**Service:** Adult Community Learning (ACL) Essex

**ACL Apprenticeship Complaints, Compliments and Comments Policy**

**Control of Document:** ACL Senior Leadership Team

The latest version of the policy will be maintained by the Adult Community Learning Service (ACL) and updates sent to all relevant staff, Apprentices and Employers. It is important that only the latest version of the policy is used

**Applies:** Whole Service

**Policy Aims and Intention**

To ensure that Apprentice and Employer feedback is listened to, recorded, information acted on where necessary and appropriate feedback is provided. Through this process, we seek to ensure that all complaints, compliments, and comments are handled in a timely and professional manner.

**Responsibility Group:**  Senior Leadership Team

**Date of acceptance:** July 2014

**Last review date:** June 2023

**Next review date:** June 2024

**Audience**: Apprentices, Employers, ACL staff and other relevant stakeholders

**The Policy**

Adult Community Learning Essex takes all complaints, compliments, and comments, seriously.

As part of our commitment to high-quality service, we listen to, record, provide appropriate feedback and act on information received in a timely manner. Through this process, we seek to ensure that all complaints, compliments, and comments are dealt with efficiency and professionalism.

We also recognise and respond to compliments, ensuring that staff teams and individuals are recognised when excellent service is delivered.

The policy has been developed to:

* Be easily accessible
* Be simple to understand and use
* Address all the points raised and provide an effective response
* Allow speedy handling with established time limits for action
* Keep people informed of progress
* Ensure a full and fair investigation
* Respect people’s desire for confidentiality
* Provide information to managers so that services can be improved and “lessons learned”.

**Monitoring and Evaluation**

Customer feedback informs the Self - Assessment and Quality Improvement Planning Process and informs performance against Matrix Standards

Feedback is collected throughout the year and in addition to complaints, compliments and comments includes:

* Apprenticeship progress reviews
* Programme evaluations
* Apprentice and Employer surveys
* Employer Engagement Monitoring Visits
* All apprentice learning sessions
* Learner Voice
* Apprentice and Employer feedback collected through the find apprenticeship training service and the apprentices feedback tool for the Apprenticeship Accountability framework

**Complaints**

A complaint will usually be about something you think we have done the wrong way, something we should not have done, or something we have failed to do.

During the complaint process Apprentices, Employers and/or other relevant stakeholders can expect to be treated by ACL with courtesy, respect, and fairness at all times. We expect Apprentices, Employers and/or other relevant stakeholders to treat ACL staff dealing with the complaint with the same courtesy, respect, and fairness.

*Informal Complaints*

Apprentices: In the first instance it is hoped that a discussion between the apprentice and their assessor/tutor or the curriculum lead will resolve the situation. However, where this is not possible the ACL formal complaints process will be followed.

Employers: In the first instance it is hoped that a discussion between the employer and their account manager within the Employer Engagement Team will resolve the situation. However, where this is not possible the ACL formal complaints process will be followed.

You can email or telephone the relevant staff member directly. Their contact details can be found on Learning Assistant, the VLE and the Apprenticeship Commitment Statement.

Alternatively, you can contact the Working Lives Team on 03330 139502 or at [Acl.apprenticeships@essex.gov.uk](mailto:Acl.apprenticeships@essex.gov.uk) who can direct you to the correct member of staff.

*Formal Complaints*

Complaints can be sent via telephone, email, or written letter.

[Acl.apprenticeships@essex.gov.uk](mailto:Acl.apprenticeships@essex.gov.uk)

03330 139502

Working Lives Team

ACL

Spinks Lane

Witham

CM8 1EP

When submitting your complaint, you must give robust and factual evidence and refer to any relevant documentation, witnesses etc.

This will include:

1. Details of what the complaint is about
2. When the incident/situation occurred including dates and times
3. The name of the ACL staff member if relevant
4. The name of your employer and line manager if relevant
5. The name of any other people involved if relevant

Your complaint will be acknowledged within three working days from the date of receipt and responded to within 10 working days.

