COMPLAINTS, COMMENTS & COMPLIMENTS POLICY

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COMPLAINTS, COMMENTS & COMPLIMENTS POLICY

Creation / Amendments Date	Name	Position	Review Date
24/08/2024	Ben Mills	Managing Director	23/08/2024
26/08/2025	Ben Mills	Managing Director	25/08/2026
01/10/2025	Ben Mills	Managing Director	30/09/2026
18/11/2025	Ben Mills	Managing Director	17/11/2026

Introduction

Orchard Training & Education Ltd strives to provide a high-quality service to all learners, employers, and stakeholders. We welcome comments, compliments, and complaints as part of our continuous improvement process.

Feedback can be given in person, by phone, email, or via our website. Learners and employers are also invited to provide feedback through surveys and suggestion channels. We operate a “You Said / We Did” process to demonstrate how feedback leads to improvements.

Complaints are defined as expressions of dissatisfaction where a customer, learner, employer, or stakeholder believes Orchard has not acted properly or fairly. All complaints will be investigated promptly, fairly, and without prejudice.

Rationale

Our provision works with learners, parents/carers, employers, local authorities, Ofsted, and the Department for Education. It is important that concerns or complaints are addressed quickly and thoroughly, with complainants kept informed throughout.

Everyone has the right to make a complaint and to have it addressed without fear of reprisal.

3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All Orchard learners (apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeships, AEB, traineeships)
- Parents/carers and employers
- Orchard staff and directors
- External professionals and members of the public

Complaints relating to safeguarding/child protection are managed under the Safeguarding Policy and referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

Complaints must be raised within 12 months of the issue, or within 12 months of exhausting a subcontractor's procedure.

4. Types of Complaints

We will investigate complaints relating to:

- Quality or management of learning provision
- Poor administration
- Learner support assessment
- Qualification assessment decisions (see Section 10)
- Unsatisfactory, incompetent, or unfair treatment
- Non-compliance with data protection requirements
- Equality and diversity issues
- Health and safety concerns

We will not usually investigate complaints relating to:

- Examination results (handled by awarding organisations/Ofqual)
- Employment issues (covered by employment law)
- Contractual disputes
- Matters subject to legal action
- Complaints more than 12 months old
- Complaints not exhausting other appeals procedures
- Malicious or vexatious complaints

5. Concern vs Complaint

- Concerns: Issues raised informally, often resolved quickly without formal recording.
- Complaints: Formal issues requiring investigation, logging, and written response.

Orchard encourages early resolution of concerns to prevent escalation.

6. Internal Complaint Contacts

Complaints may be submitted directly to:

- **Ben Mills – Managing Director**
- Email: bmills@oteconstruction.co.uk

- **Becky Mills – Director of Operations / Compliance Lead**
- Email: blmills@oteconstruction.co.uk

- **Daniel Peacham – Head of Business Operations**
- Email: dpeacham@oteconstruction.co.uk

7. The Complaints Process

7.1 Adults – Adults

Workplace disagreements should be resolved informally where possible. If unresolved, escalate to line manager, then Director of Operations. Adults must never allow disagreements to play out in front of learners.

7.2 Adults – Themselves

Staff who recognise inappropriate behaviour in themselves should report it to their line manager or the Board directly.

7.3 Learner – Adult

Learners may complain about staff behaviour. Complaints are heard, logged, and investigated by the Director of Operations or delegate. Parents/carers and employers are informed.

7.4 Adult – Learner

Staff may raise complaints about learner behaviour. These are investigated by the Director of Operations or delegate.

7.5 Learner – Learner

Complaints between learners are taken seriously, logged, and investigated with appropriate support.

7.6 Parents/Carers

Parents/carers may raise complaints with the Director of Operations. If unresolved, the formal procedure applies.

7.7 Other Professionals/Employers

Complaints from external professionals or employers are investigated by the Director of Operations or delegate.

7.8 Community

Complaints from members of the public are investigated by the Director of Operations or delegate.

