

# The Royal Life Saving Society UK (RLSS UK)

## Complaints Policy and Procedure

**Volunteers, Members and Participants**

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## Definitions and key concepts

**RLSS UK:** The Royal Life Saving Society UK and also known as ‘The Society’.

**IQL UK:** is the awarding body of RLSS UK delivering regulated and non-regulated vocational training programmes.

**ATC/Ps:** means Approved Training Providers and Approved Training Centres.

**Appeal:** an appeal is defined as a request for the reconsideration of a decision made by complainant at any level of the Complaints Procedure.

**Complaint:** a complaint is a written or oral expression of dissatisfaction which has had an impact on an individual which requires an investigation and usually a formal response.

**Concern:** a concern is a written or oral expression of dissatisfaction, issue, worry or disquiet that is not serious or complex, which can be resolved promptly with minimal intervention. It could require a written response. A concern, in most cases, will be dealt with less formally.

**CAG:** Complaints Assessment Group.

**Dispute:** an unresolved complaint escalated either within or outside of our organisation.

**Feedback:** opinions, comments and expressions of interest or concern, made directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly, to or about us, about our services or complaint handling where a response is not explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.

**Member:** a member is any person who has a current membership and makes an annual contribution of a membership fee to obtain a package of benefits and support at RLSS UK. This includes those who hold honorary life memberships.

**Participant:** any person who attends RLSS UK activity as a participant.

**Volunteer:** anyone who willingly undertakes regular, ongoing and/ or occasional or one-off unpaid activity by giving their free time, energy, experience and skills to help perform an activity or task on behalf of RLSS UK without any monetary compensation or expectation of compensation. Volunteers are not paid a salary or wage but shall be reimbursed for approved out of pocket expenses.

## Policy

### 1. Introduction

We are confident of providing a high quality service. When something goes wrong or we fall short of the high standards we set, we need you to tell us about it so that we can have the opportunity to put things right and take the appropriate steps to resolve it.

We want to ensure that concerns from our customers and all those we interact with are acknowledged, managed and responded to in an open and accountable way. Therefore, it is important that should you feel you have encountered a level of service that is below both yours and our expectations that you raise any concerns you may have with us immediately so that we may address them and learn lessons.

At RLSS UK, we endeavour to deal with complaints in confidence. However, there may be circumstances where we are unable to deal with the complaint in confidence, for example if the complaint relates to a matter which may need to be referred to the police or statutory agencies.

We have developed a standard approach across the organisation setting out a complaints handling process to receiving and resolving complaints in a manner which is satisfactory to all parties. Our complaints policy and procedure supports organisational wide policies within RLSS UK and IQL procedures, standards, guidelines, Codes of Conduct and Codes of Practice.

This Complaints Policy and Procedure 2017 is a revised publication which replaces all previous RLSS UK versions of Complaints Policy dealing with external complaints.

### 2. Organisational Commitment

RLSS UK is committed to resolving complaints expediently, fairly and in a consistent and effective manner at all levels. If the complainant is still not happy with the outcome of the complaint, they will have the right to use our appeal process to resolve the issue. Complainants will be kept informed and supported in exercising their right to make a complaint without fear of discrimination.

### 3. Application and Scope

This policy will manage and respond to external complaints from our customers and all those we interact with in our activities, services, operations, functioning, programmes, qualifications and training.

It also covers complaints learners, Approved Training Centres/Providers (ATC/Ps), members of the public, and any other individual or organisation that has business or have dealings with RLSS UK that may wish to make a complaint in relation to any issue or qualifications and associated services offered by IQL UK.

Additionally, the policy will deal with external complaints against staff, volunteers and RLSS UK members, affiliated clubs and any other organisation or person delivering an activity on behalf of or in the name of RLSS UK/IQL in relation to the work of the organisation.

### 4. Breach of this Policy

Failure to comply with the requirements of this policy and procedure may result in investigation and disciplinary action being taken as considered appropriate.

