

Compliments, Concerns and Complaints Policy

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This policy and procedure is subject to The Equality Act 2010 which recognises the following categories of individual as Protected Characteristics: Age, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion and Belief, Sex (gender), Sexual orientation, Disability.

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Introduction

At Milton Keynes College Group, we are proud to welcome learners of all levels – delivering exceptional education in all of our sectors. MK College, MKC Commercial, and South Central IoT offer a full range of qualifications, study programmes, apprenticeships and Higher Education to full and part-time students, and employability and skills training programmes within the local community. We also provide education services to prisons across England. Here at Milton Keynes College Group, we know that education has the power to create equal opportunities and to build fairer futures, leading to an inclusive society for all.

Milton Keynes College Group places a significant emphasis on customer feedback and views *The Compliments, Concerns and Complaints* process as a valuable tool for contributing to ongoing improvements to the quality of our services.

All compliments, concerns and complaints received at Milton Keynes College Group are handled with integrity and respect in line with our values.

Our Approach

We will work collaboratively with learners, partners, employers, and our community to deliver the skills needed to aid productivity, to be aspirational, and to grow our regional influence. We will amplify our drive for inclusion and fairness to influence others and to ensure we have a financially strong organisation aligned to our sense of purpose.

All compliments received by Milton Keynes College Group will be shared with the ELT, SLT, and all relevant members of staff,

However, if a concern or complaint is received, we will act in a timely manner to find a resolution. Therefore, in this Policy we outline our commitment to acknowledging and responding to concerns and complaints and are open to all suggestions, whether positive or negative, in a prompt and courteous manner. All concerns and complaints will be treated seriously.

Milton Keynes College Group realises that, occasionally, mistakes will be made, or the service offered will not meet an individual's requirements or expectations. However, with our proactive approach we anticipate that most concerns and complaints will be resolved quickly by an informal approach.

All compliments and complaints made to the College Group or the services it offers will be used as feedback to reflect and implement improvements identified.

Responsibilities

- People Services are responsible for the coordination of all email complaints/letters/Speak Out at Stages 1 and 2; the concern/complaint will be recorded and directed to the relevant Head of School/Department/Prison for

resolution. The concern/complaint will be monitored to ensure it is resolved within the timeline agreed in the policy. Any paper based concerns and complaints will be stored in People Services and shared with the Quality Team.

- People Services will collate the data around concerns/complaints and report this data to ELT and SLT monthly.
- ELT are responsible for the concern/complaint if the resolution is appealed; monitoring and recording will continue to be undertaken by People Services.
- People Services will share the data on compliments, concerns and complaints at the termly 360 meetings.
- The Principal - Quality and Student Experience will be responsible for receiving and monitoring the data, and for the timely and effective implementation of this Policy and will produce an annual report for the College's Board of Governors.

The Stages of the process are as follows:

Stage 1 – Informal

Before raising a formal complaint, we would encourage you to discuss your concerns with a member of staff as most problems can be resolved quickly and informally in this way within a reason timeline of **ten** working days.

If not resolved after completing Stage 1 – the informal stage, then Stage 2 may be considered and initiated.

Stage 2 – Formal

Where it has not been possible to satisfactorily resolve matters in Stage 1 then the concern/complaint should be progressed to the Speak Out procedures. (See Appendix 1 – Guidance document – 'Information and FAQs for Whistleblowing, Complaints and Grievances: Using Speak Out' [faq.pdf \(ethicspoint.eu\)](http://faq.pdf(ethicspoint.eu)))

To make a report, customers can access Ethics Point from the MK College website. This facility provides complainants with the ability to file a confidential, anonymous report via either the telephone or the Internet.

MK College Website link: [EthicsPoint - Milton Keynes College](#)

The free Speak Out Hotline Number is 0800 0698395.

The timeline for a formal acknowledgement of the concern/complaint will be confirmed within **two** working days of receiving the complaint. This communication will inform the complainant that they will receive a full response within **fifteen** working days.

Stage 3 – Appeal

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the resolution offered, the complainant has the right to appeal.

- The appeal is addressed to the Milton Keynes College Group Executive Leadership Team within **ten** working days of the outcome at Stage 2. This can be any member of ELT and it is the responsibility of the member of ELT to inform People Services that an appeal has been placed, therefore allowing for the monitoring, and tracking of the appeal to ensure the capture of data.

