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REGIONAL BOARD REPORT

BORDERS COLLEGE REGIONAL BOARD

Subject: Annual Complaints Handling Report 2021/22	**Purpose:** **For Approval** ☐ **For Discussion** ☐ **For Information** ☒
Prepared by: Anne-Marie Sturrock, VP – Student Experience	**Date:** 19 October 2022

Purpose: To provide members with an overview of the complaints received in the last year, the actions taken to resolve these and lessons learned.

Linked to Strategic Ambition: Create high quality learning and training opportunities which are relevant, enabling and flexible

Performance Measures: Recogise nationally as a progressive organisation

Linked to Strategic Risk Register: 1c - Learners Needs

New Risk Commentary: N/A

Executive Summary:

In 2021/22 there remains a high level of satisfaction with the complaints process with only three people having indicated that they were not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint.

As a result of this dissatisfaction, one Level 1 complaint was escalated to a Level 2 investigation. Two concerned student support for their learning and the other complaint was around how a data breach was dealt with by the organisation.

All individuals indicated a good level of access to the Complaints Handling Procedure and likewise there were no further actions identified by the Senior Leadership Team that could have advanced the issues for the individuals.

Recommendation: Members to note the content of the report.

Previous Committee Approvals:
Curriculum & Quality Committee on 4 October 2022.

For publication ☒	**For publication with redactions** ☐	**Not for publication** ☐

BORDERS COLLEGE

Regionally Focused – Globally Engaged

Complaints Handling Report 2021/2022

September 2022

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Executive Summary

The annual Complaints Handling Report analyses our performance in handling complaints effectively, resolving complaints quickly and identifying areas for improvement when our service is found to be below expectations.

Our Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) meets the requirements of the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) model complaints handling procedure and complies with the requirements of the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010.

The CHP allows for two levels of complaints handling. Frontline resolution (Level 1) empowers all staff to deal with complaints at the point of contact quickly and effectively. Most complaints are resolved at this level. Where complaints are more serious or cannot be resolved at the frontline, these are investigated fully (Level 2) with a designated college manager leading the investigation. In all cases we look to learn from the complaint and examine ways it can improve the quality of our service

Learning from Complaints

Frontline (Level 1) Complaints

We aim to resolve complaints quickly and close to where we provided the service. This could mean an 'on the spot' apology and explanation if something has gone wrong and immediate action taken to resolve the problem.

We continue to make changes to the way in which we do things because of some of these complaints. Often changes have been specific to a programme or service, such as increasing a level of support to a student or making a staff member aware of their style of communication. These also include course organisation and delivery of specific services such as improving information about courses or student funding, referral for learning support, and improvements to communication with students.

The number of Level 1 complaints dealt with in the year was higher than the previous year's total, increasing from twenty-one in 2020/21 to thirty -seven in 2021-2022.

This increase could be attributable to a return to on campus activity and so there were an enhanced level of staff and student interactions that sometimes results in complaints taking place. However, we have increased staff and student awareness of the CHP within the College during the previous academic year and this could also have resulted in the increased reporting of complaints.

Once again, most complaints were from students, with complaints from carers being the next largest category. Where a complaint against a staff member was upheld, an apology was issued, and the cause of the complaint and subsequent behaviour discussed to assist the individual in managing issues better in the future.

Investigation (Level 2) Complaints

Investigation (Level 2) complaints are those which we have not been able to resolve at the frontline, or complaints which are complex and require more detailed investigation. We aim to acknowledge receipt of Level 2 complaints within three working days and give a full response to the complainant within twenty working days. In 2021-2022 there were three Level 2 complaints and all were investigated and reported on within the allocated timescales. The Level 2 complaints concerned lack of staff support to students particularly those with an additional learning need and an individual receiving data about another individual. This resulted in further staff training and CPD on supporting students with an additional learning need and changes to our MIS system.

Review by the SPSO

If a complainant has exhausted the College's complaints handling process but remains dissatisfied with our decision or the way in which we dealt with a complaint, they can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to review the way in which the complaint was handled. No complaints were referred to the SPSO during 2021/22.

Indicator One: The total number of complaints received

Table 1 Number of complaints per year at Levels 1 & 2

Year	No. of complaints Level 1	No. of complaints Level 2
2018/19	15	1
2019/20	32	3
2020/21	21	0
2021/22	37	3

Overall the % number of complaints (37) against the total number of student enrolments (5342) in 2021/22 is 0.007%.

Indicator Two: The number and percentage of complaints at each stage which were closed within the set timescale of 5 and 20 working days.

During the period 1 August 2021 to 31st July 2022 all of the frontline and Level 2 complaints received were resolved within our target timescale of five working days and twenty working days respectively.

Year	No. of complaints	% of total complaints
2020/21	15 complaints resolved within timescale	71%
2021/22	40 complaints resolved within timescale	100%

We recognised that we needed to improve our administration of complaints handling further to eliminate situations where the time to deal with a complaint exceeded the allotted time without an extension of time being considered. This was achieved by referring complaints to the Quality Improvement Manager who was able to effectively deal with the students independently, kept within timescales and provided a good level of impartiality.

Indicator Three: The average time in working days for a full response to Level 1 complaints.

Year	No. of complaints	Annual Average
2020/21	21	5 working days
2021/22	37	5 working days

Indicator Four: The outcome of Complaints at each stage

2021/22 Complaints

In that period, there were thirty-seven frontline complaints (Level 1) and three complaints requiring a full investigation (Level 2). In all cases but two, the complainants were satisfied with the outcome and in all cases apart from two did they indicate the complaint had been resolved.

Year	Number of Level 1 complaints	Complaint Not Upheld		Complaint Partially Upheld		Complaint Upheld		Complaint Resolved	
2020/21	21	6	28%	2	11%	13	26%	19	90%
2021/22	37	12	32%	7	19%	18	49%	34	92%

Year	Number of Level 2 complaints	Complaint Not Upheld		Complaint Partially Upheld		Complaint Upheld		Complaint Resolved	
2020/21	0	0		0		0		0	
2021/22	3	0	0%	0	0%	3	100%	2	66%

Complaints process

In 2021/22 there remains a high level of satisfaction with the complaints process and only three people indicated they were not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint. As a result of this dissatisfaction one Level 1 complaint was escalated to a Level 2 investigation. Two concerned student support for their learning and the other complaint was around how a data breach was dealt with by the organization. All individuals indicated a good level of access to the Complaints Handling Procedure and likewise there were no further actions identified by the Senior Leadership Team that could have advanced the issues for the individuals concern.