



VOLUNTEER IT YOURSELF – COMPLAINTS & APPEALS POLICY

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Introduction

A complaint can be made about behaviour or actions carried out by: VIY; a member of staff employed by VIY; a subcontracted provider; an assessment organisation; a learner; or an associated employer or contractor, which causes significant disadvantage. The aim of any complaint should be to stop the offending behaviour; to secure appropriate and fair redress; and to learn how things might be done better in future (to the extent that they can suggest ways to improve, complaints are not necessarily undesirable). Complaints concerning a subcontracted provider, an assessment organisation, an associated employer or contractor can be taken up with the relevant organisation, following their complaints procedure, or through VIY using this procedure.

Informal complaints

The most satisfactory way to resolve a complaint is often by direct discussion between the person who feels aggrieved and the person who seems to have given offence. To be effective in achieving a resolution discussions should be:

- Calm, with no raised voices or inflammatory language
- Specific, with the grounds for complaint clearly stated
- Un-confrontational. It may be that the offence, whilst real, was unintentional and a simple apology would suffice to lay matters to rest
- Constructive, seeking ways to avoid future difficulties

An informal approach is most likely to work where the people concerned are of broadly equal status (for example, they are both learners) or they know each other well (for example, learner and tutor). The presence of a third person who is neutral in the dispute may help in its resolution. Where a complaint concerns a serious matter – violent bullying, racial abuse or discrimination by a member of staff against a learner, for example – it should always be dealt with formally.

Formal complaints

Even though the procedure is formal and may result in serious action against an offender if upheld, formal complaints will be dealt with in a sympathetic way, respecting the dignity of all concerned. The procedure for addressing a formal complaint is as follows:

- The complainant should either report the incident in writing or via an informal verbal discussion and notes that are witnessed by a team member and manager (discussions with those under the age of 18 must comply with the relevant safeguarding policy)
- The complaint should be described in as much detail as possible and the complainant should agree that the information is correct, and the understanding of the complaint is noted



- The complaint will be given to the relevant manager (by ten working days of the alleged offence) and copied to a Senior Management Team (SMT) member
- The complaint investigation will be actioned by the relevant manager within ten working days of the alleged offence, if further time is needed then the complainant will be notified
- A written judgement on the complaint will be sent to the complainant, copied to an SMT member
- The relevant manager/SMT will recommend any further action thought necessary related to the complaint
- If the complaint cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant in the first instance then an appeal can be made to the Operations Director, or a designated member of SMT if the Operations Director is involved

Appeals

If a learner is dissatisfied with an assessment/examination outcome, they have the right to appeal. The appeals procedure for candidates will be based on the procedure detailed in the Awarding Body documentation for the particular qualification. This is normally part of the learner pack issued to all new learners when they start on a new qualification.

There are generally several stages in the appeals procedure and each stage must be exhausted before proceeding to the next one. The main reasons for an appeal are likely to be, for basic skills qualifications (competence based):

- The learner does not understand why they are not yet regarded as competent, due to unsatisfactory feedback from the Assessor
- The learner believes they are competent and that the Assessor has misjudged them, or has failed to utilise some vital evidence

For precise details on the various steps of the procedure, refer to the Awarding Body documentation for the specific qualification concerned. Further details and guidance can also be obtained from your Assessor.

I have been informed of and understand the complaints and appeals procedure.

Learner signature _____ Date _____

Assessor signature _____ Date _____