An appeal can be requested under the following grounds:

- A review of the procedures followed at Stage 2
- A consideration of whether the outcome was reasonable; or
- New material evidence which the complainant was unable, for valid reasons, to provide earlier in the process.

The appropriate member of ELT will review the complaint but will not usually consider the issues afresh or undertake further investigation unless new material evidence is submitted. The member of ELT will respond in writing within **fifteen** working days with a copy to People Services and the Group Quality team.

If the complainant is still not satisfied, they may wish to appeal the decision by writing to the Milton Keynes College Group Board of Governors.

Clerk to the Governors will acknowledge the appeal within five working days and share with the relevant Governors – a response will be given in writing within fifteen working day.

If the complainant has exhausted the Milton Keynes College Group's Complaints policy (Speak Out) and is still not satisfied, they may wish to write to the relevant funding agency about the handling of the complaint, details of which will be provided on request.

The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) maybe be contacted if you feel the complaint has not been resolved:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-and-skills-funding-agency>

Monitoring and Quality Assurance

All compliments, concerns, and complaints (Speak Out) will be fed into the School Review system (Regular 360 meetings) for discussion and action plans produced if appropriate.

In addition, The Principal - Quality and Student Experience will provide an annual report to the Milton Keynes College Board of Governors summarising the

compliments, concerns and complaints during the year. This will be based on an analysis by School, Business Partner and Prison function.

The Principal - Quality and Student Experience will be responsible for investigating and responding to any queries arising from the annual report to the Board of Governors.

Associated Policies

This policy cross-references with the following documents:

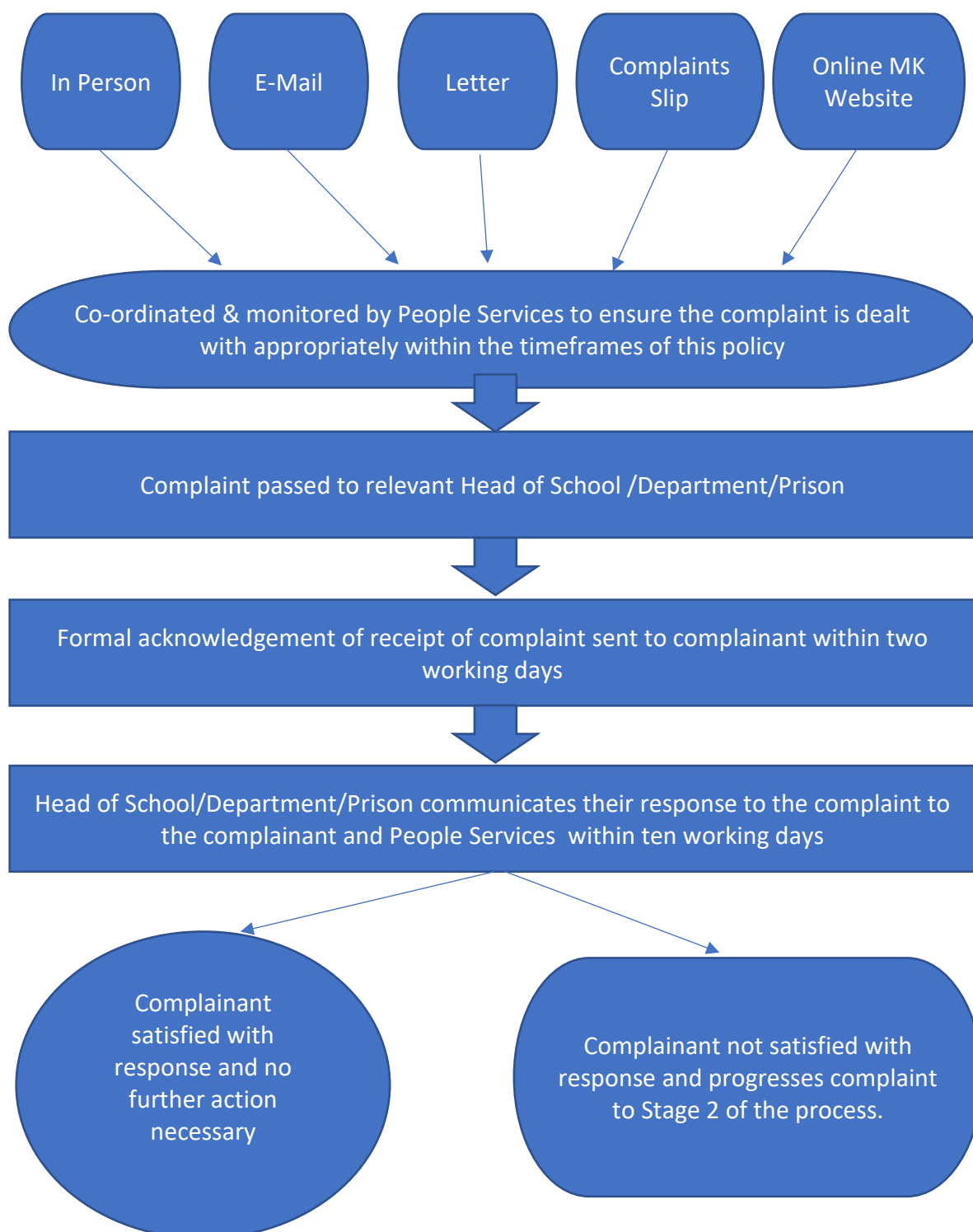
- Milton Keynes College Strategic Plan 2021 - 2026
- Quality Strategy
- Equality and Diversity Strategy
- Equality & Diversity Policy
- Professional Standards & Code of Conduct for Campus Employees
- Student Code of Conduct
- MK College Apprentice Code of Conduct Apprentices
- Assessment & IQA Policy
- Academic Appeals Policy
- Complaints Guidelines – Speak Out
- Anti- Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Staff Resolution & Grievance Policy
- Public Interest Disclosure Policy & Procedures (Whistleblowing)
- Anti-Fraud & Corruption Policy
- Plagiarism, Collusion & Cheating Policy
- Malpractice & Maladministration Policy
- Send & Learning Support Guidance

