



Complaints Policy

Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that complaints are dealt with in an appropriate manner. The complaints policy and procedure are accessible to all.

All complaints are handled in a fair, consistent and timely way. This policy allows for all stakeholders and learners to log a formal or informal complaint should they perceive that they have a grievance.

A complaint can be raised by anyone. For this policy's purpose, a complaint is defined as a verbal or written declaration of dissatisfaction regarding a service, process, product or indeed an individual, where there is a clear expectation that remedial action is required.

We are committed to delivering a high quality service and take feedback from apprentices and employers very seriously. It is our aim to settle complaints promptly, fairly and courteously in the best interest of all parties, and to address areas where improvement is needed. We are keen to ensure that the interests and well-being of all those associated with a complaint are properly safeguarded.

Policy Scope

Provision of apprenticeships is regulated by the ESFA and inspected by Ofsted. Our complaints procedure aligns to the requirements outlined within their applicable funding rules, contract requirements, and inspection frameworks. All apprentices, prospective apprentices, employers, parents (where applicable) and local partners will be made aware of the complaint procedure. The process is embedded into our apprentice induction, within employer contracting and published on our website. All complaints are dealt with appropriate discretion and sensitively.

A complaint is defined as an oral or written expression of dissatisfaction. The person making the complaint may not necessarily refer to it as being a "complaint", but it will still be treated as such where the above definition applies.

- Complaints concerning assessment practice will be dealt with through our appeals procedure which is aligned to awarding body requirements.
- Complaints from partners will be dealt with along alongside contracting terms.

Through our complaints process we ensure that:

- complaints and appeals are treated fairly, consistently, transparently, and in a timely manner;
- matters of concern can be raised without risk of disadvantage and any matter raised that may be considered in line with the principles of Whistleblowing will receive the same protections available to Whistle Blowers;
- where complaints or appeals reveal any failure on our part, we will take appropriate action to rectify this for the complainant and to identify any others who may have been adversely affected by the same issue;
- we review aspects of our service in the light of any complaints or appeals; and
- We maintain duties of confidentiality to third parties, or other legal duties, in responding to complaints and appeals.

Complaints are logged centrally so that oversight of any emerging trends in complaints or concerns can be assessed by our Senior Leadership and Management teams.

Responsibility

Our Management Team is responsible for this process, ensuring that it complies with ESFA Funding Rules. It is reviewed annually, or as and when Funding Rules or the Education/Common Inspection Framework (EIF) are revised. The Operations Manager oversees the management of the process and stakeholders involved.

Definition

An 'informal complaint' is defined as an issue which an employer wishes to raise with a member of our staff, without using the formal complaints process. Informal complaints are usually quick to resolve and unlikely to require an in-depth investigation.

A 'Complaint' in this policy is defined as 'The expression of a specific concern about matters that affect the quality of an apprentice's learning opportunities, our action or lack of action or the standard of service provided by, or on our behalf'.

An 'Appeal' is 'a request for a review of a decision taken by an individual or academic body charged with making decisions about apprentices' progression, assessment and awards.

Guide to making a complaint

Stage 1 – Informal Complaint

Where possible, complaints should be raised immediately with the relevant department at the source of the complaint, or via the Operations Manager, Kevin Foreman or, for apprentices, your workplace line manager. The aim is to resolve the problem directly and informally at the earliest opportunity. It is anticipated that the vast majority of complaints will be resolved in this manner.

Complaints should be raised within 20 working days of the event occurring where possible and will only be accepted for investigation outside this timeframe where evidence can be provided of why it was not reasonably possible for the complaint to have been raised earlier.

You should receive an acknowledgement of your complaint within five working days, with a full response given within 4 weeks. If it is not possible to meet these timeframes you will be contacted and told why and what timeframe you will receive your response in.

Although Stage 1 is informal, the member of staff involved should provide a written outcome to you and copy in the Operations Manager and complaints@sr-apprenticeships.co.uk who will record the details of all informal complaints.

If, as an employer, you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of your informal complaint, SR Apprenticeships will arrange for a representative from your organisation, SR Apprenticeships Operation Manager and a senior member of staff, who is independent of the original complaint, to review the complaint together.

If, as an apprentice, you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of your informal complaint, you may follow the stages below:

Stage 2 – Formal Complaint

If your complaint has not been resolved satisfactorily through the informal process or within the timescales agreed, or you do not feel that it is appropriate to speak to one of the above members of staff, you may raise a formal complaint with your workplace Programme Manager.

To make a formal complaint you should write to your workplace Programme Manager copying in the Operations Manager at SR Apprenticeships, kevin.foreman@sr-apprenticeships.co.uk.

