



EN-2A: Learner Complaints Procedure

The Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (Solace Group) Ltd are trusted providers of quality services to the public sector.

Apprentices views on the service provided are important to us. If we fail to deliver the standard of service expected, or if we make a mistake, we would like to know. In such circumstances, the reported matter will be reviewed and any necessary action taken to put things right as quickly as is practicable. Your feedback will help us to improve our services.

This policy outlines the core aims and intended approach to the handling of compliments, comments and complaints regarding services provided by the Solace group. The policy is designed to:

- be responsive to the needs of our customers
- be transparent and easy to understand
- reflect best practice
- establish clear minimum standards that can be monitored and reported
- help us learn from compliments, comments and complaints to improve our services

Many matters can be resolved informally so do contact our Head Office on +44 (0) 20 7233 0081 Monday – Friday 9am – 17.30pm or email apprentices@solace.org.uk as we may be able to resolve the problem straight away. But if you feel the problem needs to be put on a more official footing, please follow the process below.

Complaints definition and process

The policy provides a definition and examples of complaints which may occur and outlines the process for making a complaint.

We aim to ensure that:

- making a complaint is as easy as possible
- we treat a complaint as a clear expression of dissatisfaction with our service which calls for an immediate response
- we deal with it promptly, politely and, when appropriate, confidentially
- we respond in the right way, for example, by giving you an explanation or an apology where we have got things wrong, and letting you know what action we've taken
- we learn from complaints and feedback and we use them to improve our service.

It is not possible to provide a definitive list of examples of complaints, but the following are examples of situations that would constitute a complaint:

- the quality or management of our apprenticeship provision
- learner dissatisfaction with programme content and / or delivery methodology
- undue delay or non-compliance with published procedures
- poor administration, including lack of response to queries
- equality and diversity issues
- health and safety concerns (unless these are matters for the Health and Safety Executive)
- website and eLearning issues



We will respond to all complaints in the same way, whether regarding a service, a member of staff, an associate or a partner organisation.

Our complaints approach

In the first instance please raise your concern with the Programme Director explaining the problem as clearly and fully as possible, including any action taken so far;

The Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (Solace Group) Ltd services

- writing to; Trudy Birtwell, Solace Group, Off Southgate, Pontefract, WF8 1NT
- telephoning: 07799 997423
- emailing: Trudy.birtwell@solace.org.uk

Process

- Your complaint will be passed to the relevant Programme Manager, who will send an acknowledgment.
- The acknowledgment will include details of how the complaint will be dealt with, provide a named contact within the Company, ask for any further details required regarding the complaint and ascertain the required outcomes.
- If appropriate, detailed enquiries will be made which may include interviewing anyone involved. Enquiries will be carried out by an appropriate person within the Company, usually a manager or director.
- Recommendations will be based on any findings; they will be put to a director for review and decision and the decision will be recorded on the company's CRM system.
- The decision will be conveyed as quickly as possible to all involved, followed up in writing where appropriate.

If a complaint relates to a director, it will be dealt with by another director (which may include a non-executive director).

Investigation

The formal complaints procedure is intended to ensure that all complaints are handled fairly, consistently and wherever possible resolved to the complainant's satisfaction.

Our aim is to resolve all matters as quickly as possible. However, inevitably some issues will be more complex and therefore may require longer to be fully investigated.

We'll record and acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days and confirm who will be dealing with it. We will appoint an appropriate person to investigate the matter on your behalf. We aim to resolve complaints within 10 working days but if it's going to take longer than that we'll keep you fully informed.