Complaint Stage Process (Flowchart)

Stage 1 (Informal)

We would encourage you to discuss your concerns with a member of staff as most problems can be resolved quickly and informally in this way.

The initial complaint can be made by using (but not limited to) the following methods:



Stage 2 (Formal)

Where it has not been possible to satisfactorily resolve matters in Stage 1 then the concern/complaint should be progressed to the Speak Out procedures. Additionally, if the complainant wishes to raise a concern/complaint anonymously then they can use the Speak Out procedures outlined below.

Complainant makes complaint using EthicsPoint which is available on the MK College Website Speak Out platform [EthicsPoint - Milton Keynes College](#) or on the free Speak Out Hotline Number: 0800 0698395

EthicsPoint makes these reports available only to specific individuals within the College who are charged with determining what happens next, based on the type of violation, complaint or concern and location of the incident. Relevant feedback and questions are recorded on the report by the designated member of MK College Group Staff.

A formal acknowledgement of the complaint will be confirmed within **two** working days of receiving the complaint. This communication will inform the complainant that they will receive a full response within **fifteen** working days.

Complainant is assigned a unique code called a "report key" – this is to maintain their anonymity. After **six** business days, the complainant can use their report key and password to check the report for feedback or questions.

Full response is provided to the complainant within fifteen working days of receipt of complaint.

Complainant satisfied with response and no further action necessary

Complainant not satisfied with response and wishes to make an appeal and progresses to stage 3 of the process.

Stage 3 (Appeal)

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the resolution offered, the complainant has the right to appeal.

The complainant must address their appeal to the Milton Keynes College Group Executive Leadership Team within **ten** working days of the outcome at Stage 2.
(This can be to any member of ELT)



Upon receipt of the appeal, it is the responsibility of the member of ELT to inform People Services that an appeal has been placed



The appropriate member of ELT will review the complaint and respond in writing within **fifteen** working days with a copy to People Services and the Group Quality team.



If the complainant is still not satisfied, they may wish to appeal the decision by writing to the Milton Keynes College Group Board of Governors.
Clerk to the Governors will acknowledge the appeal within five working days and share with the relevant Governors – a response will be given in writing within fifteen working days



If the complainant has exhausted the Milton Keynes College Group's Complaints policy (Speak Out) and is still not satisfied, they may wish to write to the relevant funding agency about the handling of the complaint, details of which will be provided on request.

Information and FAQs for Whistleblowing, Complaints and Grievances: Using Speak Out



Milton Keynes College places a significant emphasis on customer feedback and staff views, seeing any complaints, grievances and whistleblowing notifications received as a valuable tool for contributing to ongoing improvements to the quality of our services. Milton Keynes College will respond to all suggestions, whether positive or negative, in a prompt and courteous manner. All complaints will be treated seriously and whistleblowing notifications and grievances will be treated in line with our specific policies.