## 5. Policy Exclusions

This procedure does not cover safeguarding complaints, as such complaints will be dealt with under the Complaints Procedure under the RLSS UK Safeguarding Policy.

## 6. IQL appeals

This policy is not applicable to appeals in relation to decisions made by IQL. IQL has its own Enquiries and Appeals Policy. If you are unhappy about the way an assessment was delivered and/or conducted, and you suspect malpractice or maladministration may have occurred, you should notify us of your concern in accordance with the arrangements set out in our Malpractice and Maladministration Policy.

## 7. Complaints Process

Everyone involved with RLSS UK including customers, members, employees and volunteers including all those that we interact with in our activities, services, operations, qualifications and training will be made aware of this policy and relevant procedure.

ATC/Ps should take all reasonable steps to ensure that their staff involved in the management, assessment and quality assurance of our qualifications, and its learners are aware of the contents of this policy. ATC/Ps should have a complaints handling procedure and appeals process in place to deal with complaints from its learners about the services they provide.

If an individual is unhappy about a service or activity being delivered by an ATC/P it must first of all go through the ATC/Ps complaints process before bringing the matter through this Complaints Policy and Procedure.

## 8. Aims of the Policy

The Policy aims to:

- Establish a uniform approach in the management of complaints and feedback across the organisation.
- Ensure that we have a procedure through which our customers and all those we interact with can communicate any complaints regarding all RLSS UK activities, services, operations, awards, training programmes. This includes external complaints against staff, volunteers, RLSS UK members and affiliated clubs and any organisation or person delivering an activity on behalf of or in the name of RLSS UK.
- Ensure that all complaints are recorded, considered, resolved and monitored in a fair, timely and consistent manner.
- Establish the guiding principles that are to govern RLSS UK's response to complaints.
- Ensure that all those we interact with are made aware of the content of this policy and the relevant procedure.

## 9. Policy Statement

- RLSS UK will maintain an effective formal complaints and feedback procedure to ensure that all complaints are treated seriously and responded to promptly and fairly.
- RLSS UK will ensure that the rules of natural justice and fairness are adhered to at every level of the complaints and appeals process.
- We will ensure that information about how and where complaints may be made to or about us is well publicised and that our complaints process is easily understood and accessible to everyone.
- The complaint will be assessed and assigned priority in accordance with urgency and/or seriousness of the issues raised. If a matter concerns an immediate risk to safety, safeguarding or security the response will be immediate and will be escalated appropriately.
- RLSS UK will conduct a full investigation to resolve factual issues and consider options for complaint resolution.
- RLSS UK will ensure that the complaint investigation process is impartial. No assumptions will be made nor any action taken until all relevant information has been collected and considered.
- RLSS UK will take all reasonable steps to ensure that any complaint is not detrimental to the complainant (including through victimisation) as a result of making a complaint.
- RLSS UK will ensure that all feedback, suggestions and results of such complaints are logged, considered and retained to enable us to learn from what we do and how to do it.
- RLSS UK will support continuous service improvement including forwarding complaints to the relevant department or individual for action.
- We will advise all those involved in a complaint as soon as possible if we are unable to meet our timeframes for responding to their complaint and give the reason for the delay.
- If we are unable to deal with the complaint internally or any part of it, we will provide advice about where such issues and/or complaints are directed to seek resolution (if known and appropriate).

## 10. Guiding principles

All parties to a complaint have the right:

- To be heard.
- Treated fairly without bias or pre-judgement.
- Informed of any complaint which relates to them and their likely involvement in the process.
- Informed of the complaints process including expected timeframes for our actions.
- Provided with an opportunity to respond to any complaint pertaining to them.
- To be informed of their right to have a representative or support person during the complaints process. A representative or support person may not be a person who was involved in, associated with or alleged to have been involved with the subject matter of the complaint. They may only make submissions if invited to so by the complainant.
- To be advised of their options to escalate their complaint to the appropriate level of complaint handling if they are dissatisfied with treatment or outcome.
- To be provided with clear and understandable reasons for decisions relating to complaints.

