

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 One of the hallmarks of an effective charity is that it will be accountable and transparent. The College of Paramedics (the College) welcomes both positive and challenging feedback from its members and stakeholders and has well-publicised, effective and timely procedures for dealing with complaints about the charity and its activities.
- 1.2 Complaints can be delivered to the College via:
- the head office
  - an employee
  - a Trustee
  - a station liaison
  - verbally; via phone, voicemail, face to face
  - in written form; via letter, email.
- 1.3 Complaints may be made confidentially with complainant name and contact details known only by a service manager and/or the Chief Executive, however anonymous complaints will be directed through the College whistleblowing policy.
- 1.4 A complaint may be made without an overt statement that it is a complaint. The College aims to recognise and acknowledge any expression of dissatisfaction as a potential complaint.
- 1.5 Document layout
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## 2. Purpose

- 2.1 This policy covers the principles and the procedures for the handling and management of complaints to ensure that all complaints delivered to the College are managed consistently, fairly and transparently, and that clear records are maintained and available for inspection.
- 2.2 This policy explains the right to complain and to appeal and gives details of the process and likely timescales.

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## 3. Definitions

3.1 For the purposes of this policy the following definition will apply:

- A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about:
  - the standards of service provided by the College, which, an individual member or a group of members, claim has affected him, her or them
  - the conduct of an individual closely associated with the College such as a member, a Trustee or an employee.

## 4. Scope of Policy

4.1 This policy covers all complaints received by the College and sets out in detail the procedures for complaints about College services, employees and members (including Trustees).

## 5. Complaints about a College service

5.1 Principles:

- The College takes all complaints about its services seriously
- If there is found to be a case to answer every effort will be made to remedy the situation to the complainant's satisfaction
- The College views complaints as opportunities to learn and improve its processes and effectiveness in representing the professional interests of the paramedic profession.

5.2 On receipt of a complaint, details will be requested and recorded of the complainant's name, contact details, and the substance of the complaint.

5.3 The complainant will be advised, if the complaint is considered to be of a serious nature, that a representative of the College may contact them for further details and, if not already provided, request the complaint in writing.

5.4 In the first instance, the person who receives the complaint will try to remedy the situation to the complainant's satisfaction

5.5 If this is not possible they will refer it on, as soon as possible and not within more than three working days, to the manager of the relevant service, who will again endeavour to remedy the situation to the complainant's satisfaction.

5.6 If this is not possible they will refer it on, as soon as possible and not more than three working days, to the Chief Executive (CE) or if not available, another member of the Executive Team.

5.7 The CE or delegate will work with the relevant service manager to remedy the situation to the complainant's satisfaction

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5.8 There are various options of redress that the College can offer which are not mutually exclusive, such as:

- making a commitment to ensure that whatever went wrong does not recur
- providing tangible evidence of work done to achieve this, such as copies of meeting minutes or an invitation to a key event
- sending a letter of apology and appreciation or an outline of the action that has been taken from a senior person in the College
- rectifying the problem where possible
- waiving part or all of any related charge made to the complainant.

5.9 Complaints related to strategic direction or professional standards will, in the first instance, be referred to the CE and the relevant head of department, who should make recommendations as to a response, to the Trustee Officials Committee (TOC), for approval.

## 6. Complaints against an employee

6.1 Principles:

- The College takes all complaints against its employees seriously
- If there is found to be a case to answer the determinations made will be in accordance with the College's disciplinary procedure
- The College views complaints as opportunities to learn and improve its processes and effectiveness in representing the professional interests of the paramedic profession.

6.2 On receipt of a complaint, details will be requested and recorded of the complainant's name, contact details, and the substance of the complaint. The complainant will be advised that, if the complaint is considered to be of a serious nature, a representative of the College may contact them for further details and, if not already provided, request the complaint in writing.

6.3 In the first instance, if appropriate, the complaint will be directed to the line manager of the employee who will try to resolve the issue to the complainant's satisfaction.

6.4 If this is not possible the Chief Executive (CE) or if not available, another member of the Executive Team, should be advised of the complaint as soon as possible and not within more than 3 working days.

6.5 The CE or delegate will contact the individual who is the subject of the complaint within two working days of receiving the complaint in writing, to advise them of the nature of the complaint and that they should make a response addressed to the CE within 21 working days.

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6.6 The CE or delegate and the relevant line manager will meet to consider the substance of the complaint, the response of the employee and the appropriate outcome. The outcome may be one of the following:

- No case to answer
- Informal discussion, apology issued if relevant
- Disciplinary process activated.

6.7 The employees have a right of appeal within the disciplinary process. The employee should appeal in writing to the CE, within 7 working days of receiving the outcome of the disciplinary. The appeal will be heard by a Vice-chair who will follow the disciplinary procedure.

## 7. Complaints against members of the College

7.1 Principles:

- The College of Paramedics takes all complaints against its members, including Trustees, seriously
- Clause 20 of the College Articles of Association provides scope to terminate membership of any person, should the Board consider it undesirable that such person continues as a member. However, the correct procedures, including the opportunity to appeal, must be followed
- The College of Paramedics views complaints as opportunities to learn and improve its processes and effectiveness in representing the professional interests of the paramedic profession.