We have partnered with EthicsPoint to provide a service which will help us respond to and, if necessary, allow the individual submitting the complaint or whistleblowing notification, complete anonymity. EthicsPoint is a comprehensive and confidential reporting tool created by NAVEX Global to address fraud, abuse, and other misconduct in the workplace, all while cultivating a positive work and learning environment.

Why does Milton Keynes College need a system to deal with Whistleblowing, Complaints and Grievances?

We believe that our employees and our students are our most important assets. By creating open channels of communication, we can promote a positive work environment and maximise learning outcomes.

We believe an anonymous reporting vehicle helps MK College meet its professional and statutory requirements to address accounting and auditing fraud directly with the audit committee and deal with other misconduct appropriately.

An effective reporting system will augment our other efforts to foster a culture of integrity and ethical decision-making and reporting.

What is a complaint?

In general terms, it is an expression of dissatisfaction about the College's action or lack of action or a specific concern about the College provision, support offered by a College department, an administrative system or policy operated by or on behalf of the College. It also includes any specific concern about the activities of College students whilst on College owned property or College staff engaged in College business.

What is not considered a complaint?

- Academic assessment e.g. grades and marks. These are covered by the Academic Appeals procedure
- Any attempt to reopen or reconsider a complaint the College have concluded or given their final decision on.

When should I complain?

Before raising a formal complaint, you should discuss your concerns with the most appropriate member of staff as most problems can be resolved quickly and informally in this way. If your situation cannot be resolved informally, the EthicsPoint Speak Out reporting platform or hotline is there for you to make a more formal submission. Acknowledgement of the formal submission will be sent within five working days of receipt alongside information about the process to be followed to consider and resolve it.

Making a Complaint or submitting a Whistleblowing notification or a Grievance**May I report using either the Internet or the telephone?**

Yes. With EthicsPoint, you have the ability to file a confidential, anonymous complaint, grievance or whistleblowing notification via either the telephone or the Internet.

The free Speak Out Hotline Number is 0800 0698395.

What type of situations should I report?

The EthicsPoint system is designed for employees, students or other members of the community to report any violation of our Professional Standards or Student Code of Conduct, or other concern, complaint or grievance that may arise.

As an employee, if I see a violation, shouldn't I just report it to my manager, security, or human resources and let them deal with it?

When you observe some behaviour that you believe violates our professional standards or codes of conduct, we expect you to report it. Ideally, you should bring any concerns forward to your direct manager, or other member of our management team. We recognise, however, that there may be circumstances when you are not comfortable reporting the issue in this manner. It is for such circumstances that we have partnered with EthicsPoint. We would rather you report anonymously than keep the information to yourself.

Why should I report what I know? What's in it for me?

We all have the right to work and study in a positive environment and we want to make sure we are contributing well to the communities we serve. With this comes the responsibility of acting in an ethical manner and letting the appropriate people know if someone is not acting as they should. By working together, we can maintain a healthy and productive environment. Corporate misconduct or shortfalls in standards can threaten the livelihood of the entire College.

Does the College really want me to report?

We certainly do. In fact, we need you to report. We need to know what is going on in the College and in the prisons in which we provide education services - both good and

bad. You may have initial knowledge of an activity that may be cause for concern. Your reporting can minimise the potential negative impact on the College, our people and our communities. Also, offering positive input may help identify issues that can improve our culture and performance.

Where do these reports go? Who can access them?

Reports are entered directly on the EthicsPoint secure server to prevent any possible breach in security. EthicsPoint makes these reports available only to specific individuals within the College who are charged with determining what happens next, based on the type of violation, complaint or concern and location of the incident. Each of these report recipients has had training in handling these reports with the utmost confidence.

Isn't this system just an example of someone watching over me?

The EthicsPoint system concentrates on being a positive aspect of our overall philosophy and our College values. It allows us to assure a safe, secure, and ethical workplace and learning environment. You are encouraged to seek guidance on ethical dilemmas, provide positive suggestions, or communicate a concern. Effective communication is critical for everyone at the College, wherever they are based, and this is a great tool to enhance that communication.

We have carefully chosen the best reporting tool to meet our compliance obligations while maintaining a positive reporting environment.

Reporting Security & Confidentiality

It is my understanding that any report I send from a College computer generates a server log that shows every website that my PC connects with, and won't this log identify me as a report originator?

EthicsPoint does not generate or maintain any internal connection logs with IP addresses, so no information linking your PC to EthicsPoint is available. In fact, EthicsPoint is contractually committed not to pursue a reporter's identity.