## 11. Complaints Assessment Group (CAG)

RLSS UK will appoint a Complaints Manager and Complaints Assessment Group as its principal organisational structure responsible for assessing and allocating complaints for action. The Complaints Manager will be the main point of contact to which complaints should be directed.

Upon receipt of a complaint, the Complaints Manager will notify the members of the Complaints Assessment Group and convene a meeting as soon as possible to determine the appropriate person or department to handle the issue, assess what level each case will be dealt with and advise the organisation about actions they need to take to redress the situation.

The Complaints Manager will be responsible for receiving and documenting the complaint in writing if it is reported verbally and forwarding it to the relevant department, organisation, training provider, club or individual for investigation. The Complaints Manager is also responsible for writing an acknowledgement letter confirming receipt of the complaint within 3 days of receipt of the complaint, giving the name of the person handing the complaint and informing them of the expected process that will follow.

### **12. The right to appeal**

Complainants who have launched a well-founded complaint and who are unsatisfied with the organisation's response to their complaint have the right to appeal.

### **13. Confidentiality**

At RLSS UK, maintaining confidentiality is essential and personal information relating to individuals must be protected in accordance with data protection legislation. All complaints will be addressed in a confidential manner and only the people directly involved in making, investigating, managing or resolving it will have access to information about it. Personal information that identifies individuals will not be disclosed to any third party or used by the organisation unless the individual has consented to it or is permitted under some other lawful authority to do so. Anonymised information arising from complaints may be shared with other agencies.

### **14. Whistleblowing**

Whistleblowing is a concept that allows an individual to raise concerns or an alarm about any potential incident of poor practice or misconduct or concern by anyone involved in RLSS UK activity. Whistleblowing concerns will be treated fairly and appropriately considered. We will support any individual who communicates genuine concerns however, if it is proven that the concern was maliciously raised to cause harm to another individual, the whistle-blower might be subject to disciplinary action under the appropriate disciplinary procedures.

We will always aim to keep a whistle-blower's identity confidential where asked to do so although we cannot absolutely guarantee this. We may need to disclose your identity should the complaint lead to issues that need to be taken forward by other parties. For example:

- The police, fraud prevention agencies or other law enforcement agencies (to investigate or prevent crime, including fraud).
- The courts (in connection with any court proceedings).
- Other third parties such as the regulator Ofqual.

### **15. Related Policies and Procedures**

This document must be cross referenced with organisational policies, procedures, guidelines, standards, Codes of Conduct and Codes of Practice.

### **16. Anonymous complaints**

Sometimes a complainant will wish to remain anonymous. For example, a person making an allegation of malpractice or maladministration may wish to remain anonymous. However, it is always preferable to reveal your identity and provide us with your contact details. But, if you are concerned about possible adverse consequences that may occur should your identity be revealed to another party, then please inform us that you do not wish for us to divulge your identity and we will take all reasonable steps to ensure your details are not disclosed.

Because, we value all complaints, we will accept anonymous complaints and carry out an investigation of the issues raised where there is enough information provided. If however, an anonymous complaint does not provide enough information to enable us to take further action, we may decide not to pursue it. However, any decision not to pursue an anonymous complaint must be authorised by a senior manager.

If any anonymous complaint makes serious allegations, these should be dealt with in a timely manner under relevant procedures. This may not be the complaints procedure and could instead be relevant safeguarding complaints procedure or disciplinary procedures. If we pursue an anonymous complaint further, it will be recorded as an anonymous complaint on the complaints system and allow us to take corrective action where appropriate.

### **17. Withdrawal of complaint**

At any time during the process, a complainant may withdraw a complaint, by notice in writing to the responsible person handling their complaint or the Complaints Manager. Upon such withdrawal, consideration of the complaint will normally be discontinued, unless the consequences of not following the procedure may result in harm to the individual or the organisation.

