

First Step Training Complaints Policy

Version 7

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1. Purpose Statement

1.1 First Step Training has a Complaints Policy to enable clients including apprentices, employers, and other stakeholders, who have legitimate complaints to have them addressed in the interests of continually improving the service we offer.

1.2 First Step Training welcomes constructive comments and criticisms from apprentices. Whatever is stated will be taken seriously and dealt with objectively and efficiently, for the following reasons;

- Complaints tell us when apprentices are not happy with a service and this gives First Step Training the opportunity to put things right.
- Comments/suggestions provide ideas on how First Step Training can improve its services.
- Compliments let First Step Training know when apprentices are happy with a college service and tell us when something is working well. The good practice can then be shared with other college services.

1.3 This procedure may be used by any apprentice regardless of mode of attendance or venue (including prospective apprentices and apprentices who have recently left First Step Training, parents, carers, employers and any other members of the community served by First Step Training.

1.4 The complaints procedure can be applied to complaints about:

- Enrolment
- Quality of teaching
- Treatment by staff
- Behaviour of other apprentices
- Information, advice and guidance
- Facilities

Note:

This procedure should not be used for:

- Appealing an assessment grade, for which there is a separate Appeals Procedure.
- Matters relating to potential personal injury which are covered in the relevant Health and Safety documents.

Note: The complainant is the person making the complaint.

2. How to Make a Complaint

2.1 All formal complaints must be made in writing and sent to the Training Manager.

2.2 To guarantee a swift response, clients should complete a complaint form which is available from the main reception or can be downloaded from First Step Training website.

2.3 Representatives of organisations may wish to write their own letter of complaint on behalf of their organisation, but in this case, they should take care to clearly state the nature of the complaint and the people involved, identifying when and where the incident/circumstances occurred and stating the named contact in the organisation with whom.

2.4 Every complaint will be dealt with separately unless a group of complaints relate to the same individual. If a group of apprentices wish to make a joint complaint, one person, possibly the course representative should be nominated to 'lead' the complaint. This person should complete the complaints form. All the rest of the complainants must individually sign on the back of the form and all names must be clearly identified. In some circumstances all signatories may be asked to individually confirm that they wish to proceed with the complaint.

2.5 When the complaint is against a member of staff or another apprentice, the person being complained about will be notified of the complaint. Once a complaint of this nature has been made it cannot be withdrawn until it has been investigated and a conclusion reached.

2.6 Subjects of a complaint will not be responsible for investigating the complaint.

2.7 If the complainant wishes to remain anonymous he/she must be informed that a formal complaint against a member of staff or other apprentices cannot be pursued.

2.8 Once received, all complaints will be acknowledged within 5 working days by the Training manager, and investigations completed as quickly as practicable.

2.9 The complainant will be updated by the Training manager on the progress of their complaint every 15 working days until the matter is resolved.

2.10 The Training manager will direct the complaint to be investigated by the most appropriate Manager.

2.11 The investigating manager may interview parties involved in the complaint. In this case such parties may be accompanied by a representative. An apprentice will be entitled to be accompanied by a "friend" who may be a relative, fellow apprentice, union representative or appropriate member of staff but not by a legal or other professional adviser.

2.12 A letter of response will be composed by the investigating officer, checked by the supervisor and sent to the Training manager.

2.13 The Training manager will monitor the progress of the complaint and will check and send a written response letter from the investigating manager(s) as soon as the matter has been fully investigated.

2.14 If the complainant is not satisfied with the response, he/she should contact the Training manager who will pass the complaint to a member of the senior leadership team, who will determine whether the complaint has been properly dealt with under this policy. Their decision is final.

3. Staff Responsibilities

The Training Manager should:

- reply to complainant within 5 working days of receipt of the complaint
- advise the complainant that attempts to influence witnesses before the case has been investigated may prejudice his/her original complaint (if applicable)
- identify an appropriate investigating officer for the complaint and advise that a written response should be prepared and if necessary that the disciplinary procedures should be initiated (if applicable)
- identify an appropriate supervisor to oversee the investigation
- advise the person(s) complained against, of the complaint and unless there is a demonstrable fear of intimidation or victimisation, of the name(s) of the complainant(s)
- check the letter of response before sending it to the complainant
- maintain a confidential file of complaints and responses and any other relevant correspondence
- ensure the file is up to date
- report as required about the record of complaints to the SLT
- produce an annual Complaints Report.

The Investigating Manager should:

- fully investigate the complaint, adhering to the guidelines provided herewith.
- if they are not able to fully investigate the complaint, or there is a conflict of interest, inform their line manager and the Quality Director who will ensure that the investigation is followed through
- if the complaint is of a sufficiently serious nature, take steps to separate the complainant and the person(s) complained against.
- discuss cases involving staff with the Human Resources lead, to consider whether any disciplinary action should be initiated
- after the investigation has been completed, produce a written response to the complainant and check it with the complaint supervisor before sending it to the Training Manager (responses should not normally be sent directly to the complainant)

- incorporate important outcomes/findings into the Self-Assessment Report.

4. Staff Training

All Managers in each area of work will deal with complaints in their departments. Where complaints cannot be resolved immediately, they will receive additional guidance and training as necessary in order to enable them to operate the system effectively.

All members of First Step Training staff will be made aware of the complaints procedure, including guidance notes which they should follow in respect of dealing with complaints.

First Step Training will provide information to stakeholders of the complaints procedure, outlining how they can make a complaint.

- The Training Manager will monitor and review the complaints register on a regular basis. The results of these reviews will be available to both customers and relevant bodies on request
- In addition, having dealt with a complaint, the Training Manager will be responsible for asking the complainant for their opinion on the way in which the complaint was dealt with
- The Managing Director will be responsible for reviewing and amending the procedure as necessary

5. Contacting the ESFA

Where a complaint directly links to an Education and Skills Funding Agency funded projects (apprenticeships), you can contact the ESFA to make an official complaint regarding the service you have received from a training provider. Before you take this step, it is essential that you have:

- Started by trying to resolve the issue, informally, direct with the school or organisation involved.
- If you're not happy with their response, make a formal complaint (through to appeal), direct to them. All Independent Training Providers should have a complaints procedure. Ask them for a copy or check their website. Keep copies of everything you send and receive.
- If you're still not happy after that, please follow the below link on guidance on how to make an official complaint to the ESFA.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-and-skills-funding-agency/about/complaints-procedure>

6. Compliments and Comments Procedure

We also like to hear from our stakeholders when things have gone well, or when they have received particularly good service from our staff. Indeed, we welcome any comments you have to make regarding our services.

The Training Manager will bring this to the staff member's attention on your behalf. The compliment will also be highlighted at staff team meetings and filed. Anonymised comments may also be used in the evaluation of our services and marketing activity.

Key Contacts:

Training Manager: Jodie Love – Jodie@firststep-sports.co.uk

Managing Director: Rob Brown – Robert@firststep-sports.co.uk