

# COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, made either verbally or in writing, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by STA or its staff, affecting an individual learner or group of learners.

## The following will not be registered as complaints:

- A request for service
- A request for information
- The lodgement of an appeal in accordance with Awarding Organisation Policy.

## PROCEDURE

### *Responsibilities*

Stephanie Ball is responsible for the coordination of the complaints policy and procedure, including the analysis of data.

Stephanie is also responsible for overseeing the process of monitoring and reporting the progress of the complaint and any responses made.

Managers and Directors are responsible for the investigation of complaints directly related to their areas of operation.

### *The System*

1st Tier Front Line Administration Staff <b>Actioning</b> Officer – Janna Ball
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2nd Tier <b>Responsible Officer</b> Section Manager – Andy Day
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3rd Tier including SMT *
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\* could include the implementation of STA's Internal Review of STA Decisions

### *Process for complaint handling (Learner Action Request)*

Complaints should preferably be in writing, addressed to a Director and signed by the complainant, complete with address.

Telephone and verbal complaints will be entered into the complaints system, but wherever possible, should be confirmed in writing.

Anonymous complaints (whistle blowing) should also be recorded and assessed and action taken where necessary.

In order to deal with complaints effectively and efficiently in order to resolve the problem, they will be dealt with in the following manner:

1. Front line staff (1st Tier) will handle straightforward, minor complaints. Where these minor complaints cannot be dealt with immediately, they will be acknowledged in writing within 5 working days. The letter will detail what action will be taken, who the responsible officer will be and a contact number, and the anticipated time for a response where this is known.
2. Complaints which cannot be handled by front line staff should be referred to the officer responsible for resolution i.e. the Actioning Officer (1st Tier), in conjunction with other supervisory staff in that work area, if required. It is expected that the Actioning Officer will acknowledge the complaint and will liaise with the complainant, in order to keep him/her informed of the progress of the action being taken.
3. Any follow up complaint to an original request/complaint will progress immediately to the 2nd Tier and be handled by the Responsible Officer
4. Where a complaint involves a number of different issues which require action by different members of staff, Stephanie Ball will send a letter of acknowledgement and then enter each complaint as a separate Learner Action Request (LAR) entry to be forwarded to each relevant officer who will follow up on each complaint until its completion.
5. All written complaints will first be registered by the administrator, who will then refer the complaints on to Stephanie Ball for acknowledgement and entry into LAR.
6. Serious complaints involving inappropriate behaviour or staff (e.g. rudeness, discrimination or harassment) will be directed to the relevant Director. As in (1), the initial acknowledgement by the responsible officer, detailing the likely action to be taken, will occur within 5 working days.
7. Serious complaints involving personal injury, a breach of the law or financial implications, an STA decision, and complaints which involve the need for a detailed knowledge of STA's operations and procedures, will be directed to the responsible Manager in the first instance (i.e. 2nd Tier), followed by the SMT (3rd Tier) where necessary. Once again, the initial acknowledgement should be made within 5 working days by the responsible officer. The Procedure for the internal review of STA decisions should be followed.
8. Any appeal against a response from 1st Tier staff can be referred to a 2nd Tier manager, director or the SMT for resolution. Any appeal against a response from 2nd Tier staff should be referred to SMT for resolution and the Procedure for the internal review of STA decisions should be followed.
9. Should the SMT consider that a complaint is of a nature that requires the involvement of an independent mediator/facilitator, this process could be employed to assist in a 3rd Tier review.
10. In cases where the learner does not accept the outcome achieved by STA following its complaints procedure, the complainant should be advised of alternative options open to them. These include approaching the Ombudsman, Office of Local Government.

#### Staff support

Learner service training will be provided to all staff in the first instance. Front line staff will receive additional training in complaint handling and complaint resolution. If required, specialised training in conciliation and mediation could be provided to those staff involved in more serious complaints.