### **18. Malicious or vexatious complaints**

In any case in which a complaint is found to be frivolous, vexatious or malicious, action may be taken by the organisation under the relevant disciplinary policy.

### **19. Other avenues of complaint handling**

While complainants are encouraged to resolve any concerns or complaints they may have, nothing in this policy and procedure detracts from the right of a complainant to access any other complaint or appeal mechanism available to them. If any external process is initiated, the internal investigation of the complaint or appeal will be terminated.

### **20. Support during the complaint process**

Any person subject to a complaint may seek confidential and independent professional support from the Organisation at any stage of a complaint. Support will be provided by independent services and the person will be directed to sources of help or counselling services (if known and appropriate).

### **21. Who can make a complaint?**

Anyone including our customers and those we interact with in our activities, services, operations, functioning, programmes, qualifications and training can make a complaint including against staff, volunteers and RLSS UK members, affiliated clubs and any organisation or person delivering an activity, on behalf of or in the name of RLSS UK.

Learners and/or members of the public who wish to complain about a level of service provided by the ATC/P at which they have taken an IQL UK qualification should have exhausted their ATC/Ps own complaints process before bringing the complaint to us. Learners can make the complaint directly to us in exceptional circumstances where they feel there was a significant breach by the ATC/P of our various procedures. Learners and/or members of the public can raise a complaint by sending it to us in writing either through email or at the address provided below.

## 22. How to make a complaint

A complaint can be made verbally (phone or in person), in writing (by letter or email) or through comments and feedback on surveys. If made verbally, the person receiving the complaint or the Complaints Manager will document it and either the complainant or the recipient of the complaint must sign the document.

To enable the timely consideration of a complaint, specific incident, conduct or behaviour giving rise to a complaint, please provide the following information:

- Name, position and contact details (phone number and email address) of the person making the complaint.
- Relationship with RLSS UK (i.e. the nature of your engagement with RLSS UK, if you are customer, participant, club or organisation).
- The nature of the complaint and full description (including when the conduct giving rise to the complaint occurred e.g. dates and times if known).
- Details of the RLSS UK person or club or organisation involved (if applicable).
- Copies of any documentation, paperwork or letters in connection with the complaint.

If you are not sure to whom to refer your complaint, or feel it is inappropriate to address your complaint to a member of the team in your local club, training provider or RLSS UK HQ. Please write to:

### **Complaints Manager**

RLSS UK  
Red Hill House  
227 London Road  
Worcester  
WR5 2JG

## 23. Complaints brought to our attention by Regulators

Where regulators notify us about failures that have been discovered in the assessment process or other activities of another awarding organisation, these will be reviewed in the same manner as other external complaints to ascertain if the same issue could affect RLSS UK/ IQL qualifications.



## Procedure

### 24. Complaints handling procedure

At RLSS UK there are 3 levels of the complaint handling procedure that you can go through to try and resolve your complaint.

