



Complaints Handling

We want to help

LSM Concerns and Complaints Policy

1. The London School of Mediation is committed to dealing effectively with any concerns or complaints you may have about our service. We aim to clarify any issues about which you are not sure. If possible, we'll put right any mistakes we may have made. Our policy has been reviewed by NOCN (December 2014) and approved.
2. We will provide any service you're entitled to which we have failed to deliver. If we got something wrong, we'll apologise and where possible we'll try to put things right. We also aim to learn from our mistakes and use the information we gain to improve our services.

When to use this policy

3. When you express your concerns or complain to us, we will usually respond in the way we explain below. Occasionally we may deviate if time, resources or other circumstances so require. Also, this policy does not apply if the matter relates to a Freedom of Information or Data Protection issue. In this circumstance, you should contact the FOI/DPA officer, Judith Kelbie.

Have you asked us yet?

4. If you are approaching us for a service for the first time, (e.g. making an enquiry etc) then this policy doesn't apply. You should first give us a chance to respond to your request. If you make a request for a service and then are not happy with our response, you will be able to make your concern known as we describe below.

Informal resolution

5. If possible, we believe it is best to deal with things straight away rather than try to sort them out later. If you have a concern, raise it with the person you're dealing with. He or she will try to resolve it for you there and then. If there are any lessons to learn from addressing your concern then the member of staff will draw them to our attention. If the member of staff can't help, they will explain why and you can then ask for a formal investigation.

How to express concern or complain formally

6. You can express your concern or complain in any of the ways below:-

* You can get in touch with our central complaint contact point on 01423 874599 if you want to make your complaint over the phone.

- * You can use the 'contact us' form on our website at www.londonschoolofmediation.com
- * You can e-mail us at concern@schoolofmediation.org
- * You can write a letter to us at the following address:

Complaints Officer, 7 Hornbeam Square South Harrogate HG2 8NB

Dealing with your concern or complaint

7. We will adopt the following approach:

- * We will formally acknowledge your concern or complaint within five days and let you know how we intend to deal with it.
- * We will ask you to tell us how you would like us to communicate with you and establish whether you have any particular requirements – for example, if you have a disability.
- * We will deal with your concern or complaint in an open and honest way.
- * We will make sure that your dealings with us in the future do not suffer just because you have expressed a concern or made a complaint.

8. Normally, we will only be able to look at your concern or complaint if you tell us about them within two weeks. This is because it is better to look into your concerns or complaints while the issues are still fresh in everyone's mind.
9. We may exceptionally be able to look at concerns which are brought to our attention later than this. However, you will have to give us strong reasons why you have not been able to bring it to our attention earlier and we will need to have sufficient information about the issue to allow us to consider it properly. (In any event, regardless of the circumstances, we will not consider any concerns or complaints about matters that took place more than six months ago).
10. If you are expressing a concern or complaint on behalf of somebody else, we will need to see evidence of their agreement to you acting on their behalf.

Investigation

11. We will tell you who we have asked to look into your concern or complaint. If your concern is straightforward, we'll usually ask somebody from LSM to look into it and get back to you.
12. We will set out to you our understanding of your concerns and ask you to confirm that we've got it right. We'll also ask you to tell us what outcome you're hoping for. The person looking at your complaint will usually need to see the documents we hold relevant to your complaint.
13. If you do not want this to happen, it's important that you tell us.
14. If there is a simple solution to your problem, we may ask you if you are happy to accept this. For example, where you asked for a service and we see straight away that you should have had it, we will offer to provide the service rather than investigate and produce a report.

15. We will aim to resolve concerns or complaints as quickly as possible and expect to deal with the vast majority within 10 working days.
16. If your complaint is more complex, we will:-
 - * let you know within this time why we think it may take longer to investigate
 - * tell you how long we expect it to take.
 - * let you know where we have reached with the investigation, and
 - * give you regular updates, including telling you whether any developments might change our original estimate.
17. The person who is investigating your concerns will aim first to establish the facts. The extent of this investigation will depend on the complexity or the seriousness of the issues you have raised. In complex cases, we will draw up an investigation plan. Or
18. In some instances, we may ask to meet you to discuss your concerns. Occasionally, we might suggest mediation or another method to try to resolve disputes.
19. We will look at relevant evidence. This could include files, notes of conversations, letters, e-mails or whatever may be relevant to your particular concern. If necessary, we will talk to the staff, tutors, assessors or others involved and look at our policies and any legal entitlement and guidance.

Outcome

20. If we formally investigate your complaint, we will let you know what we have found in keeping with your preferred form of communication. This could be by letter or e-mail, for example. If necessary, we will produce a longer report. We'll explain how and why we came to our conclusions.
21. If we find that we got it wrong, we'll tell you what and why it happened. We'll show how the mistake affected you.
22. If we find there is a fault in our systems or the way we do things, we'll tell you what it is and how we plan to change things to stop it happening again.
23. If we got it wrong, we will always apologise.

Putting Things Right

24. If we didn't provide a service you should have had, we will aim to provide it now if that is possible. If we did not do something well, we will aim to put it right. If you have lost out as a result of a mistake on our part we will aim to put you back in the position you would have been in if we had got it right.

Learning lessons

25. We take your concerns and complaints seriously and try to learn from any mistakes we have made. Our directors consider a summary of all complaints quarterly as well as details of any serious concerns.

26. Where there is a need for change, we will develop an action plan setting out what we will do, who will do it and when we plan to do it by. We will let you know when changes we have promised have been made.

What if I need help?

27. Our staff will aim to help you make your concerns known to us. If you need extra assistance, we will try to put you in touch with someone who can help.

Review

28. This policy is reviewed by a director currently:-

Judith Kelbie
Solicitor & Mediator
Director
London School of Mediation