7.2 On receipt of a complaint, details will be requested and recorded of the complainant's name, contact details, and the substance of the complaint. The complainant will be advised that, if the complaint is considered to be of a serious nature, a representative of the College may contact them for further details and, if not already provided, to put the complaint in writing.

7.3 The Chief Executive (CE) or, if not available, another member of the Executive Team, should be advised of the complaint as soon as possible and not within more than three working days. This process may not move on before the complaint is received in writing.

7.4 In the first instance, CE will consider whether it is more appropriate that the complaint be referred to another body rather than or before the College addresses the complaint. The complainant will be informed of such.

### Stage 1

7.5 If/when it is decided that it is appropriate that the College addresses the complaint, the CE or delegate will contact the individual who is the subject of the complaint within two working days of receiving the complaint in writing, to advise them of the nature of the complaint and that they should make a response addressed to a named Vice-Chair of the College within 21 working days.

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7.6 On receipt of the response, names of individuals will be redacted, and the CE or delegate will discuss the complaint with one other Executive Team member and two Trustees. This discussion can take place via phone, video link, or email but must be concluded within 14 working days of receipt of the response. A complaint against a Trustee will go straight to Stage 2.

7.7 The discussion will consider the substance of the complaint and the appropriate response to the complaint. The outcome may be one of the following:

- no case to answer
- referral to a Committee of the Board (Stage 2)
- organisation suspension of membership pending
  - further investigation and return to Step 7.6
  - remedial action and rectification by member
  - referral to another body
- termination of membership either permanently or for a fixed-term following which a review will take place.

7.8 The CE will write to the individual who is the subject of the complaint within 7 working days setting out the outcome.

## Stage 2

7.9 The individual subject to the outcome has the right of appeal and, if they wish to do so, they should write to the CE within 21 working days of receiving the letter from the CE.

7.10 The CE will convene a meeting of a temporary Committee of the Board to be led by a named Vice-chair of the College which shall meet within 14 working days of receipt of the appeal.

7.11 A complaint against a Vice-chair or Deputy Chair will require the Deputy Chair or Chair to lead the Committee. A complaint against the Chair will require the Deputy Chair to lead the Committee with at least one other Vice-chair present.

7.12 The Committee of the Board will consider the substance of the complaint and the appropriate response to the complaint, making a determination which may be one of the following:

- no case to answer
- organisation suspension of membership pending
  - further investigation and return to Step 7.10
  - remedial action and rectification by member
  - referral to another body
- termination of membership either permanently or for a fixed-term following which a review will take place.

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7.13 The named Vice-Chair will write to the individual who is the subject of the complaint within 7 working days setting out the determination of the Committee.

## Stage 3

7.14 The individual who is the subject of a determination has the right of appeal and should, if they wish to do so, write to the CE within 21 working days of receiving the letter of determinations from the Vice-Chair.

7.15 The CE will convene a temporary Committee of the Board to be led by the Chair of the College and whose membership will not be the same as those of the previous Committee and which will convene within 14 working days of receipt of the appeal.

7.16 Appeals by the Deputy Chair or Chair will be heard by the Board of Trustees

7.17 The Committee of the Board will consider the substance of the complaint and the appropriate response to the complaint, taking into account the record made by the original Committee, and make a determination which may be one of the following:

- no case to answer
- organisation suspension of membership pending
  - further investigation and return to Step 7.15
  - remedial action and rectification by member
  - referral to another body
- termination of membership for either permanently or for a fixed-term following which a review will take place.

7.18 The Chair will write to the individual who is the subject of the complaint within 7 working days setting out the determination of the Committee.

7.19 The determination of the Stage 3 Committee shall be final.

## 8. Records

8.1 The CE will be responsible to ensure records are kept of all complaints and that complaints data and analysis is collated for inclusion in the Annual Report.

## End of document

Policy approved by the Board of Trustees, via email, February 2018

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## Appendix 1

### Stage 1

Inform subject in writing within 2 days of receiving written complaint

Respond in writing within 21 working days of receiving written notice

CE writes to subject of complaint within 7 working days

Discussion by CE or Delegate plus other Executive Team member and 2 Trustees within 14 days

Appeal in writing within 21 working days of receiving written notice of outcome of Stage 1

### Stage 2: First appeal or subject is Trustee of the College

Temporary Committee of the Board led by named Vice-chair meet within 14 working days of receipt of the appeal/complaint about Trustee

Complaint against Deputy Chair/Vice-chair: Chair/Deputy Chair leads Committee.  
Complaint against Chair: Deputy Chair leads Committee with one other Vice-chair present

Consider substance of complaint and appropriate response to complaint

Vice-Chair writes to subject of complaint within 7 working days

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Appeal in writing within 21 working days of receiving written notice of outcome of Stage 2

**Stage 3:**

Temporary Committee of the Board led by Chair and with membership not the same as the previous Committee will convene within 14 working days of receipt of appeal.

Appeals by the Deputy Chair or Chair will be heard by the Board of Trustees

Consider substance of complaint and appropriate response to complaint and considering previous Committee record

Chair will write to subject of complaint within 7 working days



The determination of the Stage 3 Committee shall be final.

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