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At OPAL CIC, we strive to provide exceptional products/ services and maintain high standards of customer satisfaction. However, we understand that there may be instances where our customers are dissatisfied with our offerings or services. We take all feedback seriously and are committed to resolving any issues as promptly, fairly and informally as possible.

Purpose

The purpose of this Complaints Procedure is to outline the procedures for addressing and resolving customer complaints effectively and efficiently.

Scope

This procedure applies to all customers of OPAL CIC who wish to complain about our products/ services or any aspect of their customer experience. Timescales contained in this document do not include weekends or school holiday periods.

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If the subject of the complaint is absent and is unable to be part of a discussion or an investigation, then the complaint will be put on hold until their return. Issues from the complaint will be passed on to the line manager of that person and, if appropriate, actions will be taken. The complainant will be informed that the complaint is on hold and will be informed of any actions taken by OPAL CIC to address the issues raised.

STEP 1: Informal

It is encouraged that all concerns and complaints should be referred to the OPAL Mentor/ Staff Member in the first instance - this can be done by speaking directly to them or by contacting them via email.

Start by telling the OPAL Mentor/ Staff Member about your concern. This is usually the **best and quickest way of resolving issues**.

- It is recommended that you make an appointment to speak to the OPAL Mentor/ Staff Member as soon as possible, as this will allow both parties to talk about the issue in an appropriate manner and without being interrupted (this could also be in the form of a virtual meeting).
- It is important to recognise that OPAL mentors are often busy working in schools, and it may not be possible to offer an appointment straight away.
- The purpose of this meeting should be to establish the nature of the concern and to seek a realistic resolution to the problem.
- It is good practice for the OPAL Mentor/ Staff Member(s) to make a brief written record of the concern raised and any actions agreed upon.

Most problems will likely have been resolved at this stage through the informal process. If you feel dissatisfied with the outcome of discussions with the OPAL Mentor/ Staff Member or you feel unable to address your concern with the complainee, please escalate the concern by progressing to Step 2.

STEP 2: Formal - escalation

If the concern has not been resolved, please make a formal complaint by following the Complaints Handling Procedure below. **Please note that it is likely that any forthcoming meetings you have booked with an OPAL Mentor/ Staff Member are likely to be suspended until the Step 2 process has been completed.**

Complaints Handling Procedure

Receipt of Complaints:

- Customers can lodge a complaint via our [OPAL Complaints Procedure Online Form](#) (also found on our website).
- All complaints will be documented, including the date received, the nature of the complaint, and the customer's contact details.

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Acknowledgement:

- Upon receiving a complaint, **we will acknowledge its receipt within 24 hours** in writing.
- The acknowledgement will include information about the steps we will take to address the complaint.

Investigation:

- The complaint will be thoroughly investigated by a designated member of our team.
- We may request additional information from the customer if necessary to fully understand the nature of the complaint.
- Please note that a complaint must include all concerns present at the initial stage. Unraised or new concerns cannot be introduced during the complaints process, although these can form part of a new complaint.

Resolution:

The investigator will consider the complaint and, in doing so, will:

- Establish what has happened so far, and who has been involved.
- Contact you if they need further information.
- Interview those involved in the matter and/ or those complained of.
- Conduct any interview with an open mind and be prepared to persist in the questioning.
- Keep notes of any interview for the record.

The investigator will keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- An apology.
- An explanation.
- An admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better (n.b. this is not an admission of negligence).
- An assurance that the event complained of will not recur.
- An explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again.
- An undertaking to review policies in light of the complaint.
- The option of working with another OPAL Mentor.

It may also be the case that the complaint may not have any substance and is therefore considered to be **unfounded** or **unsubstantiated**.

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Once the investigation is complete, we will work to **resolve the complaint by sending a detailed written response within 30 working days**. Where this proves unrealistic, you will be informed in writing and given an estimate of how long it will take to provide a detailed response. We will communicate the resolution to the customer, outlining any actions taken to address their concerns.

Feedback and Follow-Up:

- After the resolution, we may follow up with the customer to ensure their satisfaction and gather feedback on the handling of the complaint (within 15 working days).
- Any feedback received will be used to improve our processes and prevent similar issues from arising in the future.

Escalation Procedure

If a complaint cannot be resolved satisfactorily through the standard procedure outlined above, it will be escalated to a higher authority within OPAL CIC for further review and resolution.