8. Investigating Complaints

Investigations will:

- Establish what has happened so far and who has been involved
- Clarify the nature of the complaint and what remains unresolved
- Meet with the complainant if necessary

Clarify what the complainant feels would put things right

Interview those involved fairly, allowing representation if requested

Keep notes of all interviews and findings

Resolving Complaints

Resolution may include:

- Apology or explanation
- Corrective action or assurance
- Policy/procedure review
- Training or support for staff

Complaints Procedure – Stages

Stage 1 – Early Resolution

- Raise with tutor/assessor, line manager, or Operations Team.
- Aim to resolve within 7 calendar days.
- Logged in the Complaints Register.

Stage 2 – Formal Consideration

- Written complaint to Director of Operations (Becky Mills).
- Acknowledged within 5 working days.
- Investigation completed within 10 working days.
- Written outcome issued within 7 working days of investigation.
- Complaint recorded with a unique identifier in the Complaints Tracking Record.

Stage 3 – Escalation to Director of Training

- Escalation to Director of Training (Kevin Davison).
- Meeting offered; complainant may be accompanied.
- Written outcome within 20 working days.

Stage 4 – Referral to Managing Director

- Escalation to Managing Director (Ben Mills).
- A Complaints Panel convened (Managing Director + 2 independent members).
- Written outcome within 7 calendar days of panel meeting.

Stage 5 – Appeals Process

- If dissatisfied, complainant may appeal to the Chief Executive equivalent (Managing Director) with evidence of the original complaint.
- Reviewed within 7 working days.
- Decision communicated in writing.

Stage 6 – External Referral

If all internal stages are exhausted, complaints may be referred to:

- Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)
- Ofsted
- Awarding Organisations:
  - NOCN
    - Address: NOCN Group, 1st Floor, Acero, 1 Concourse Way, Sheffield, S1 2BJ
    - Phone: 0300 999 1177
    - Email: customersupport@nocn.org.uk
    - Website: Roles & Responsibilities
  - NCFE
    - Address: Q6 Quorum Business Park, Benton Lane, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE12 8BT
    - Phone: 0191 239 8000
    - Email: service@ncfe.org.uk
    - Website: Roles & Responsibilities
- Apprenticeship Helpline – Roles & Responsibilities or 0800 015 0400
- Department for Education (DfE) – www.gov.uk/contact-dfe

Internal Contacts

Name	Role	Contact Number	Email
Ben Mills	Managing Director	07595 524084	bmills@oteconstruction.co.uk
Becky Mills	Director of Operations	07710619023	blmills@oteconstruction.co.uk
Daniel Peacham	Business Operations	01482 253200	dpeacham@oteconstruction.co.uk
Kevin Davison	Director of Occupational Development	01482 253200	kdavison@oteconstruction.co.uk

11. Qualification Assessment Appeals

Learners have the right to appeal assessment decisions.

- Stage 1: Appeal to Programme Tutor Assessor within 5 working days.
- Stage 2: Appeal to Independent Assessment Panel (Director of Operations + Director of Training). Response within 5 working days.
- Stage 3: If unresolved, escalate to awarding organisation (NOCN or NCFE).

12. Safeguarding Complaints

Complaints relating to safeguarding of children or vulnerable adults are handled under the Safeguarding Policy and referred immediately to the DSL.

13. Complaints Against Senior Staff

- Complaints against the Managing Director are referred to the Director of Training.
- Complaints against other Directors are referred to the Managing Director.
- Where appropriate, matters may be considered under disciplinary procedures.

15. Staff Training

All staff receive training on:

• Distinguishing concerns vs complaints
• Recording and escalation procedures
• Supporting learners and parents in making complaints
• External referral routes (ESFA, Ofsted, awarding bodies)
• How to support vulnerable learners in accessing complaints procedures, including advocacy options
• How to signpost safeguarding complaints directly to the DSL
Training is refreshed annually and reinforced through induction and CPD.

16. Monitoring & Review

• Complaints are logged and reviewed quarterly by the Operations Team.

• Trends and outcomes are reported to the Senior Leadership Team and used to inform continuous improvement.

• Policy is reviewed annually or following regulatory change.

• The latest version is published on Orchard's website: https://www.oteconstruction.co.uk/.