



COMPLAINTS POLICY

Last reviewed- 26/4/2023

Next review- 26/4/2024

Reviewed by – Jan Kelly

Approved by – Trustees

1. Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all staff and learners of Step into Learning (hereafter referred to as SiL), both full-time or part-time.

2. Definitions

A complaint:

'Any expression of dissatisfaction, whether oral or written, and whether justified or not, from or on behalf of an eligible complainant about the firm's treatment of them and /or a failure to provide the appropriate support or service.'

3. Policy

3.1 Statement of key principles

1. Learners, parents/guardians, partner organisations, members of the public and **SiL** staff should be able to make a complaint about any issue which is of concern to them and also to have the procedure they need to follow explained to them.
2. A complaint may be in writing or made verbally.
3. All complaints will be formally logged and promptly considered.
4. All concerns and complaints will be treated seriously and sensitively.
5. Where possible an informal solution will be sought. If that cannot be achieved then formal procedures will commence.
6. The complaints procedure relates to complaints relating to issues which have occurred within the previous three years. Beyond that time limit the nature of the complaint and the difficulties involved in any investigation will be considered by the board prior to a decision being made about what should be done.

3.2 Complaints from Learners

1. The **SiL** Learner handbook outlines how a learner may complain.
2. It is **SiL** policy to encourage learners and their parents/guardians or members of the wider community to resolve issues and disagreements informally without reference to the Head of Adult Education or Head of EHCP and 16-18 Education and to make a formal complaint only when informal discussions have not resolved the issue(s). However, it is

the right of any party to require a concern to be dealt with as a formal complaint at the outset if they so wish.

3. In the event of the Complaints Procedure below being put into operation, a record of the complaint must be kept at each stage in a central 'Complaints' file held by the Head of Adult Education or Head of EHCP and 16-18 Education.

4. **SiL** will endeavour to resolve matters informally wherever possible and it is hoped that the majority of disagreements will be resolved in this way. If this is not possible, the formal procedure will be invoked and the Head of Adult Education or Head of EHCP and 16-18 Education will be involved.

3.3 Complaints by a Member of Staff

1. If a member of staff has an issue of concern, they will be encouraged to deal with this informally through the normal channels of line management.

2. If it is not possible to resolve the matter informally, then the member of staff may invoke the Complaints Procedure or formal Grievance Procedure if they so wish.

3.4 Unresolved Complaints

1. Where complaints cannot be satisfactorily resolved through internal complaints procedures, advice will be sought from external bodies such as the Commission for Equality and Human Rights.

4. Implementation

Personnel

- a. The Head of Adult Education or Head of EHCP and 16-18 Education will oversee each formal complaint and may wish to delegate where appropriate.
- b. Complaints against The Head of Adult Education or Head of EHCP and 16-18 Education will be addressed by the Chair of the Trustees.
- c. Complaints against the Trustees will be dealt with by the Chair or, in the case of a complaint against the Chair, will be dealt with by a panel of three trustees.
- d. Complaints against **SiL** are to be referred to external agencies where appropriate, e.g. OFQUAL, Awarding organisations

Internal procedure

In the absence of an informal resolution, the formal procedure will be invoked and procedures followed:

- A complaint should be made in writing to the Head of Adult Education or Head of EHCP and 16-18 Education who will decide whether to deal directly with the complaint or oversee this and delegate to another member of staff.

- If the complaint concerns a member of staff, the person concerned should be informed and given the opportunity to respond fully either verbally and/or in writing. From the outset, they should have access to all relevant correspondence or documentation. The member of staff's comments will be noted. The member of staff should be informed of the outcomes of the complaint.
- The Head of Adult Education or Head of EHCP and 16-18 Education will respond initially, in writing, to the complainant. This initial response acknowledging the complaint should take place within 5 working days and preferably by return. Further investigations, if needed, should be completed and the complainant informed of the outcomes within 10 working days, if possible.
- If a complainant is not satisfied with the findings, then they may wish to pursue the issue with the Head of Adult Education or Head of EHCP and 16-18 Education or make an independent approach to the Board of Trustees. If so, the complainant should make this known within 10 days of receipt of the outcome. The decision of the Board of trustees is final
- Confidential notes should be kept and details of the complaint stored in a central 'Complaints' file. These records will be used on an annual basis to monitor the number and type of complaints and the response and resolutions rates. Other details will remain confidential.
- If the Head of Adult Education or Head of EHCP and 16-18 Education decides, after investigations have been carried out, that the issue justifies it, the matter may result in the implementation of:
 - Learner Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
 - Staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
 - Partner Disciplinary Policy and Procedure

5. Appeals and Complaints

If a complainant wishes to appeal a decision they will be referred to SIL's Executive Directors or if more appropriate to the Chair of the Board of Trustees who will respond to the applicant either verbally or in writing within 10 working days.

When the appeal has been decided the outcome of that decision is final.

Complaint procedure flow