Vexatious Complaints

The majority of complaints are resolved through a properly managed complaints procedure. However, there are occasions when:

- Despite all stages of the procedure having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If a complainant tries to reopen the same issue, the Managing Director will write informing them that all stages of the procedure have been exhausted and the matter is considered closed.
- Complainants behave unreasonably when raising and/ or pursuing concerns. In these circumstances, OPAL CIC may take action in accordance with Appendix 1 of this procedure.

Confidentiality

All complaints and related information will be handled confidentially and in accordance with applicable privacy laws.

Procedure Review

This Complaints Procedure will be reviewed periodically to ensure its effectiveness and relevance to the business operations. Any necessary updates will be made promptly.

Contact Information

If you have any questions, please contact us at: opalcic@opalcic.org.

If you wish to complain, please complete our [OPAL Complaints Procedure Online Form](#).

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Conclusion

At OPAL CIC, we value our customers and are committed to providing exceptional service. We encourage open communication and feedback to continuously improve our products/ services and enhance the overall customer experience. Your satisfaction is our priority.

OPAL CIC Head Office - September 2025

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Appendix 1

Policy for dealing with persistent or vexatious complaints/ harassment

The Managing Director and OPAL CIC Head Office deal with specific complaints as part of their day-to-day management of the CIC in accordance with the **Complaints Procedure**. The majority of complaints are handled in an informal manner and are resolved quickly, sensitively and to the satisfaction of the complainant.

However, there are occasions when complainants behave unreasonably when raising and/ or pursuing concerns. In these circumstances, OPAL CIC may take action in accordance with this policy.

1. Aims of Policy

This policy aims to:

- Uphold the standards of courtesy and reasonableness that should characterise all communication between OPAL CIC and persons who wish to express a concern or pursue a complaint.
- Support the well-being of staff and everyone else who has a legitimate interest in the work of the CIC.
- Deal fairly, honestly and properly with those who make persistent or vexatious complaints and those who harass members of OPAL CIC while ensuring that other stakeholders suffer no detriment.

2. Human Rights

In implementing this policy, the Managing Director will seek to ensure that its actions are in accordance with its obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Convention Rights embodied within it in order to protect the Human Rights of both persistent complainants, OPAL CIC staff and all other stakeholders.

3. Complainants' expectations of OPAL CIC:

Parents/ carers/ members of the public who raise either informal or formal issues or complaints with OPAL CIC can expect OPAL CIC to:

- a. Communicate in writing:
 - i. How and when problems can be raised with the CIC.
 - ii. The existence of the complaints procedure.
 - iii. The existence of the Policy for Dealing with Persistent or Vexatious Complaints and/ or Harassment.
- b. Respond within a reasonable time.
- c. Be available for consultation within reasonable time limits, bearing in mind the nature of the complaint.
- d. Respond with courtesy and respect.
- e. Attempt to resolve problems using reasonable means in line with OPAL CIC's complaints procedure and other policies and practices.
- f. Keep complainants informed of progress towards a resolution of the issues raised.

4. OPAL CIC's expectations of parents/ carers/ members of the public

OPAL CIC can expect parents/ carers/ members of the public who wish to raise problems to:

- a. Treat all OPAL CIC staff with courtesy and respect.
- b. Respect the needs and well-being of OPAL CIC staff.
- c. Avoid any use, or threatened use, of violence against people or property.
- d. Avoid any aggression or verbal abuse.
- e. Recognise the time constraints under which members of OPAL CIC staff work and allow a reasonable time to respond.
- f. Recognise that resolving a specific problem can sometimes take some time.
- g. (in the case of a complaint) Follow the Complaints Procedure.

5. Who is a persistent complainant?

5.1 For this policy, a persistent complainant is a parent/ carer or member of the public who complains about issues, either formally or informally, or frequently raises issues that the complainant considers to be within the remit of OPAL CIC and whose behaviour is unreasonable. Such behaviour may be characterised by:

- a. Actions which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious.
- b. Prolific correspondence or excessive e-mail or telephone contact about a concern or complaint.
- c. An insistence upon pursuing unsubstantial complaints and/ or unrealistic or unreasonable outcomes.
- d. An insistence upon unreasonably pursuing complaints.
- e. An insistence upon repeatedly pursuing a complaint when the outcome is not satisfactory to the complainant but cannot be changed, for example, if the desired outcome is beyond the remit of OPAL CIC because it is unlawful.

5.2 For this policy, harassment is the unreasonable pursuit of such actions as in (a) to (e) above in such a way that they:

- a. Appear to be targeted over a significant period of time on one or more members of OPAL CIC staff and/ or.
- b. Cause ongoing distress to individual member(s) of OPAL CIC staff and/ or.
- c. Are pursued in a manner which can be perceived as intimidating and oppressive by the recipient. This could include situations where persistent demands and criticisms, whilst not particularly taxing or serious when viewed in isolation, have a cumulative effect over time of undermining confidence, well-being and health.

