

ESF12 Complaints Policy	Effective date: 01/2023
Authorised Owner: Jo Pountney	Last revision: 01/2026
Classification: Public	Issue: 03
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# Complaints Policy

## 1. Introduction

ESF Apprenticeships (trading name for Sporting Futures Training (UK) Ltd), is committed to providing a high quality experience for each client and encourages clients to inform us where there is any cause for concern. Our complaints procedure exists to enable clients to make complaints about such matters.

## 2. Scope

Our complaints policy and procedure are aimed at our partners, learners and all interested parties who encounter a direct or indirect service from ESF Apprenticeships.

## 3. Principles

We value all our learners, schools and partners who work with us at a professional level and our aim every day is to exceed the expectations of our partners. We are confident of providing a high- quality service and would be extremely disappointed if this is not the case. Therefore, it is important should you feel you have encountered a level of service that is below both yours and our expectations that you raise any concerns you may have with us immediately so that we may address them and learn lessons.

The guiding principles within this procedure are that complaints will be:

- treated seriously and with fairness
- dealt with without undue delay, and in as straightforward a manner as possible
- treated consistently across all programmes and departments
- dealt with and resolved, wherever possible, in an informal way
- progressed through stages leading, if necessary, to a more formal stage

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## 4. Timeframe for making a complaint

A current or recent client wishing to complain should normally do so within 20 working days of the event which has given rise to the complaint or, if a series of events has given rise to a complaint, within 20 working days of the final event in the series.

Key in any event would be to contact us without delay and our aim would be to resolve any complaint to a satisfactory conclusion within 2 working days.

For learners there is a specific staged process as shown but the first step would be to contact your ESF Tutor and we will aim to resolve the complaint within 2 working days.

## 5. Confidentiality

Except in exceptional circumstances, every attempt will be made to ensure that both the complainant and ESF apprenticeships maintain confidentiality. However, the circumstances giving rise to the complaint may be such that it may not be possible to maintain confidentiality (with each complaint judged on its own merit and dealt with in the most appropriate, professional manner).

## 6. Complaints Procedure Stages

### **Stage 1 – Early Resolution**

An informal complaint can be made by a learner /employer to the learner's tutor/assessor or the main point of contact with ESF apprenticeships in the first instance to give the opportunity for quick resolution

#### **Stage 1a complaint**

The tutor/assessor should discuss the informal complaint with the learner and attempt to agree a way forward or a solution that suits both parties. The complaint will be discussed and all parties will attempt to agree a way forward or a solution that suits all parties. If the complaint is one that can be resolved promptly, or if steps can be agreed to start the resolution of the complaint, the process will end at this point, or as soon as the agreed steps have been taken.

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### Stage 1b complaint

If the complaint cannot be resolved quickly or requires further investigation, further steps will be necessary. Stage 1b complaints will be dealt with in a timely fashion but complainants should allow the tutor/assessor sufficient time to investigate or remedy the issue. Those involved in investigating the complaint will establish appropriate timescales based on its nature and complexity. ESF apprenticeships will communicate these timescales to the complainant and keep them informed of any changes. Wherever possible, the investigation should be completed within 20 working days.

### **Stage 2 - Formal complaint**

If the complaint cannot be resolved informally to the satisfaction of the learner/employer, or if they feel that they cannot make an informal complaint to their tutor/assessor, the complaint should be submitted via the

ESF apprenticeships complaints form (see appendices) to Jo Pountney, Director of Apprenticeships.

Learners/Employers should use the complaint form to provide a detailed account of the issue(s) underpinning to the complaint which must be submitted by post (to Jo Pountney, ESF apprenticeships, Business Technology Centre, Bessemer Drive, Stevenage, Herts SG1 2DX) or as an email attachment (to [J.pountney@esfapprenticeships.co.uk](mailto:J.pountney@esfapprenticeships.co.uk)).

Once a formal complaint has been received, the Director of Apprenticeships will allocate the investigation into the issue to a member of the team, who will fulfil the role of Complaints Officer.