If you feel uncomfortable making a report on your work PC, you have the option of using a PC outside our work environment (such as one located at an Internet café, at a friend's house, etc.) through the EthicsPoint secure website. Many people choose this option, as EthicsPoint's data shows that fewer than 12% of reports are generated during business hours.

Can I file a report from home and still remain anonymous?

A report from home, a neighbour's computer, or any Internet portal will remain secure and anonymous. An Internet portal never identifies a visitor by screen name and the EthicsPoint system strips away Internet addresses so that anonymity is totally maintained. Plus, EthicsPoint is contractually committed not to pursue a reporter's identity.

I am concerned that the information I provide EthicsPoint will ultimately reveal my identity. How can you assure me that will not happen?

The EthicsPoint system is designed to protect your anonymity. However, if you wish to remain anonymous, you - as a reporting party - need to ensure that the body of the report does not reveal your identity by accident. For example, "From my desk next to Jan Smith..." or "In my 33 years at MK College...".

Is the Speak Out hotline confidential and anonymous too?

Yes. You will be asked to provide the same information that you would provide in an Internetbased report, and an interviewer will type your responses into the EthicsPoint Web site. These reports have the same security and confidentiality measures applied to them during delivery.

What if I want to be identified with my report?

There is a section in the report for identifying yourself, if you wish.

Tips & Best Practices

I am aware of some individuals involved with unethical conduct, but it doesn't affect me. Why should I bother reporting it?

MK College chooses to promote ethical, and values driven behaviour. All unethical conduct, at any level, ultimately hurts the College, our employees and our students, including you. You only have to consider what you read in the news to see the disastrous effects that a seemingly harmless lapse in ethics can have on an otherwise healthy organisation. So if you know of any incidents of misconduct or ethical violations, consider it your duty to yourself and your colleagues and peers to report it.

I am not sure if what I have observed or heard is a violation of MK College policy, or involves unethical conduct, but it just does not look right to me. What should I do?

File a report. EthicsPoint can help you prepare and file your report so it can be properly understood. We'd rather you report a situation that turns out to be harmless than let possible unethical behaviour go unchecked because you weren't sure.

What if my line manager or other managers are involved in a violation? Won't they get the report and start a cover-up?

The EthicsPoint system and report distribution are designed so that implicated parties are not notified or granted access to reports in which they have been named.

What if I remember something important about the incident after I file the report? Or what if there are further questions for me concerning my report?

When you file a report at the EthicsPoint Web site or through the EthicsPoint Call Centre, you receive a unique username and are asked to choose a password. You can return to the EthicsPoint system again either by Internet or telephone and access the original report to add more detail or answer questions posed by an MK College representative and add further information that will help resolve open issues. We strongly suggest that you return to the site in the time specified to answer questions. By using EthicsPoint to file your report, you have now entered into an "anonymous dialogue," where situations are not only identified, but can also be resolved, no matter how complex.

Are these follow-ups on reports as secure as the first one?

All EthicsPoint correspondences are held in the same strict confidence as the initial report, continuing under the umbrella of anonymity.

Can I still file a report if I don't have access to the Internet?

You can file an EthicsPoint report from any computer that can access the Internet. You can file from home. Many public locations, including the public library, have Internet computers. If you don't have access to or are uncomfortable using a computer, you can call the EthicsPoint free Speak Out hotline, which is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

How does the College monitor this process to understand if it's effective?

An annual report will be reported to the Milton Keynes College Board of Governors summarising the complaints during the year. This will be based on an analysis of the complaints by School and Business Partner function, category of complaint, and type of complainant. Analysis will also be provided according to diversity information.

What happens if, after following the process, I am not satisfied with the outcome?

If you have exhausted the College's Complaints, Whistleblowing and Grievance Guidelines and relevant Policies and Procedures and are still not satisfied, you may wish to write to the relevant funding agency about the College's handling of the complaint. If the complaint has come from a student on a Higher Education Programme, the complainant may escalate their complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator. Details of funding agencies and adjudication can be provided upon request.

Additional Information for Higher Education Students relating to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator

Under the Higher Education Act 2004 the College subscribes to the independent scheme for the review of student complaints. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome they may be able to apply for a review of the complaint / appeal to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) providing that the complaint presented to the OIA is eligible under its Rules. After the complaint has been investigated the complainant will be issued with a Completion of Procedures Letter which will provide further details about the OIA's work to support the complainant further.