



## **Complaints, Grievances and Concerns**

### **Function of this Policy**

To define a clear route for individuals to raise any complaint, grievance or concerns regarding the operation of the Volunteer Tutors Organisation and ensure that they are properly and effectively handled.

### **Initial Action**

Many problems can be resolved informally, for example through a quiet chat. An employee or volunteer could raise a problem informally by telling their LCC or line manager or someone else (for example, a lead volunteer, another manager or someone on the HR sub-group). It does not have to be in writing at this stage.

However, all issues raised must be taken seriously as they may result in formal action at a later stage.

In this initial stage it may be appropriate for the individual raising the issue to have a friend or colleague present during any discussion. It is also very important to keep a record of events at this early stage. Record to include:

- what the issue is about;
- what you did (such as have an informal meeting);
- what was discussed in any informal chat or meeting;
- any next steps agreed; and
- the reasons for any next steps

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR FORMAL ACTION**

### **TRANSPARENCY, INTEGRITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

#### **Transparency**

In general, transparency is defined as the being open in the disclosure of information, rules, plans, processes and actions.

Communication between the parties should be open and timely, unless information must be limited for confidentiality, privacy or other reasons.

#### **Integrity**

Integrity is defined as behaviours and actions consistent with ethical principles and standards, embraced by individuals and organisations that create a barrier to malpractice and corruption.



## **Accountability**

Ensures:

- i) compliance with all relevant legislation, regulatory requirements, professional standards and guidelines;
- ii) the possibility for all parties to a complaint/grievance to have decisions reviewed;
- iii) a complainant who launched a well-founded complaint has a right to appeal and after the appeal, there is no further process;
- iv) zero tolerance approach against conflict of interest and misuse of the complaint/grievance mechanism by people involved in the process of handling it.

## **Accessibility**

The needs and rights of our users and volunteers are at the centre of this process and it is our aim to prevent barriers to access, including language, literacy, awareness of the mechanism, poverty, distance, or fear of reprisal.

## **Responsiveness**

All complaints/grievances and constructive feedback will be taken seriously and handled swiftly.

## **Confidentiality and Anonymity**

All VTO Staff and Board members will comply with privacy requirements when collecting, using, disclosing and storing information, and will treat all complaints/grievances confidentially. They will ensure that any request for confidentiality is complied with unless doing so would pose a risk to the safety, health and well-being of any person.

Complainants are advised of the possibility of lodging a complaint/grievance anonymously, although this may have implications for future investigation. If required, there will be a method of communication with the complainant that allows communication with a complainant even when the complaint was filed anonymously.

## **Impartiality and independence**

Any decisions made will be impartial. Each issue will be treated on its merits, with an open mind and without prejudice arising from any previous contact. There will be a full and objective evaluation of the facts or evidence provided in support of a complaint/grievance. Issues of conflict of interest will be identified and declared to ensure objectivity.

The procedure will be independent from the parties to a complaint/grievance.

## **THE HANDLING PROCESS**

### **Channels of Reporting**

Channels of reporting will include emails, online and offline reporting tools, helplines, personal conversations, SMS reporting and mobile applications.

All channels will be free of charge and be easily accessible to individuals and seek to reduce the barriers for persons in fear or people with a special need to access the mechanism.

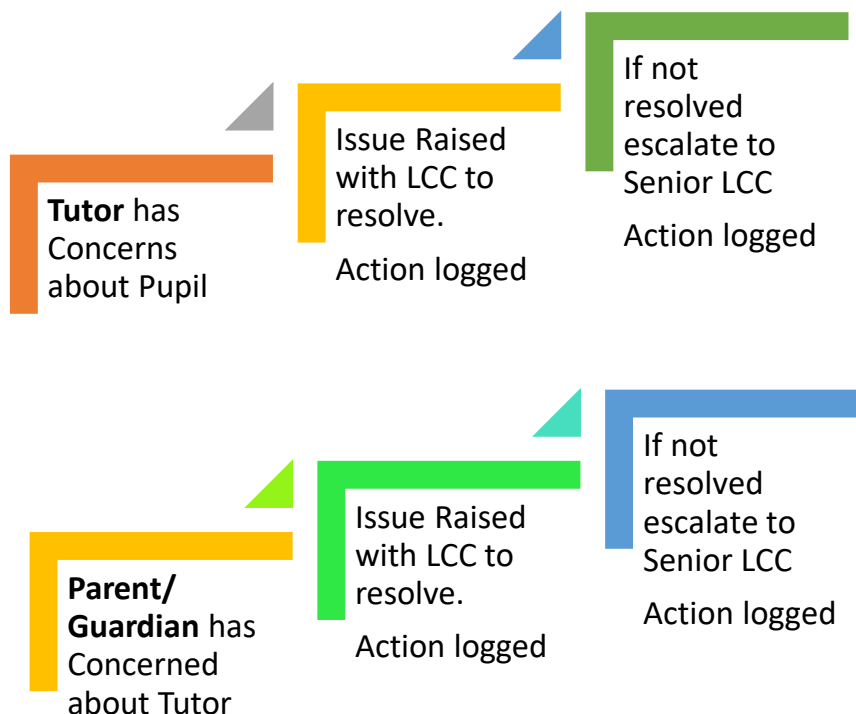
The procedure will be auditable and transparent.

