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| **Title** | **ACL COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY** |
| **Responsible Group** | ACL Senior Leadership Team |
| **Author** | Vice Principal Quality and Compliance |
| **Intended Audience** | All staff, volunteers, employers, partners, learners, and other members of the public. The term learner also refers to apprentices throughout. |
| **Status**  | Live |
| **Version** | 2 |
| **Last Review and Approval** | July 2024 |
| **Approved By** | ACL Senior Leadership Team |
| **Next Review**  | July 2025 |
| **Original Date of Acceptance** | 19 December 2008 |
| **Changes Made** | February 2024 – Learner and Apprenticeship Compliments, Comments and Complaints policies combined into one policy. |
| **Stored Location**  | Master Copy on ComEd Pool/Policies and Strategies. ACL Website  |

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| **Changes made:** |  |
| July 2024 | Removal of duplicated text.  |
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**Policy aims and intentions**

To ensure that customer feedback is listened to, recorded, information acted on where necessary and appropriate feedback is provided. 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 concerns/compliments/comments are handled in a timely and professional manner.

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# **THE POLICY**

This policy, alongside the ECC Complaints and Compliments Policy, operates across all Essex Adult Community Learning provision.

Adult Community Learning Essex takes all compliments, comments, and complaints seriously and we treat all feedback 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 concerns/compliments/comments are dealt with efficiency and professionalism.

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”

**Method of implementation**

All staff must be aware of this policy and act in accordance with this guidance.

ACL works hard to deliver a high-quality service to all learners. We regularly ask for feedback about the different services we offer in order that we can continue to develop as an organisation. However, we recognise that there will be occasions when we don’t get it right and therefore, we welcome complaints and suggestions in order that we can change and improve our service.

**Comments and Compliments**

Quality and excellence are our top priorities. ACL is 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.

ACL receives feedback via:

* Phone: 0345 603 7635
* Email: Lifelong.learning@essex.gov.uk

Additionally, you can feedback to us at the end of your course using the ACL End of Course Evaluation form.

**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.

In the event of a complaint ACL will act promptly and with discretion and no-one will be treated differently as a result of making a complaint.

If you have a complaint about any aspect of the service you have received, or if you feel you have been treated unfairly, you should take the following action:

**Informal Complaints**

Centre based/outreach Learners: In the first instance it is hoped that a local discussion between you and a relevant member of ACL staff, for example your tutor or a customer services assistant will be able to resolve your resolve the situation.

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.

You can also contact the Working Lives Team on 03330 139502 or at Acl.apprenticeships@essex.gov.uk who can direct you to the correct member of staff.

**Formal Complaint**

Where an informal approach is not possible the following feedback processes are to be used.

ACL receives feedback via:

* Phone: 0345 603 7635
* Email: Lifelong.learning@essex.gov.uk

Apprenticeships:

* Email: Acl.apprenticeships@essex.gov.uk
* Phone:03330 139502

Write to us: ACL

Spinks Lane

Witham

CM8 1EP

When submitting your complaint, please provide robust and factual evidence and refer to any relevant documentation, witnesses etc.

Complaints received verbally, via email or by phone will be tracked using the ACL Feedback Log. ACL records feedback from customers on a secure, online customer feedback log.

ACL Feedback Log to capture and track:

* Details of the complaint
* When the incident/situation occurred including dates and times
* The name of the ACL staff member if relevant
* The name of your employer and line manager if relevant
* The name of any other people involved if relevant

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

An appropriate member of the ACL management team will fully investigate the complaint and work with you and any other relevant ACL staff to resolve the issue.

They will prepare a response that will include:

* Full details of the outcome of the investigation
* A recommendation whether they believe the complaint is: upheld/ partially upheld / not upheld.
* 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.

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.

The outcome of the appeal will either modify or uphold the outcome of the complaint.

Alternatively, if you are not satisfied with the outcome or wish to share your feedback direct to Essex County Council, you can use the ECC Complaints and Compliments process. Once your feedback 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
* 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.

* We will treat all feedback seriously and according to our standard procedures
* We will recognise and respond to compliments, ensuring that staff teams and individuals are recognised when excellent service is delivered.
* The customer can expect to be treated with courtesy, respect, and fairness at all times. We expect that customers also treat ACL staff dealing with complaints with the same courtesy, respect, and fairness.

**MONITORING AND EVALUATING**

**Compliments, Suggestions, and Feedback**

Quality and excellence are our top priorities. ACL is 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:

* + Phone: 0345 603 7635
	+ Email: Lifelong.learning@essex.gov.uk
	+ Phone: 03330 139502 (Apprenticeships)
	+ Email: Acl.apprenticeships@essex.gov.uk
* ACL Feedback Log
* Full details of feedback received is captured on the ACL Feedback Log (staff use only)
* Feedback allocated to relevant manager for appropriate action ie following up of a complaint, cross service sharing
* Log is monitored to ensure all communication is timely
* Resolution/outcome is recorded
* Reporting carried out on feedback relating to different service areas.
* Identified areas of service improvement captured and followed up.
* Customer feedback informs the Self - Assessment and Quality Improvement Planning Process
* Report results inform 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

# **Related ACL Policies:**

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

If you require this document in any other format please email teresa.ablewhite@essex.gov.uk stating the document name in full and the format you need.