Divergent Learning Community

Complaints Procedure

Policy Owner:	DLC Founder - Claudia Celi
Approved By:	DLC Founder - Claudia Celi
Date of Approval:	25 February 2026 (v2 updated 18 November 2026)
Review Date:	Annually or following significant changes

1. Purpose and Scope

Divergent Learning Community (DLC) values open communication and views feedback, including complaints, as an opportunity to improve our practice and strengthen our community. This procedure sets out how we handle concerns and complaints fairly, transparently, and constructively.

This procedure applies to all complaints about DLC's services, facilities, or team members from families, children, team members, or other community members. It operates alongside our other policies to ensure comprehensive response to all concerns.

2. Our Values and Approach

DLC's approach to complaints reflects our core values:

- **Openness:** We welcome feedback and treat all concerns seriously and respectfully
- **Learning:** Complaints help us identify where we can improve and strengthen our practice
- **Fairness:** We investigate complaints thoroughly and impartially, considering all perspectives
- **Participation:** Children's voices matter. We support children to raise concerns in ways that work for them
- **Timeliness:** We respond to complaints promptly and keep people informed throughout
- **Resolution:** We focus on finding constructive solutions and preventing recurrence

3. What is a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about DLC's actions, decisions, or service that requires a response. This might include concerns about:

- Quality or delivery of education or care
- Actions or decisions by team members
- Behaviour of other children or families
- Facilities, equipment, or resources
- Communication or information sharing
- Application of DLC policies

3.1 Concerns vs Complaints

Not every concern requires the formal complaints procedure. Many issues can be resolved quickly through informal conversation. We encourage families and community members to raise concerns early with the relevant team member, who will work to address them promptly.

The formal complaints procedure should be used when:

- Informal resolution has been attempted but the concern remains
- The issue is serious or complex
- You prefer a formal investigation
- The matter involves multiple people or aspects of DLC operation

3.2 Matters Outside This Procedure

This procedure does not cover:

- **Child protection concerns:** Report immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead using the Safeguarding Policy
- **Matters about a volunteer's or community member's own role: handled separately and confidentially by the Founder**
- **Legal proceedings:** Complaints subject to legal action will be paused pending legal resolution
- **Anonymous complaints:** We cannot fully investigate anonymous complaints but will consider concerns raised

4. Who Can Complain?

Anyone directly affected by DLC's actions can make a complaint, including:

- Parents and carers of children attending DLC
- Children attending DLC (with appropriate support)
- Prospective families
- Team members

- Volunteers
- Members of the wider community affected by DLC activities

Third parties can raise complaints on behalf of a family with their consent. Children can be supported by parents, advocates, or trusted adults to raise complaints.

5. How to Make a Complaint

Complaints can be made:

- **In writing: by email to DivergentLearningCommunity@outlook.com or by letter to Divergent Learning Community CIC, 71-75 Shelton Street, Covent Garden, London WC2H 9JQ**
- **By phone: 07757 749097**
- **In person: ask to speak with the Complaints Lead or the Founder**

When making a complaint, please provide:

- Your name and contact details
- Details of the complaint including what happened, when, and who was involved
- What you would like to happen as a result
- Any relevant supporting information or documentation

If you need support to make a complaint due to communication preferences, language needs, or other requirements, please let us know and we will make appropriate arrangements.

6. The Complaints Process

DLC uses a three-stage complaints process:

Stage 1: Informal Resolution

Many complaints can be resolved quickly through direct discussion with the community member involved or the Complaints Lead.

Process:
- Raise your concern with the relevant team member or Complaints Lead
- Discussion takes place to understand the issue and identify solutions
- Agreement reached on way forward

Timescale: Aim to resolve within 5 working days

Outcome: If resolved, the matter is closed. If unresolved or you prefer a formal investigation, proceed to Stage 2.

Stage 2: Formal Investigation

If informal resolution is unsuccessful or inappropriate, a formal investigation will be conducted.

Process:

- Submit your complaint in writing (email, letter, or complaints form)
- Acknowledgement sent within 3 working days
- Complaints Lead (or appropriate alternative if conflict of interest) assigned to investigate
- Investigation gathers relevant information, interviews witnesses, reviews documentation
- Written response provided setting out findings, conclusions, and any actions to be taken

Timescale: Investigation completed and response provided within 15 working days. If more time is needed, you will be informed of the reason and new timescale.

Outcome: Complaint upheld (fully or partially), not upheld, or inconclusive. Actions and learnings identified. If unresolved, proceed to Stage 3.

Stage 3: Review by Founder

If you remain dissatisfied with the Stage 2 response, you can request a review by the Founder.

Process:

- Request review in writing within 10 working days of receiving Stage 2 response
- Explain why you remain dissatisfied
- Founder reviews complaint file and may meet with relevant parties
- Final written response provided

Timescale: Review completed and response provided within 15 working days

Outcome: Final DLC decision provided. This concludes the internal complaints process.