The outcomes

The outcomes of any compliment, comment or complaint will be decided in each individual case. In all instances, the feedback will be used to help further improve our services. Other possible outcomes may include:

- A 'thank you' for compliments or positive comments
- The request to use feedback in future promotional literature



- An apology for poor service
- The re-working of part of an assignment or service
- Removal of an associate and/or member of staff from remaining parts of the activity
- Development or training for members of staff, with disciplinary action a possibility if deemed appropriate to the circumstances
- Critical friend analysis for involved associates, with removal from the Company's associate register if deemed appropriate in the circumstances
- The use of mediation for contractual disputes

Right to respond

If the outcome is considered by anyone involved to be unsatisfactory, they may write to Graeme McDonald, Managing Director, at the address given above (Off Southgate, Pontefract, WF8 1NT).

In such circumstances the initial outcome will be reviewed and a follow-up response sent as appropriate.

All customers have the right to respond to our full response.

If the Learner is dissatisfied with the processing of their complaint, or the response received, the Apprentice/Employer has the right to escalate the complaint to the Education and Skills Funding Agency via its apprenticeship helpline on 0800 015 0400 or 0247 682 6482, or by email at [**nationalhelpdesk@apprenticeship.gov.uk**](mailto:nationalhelpdesk@apprenticeship.gov.uk)

Post Assignment Assessments

To facilitate this process, customers and associates will be sent a Post Assignment Assessment (PAA) for completion. This will help us assess the quality of our services and capture best practice. Although the submission/receipt of PAAs is not acknowledged, they are analysed to help



Appendix 1 – Appeals Process

Introduction

Appeals against assessment decisions normally happen in one to four stages, each dealt with by different personnel within Solace Apprenticeship Team or the ILM.

These are:-

Stage 1 - Assessor

Stage 2 - Internal verifier

Stage 3 - Principal verifier / Director responsible for training

Stage 4 - Awarding body

The process for appeal is as follows: -

Stage 1

1. Should an apprentice not be satisfied with an assessment decision (failed or referred), they should put the grounds for appeal, in writing, within **fourteen** days of receipt of the decision, to the relevant Solace Programme Manager. This should be submitted by email to apprentices@solace.org.uk. The apprentice will receive a response within **fourteen** days of receipt of the appeal.
2. The Solace Programme Manager will communicate the appeal to the relevant assessor.
3. The assessor will consider the grounds for appeal and makes a decision, based on the evidence presented and the reasons provided.
4. The assessor's decision, together with reasons, is communicated to Solace Programme Manager, who will communicate this to the learner and record details of the transaction.

Stage 2

1. Should the learner not be satisfied with the outcome of the appeal, they should put the grounds for their appeal, in writing, within **fourteen** days of receipt of the assessor's decision, to Solace Programme Manager. This should be submitted by email to apprentices@solace.org.uk the learner will receive a response within **fourteen** days of receipt of the appeal.
2. The Solace Programme Manager will communicate the appeal to an internal verifier.
3. The internal verifier will consider the grounds for appeal and makes a decision, based on the evidence presented and the reasons provided.
4. The internal verifier's decision, together with reasons, is communicated to Solace Programme Manager, who will communicate this to the learner and record details of the transaction.



Stage 3

1. Should the learner not be satisfied with the outcome of the appeal, they should put the grounds for their appeal, in writing, within **fourteen** days of receipt of the internal verifier's decision, to Solace Programme Manager. This should be submitted by email to apprentices@solace.org.uk. The learner will receive a response within **fourteen** days of receipt of the appeal.
2. The Solace Programme Manager will communicate the appeal to the Programme Director.
3. The Programme Director responsible for training will consider the grounds for appeal and makes a decision, based on the evidence presented and the reasons provided.
4. The Programme Director's decision, together with reasons, is communicated to Solace Programme Manager who will communicate this to the learner and record details of the transaction.

Stage 4

1. Should the learner not be satisfied with Programme Director decision, they can institute the external appeals procedure as defined by the Awarding Body, details of which will be supplied.

Written records and evidence

Solace will keep written records and evidence of any appeal for a period of seven years from the date of appeal.

Further information

Should you have require any further information about the appeals procedure, please contact apprentices@solace.org.uk