The Curriculum & Learning Manager (Working Lives) will fully investigate the complaint and work with you and any relevant ACL staff to resolve the issue. They will prepare a response that will include:

1. Full details of the outcome of the investigation
2. A recommendation whether they believe the complaint is: upheld/ partially upheld / not upheld.
3. Any actions proposed to deal with issues raised and if possible, how to avoid the situation happening again in the future.

The response will address all the points raised within the complaint and will attempt to provide effective and appropriate remedial actions where fault on the part of ACL has been Upheld or Partially Upheld.

Once you have been informed of the outcome, a copy of the final letter responding to the complaint will be sent, for information, to yourself, appropriate ACL managers and then recorded centrally in a secure area on the intranet.

If you are not satisfied by the outcome of the complaint you have the right to appeal. This should be directed to the ACL Vice-Principal for Quality & Compliance.

Any appeal must be made in writing and within 10 days of the outcome of the original complaint.

The letter of appeal must clearly state the grounds for appeal. An appeal can only  
be considered on the following grounds:

* there is new additional evidence which was not reasonably available at the time of the original investigation
* proper procedures were not followed
* the decision and outcome are deemed to be unreasonable given the evidence available.

You will be informed if there are appropriate grounds for an appeal. The outcome of the appeal will either modify or uphold the outcome of the complaint.

Alternatively, you can use the Essex County Council Complaints and Compliments process to raise your formal complaint. Once your complaint has been submitted and received by the Central Customer Service Team, they will action and liaise with yourself and the relevant staff at ACL. They will act as an intermediary to ensure that your complaint is resolved satisfactorily. Full details of this process can be found here [Complaints and compliments - Essex County Council](https://www.essex.gov.uk/complaints)

If your complaint is in relation to the qualification elements of your apprenticeship, please refer to the Qualifications Appeals procedure and for those relating to End Point Assessment, the Exams Policy. Both documents are available on the VLE and will have been discussed with you as part of your induction. Your Tutor can also direct you to these documents.

If after following either of the above formal complaints processes, you are still unhappy with the outcome, you can complain to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) about how your complaint was handled.

You must contact the ESFA within 12 months after the issue happened.

Email or post your complaint to the ESFA complaints team.

[complaints.ESFA@education.gov.uk](mailto:complaints.ESFA@education.gov.uk)

Complaints Team  
Education and Skills Funding Agency  
Cheylesmore House  
Quinton Road  
Coventry  
CV1 2WT

The ESFA will reply to let you know what will happen next

If you’re unhappy with the ESFA response you can [contact the Department for Education](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education/about/complaints-procedure)

Apprentices and Employers are also able to contact the ESFA Apprenticeship Service Support Team on 08000 150 600 or [helpdesk@manage-apprenticeships.service.gov.uk](mailto:helpdesk@manage-apprenticeships.service.gov.uk) should they not wish to raise their complaint directly with ACL or Essex County Council in the first instance.

The ESFA does not deal with complaints about employment issues (for example, a problem with your contract if you’re working as an apprentice). The ACL Employer Engagement Team can support you with this type of complaint, and where appropriate, support you to address concerns directly with your employer.

**Compliments,** **Suggestions, and Feedback**

Quality and excellence are our top priorities. Both the Working Lives and Employer Engagement Team is totally committed to providing you with high-quality services including information, advice and guidance, engaging learning experiences and 1.2.1 support. As a result, we always want to hear what you have to say. We welcome compliments and any suggestions for improvements you might have. We record and monitor comments when we receive them to help us with the evaluation and development of our programmes.

You can send compliments, suggestions, and feedback to your Tutor or Employer Engagement account manager directly or via one of the following:

[Acl.apprenticeships@essex.gov.uk](mailto:Acl.apprenticeships@essex.gov.uk)

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**Associated Documents**

* Harassment and Bullying Policy
* Qualification Appeals Policy
* Exams Policy
* Essex County Council Complaints, Comments, Compliments Policy
* Confidentiality Statement
* Apprentice Handbook
* Employer Toolkit
* Exclusion Policy
* Fitness to Learn Policy
* ACL Learner Charter

If you require this document in any other format please email [jaimie.huckfield@essex.gov.uk](mailto:jaimie.huckfield@essex.gov.uk) stating the document name in full and the format you need.