></b>
Newcastle	<u>Yes</u> / No	Yes
Newcastle 6th Form	<u>Yes</u> / No	Yes
Carlisle	<u>Yes</u> / No	Yes
Kidderminster	<u>Yes</u> / No	Yes
Lewisham Southwick	<u>Yes</u> / No	Yes
West Lancashire	<u>Yes</u> / No	Yes
InTraining	<u>Yes</u> / No	Yes
Rathbones	<u>Yes</u> / No	Yes
Group Services	<u>Yes</u> / No	Yes

<b><u>Changes to Earlier Versions</u></b>	
<b><u>Previous Approval Date</u></b>	<b><u>Summarise Changes Made Here</u></b>
<i>No changes recommended</i>	

<b><u>Linked Documents</u></b>	
<b><u>Document Title</u></b>	<b><u>Relevance</u></b>
Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy	
Disclosure Policy	
Single Safeguarding Policy	
Staff Disciplinary Policy	

## 1. Scope and Purpose of Policy

Despite being an organisation committed to the highest standards of education, training and service standards, NCG understands that occasionally our learners, students, apprentices, parents, employers, clients or other direct or third party stakeholders may wish to express their formal dissatisfaction with our services and therefore we set out in this Single Policy a consistent method of receiving, responding to and learning from such instances.

This Group-level complaints policy is delivered via College complaints procedures. Group Services do not have a derivative procedure and will follow this policy.

Through the complaints policy and supporting procedures, all parts of the Group aim to resolve concerns quickly and courteously in line with the Group's core values.

NCG also values recognition of good services and believes that staff will be recognised and rewarded. In doing so, Colleges are expected to run a concurrent procedure for gathering compliments and commendations of their staff, learners and the wider organisation. At a Group-level this through regular e-newsletters such as Insight and the Annual Excellence Awards.

## 2. Policy Statement

### 2.1. Overview

The complaints policy applies to each College within NCG and also Group Services. It is intended to safeguard the entitlement and experiences of the Group's learners, students, apprentices, staff, parents, employers, clients and other NCG customers or stakeholders. Its purpose is to ensure a positive experience for those who learn with us, or use our services. Each of NCG's Colleges will therefore:

- develop and work within a four stage complaints procedure agreed herein by the Corporation Board
- incorporate a final stage into their College procedure whereby unresolved complaints are referred to the Group Chief Executive for investigation. If this final stage can not resolve the complaint, then there will be referral to an external funding body (ESFA). For HE students this is review by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator, OIA, or the validating partner if the provision is franchised from another Higher Education Institution (and not through NCG's taught degree awarding provision). In the case of the latter colleges must additionally comply with specific regulations for complaints notification outlined in HEI franchise partnership agreements.
- investigate all complaints in a formal, consistent, systematic and non-confrontational manner;  
designate a single senior manager who will have responsibility for ensuring full implementation of the procedure;  
ensure that confidentiality is observed as appropriate throughout the procedure;

- produce an annual report to Local and Corporation Board
- provide updates for inclusion in the annual report of complaints to Corporation;
- complaints received by Group Services about College provision will be referred to the appropriate stage in College procedure in the first instance; College receiving complaints about Group Services will do the same;
- ensure that the procedure:
  - is regularly monitored, evaluated and reviewed annually;
  - is accessible to students, clients, staff, employers, visitors and the general public via the Group Policy intranet
  - ensure that it is straightforward to make a complaint, without bureaucratic or complex language, processes, forms or systems;
  - contributes to quality assurance and to the constant improvement of services provided by the College.

### 3. Links to Health and Safety, Safeguarding and Whistleblowing (Disclosure)

The Group has definitive policy for specific concerns associated with health and safety, safeguarding and whistleblowing (disclosure). A concern or complaint associated with either category will follow the relevant policy and procedures defined.

These policies are listed under Point 5.

#### 3.1. Stages of Complaint

NCG operates a four stage complaints procedure:

Stage	Timescale	Reporting
Stage One – Informal	Stage 1 concerns will be raised immediately and no later than three months after its occurrence	Concerns will be brought by the complainant to the attention of the person who in the opinion of the complainant, is responsible. (For example a tutor, course leader, curriculum or service manager) Whilst this is an informal stage, Colleges must ensure that the issue is recorded in a simple log or similar broadly indicating the nature of complaint, date it was raised, outline resolution and date closed.
Stage Two – form	Stage 2 concerns will be raised within three months of exhausting Stage 1	If the concern is not resolved at the informal stage, or the complainant feels that the issue has not been dealt with, then this will progress to Stage 2.  Formal complaints are submitted to a designated manager for resolution. College procedures must make clear a) who this is and b) how to refer.

