

# Complaints Policy for Learners and Participants

## Policy Statement

Social Enterprise Kent CIC (SEK) is committed to providing high-quality learning, employability and support services.

We aim to create a positive, respectful and inclusive environment where learners and participants feel listened to and supported.

We recognise that, from time to time, concerns or complaints may arise. We welcome feedback and take complaints seriously as part of our commitment to continuous improvement.

This policy explains how learners and participants can raise concerns or make a complaint, and how SEK will respond.

## Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide a clear and fair complaints process,
- ensure concerns are addressed promptly and consistently,
- support respectful resolution of issues,
- promote continuous improvement,
- and ensure learners and participants know how to escalate concerns if needed

## Who This Policy Applies to

This policy applies to all learners, participants and individuals accessing SEK learning, employability and support services.

SEK aims to maintain a respectful, safe and inclusive environment across all programmes and activities.

This policy covers complaints relating to programme delivery, learner experience, support services and participant conduct.

Safeguarding concerns should be reported immediately through SEK safeguarding procedures.

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## Principles

SEK will ensure complaints are:

- taken seriously,
- handled fairly and respectfully,
- managed consistently,
- dealt with confidentially where possible,
- resolved as quickly as possible,
- and used to improve services and learner experience.

No learner or participant will be treated unfairly for raising a complaint in good faith.

## Informal Resolution

We encourage concerns to be raised informally in the first instance wherever appropriate.

Many issues can be resolved quickly through discussion with:

- a tutor,
- programme manager.

Informal concerns should normally be raised as soon as possible after the issue occurs.

SEK will aim to resolve informal concerns within 5 working days

If the issue cannot be resolved informally, a formal complaint may be made.

## Formal Complaints Process

Stage 1 – Submitting a Complaint

Formal complaints should be submitted in writing by email or letter.

Complaints should include:

- the nature of the complaint,
- relevant dates and details,
- any actions already taken,
- and the outcome being requested.

Complaints should normally be submitted within 20 working days of the issue occurring.

## Complaints Contact

[training@sekgroup.org.uk](mailto:training@sekgroup.org.uk)

If support is needed to submit a complaint, SEK will provide reasonable assistance where possible.

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## Stage 2 – Acknowledgement

SEK will:

- acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 5 working days
- confirm who is handling the complaint,
- and explain the next steps.

## Stage 3 – Investigation

The complaint will be reviewed fairly and proportionately.

This may include:

- reviewing relevant information,
- speaking with individuals involved,
- reviewing policies or records,
- and considering appropriate resolutions.

SEK aims to provide a formal response within 15 working days

If additional time is needed, the complainant will be informed.

## Complaint Outcomes

Possible outcomes may include:

- explanation or clarification,
- apology,
- agreed actions,
- reasonable adjustments or support,
- mediation or informal resolution,
- service improvements,
- or other appropriate actions.

Where appropriate, SEK may identify learning or improvement actions following a complaint.

## Appeals Process

If a learner or participant is dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint, they may request an appeal.

Appeals must:

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- be submitted in writing,
- explain why the outcome is disputed,
- and include any additional relevant information.

Appeals should be submitted within 10 working days of receiving the complaint outcome.

Appeals will be reviewed by a senior manager or director not previously involved in the complaint where possible.

SEK aims to respond to appeals within 15 working days

The appeal decision will normally be final within SEK's internal procedures.

### **External Escalation**

If a learner or participant remains dissatisfied after completing SEK's complaints process, they may seek independent advice or contact relevant external organisations where appropriate.

Depending on the nature of the complaint, this may include:

- funding or awarding organisations,
- the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA),
- the Department for Education,
- the Department for Work and Pensions,
- the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO),
- or other appropriate regulatory bodies.

SEK will provide information on escalation routes where applicable.

### **Confidentiality**

Complaints will be handled sensitively and confidentially wherever possible.

Information will only be shared with individuals involved in managing or investigating the complaint.

Some information may need to be disclosed where:

- safeguarding concerns are identified,
- legal obligations apply,
- or there is risk of harm to individuals.

### **Unreasonable or Vexatious Complaints**

SEK reserves the right to manage complaints appropriately where behaviour becomes abusive, threatening, discriminatory or unreasonable.

This will not affect the right to raise genuine concerns respectfully.

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## Monitoring and Continuous Improvement

SEK will:

- monitor complaints and outcomes,
- identify themes or recurring issues,
- review learner feedback,
- and use findings to improve services and learner experience.

## Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding and Prevent Policy
- Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Policy
- Learner Code of Conduct
- Appeals Policy
- Data Protection and Privacy Policy

## Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains effective, fair and aligned with good practice.

Signed:



Rebecca Smith (Chief Executive Officer)

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