

COMPLAINTS POLICY

We hope you are happy with the services we provide. However, there may be times when you wish to raise a complaint about the service you have received. All complaints are taken seriously, we are committed to dealing with complaints fairly and efficiently through our complaints procedure.

Our commitment to you:

- ▲ We will use any complaints received to help us improve our services, wherever possible.
- ▲ Complaints will be dealt with honestly, politely and in confidence.
- ▲ We aim to settle most complaints quickly and informally either by putting matters right or by giving you an explanation.
- ▲ We will tell you what we are doing to put things right.
- ▲ We aim to provide a full response to complaints within 10 working days.

For the purposes of this procedure, a complaint is defined as ‘an expression of dissatisfaction which is not immediately resolved. You should commence our complaints procedure if you are unhappy with:

- ▲ the standard of service you received from us
- ▲ our response to a request for service
- ▲ our actions
- ▲ the behaviour of a member of staff
- ▲ the way you have been treated i.e. incidents of bullying, harassment or unfair treatment
- ▲ allegations of fraud or financial irregularity.

Somerset Skills & Learning CIC follow a three stage complaints procedure that tries to resolve problems as quickly as possible to the satisfaction of everyone involved.

STAGE 1 Your complaint will be passed to the person who can best deal directly with it, and is responsible for providing the service. Unless there are sound reasons for not doing so, a full response will be sent within 10 working days of receipt of the complaint. We aim to resolve most complaints at this stage.

STAGE 2 If you are unhappy with the outcome at stage one, you can contact us again to take the matter further. We will forward your complaint to a member of the Senior Management Team who will carry out an investigation into the concern raised. Unless there are sound reasons for not doing so, the Senior Manager will reply within 10 days of the complaint being referred to him/her. If this is not possible, an explanation and a new date for reply will be sent.

STAGE 3 If you remain unhappy with the outcome our Chief Executive, who has overall responsibility for dealing with complaints, will review the way your complaint has been investigated and the outcome on your behalf. Unless there are sound reasons for not doing so, the Chief Executive will reply within 10 days of the complaint being referred to her. If this is not possible, an explanation and a new date will be sent. When all the above avenues have been exhausted and a complaint remains unresolved, the complainant may use the following link to access the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) Procedure
**for dealing with complaints about providers of education and training.*

When all the above avenues have been exhausted and a complaint remains unresolved, the complainant may use the following link to access the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) Procedure for dealing with complaints about providers of education and training. Note: This process may only be used for complaints about courses that the ESFA fund and those courses funded by an Advanced Learning loan.

www.gov.uk/government/publications/sfa-complaints-procedure-about-providers

Financial Impropriety

Any complaints alleging financial impropriety will be referred to the CEO or Director, who will ascertain how the complaint will be processed in accordance with the preceding stages.

The complainant may use the following link to access the ESFA 'Allegations of fraud or financial irregularity policy'. Note: This process may only be used for allegations of fraud or financial irregularity relating to courses that the ESFA fund and those courses funded by an Advanced Learning Loan.

www.gov.uk/government/publications/sfa-complaints-procedure-about-providers

Any allegations will be dealt with by the ESFA Intervention and Investigation Team.

The following list identifies some of the allegations the Intervention and Investigation Team may consider (the list is not exhaustive):

- ▲ Allegations of financial irregularity
- ▲ Allegations that a college or other training organisation has claimed funding from us through deception
- ▲ Allegations of fraud
- ▲ Allegations that a college or other training organisation has broken the funding rules
- ▲ Non-delivery of training that has been funded by the ESFA.

The ESFA will not consider the following allegations (the list is not exhaustive):

- ▲ Concerns relating to employment and/or contracts of employment of individual staff
- ▲ Contractual disputes between employees and employers
- ▲ Complaints about managers, including bullying and harassment.

Disciplinary proceedings

Any need to invoke the Somerset Skills & Learning CIC staff disciplinary proceedings as the result of a complaint should not normally delay a response to the complainant.

Confidentiality

Staff dealing with a complaint under any of the three stages will not disclose any information about the complaint or complainant to any member of the public. Staff will also reveal information to colleagues only on a strict 'need to know' basis.

Cross-service complaints

Where a complaint applies to more than one team within Somerset Skills & Learning CIC, the relevant teams involved will agree whether to respond separately or to appoint a single lead responder.

Policy approved by SMT