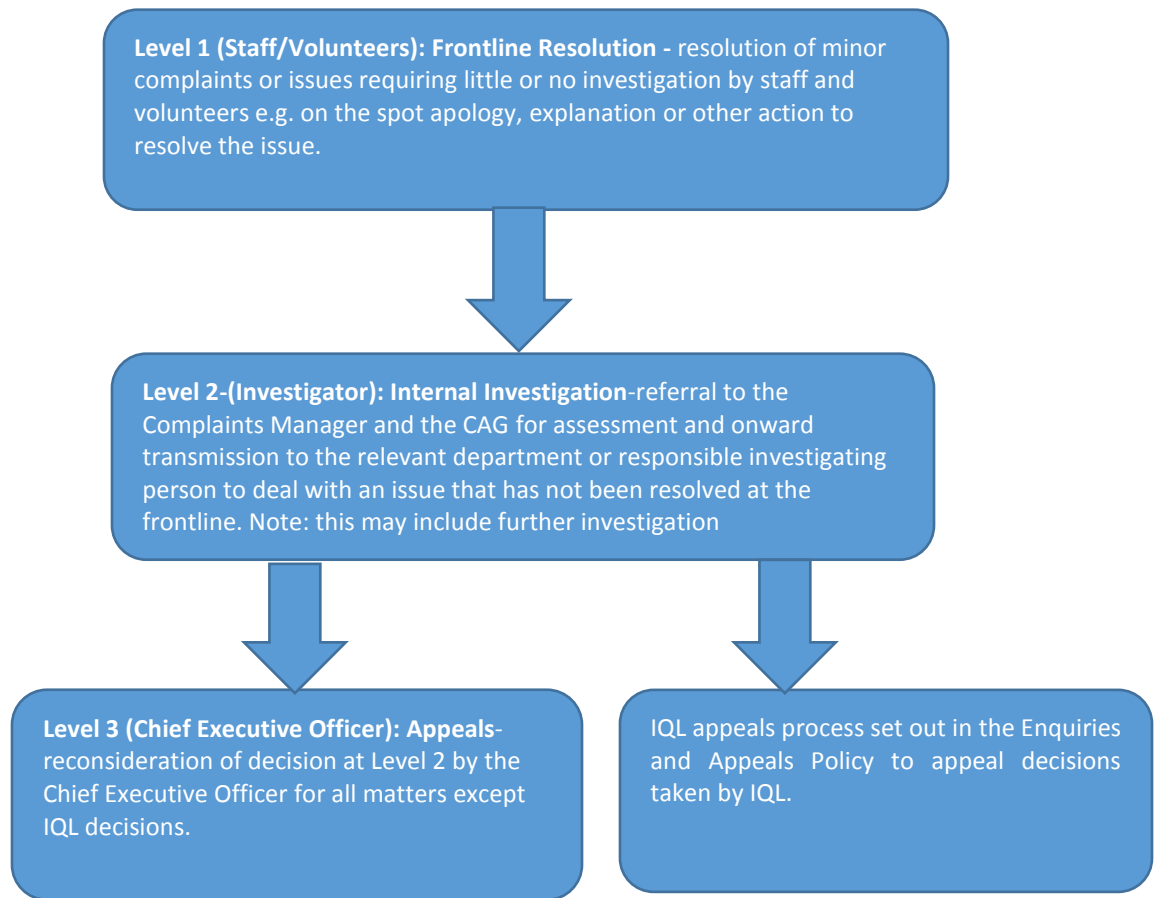
### 25. What will happen to your complaint?

RLSS UK will endeavour to acknowledge receipt of a complaint within 72 hours, letting you know who is investigating your complaint.

We aim to assess, investigate, resolve and respond to all complaints within 20 working days of receipt. However frontline resolution should be completed within 5 working days, although in practice we would often expect to resolve the complaint much earlier. We may contact you within this period to seek further information or clarification (in some instances we may recommend a meeting). At the end of the investigation we shall write/email to inform you of our decision.

Where a complaint cannot be resolved within 20 working days, an interim response will be provided to the complainant with an indicative timeframe as to when a full response can be expected.

### 26. Complaints Procedure Flow Chart



## 27. Level 1-Frontline Resolution

At RLSS UK we aim to resolve straightforward complaints at Level 1 that require little or no investigation, the frontline. The person at the frontline receiving the complaint should first determine if the complaint is suitable for frontline resolution and the proper person and level to handle it. They should listen and seek to understand the complaint, and may attempt to resolve it immediately.

The main principle is to seek early resolution, resolving complaints at the earliest opportunity and as close as to the point of contact or service delivery as possible. This may mean face to face discussion with a customer, participant or asking an appropriate member of staff or volunteer to handle the complaint.

Wherever possible, RLSS UK staff and volunteers will be adequately equipped to deal with minor complaints including being given appropriate level of authority, training and supervision. If they feel unable to deal with it, the complaint should be referred to Level 2.