The Complaints Officer will contact the learner/employers to acknowledge receipt of the formal complaint within 10 working days and outline the course of action to be taken. The Complaints Officer will then carry out an investigation, which will involve the complainant and relevant parties.

### **Exceptional panel meeting**

In exceptional circumstances it may be decided by ESF apprenticeships to hold a panel meeting to provide an opportunity for mediation and resolution. A panel meeting would be expected to be held within 20 working days of the formal complaint being acknowledged.

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If a panel is to be convened, ESF apprenticeships will write to the complainant inviting them to a panel meeting making it clear whether the focus is to make a decision or provide mediation and setting out:

- the circumstances in which a panel has been convened
- the process to be followed
- the date of the meeting and an explanation of what the client needs to do if they cannot attend on that date, or does not wish to do so
- the names of the panel members and their job titles
- the names of anyone else attending the meeting and what their role will be
- details of if the client may be represented, or may bring a friend to support them
- an outline of how the meeting will proceed
- copies of any relevant documents ESF apprenticeships will take all necessary steps to ensure that the proceedings are conducted in a timely manner with adequate notice given to the client.

If the client is able to join via video link, ESF apprenticeships will discuss with the client the best software to use for the individual and organise a solution that meets their needs. ESF apprenticeships will carefully consider the constitution of the panel to ensure that those charged with reaching a decision or providing mediation have had no previous involvement in the matter, and are properly trained, resourced and supported.

Within 20 working days of acknowledging receipt of the formal complaint (or within 20 working days of the Exceptional panel meeting, if this has been part of the process) the Complaints Officer will write to the complainant outlining [his/her] findings and a decision as to whether the complaint will be upheld.

If the complaint is rejected, for example because it has been submitted late, ESF apprenticeships will issue a Completion of Procedures letter. The letter will outline the reason(s) why the complaint has been rejected.

Where a complaint is upheld, the ESF Director of Apprenticeships will communicate this to the complainant in writing, explaining how and when it will implement any remedy, and whether that includes an apology. A Completion of Procedures letter will be issued if requested in writing by the client within 20 working days of the date on the letter giving the outcome.

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### **Stage 3 - Appeal**

We aim to resolve issues promptly and fairly. If a learner or employer believes that their case has not been adequately addressed, they have the right to appeal. The grounds on which a learner/employer can request a review of an initial investigation decision are:

- The investigator made an error in judgement or did not consider all of the evidence available to them.
- The investigator did not conduct the complaint fairly, and/or not in line with this policy.
- There is new material evidence that could not, for valid and evidenced reasons, be submitted at the time of the formal complaint.

The appeal will take the form of a written submission by the Learner/Employer to Jo Pountney, Director of Apprenticeships. A panel with no recent or direct involvement in the issue will be drawn together consisting of up to three members of the ESF Governance Board. The panel will meet to review all submitted evidence and may ask for a meeting with those involved to gather any further information. A written response outlining the outcome of the appeal and any actions taken will be provided within 15 working days.

### **Stage 4 - Further consideration**

If learners/Employers have followed Stage 1 and/or 2 of the complaints procedure and are still dissatisfied with the outcome, they have the right to take their complaint to the Awarding Body if it is qualification related.

If all avenues have been exhausted and a learner or employer feels they would like more action taken related to their complaint for Apprenticeship provision they can take the next step and complain via email to Skills England at [skills.England@education.gov.uk](mailto:skills.England@education.gov.uk) with 'COMPLAINT', in the email subject line. Include dates, key facts, provider name, and the fact that internal routes were exhausted. Further information available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/complain-further-education-apprenticeship>

## **Appendix 1 Formal Complaint Form**

Before completing this form, Learners and Employers are advised to follow Stage 1 of the complaints procedure and initially try to rectify the issue prior

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to submitting a formal complaint. If progressing to stage 2 of this policy, please read the information above and submit the information on this form.

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

Describe the nature of your complaint as fully as possible:	
Please attach an additional sheet if necessary.	
Signature of complainant:	Date