

Complaints Policy

Effective Date: October 2025
Review Date: October 2026

This policy will be reviewed annually by: Lindsey Townsend,
Operations Director

Policy Statement

Network Learning Pathways accepts the rights of all those using our provision to make complaints and to register comments and concerns about the services received. It further accepts that they should find it easy to do so. It welcomes complaints, seeing them as opportunities to learn, adapt, improve and provide better services.

The Policy

This policy is intended to ensure that complaints are dealt with properly and that all complaints or comments by learners and their parents/carers are taken seriously. It is not designed to apportion blame, to consider the possibility of negligence or to provide compensation; it is not part of the company's disciplinary policy. This organisation believes that failure to listen to or acknowledge complaints leads to an aggravation of problems, learner dissatisfaction and possible litigation. The organisation supports the idea that most complaints if dealt with early, openly and honestly can be sorted at a local level between just the complainant and the organisation. The complaints procedure is made available to learners and families. A copy is always kept within our provision, on our website, and in a format that can be understood.

Aim of the Complaints Procedure

We aim to ensure that the complaints procedure is properly and effectively implemented, and that learners and parents/carers feel confident that their complaints and worries are listened to and acted upon promptly and fairly.

Specifically, we aim to ensure that:

- Learners, parents/carers and their representatives are aware of how to complain and that the company provides easy to use opportunities for them to register their complaints
- A named person will be responsible for the administration of the procedure
- Every written complaint is acknowledged within 5 working days
- All complaints are investigated within 14 days of being made
- All complaints are responded to in writing within 28 days of being made
- Complaints are dealt with promptly, fairly and sensitively, with due regard to the upset and worry that they can cause to both learners, parents/carers and staff.

Responsibilities

The Head of Service is responsible for following through with complaints.

Complaints Procedure

Verbal Complaints

- The organisation accepts that all verbal complaints, no matter how seemingly unimportant, must be taken seriously.
- Staff who receive a verbal complaint are expected to seek to solve the problem immediately.

- If they cannot solve the problem immediately, they should offer to get the Head of Service to deal with the problem.
- Staff are expected to remain polite, courteous, sympathetic and professional to the complainant. They are taught that there is nothing to be gained by adopting a defensive or aggressive attitude.
- At all times in responding to the complaint, staff are encouraged to remain calm and respectful.
- Staff should not make excuses or blame other staff.
- If the complaint is being made on behalf of the learner by an advocate, it must first be verified that the person has permission to speak for the learner, especially if confidential information is involved. (It is very easy to assume that the advocate has the right or power to act for the learner when they may not). If in doubt it should be assumed that the learner's explicit permission is needed prior to discussing the complaint with the advocate.
- After discussing the problem, the Head of Service or member of staff dealing with the complaint will suggest a means of resolving it. If this course of action is acceptable then the member of staff should clarify the agreement with the complainant and agree a way in which the results of the complaint will be communicated to the complainant (i.e. through another meeting or by letter).
- If the suggested plan of action is not acceptable to the complainant, then the member of staff or Head of Service will ask the complainant to put their complaint in writing. The complainant should be given a copy of the company's complaints procedure if they do not already have one.
- Details of all verbal and written complaints must be recorded in the complaints book and the learner's file.

Serious or Written Complaints

Preliminary steps:

- When we receive a written complaint, it is passed to the Operations Manager, who records it in the complaints book and sends an acknowledgment letter within 5 working days to the complainant.
- If necessary, further details are obtained from the complainant; if the complaint is not made by the learner but on the learner's behalf, then consent of the learner, preferably in writing, must be obtained from the complainant where required.
- If the complaint raises potentially serious matters, advice could be sought from a legal advisor. If legal action is taken at this stage, any investigation by the organisation under the complaint's procedure ceases immediately.

Investigation of the complaint by the organisation:

- Immediately on receipt of the complaint, the Operations Manager will start an investigation and within 14 days should be in a position to provide a full explanation to the complainant, either in writing or by arranging a meeting with the individuals concerned.
- If the issues are too complex for the investigation to be completed within 28 days, the complainant will be informed of any delays.
- Where the complaint cannot be resolved between the parties, an arbitration service will be used. This service and its findings will be final to both parties. The cost of this will be borne by the organisation.

Meeting:

- If a meeting is arranged, the complainant will be advised that they may, if so desired, bring a friend, relative or a representative such as an advocate

- At the meeting a detailed explanation of the results of the investigation will be given, in addition to an apology if deemed appropriate (an apology is not necessarily an admission of liability)
- Such a meeting gives the management the opportunity to show the complainant that the matter has been taken seriously and investigated thoroughly.

Follow-up action:

- After the meeting, or if the complainant does not want a meeting, a written account of the investigation will be sent to the complainant.
- The outcomes of the investigation and the meeting are recorded in the complaints book, and any shortcomings in company procedures will be identified and acted upon.
- The company management formally reviews all complaints at least every six months as part of its quality monitoring and improvement procedures to identify the lessons learned.

Vexatious Complainers

This organisation takes seriously any comments or complaints regarding its service. However, there are learners who can be treated as “vexatious complainers” due to the inability of the organisation to meet the outcomes of the complaints, which are never resolved. Vexatious complainers need to be dealt with by the arbitration service, so that the repeated investigations become less of a burden on the organisation, its staff and other learners.

Accessibility

Policies and procedures are available in accessible formats, well publicised, readily available and accessible to individuals using the service, their families, significant others, visitors, staff and others working at the service.

Training Statement

All staff, during induction are made aware of the organisations policies and procedures, all of which are used for training updates. All policies and procedures are reviewed and amended where necessary and staff are made aware of any changes. Observations are undertaken to check skills and competencies. Various methods of training are used including one to one, on-line, workbook, group meetings, individual supervisions and external courses are sourced as required.