Some complaints will require a full investigation before the complainant can be given the suitable response. Such complaints must be escalated immediately to Internal Investigation at Level 2.

When dealing with complaints at Level 1, the frontline:

- The person dealing with the complaint will explore the options and solutions that may help resolve the concern. In cases where the complainant expresses a dissatisfaction on more than one issue, this may mean dealing with one element as a complaint, while directing the complainant to pursue another part of their complaint through an alternative route or at another level of the complaints handling procedure.
- The person dealing with the complainant is responsible for ensuring the complaint is recorded and that follow up action occurs in a timely fashion.
- A brief record of the discussions and actions taken will be made and copies of any correspondence or other communication will be kept.

## 28. Closing the complaint at Level 1-Frontline resolution

Before closing a complaint at Level 1, ensure that the outcome has been communicated to the complainant. When you have informed the complainant of the decision, you are not obliged to write to them, although you may choose to do and it is advisable to do so in writing for purposes of our record keeping. The person responsible for the resolution of the complaint must ensure that the response addresses all the complainants concerns and gives an explanation of the reasons for our decisions. A full and accurate record of the complaint and the actions taken must be kept in the organisation's complaints management system. The complaint should then be closed and the complaints system updated accordingly.

## 29. Escalation of the complaint to the next stage

If the complaint remains unresolved at Level 1 (Frontline Resolution) to the satisfaction of the complainant then the matter should be referred to the Complaints Manager at RLSS UK HQ to be dealt with at the second level through the Internal Investigation process. A complaint should be escalated to the second level when:

- Frontline resolution was tried but the complainant remains unsatisfied with the outcome and requests an investigation into the complaint.
- The complainant refuses to be part of the frontline resolution process.

- The issues are complicated and will require detailed investigation.
- There are serious concerns including high risk or high profile issues.

When a previously closed complaint is escalated from the frontline resolution, the complaint should be re-opened on the complaints management system.

At Level 2- Internal Investigation, the person responsible for handling the complaint will:

- Reconsider the original decision and take additional corrective action.
- Overturn the previous decision and institute new measures considered necessary.
- Endorse the action that has already been taken with no further action required.
- Undertake to investigate the circumstances leading to the complaint.
- Consider any action that may be taken in light of the complaint such as external review or appeal.

**Note:** For clarity the term *frontline resolution* refers to the first level of the complaints process. It does not reflect any role description within RLSS UK but means seeking to resolve complaints at the initial point of contact where possible.

### 30. Level 2- Internal Investigation

Complaints handled at Level 2 are usually complex or need a detailed investigation before the organisation can make a decision. These complaints may already have been considered at frontline Level 1 or they may have been identified from the start as requiring immediate investigation at Level 2.

If the internal investigation follows attempted resolution at Level 1, ensure that the record, case notes and associated information is handed over to the person responsible for the investigation at Level 2.

The purpose of an investigation is to establish all the factual evidence related to the issues raised in the complaint and to provide the complainant with a full, objective and appropriate response.

The second level of complaints procedure will follow 7 major stages below:

1. Receive and record the complaint/feedback and if made orally, document it.
2. Acknowledge (in writing or by email) the complaint/feedback.
3. Assess the complaint/feedback and determine course of action.
4. Investigate the complaint.
5. Resolution of the complaint/feedback.
6. Provide reasons for the response, outcome or decision.
7. Options for redress or appeal and close the complaint.



### 31. Alternative resolution and mediation

In complex complaints, where the complainant and other interested parties have become entrenched in their position, the organisation has the option to refer the matter to a suitably trained and qualified external investigator or alternative dispute resolution mechanism to try and resolve the complaint. The complainant must agree to the alternative dispute resolution and timescales and this should be recorded in the case file.

Mediation will help both parties to understand what has caused the complaint, and so is more likely to lead to mutually satisfactory solutions. If your and the complainant agree to mediation, an extension to the timescales will need to be agreed.