The email should be titled as a complaint, and set out the details of the complaint in full, include any evidence you have supporting your concern, what action has been taken to date regarding attempting an informal resolution of your complaint and what would be an appropriate resolution.

The workplace Programme Manager will log the complaint and confirm receipt. The workplace Programme Manager will initiate an investigation of the complaint and provide an outcome in writing, copying in the Operations Manager at SR Apprenticeships and complaints@sr-apprenticeships.co.uk. If the workplace investigation is unable to find a solution to the complaint within the work environment or in consultation with us, the workplace Programme Manager should detail in their outcome letter that the complaint is being referred to our Learner Complaints and Appeals process via SR Apprenticeships Operations Manager.

All Stage 2 Complaints should be sent to:
The Operations Manager: Kevin Foreman, kevin.foreman@sr-apprenticeships.co.uk SR Apprenticeships, 32 Mile End Road, Colwick, Nottingham, NG4 2DW

Stage 3

On receipt of the workplace Programme Manager's outcome letter the Operations Manager will log the receipt of a formal complaint and provide a confirmation letter within ten working days and outline the course of action to be taken. The Operations Manager will carry out an investigation, which will involve the relevant coordinator (where required) and other members of personnel, and will write to the learner within 20 working days with the findings and a decision as to whether the complaint was justified.

Where learners have followed Stage 1 and/or 2 and 3 of the complaints procedure and are still dissatisfied with the outcome, they have the right to refer their complaint to the SR Apprenticeships, Quality Improvement Group (QIG) within 20 working days of the decision being communicated to them by recognised centre. The QIG which consists of a team of SRA senior managers will review the content of a complaint and make a decision as to whether to uphold the complaint or not. The decision reached by the QIG is final and will be communicated to all relevant personnel within five working days of the meeting.

If you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint following our internal Complaints and Appeal process, you may request us to supply you with a Completion of Procedures letter, which you can use to support escalation of your complaint to the ESFA complaints team.

SR Apprenticeships Complaint Form

Stage 1

Before completing this form, learners are advised to follow Stage 1 of the complaints procedure and initially try to rectify the issue prior to submitting a formal complaint.

Stage 2

Raise the complaint with your workplace Apprenticeships Manager.

Stage 3

Escalate the complaint to SR Apprenticeships Operations Director, Nadine.hughes@sr-apprenticeships.co.uk,

Learners are required to complete this form and forward it to the Complaints Officer.

Name:	
Address:	
Email address:	
Contact number:	
Date complaint submitted:	
Date of course/assessment:	

Describe the nature of your complaint as fully as possible:

Please use additional sheet if necessary.

Signature of complainant:

Date:

Please return this form to: Kevin Foreman, Operations Manager
kevin.foreman@sr-apprenticeships.co.uk
SR Apprenticeships, 32 Mile End Road, Colwick, Nottingham NG4 2DW

Reporting

Each investigating manager must log the complaint information on our internal Complaints Log. The Operations Manager will produce a report regularly reviewing the number of complaints received; the category/nature of complaints and the resolutions derived which will be provided to the senior management team. The Operations Manager is then responsible for identifying actions and adding them to the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) to reduce the likelihood of any similar future complaints arising.

Confidentiality and Safeguarding

All complaints will be treated with due sensitivity and confidentiality, without undue fear of reprisal or repercussion. We will work to instil a culture through which learners and employers feel confident to make a complaint where they have any perceived grievance.

The Management Team will give due consideration to any aspects of confidentiality and sensitivity associated with any complaint in determining how any investigation will be conducted, with the wellbeing and safeguarding of learners always being paramount. Where the complaint relates in any way to a safeguarding issue, our Lead Safeguarding Officer will be consulted in terms of the most

appropriate way to proceed. Where appropriate / necessary, the complainant's anonymity will be reasonably protected.

Any personal and/or sensitive data which may be requested/obtained in the course of any investigation will be securely stored and processed in strict accordance with the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulation. Any data held or processed will only be used for the purpose of dealing with complaints and for monitoring and will be deleted/destroyed once the complaint is resolved. Only staff directly involved with the complaint / investigation / resolution will be given access to such data. Learners and employers may request a copy of our Data Security Policy if they have any questions or reservations about how their data may be handled.

Title: Contingency Plan		Version	2.1
Authorised by:	K.Foreman	Date Authorised	Jul 2021
Amendments by:	N. Hughes	Date of review/amend	Oct 2021
Annual check date	Jul 2022	Next full review	Jul 2022