7. Supporting Children to Complain

DLC recognises that children have the right to raise concerns and complaints. We support children to do this through:

- Regular conversations about how to raise concerns and who can help
- Multiple ways to communicate concerns (talking, writing, drawing, etc.)
- Trusted adults children can talk to
- Age-appropriate complaints information displayed at DLC
- Support from parents, advocates, or other trusted people if wanted
- Reassurance that raising concerns is important and valued

Children's complaints are treated seriously and investigated appropriately. Outcomes are communicated to children in ways they can understand.

8. Investigation Principles

All formal investigations follow these principles:

- **Impartiality:** Investigators have no direct involvement in the complaint and approach it objectively
- **Thoroughness:** All relevant information is gathered and considered
- **Fairness:** Everyone involved has opportunity to provide their account
- **Confidentiality:** Information is shared only with those who need to know
- **Documentation:** Clear records kept of investigation process and findings
- **Timeliness:** Investigations proceed efficiently whilst ensuring thoroughness

9. Possible Outcomes

Following investigation, complaints may be:

- **Upheld:** The complaint is substantiated. DLC will apologise where appropriate, explain what went wrong, and set out actions to prevent recurrence.
- **Partially upheld:** Some aspects of the complaint are substantiated. DLC will respond to substantiated elements as above.
- **Not upheld:** The investigation finds no evidence to support the complaint. The response will explain the reasoning.
- **Inconclusive:** Insufficient evidence exists to reach a definitive conclusion. The response will explain what was considered and any actions DLC will take regardless.

Regardless of outcome, DLC considers whether any learning or improvements can be identified from the complaint.

10. Learning and Improvement

DLC uses complaints as opportunities to improve. Following investigation:

- Identified actions are documented with clear responsibilities and timescales
- Progress on actions is monitored
- Policies, procedures, or practices are updated where needed
- Learning is shared with the team (maintaining confidentiality)
- Patterns or trends in complaints are identified and addressed

The Founder receives regular reports on complaints including outcomes, actions, and learning.

11. Records and Confidentiality

DLC maintains records of all formal complaints including:

- Date complaint received
- Nature of complaint
- Investigation undertaken
- Outcome and actions
- Correspondence with complainant

Records are stored securely and in accordance with data protection requirements. Information is shared only with those who need to know to investigate and resolve the complaint.

Complaints records are retained for six years following resolution.

12. Vexatious or Persistent Complaints

DLC handles all complaints seriously and respectfully. However, in rare cases where complaints are vexatious, malicious, or persistently pursued after full investigation without new evidence, DLC may:

- Limit contact to writing only
- Restrict contact to one designated person
- Decline to investigate further without new evidence
- Refuse contact except through a third party

Such decisions are made by the Founder and communicated in writing with clear reasons. This does not prevent new, genuine complaints being made.

13. External Review Options

If you remain dissatisfied after completing DLC's internal complaints process, you may have options for external review:

- **Information Commissioner's Office:** For data protection concerns: 0303 123 1113

- **Health and Safety Executive:** For health and safety concerns: 0300 003 1647
- **Legal advice:** You may wish to seek independent legal advice about your complaint

14. Monitoring and Review

This procedure is reviewed annually by the Founder, or sooner if:

- Legislative or regulatory requirements change
- Significant issues are identified with the procedure
- Feedback suggests improvements are needed
- Significant organisational changes occur

The Founder receives termly reports on complaints including:

- Number and nature of complaints
- Outcomes and resolution timescales
- Actions taken and learning identified
- Trends or patterns
- Procedure effectiveness

15. Key Contacts

Internal Contacts:
DLC Complaints Lead: Claudia Celi
DLC Founder: Claudia Celi
DLC Complaints email: DivergentLearningCommunity@outlook.com
DLC Complaints address:
DIVERGENT LEARNING COMMUNITY CIC
71-75 Shelton Street
Covent Garden
London
WC2H 9JQ

External Contacts:
Concerns about a child's safety: Hillingdon Stronger Families Hub, 01895 556006 (24 hours)
Information Commissioner's Office: 0303 123 1113
Health and Safety Executive: 0300 003 1647
Please note: Divergent Learning Community CIC is not a registered school and therefore is not subject to Ofsted inspection.

Contact & Legal Information
DIVERGENT LEARNING COMMUNITY CIC
Registered in England and Wales | Company Number: 16765759

71-75 Shelton Street, Covent Garden, London, WC2H 9JQ
Email: DivergentLearningCommunity@outlook.com

This procedure was first approved on 25 February 2026, updated on 18 November 2026 (version 2), and will be reviewed by 18 November 2027.
Divergent Learning Community welcomes feedback and is committed to continuous improvement.