### **32. Closing the complaint at Level 2- Internal Investigation**

The outcome of the internal investigation will be communicated to the complainant in writing or by their preferred method of contact. The reasons for the decision and when it was communicated to the complainant will be recorded in the case file and on the organisational complaints system. The complainant will also be advised about other options available to them should they wish to appeal the decision or explore external avenues.

### **33. Level 3-Appeals**

For all issues not related to IQL decisions, where a complainant remains unsatisfied with the decision at Level 2, they should write within 10 working days from receiving the response or resolution to the Chief Executive Officer to review the decision providing reasons why they feel that the response is not satisfactory. The request should include all relevant information relating the outcome of the previous decision. The Chief Executive Officer will prepare a response, usually within 20 working days. The Chief Executive Officer may nominate a suitably and qualified external officer or independent body to conduct the appeal. After Appeal, there is no further internal process.

### **34. Successful complaints and/or issues brought to our attention by Ofqual**

If any part of your complaint is upheld we will of course respond to you accordingly and where appropriate give due consideration to how we can improve our service and arrangements. In situations where a complaint has been successful, or where an investigation following notification from the regulators indicates a failure in our processes, we will give due consideration to the outcome and will take appropriate actions such as:

- identify any other learner and/or ATC/P who has been affected by that failure
- correct, or where it cannot be corrected, mitigate as far as possible the effect of the failure, and
- review and amend our arrangements, where appropriate, to reduce the likelihood that the failure will reoccur in the future

### **35. Other organisational forms of redress**

At RLSS UK we aim to resolve complaints in a way that is appropriate to the issues raised. Redress will include:

- An apology, written or verbal.
- An explanation of what happened and why.

#### **and where appropriate:**

- We will take action to put things right.
- An undertaking and subsequent report on improving or reviewing policies/procedures where these appears to be at fault or absent.
- We give an assurance the same thing will not happen again and take measures to ensure this.
- Any other appropriate action such counselling or other support.

**The examples of redress set above are non-exhaustive.**

### 36. Outcomes of a complaint

- That there is not a case to answer and the matter should not be pursued: or that it should be pursued through another procedure.
- Recommend another form of redress.
- That the matter is a disciplinary one in which case the matter should be referred under the relevant disciplinary procedure and the complaints procedure is discontinued. In that case the complainant will be updated, but may not learn of the outcome of the disciplinary procedure, due to data protection legislation.

### 37. Link with Disciplinary Procedure

Where a member of staff, volunteer, RLSS UK member or any person working with or on behalf of RLSS UK is found to have breached this policy, other related policies, procedures, Codes of Conduct and Code of Practice or the IQL Guidance and Syllabus for any regulated qualification and this contributed to the matter which gave rise to the complaint, the Complaints Manager in consultation with the CAG reserves the right to invoke the appropriate disciplinary procedure.

This will be treated as a separate matter from the complaint because the objectives of the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure are different to that of the Complaints Procedure. Disciplinary measures can never constitute redress in respect of an upheld complaint.

### 38. Other external avenues

If the issue is judged to be well founded and still not satisfactorily resolved, the organisation will provide the complainant with information about other options to seek resolution and/or external appeal (if known and appropriate).

### 39. Monitoring and review

The organisation, with adequate consultation of the Trustee Board will regularly monitor and review the operation of this policy and its associated procedures bi-annually as a minimum or earlier if necessary as part of our self-evaluation arrangements. We will also revise it as and when necessary in response to customer, learner or regulatory feedback (e.g. to align with any appeals and complaints process established by the regulators) and any trends that may emerge in the subject matter of complaints received.

***Note: This Complaints Policy and Procedure is subject to continuous review and amendment as best practice evolves. RLSS UK reserves the right to depart from the above and, accordingly modify procedures where it is deemed to be appropriate by the Complaints Manager in consultation with the Chief Executive and/or Trustee Board.***