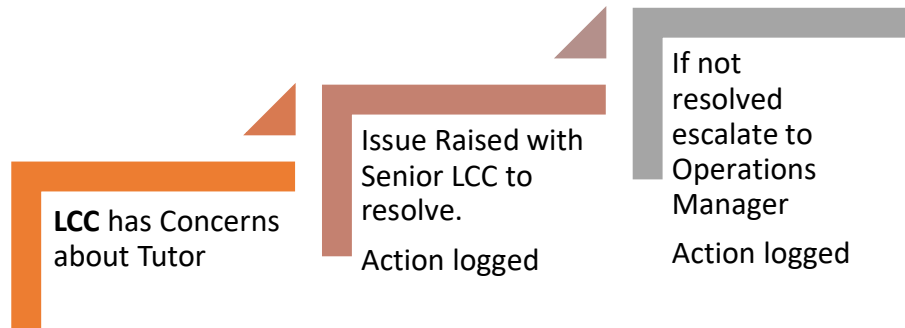
An initial response to the complaint/grievance will be provided within seven working days with the timeline to conclusion of the investigation clearly indicated to all parties.

### **Process for Reporting**

The process of reporting will depend on the source of the issue raised. These will be, but not exclusively as follows.

#### **For Tutors**

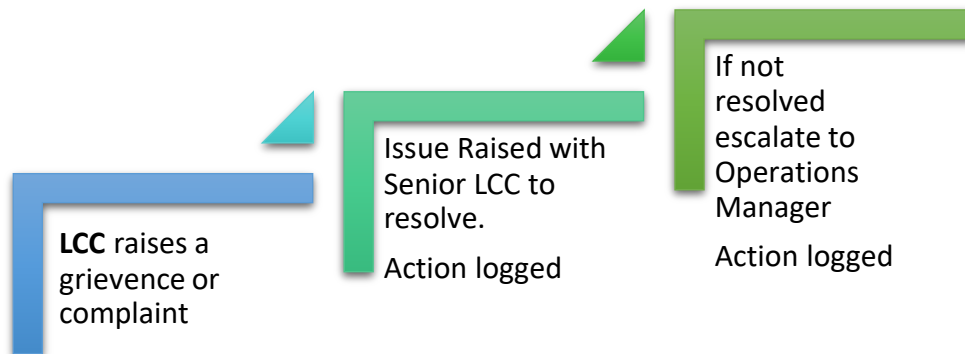




The individual raising the complaint/grievance will have the right of complete confidentiality and anonymity in appropriate circumstances.

Where any party in the process is unhappy with the outcome, they will have the right to appeal to the next level. This may result in a report going to the Board for consideration.

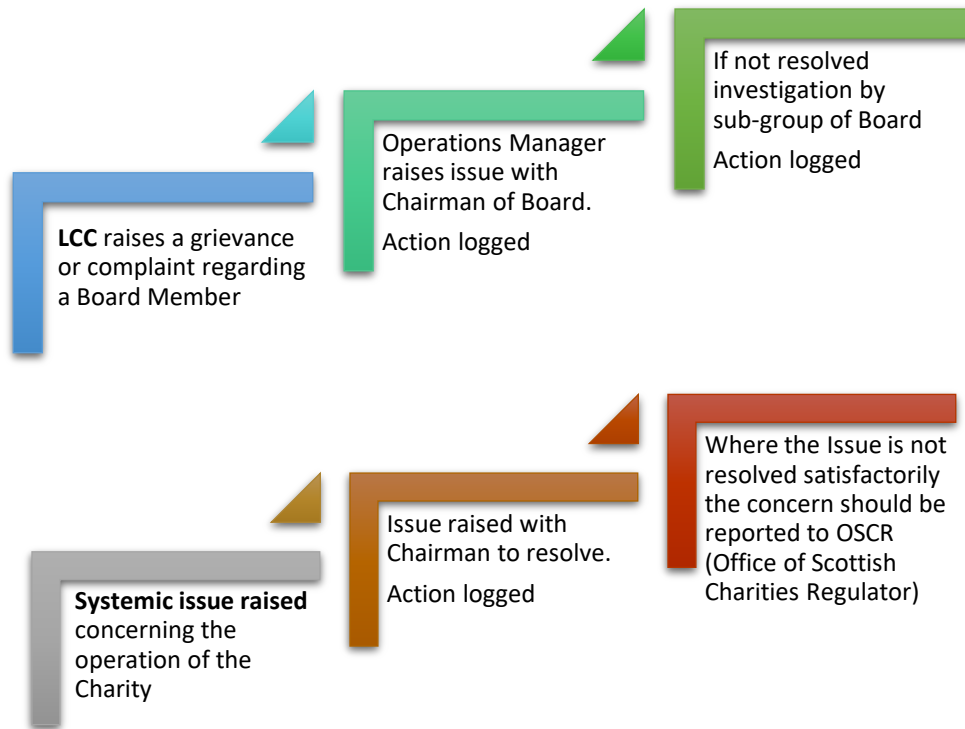
### For Staff



If the issue concerns the Senior LCC the matter will be handled by the Operations Manager who will report to the HR sub-group on the issue.

If the issue is not resolved to the satisfaction of all parties the Chair of the HR sub-group will report to the Board under confidential cover with recommendations for action.

## Board Members



All data relating to Complaints, Grievances or Comments where confidential information is involved will be kept in a secure folder either electronic or analogue and only be accessible to the parties involved in the investigation and appropriate Board members.

It is important that all issues are followed up to ensure that actions agreed have been carried out to the satisfaction of those involved.

Statistics on complaints/grievances and resolution including the number of complaints/grievances received, handled or rejected and potential issues that are most frequently complained about to be reported every six months to the Board of Trustees and action required to be referred to the HR sub-Group for resolution.

This policy was last reviewed on

Approved by Board:

Signed: 

Douglas Johnston (Chairman)

Date: 5<sup>th</sup> May 2021

