UK NEQAS for Leucocyte Immunophenotyping Policy for Complaints

Policy Statement

To outline how UK NEQAS LI will identify, process and investigate complaints

This document applies to the following staff groups

Be aware of – All staff

Work to- All staff

Scope

The aims of the policy are to ensure that all complaints are identified, dealt with promptly and outline the route taken for investigations

Key definitions

Complaint: defined as any participant feedback about any aspect of the services from UK NEQAS for Leucocyte Immunophenotyping (UK NEQAS LI) that is deemed to be unsatisfactory or unacceptable.

Policy Specifics

If a participant states in any communication (whatever route) that they wish to complain, then the issue will be treated as a complaint, subject to the rest of the policy.

Please note, the top mmanagement of UK NEQAS LI reserve the right to review all communications received from participating centres and to classify any significant issues as a complaint, irrespective of the initial communication. Conversely where a 'complaint' is judged to have been raised by a centre incorrectly e.g. a misunderstandings of the complaints process, then such 'complaints' may be downgraded at the discretion of top management. However, they should still be recorded in the database and in the noncompliance module on iPassport and classified as 'Complaint – does not fit criteria'. This will allow meta-analysis of feedback from participants and allow investigation and corrective/preventative actions if still required.

Most 'complaints' received by UK NEQAS LI consist of minor misunderstandings or problems with specimens and reports that can usually be resolved over the telephone/email by any member of staff. As such participants are actively encouraged to contact UK NEQAS LI in the first instance prior to making a formal complaint.

If difficulties persist or if participants wish to register a complaint initially, then participants with cause for complaint about any aspect of the service should communicate their concerns to any member of staff, preferably in writing, via email or the UK NEQAS LI website complaints form. All complaints are logged, and the action taken recorded and audited.

Complaints are passed to the UK NEQAS LI Quality Manager, who will provide an initial response acknowledging receipt within 3 working days of receipt.

The Quality Manager will then oversee an investigation into the complaint in conjunction with the Director/Centre Manager/Office Manager/relevant programme lead, as appropriate.

A summary of the investigation detailing the investigation of the complaint and any action taken will be provided by the Quality Manager or Top Management within 30 working days of receipt of the original complaint. Some complex investigations may take longer than 30 working days. If so, the complainant should be informed of the delay, and provided with the likely time period in which the investigation is hoped to conclude.

If after this stage the complaint remains unresolved it will be referred to the Chair of the steering committee, and or their delegated representatives e.g., the Chair of the specialist advisory group, who will reserve the right to use Chair's action or refer the matter to the next available steering committee meeting/specialist advisory group. Steering committee meetings are usually held every six months. The findings of the steering committee Chair will be final unless:

- the issue concerns performance assessment. In such instances the Chair of the relevant National Quality Assessment Advisory Panel may be informed. *
- lack of compliance with Accreditation Standards is suspected by the complainant, then the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) may be contacted. *
- the complainant states that the scheme has breached the UK NEQAS Code of Practice, in which case the UK NEQAS Executive may be notified. *

* UK NEQAS LI staff will provide the names and addresses of the appropriate individuals/organisations listed above upon request.

N.B. This document is paired with (Administration 49507, Quality Management 11 and Administration 10) and should be reviewed simultaneously with those documents by the same UK NEQAS LI staff member.