		<p>The procedure will ensure that complaints are acknowledged within three working days.</p> <p>The complaint will be assigned to a named senior manager of appropriately delegated manager, who will take responsibility to fully investigate the matter.</p> <p>Colleges/Group Services will work to a formal response within 10 working days from receipt of the complaint. Where this is not possible, due to complexity, the complainant must be informed in writing.</p>
<p>Stage 3 Appeal</p>	<p>Stage 3 concerns will be raised within one month of exhausting stage 2.</p>	<p>If the complainant is dissatisfied with the response to the Stage 2 complaint, the College procedure will include the right to appeal by escalating to Stage 3.</p> <p>The complainant will put their appeal in writing, detail the reason for the dissatisfaction and why they consider the response to the formal complaint (stage 2) to be inadequate. Stage 3 appeals will be sent to the office of the Principal (i.e. CEO, Principal)</p> <p>The Principal will review the appeal, fully investigate the matter and provide a formal response within 10 working days from receipt of the stage 3 appeal. Where this is not possible, due to complexity, the complainant must be informed in writing.</p>
<p>Stage 4 Group and External referral</p> <p>For Further Education complainants</p>	<p>Stage 4 concerns will be raised within one month of exhausting stage 3.</p>	<p>If the concern is not resolved at Stage 3 and the complainant remains unsatisfied, then a final appeal can be made to the CEO (if at college level).</p> <p>Before a complainant proceeds, they must have exhausted all stages above.</p> <p>College procedures must include details on where to send this complaint to the CEO's office</p> <p>Colleges/Group Services will work to a formal response within 10 working days from receipt of the stage 4 complaint.</p>

		<p>Where this is not possible, due to complexity, the complainant must be informed in writing.</p> <p>If the issue can not be resolved through the CEO's office, then the Executive Director of Quality, will notify the Educational and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)</p> <p>Complaints for Group Services will follow the same procedure unless the complaint is about the CEO or a member of the CEO's office.</p>
<p>Stage 4 External</p> <p>For Higher Education</p>	<p>Stage 4 concerns will be raised with the OIA within one calendar year of receiving a "Letter of Completion".</p>	<p>If the concern is not resolved at Stage 3 and the complainant remains unsatisfied, then a final appeal can be made to the CEO (if at college level) or</p> <p>Before a complainant proceeds, they must have exhausted all stages above.</p> <p>College procedures must refer this complaint to the CEO's office</p> <p>If the issue can not be resolved through the CEO's office, then the Director of HE, will notify the Office of Independent Adjudicator (OIA). The complainant will be informed in writing that this is the next stage and that it has been actioned.</p>

### **3.2. Monitoring Complaints**

- Procedures must make clear the process by which complaints are monitored, investigated and resolved.
- Local College Boards (from colleges) will receive termly reports; Corporation will receive an annual report

### **3.3. Complaints about senior leaders**

The procedure will make clear that:

- where a complainant wishes to make a complaint about the Principal Group Executive, then this will proceed directly to Stage 2 by addressing it to the NCG's Chief Executive's Office, NCG, Rye Hill House, Scotswood Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 7SA.



- where a complainant wishes to make a complaint about the Chief Executive, then this will proceed directly to Stage 2 by addressing it to the Executive Director Governance, Risk and Assurance, NCG, Rye Hill House, Scotswood Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 7SA.

### **3.4. Complaints at Group Services**

Where a complainant wishes to make a complaint about NCG Group Services, then this will follow the 4 stage process and should initially be addressing it to the Executive Director of Quality, NCG, Rye Hill House, Scotswood Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 7SA.

## **4. Equality and Diversity Statement**

Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken by each College.

## **5. Linked Policies**

- Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Disclosure Policy
- Single Safeguarding Policy
- Staff Disciplinary Policy

## **6. Linked Procedures**

- College complaints procedures

## **7. Location and Access to the Policy**

The Complaints Policy is located as follows:-

- NCG Intranet: Group Services: Group Policies and Procedures
- NCG Website: Media Centre: Guide to Information: Our Policies & Procedures

## **8. Person Responsible for the Policy**

- Executive Director Quality

## **9. Variations**

There are no variations to this policy. College procedures may, however, vary according to the needs of their business.