

Complaints Policy



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Statement of intent

Belong2 aims to resolve all complaints at the earliest possible stage and is dedicated to ensuring all complaints are managed sympathetically and efficiently.

Any complaint or concern will be taken seriously, whether formally or informally, and the appropriate procedures will be implemented. This policy has been created to deal with any complaint against a member of staff, or Belong2 as a whole, relating to any aspects of the or the provision of facilities or services.

Belong2 will ensure the complaints procedure is:

- Easily accessible and available.
- Simple to understand and put into practice.
- Impartial and fair to all parties involved.
- Respectful of confidentiality duties.
- Continuously under improvement, using information gathered during the procedure.
- Fairly investigated, by an independent person when necessary.
- Used to address all issues to provide appropriate and effective responses where necessary.

1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to legislation including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education and Skills Act 2008
- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014
- Equality Act 2010
- The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Freedom of Information Act 2000

2. Definitions

For the purpose of this policy:

- A “**complaint**” can be defined as ‘an expression of dissatisfaction’ towards the actions taken or a perceived lack of action taken.
- A “**concern**” can be defined as ‘an expression of worry or doubt’ where reassurance is required.
- “**Complainants**” are those who have raised a concern or a complaint.
- A “**grievance**” is an issue raised by a member of staff where they feel Belong2 has not implemented a policy or process fairly or properly.
- For the purpose of this policy, concerns will be classed and addressed as complaints.
- For the purpose of this policy, “**days**” relate to school days.

3. Eligibility to make a complaint

Parents (including individuals with parental responsibility) of students currently being educated at Belong2 are able to make a complaint in line with this policy.

All complaints will be treated seriously and confidentially. Parents will be assured that their children will not be penalised if they raise a complaint.

This policy does not cover complaints made by the following:

- Parents of students who have left voluntarily or as a result of being excluded (except where the complaints process was started when the pupil was still being educated at the)
- Students
- Prospective students and their parents, and the failure to admit such students

4. Timescales

Complaints are expected to be made as soon as possible after an issue arises to ensure the issue is addressed in an appropriate timescale.

Belong2 upholds a **three-month** time limit in which a complaint can be lodged following an incident. Complaints made outside this time limit will not be automatically refused and exceptions will be considered.

Timescales for managing complaints at specific stages are outlined in the relevant sections of this policy. In the case of any timescales changing, all parties involved will be informed of the changes in a timely manner.

5. Stage 1 – informal raising of a concern

Belong2 expects that most concerns can be resolved informally. Where concerns regard an aspect of day-to-day provision these should be raised with a student's mentor. Where a complainant feels it more serious, or where a complaint may relate to that mentor, these should be addressed to the Operations Lead (paul.hemming@b2mentoring.co.uk) or the Business Manager (gemma.potts@b2mentoring.co.uk).

A complaint may be made in person, by telephone or in writing. A written record will be kept of all concerns and the date on which they were received. A concern provided in writing will be acknowledged by telephone or in writing within **4 days** of receipt during term time and as soon as practicable during school holidays.

If the concern is not resolved within **10 days** or, in the event that the complainant is not satisfied with the response to their concern, the complainant will be advised to proceed in accordance with stage 2 of this procedure.

6. Stage 2 – formal complaint

The complainant should submit their complaint in writing to the business manager (Gemma Potts, gemma.potts@b2mentoring.co.uk). The complaint will be acknowledged by telephone or in writing within **4 days** of receipt during term time and as soon as practicable during school holidays, indicating that action is being taken and the likely timescales.

The Business Manager will arrange for a meeting with the complainant within **10 days** of acknowledging receipt of the complaint to discuss the matter. This meeting may be with the Business Manager or Operations Lead, as appropriate. If the complaint is about the Business Manager or Operations Lead, the meeting will take place with the Director.

During the meeting, the company representative (Business Manager or Operations Lead) will attempt to reach a resolution; however, it may be necessary for further investigations to be carried out by the company, to be conducted by a member of staff as appropriate to the concern raised.

Written records will be kept of all meetings and other communications held in relation to the complaint.

Once all facts are established, the Business Manager will inform the complainant of their decision and their reasoning in writing. Where a formal complaint has been raised with the director in person at stage 2, the Director will inform the complainant of their decision and their reasoning in writing.

The complainant will be informed of the decision within **20 days** from the receipt of the complaint. Where there are exceptional circumstances resulting in a delay, the complainant will be notified of this and informed of the new timescales as soon as possible.

7. Persistent Complaints

Unreasonable persistent complaints

Most complaints raised will be valid, and therefore we will treat them seriously. However, a complainant may become unreasonable if the person:

- Has made the same complaint before, which has already been resolved by following Belong2's complaints procedure
- Makes a complaint that is obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, defamatory, or repetitive
- Knowingly provides false information
- Insists on pursuing a complaint that is unfounded, or out of the scope of the complaints procedure
- Pursues a valid complaint, but in an unreasonable manner, e.g. refuses to articulate the complaint, refuses to co-operate with this complaints procedure, or insists that the complaint is dealt with in ways that are inconsistent with this procedure and the time frames it sets out
- Changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation goes on
- Makes a complaint designed to cause disruption, annoyance, or excessive demands on school time
- Seeks unrealistic outcomes, or a solution that lacks any serious purpose or value

Steps we will take

We will take every opportunity to address the complainant's concerns and give them a clear statement of our position and their options. We will maintain our role as an objective arbiter throughout the process, including when we meet with individuals. We will follow our complaints procedure as normal (as outlined above) wherever possible.

If the complainant continues to contact Belong2 in a disruptive way, it may become necessary to review the provision offered by B2 Mentoring as a result of this breakdown in relationship.

Stopping responding

We may cease to respond to a complaint when all these factors are met:

- We believe we have taken all reasonable steps to help address their concerns
- We have provided a clear statement of our position and their options
- The complainant contacts us repeatedly, and we believe their intention is to cause disruption or inconvenience

In these circumstances, we will inform the individual that we intend to cease to respond. We will also explain that we will still consider any new complaints they make.

In the event of aggressive, threatening, or violent behaviour directed towards any member of Belong2 or our wider community, we will inform the police and communicate the action we will take in writing. I

Duplicate complaints

If we have resolved a complaint under this procedure and receive a duplicate complaint on the same subject from a partner, family member or other individual, we will assess whether there is any new information or any aspects that have not been previously considered.

If we are satisfied that there are no new aspects, we will

- Tell the new complainant that we have already investigated and responded to this issue, and the local process is complete

Complaint campaigns

Where the Belong2 receives a large volume of complaints about the same topic or subject, especially if these come from complainants unconnected with Belong2, we may respond to these complaints by:

- Publishing a single response on the website
- Sending a template response to all of the complainants

If the complainants are not satisfied with the response, or wish to pursue the complaint further, the normal procedures will apply.

8. Recording complaints

A written record will be kept of any complaint made, detailing:

- Whether the complaint was resolved following an informal route, formal route, or panel hearing.
- Actions taken by the Belong2 as a result of the complaint (regardless of whether the complaint was upheld).

Additional records may be kept containing the following information:

- The date the issue was raised
- The name of the complainant and, where relevant, their child

- A description of the issue
- Records of all the investigations
- Witness statements
- The name of the staff member responsible for handling the issue at each stage
- Copies of correspondence on the issue

Correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the Education and Skills 2008 Act requests to access them.

9. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed **every two years**.

All changes made to this policy will be communicated with all relevant stakeholders.