



ESTAR

ELITE SKILLS, TRAINING
& RECRUITMENT

CP-002

**Complaints Policy and
Procedure**

REV: 00



Complaints Policy and Procedure

Form: CP-002

Revision: 00

Policy owner: Head of Quality & Compliance

Operational leads: Programme Managers, Safeguarding Lead, Employer Engagement Lead

Applies to: All learners, apprentices, employers, partners and stakeholders

Provision: Funded and non-funded delivery (including apprenticeships and adult skills)

Review cycle: Annual (or earlier if regulatory requirements change)

1. Purpose

ESTAR Education is committed to delivering high-quality education, training and support. We recognise that, on occasion, concerns or complaints may arise. This policy sets out a **clear, fair and transparent process** for raising, investigating and resolving complaints promptly and effectively.

The procedure ensures that:

- complaints are taken seriously and handled consistently;
- complainants are treated fairly, respectfully and without discrimination;
- learning is taken from complaints to improve provision; and
- statutory and funding body expectations are met.

2. Scope

This policy applies to complaints relating to:

- teaching, training, assessment or support;
- safeguarding or welfare (non-emergency);
- behaviour or conduct of staff, learners or subcontractors;
- learning resources, facilities or learning environment;
- employer engagement (for apprenticeships);
- administration, communication or service quality.

This policy **does not** cover:

- assessment appeals (covered under the *Assessment Appeals Policy*);
- whistleblowing (covered under the *Whistleblowing Policy*);
- safeguarding emergencies (which must follow the *Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy* immediately).

3. Principles



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ESTAR's complaints process is underpinned by the following principles:

- **Accessibility:** Complaints can be raised verbally or in writing.
- **Fairness:** All complaints are investigated objectively and proportionately.
- **Timeliness:** Clear timescales are applied at each stage.
- **Confidentiality:** Information is shared only with those who need to know.
- **Non-retaliation:** No learner, apprentice, employer or staff member will be treated unfavourably for raising a complaint in good faith.
- **Continuous improvement:** Outcomes are reviewed to improve practice and quality.

4. Who can make a complaint

Complaints may be raised by:

- learners or apprentices;
- parents/carers (where appropriate);
- employers (apprenticeship provision);
- partner organisations or subcontractors;
- members of the public affected by ESTAR's activities.

5. Informal resolution (Stage 1)

ESTAR encourages concerns to be raised **informally in the first instance**, as many issues can be resolved quickly without formal escalation.

5.1 How to raise an informal concern

- Speak directly to the tutor, assessor, programme manager or relevant staff member; or
- Contact ESTAR by email or phone requesting informal resolution.

5.2 Timescale

- ESTAR aims to resolve informal concerns within **5 working days**.

If the concern is not resolved to the complainant's satisfaction, it may be escalated to a formal complaint.

6. Formal complaints procedure (Stage 2)

6.1 Submitting a formal complaint



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Formal complaints should be submitted:

- in writing (email or letter); or
- verbally, where ESTAR will document the complaint on the complainant's behalf.

The complaint should include:

- name and contact details of the complainant;
- details of the issue (what happened, when, who was involved);
- any supporting evidence (if available);
- desired outcome (if appropriate).

6.2 Acknowledgement

- ESTAR will acknowledge receipt of a formal complaint within **2 working days**.

6.3 Investigation

- The complaint will be investigated by a senior member of staff not directly involved in the issue, where possible.
- Relevant evidence will be gathered, which may include statements, records, policies and system logs.
- Safeguarding or serious misconduct issues may be escalated immediately to the appropriate lead.

6.4 Outcome

- A written outcome will be provided within **10 working days** of acknowledgement.
- Where additional time is required, the complainant will be informed of revised timescales and reasons.

Outcomes may include:

- explanation and clarification;
- apology where appropriate;
- corrective action or service improvement;
- staff training or procedural changes;
- referral to another policy or external body where appropriate.

7. Review / appeal of complaint outcome (Stage 3)

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the Stage 2 outcome, they may request a review.

7.1 Requesting a review

- Requests must be submitted within **10 working days** of receiving the Stage 2 outcome.



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- The request should clearly state why the complainant believes the complaint was not handled appropriately.

7.2 Review process

- The review will be conducted by the Head of Quality & Compliance or a senior leader not previously involved.
- The review will consider whether:
 - the procedure was followed correctly;
 - the investigation was reasonable and proportionate; and
 - the outcome was appropriate based on the evidence.

7.3 Final decision

- A final written response will be issued within **10 working days**.
- This decision represents ESTAR's final internal position.

8. External escalation

Where internal procedures have been exhausted, complainants may escalate concerns externally, depending on the type of provision:

- **Apprenticeships or ESFA-funded provision:** Complaints may be escalated to the relevant funding body after ESTAR's procedure has been completed.
- **Awarding organisations / EPAOs:** Assessment-related complaints may be escalated in line with the awarding body or EPAO's published procedures.

ESTAR will provide appropriate signposting where external escalation routes apply.

9. Safeguarding-related complaints

Any complaint involving:

- risk of harm;
- abuse or neglect;
- inappropriate conduct with learners,

will be handled in line with ESTAR's *Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy* and may override the standard complaints timescales.

10. Record keeping and monitoring

ESTAR maintains a **Complaints Register**, which records:



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- date received;
- nature of complaint;
- stage and outcome;
- actions taken;
- lessons learned.

Complaints data is reviewed as part of:

- quality assurance activity;
- management review meetings; and
- self-assessment and quality improvement planning.

11. Confidentiality and data protection

All complaints are handled sensitively and in accordance with data protection requirements. Information is retained only for as long as necessary and accessed only by authorised staff.

12. Malicious or vexatious complaints

Complaints that are deemed to be deliberately false, malicious or vexatious may be closed following senior review. This will not prevent genuine concerns being raised or investigated appropriately.

13. Policy review and approval

This policy is reviewed:

- annually; or
- sooner if there are changes to funding rules, inspection frameworks, or organisational structure.

Date of last Review	Print Name	Position
02/02/2026	Keiran Casey	Chief Executive Officer
	Darren Beach	Quality Manager