6. OPAL CIC's actions in cases of persistent or vexatious complaints or harassment

- a. In the first instance, OPAL CIC will verbally inform the complainant that his/ her behaviour is considered to be becoming unreasonable/ unacceptable and, if it is not modified, action may be taken in accordance with this policy.
- b. This will be confirmed in writing (Model Letter 1).
- c. If the behaviour is not modified, OPAL CIC will take some or all of the following actions as necessary, having regard to the nature of the complainant's behaviour and the effect of this on OPAL CIC staff members:
 1. Inform the complainant in writing that his/ her behaviour is now considered by OPAL CIC to be unreasonable/ unacceptable and, therefore, to fall under the terms of this

policy (see Model Letter 2).

2. Inform the complainant that all meetings with a member of OPAL CIC staff will be conducted with a second person present and that notes of meetings may be taken in the interests of all parties (see Model Letter 2).
3. Inform the complainant that, except in emergencies, all routine communication with the complainant to the OPAL CIC staff member(s) should be by letter only (see Model Letter 2).
- d. Legitimate new complaints will still be considered even if the person making them is, or has been, subject to the Policy for Dealing with Persistent or Vexatious Complaints and/or Harassment.
- e. If a complainant's persistent complaining/ harassing behaviour is modified and is then resumed at a later date within a reasonable period of time, OPAL CIC may resume the process identified above at an appropriate level.

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Model letter 1:

Initial letter informing a complainant that his/ her behaviour is considered to fall below a reasonable/ acceptable standard

Recorded delivery

Dear

This letter is to inform you that OPAL CIC considers your actions in [*describe actions, dates, behaviour*] on..... when you to be unreasonable/ unacceptable [*delete as appropriate*].

We would ask you to bear in mind the fact that such behaviour can be disruptive and distressing.

We are aware that you have raised some concerns and would advise you that these are usually dealt with most effectively through OPAL CIC's Complaints Procedure.

At the moment, we are dealing with these issues by [*describe actions being taken to resolve concern*].

Please note that OPAL CIC's Policy for Dealing with Persistent or Vexatious Complaints/ Harassment sets out standards of behaviour expected of all people in their dealings with OPAL CIC. These include:

- Behaving reasonably;
- Treating others with courtesy and respect;
- Resolving complaints using OPAL CIC's Complaints Procedure;
- Avoiding physical and verbal aggression at all times.

The Policy also indicates the steps that we may take if these standards are breached. These include:

- Making special arrangements for meetings and communication with OPAL CIC;
- Considering legal action.

I would ask that you allow OPAL CIC time to resolve the issues according to the correct procedures, and would assure you that we shall take every possible step to move this process forward as quickly as possible.

Yours sincerely

Managing Director

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Model letter 2:

Informing a complainant that his/ her behaviour is now considered to fall under the terms of the policy for dealing with persistent or vexatious complaints/ harassment

Recorded delivery

Dear

You will recall that I wrote to you on *[insert date]* telling you that I felt your behaviour was unreasonable.

I am now writing to inform you that, in view of your behaviour on *[date]*, when you *[describe actions/ behaviour]*, it has been decided that OPAL CIC's Policy for Dealing with Persistent or Vexatious Complaints/ Harassment Policy will apply.

In the circumstances, I have made the following arrangements for your future contact with OPAL CIC staff:

*[*Delete as applicable]*

*For the foreseeable future, should you wish to meet with a member of OPAL CIC staff, I would ask you to note:

- a. An appointment will be arranged and confirmed in writing as soon as possible.
- b. A third party from OPAL CIC will be present.
- c. In the interests of all parties, formal notes of this meeting may be made.

* For the foreseeable future, all routine communication with OPAL CIC should be by letter only.

Please address letters to at OPAL CIC. We shall respond as quickly as possible.

E-mail correspondence will not be responded to.

These arrangements take effect straight away. If you wish to make a representation about the contents of this letter, which may include any expressions of regret on your part and any assurances you are prepared to give about your future good conduct, you can do so by writing to me *[state ten working days from the date of the letter]*. If, on receipt of your comments, I consider that the arrangements outlined above should continue, you will be supplied with details of how to review the circumstances of your case.

I do hope that the difficulties we are currently experiencing can soon be resolved.

Yours sincerely

Managing Director

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