



Complaints and Compliments Policy

Purpose	
This policy outlines how Acorn Training Ltd collects and responds to compliments, feedback and complaints. Its purpose is to ensure all individuals who engage with our services can raise concerns easily and have them handled fairly, promptly and consistently, supporting high-quality delivery and continuous improvement.	
Key words	
Compliment, Complaint, Contacts, Process	
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Name of Responsible Group:	Executive Management Team
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Target Audience:	Employees, learners, apprentices, participants, service users, employers, partners, referrers, commissioners and members of the public.

Version Control

Version Number	Date	Comments (Description change and amendments)
6	27/03/2026	Full rewrite; inclusive terminology updated; data protection strengthened; digital routes added; primary email updated to feedback@acorntraining.co.uk

For more information contact: **Sophia Franzen – Chief Operating Officer**

Equality Statement – Due Regard

Acorn Training Ltd aims to design and implement policy documents that meet the diverse needs of our service, population and workforce, ensuring that none are placed at a disadvantage over others.

It takes into account the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 and promotes equal opportunities for all.

This document has been assessed to ensure that no one receives less favourable treatment on the protected characteristics of their age, disability, sex (gender), gender reassignment, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity.

In carrying out its functions, Acorn Training Ltd must have due regard to the different needs of different protected equality groups.

This applies to all the activities for which Acorn Training Ltd is responsible, including policy development and review.

Reporting to Prime Providers and Funding Bodies

Where appropriate, there may be the need to inform a prime provider of irregularities or specific issues within the remit and scope of this policy. At all times, this should be discussed with the Managing Director or the delegated officer. A non-conformity/incident report should be raised in line with our ISO9001 accredited quality management system to aid and facilitate reporting.

Individuals may also wish to refer to the whistle blowing process where it is not deemed appropriate to report to the Managing Director or their delegated officer.

Training

The following training is required to support implementation and ongoing maintenance of this policy:

- Updated policy document to be issued to all employees, through induction and annual refresher

1. Purpose and Policy Statement

Acorn Training Ltd is committed to delivering excellent services across learning, employment, skills, wellbeing and community programmes. We welcome compliments and feedback and take complaints seriously. This policy ensures that all learners, apprentices, participants, service users, employers and stakeholders can raise concerns easily and have them addressed fairly, promptly and confidentially.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all individuals who engage with Acorn Training, including:

- Learners
- Apprentices
- Participants (employability, justice, community, wellbeing and other non-accredited programmes)
- Service users accessing community, guidance, mentoring or support services
- Employers and workplace supervisors
- Parents/carers of individuals under 18 or vulnerable adults (with consent where appropriate)
- Commissioners, partners, referrers and members of the public

Out of Scope:

Handled separately via dedicated procedures:

- Safeguarding / Prevent concerns
- Data protection rights complaints (ICO route available)
- Awarding organisation or EPAO assessment decisions (go via AO/EPAO appeals)

3. Definitions

- **Compliment:** Praise about the service, staff, support or outcomes.
- **Feedback:** Suggestions or comments for improvement.
- **Informal Concern:** Issue raised locally to resolve quickly.
- **Complaint:** Expression of dissatisfaction about services, actions or lack of action.
- **Participant:** Anyone engaged in non-accredited Acorn programmes.
- **Service User:** Anyone accessing support, interventions or community services.
- **Appeal:** Request for internal review of a complaint decision.

4. Principles

Our approach to complaints is:

- **Accessible:** multiple contact routes, adjustments available.
- **Timely:** clear response times and updates.
- **Fair and evidence-based:** impartial decision-making.
- **Confidential:** data handled under UK GDPR and DPA 2018.
- **Outcome-focused:** remedies applied where appropriate.
- **Improvement-driven:** learning informs service enhancements and ISO9001 actions.

5. How to Give a Compliment or Make a Complaint

5.1 Compliments

Send to **feedback@acorntraining.co.uk** or via any contact method below.

5.2 Informal Concerns

Raise with a Tutor, Employment Coach, Adviser, Support Worker or centre staff for quick resolution.

5.3 Formal Complaints

Submit via any of the following:

- **Email:** **feedback@acorntraining.co.uk**
- **Online form:** Via [acorntraining.co.uk](https://www.acorntraining.co.uk)
- **Telephone:** 01782 827827
- **Post:** Governance Team, Acorn Training Ltd, 8–9 Piccadilly Arcade, Hanley, ST1 1DL

6. Complaint Stages and Timescales

Stage 1: Informal Resolution

Aim: resolve within 5 working days.

Stage 2: Formal Complaint

- Acknowledgement: within 2 working days
- Update/Full investigation and outcome: within 10 working days (up to 20 if complex)
- Written outcome provided including reasons and any actions

Stage 3 — Appeal

- Must be submitted within 10 working days of outcome
- Reviewed by a senior manager not previously involved
- Decision normally within 10 working days

7. External Escalation (after Acorn's full internal process)

Once you have had Acorn Training's final internal response, you may escalate to:

Department for Education (DfE)

For complaints relating to publicly funded post-16 education or training, including apprenticeships and adult education. Must normally be raised within 12 months of the issue.

Ofsted

For concerns about providers they inspect, after completing the full Acorn Training complaints process.

Ofqual

For awarding-organisation complaints, once the awarding body's own process is exhausted.

Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)

For concerns about the handling of personal data.

8. Remedies

Where a complaint is upheld, remedies may include:

- Apology
- Service adjustments or improvements
- Re-delivery or alternative arrangements where appropriate
- Staff development or corrective actions
- Quality improvements logged and monitored

9. Anonymous and Third-Party Complaints

- Anonymous complaints may be reviewed where information is sufficient.
- Third-party complaints require consent unless a safeguarding exception applies.

10. Data Protection and Confidentiality

We process complaint information lawfully under UK GDPR and DPA 2018. Information is kept secure, minimised, retained appropriately, and disclosed only where necessary (e.g., regulators, commissioning bodies, safeguarding partners).

11. Interfaces with Safeguarding, Prevent and Whistleblowing

- Safeguarding concerns must follow the Safeguarding & Prevent Policy.
- Whistleblowing processes apply where internal disclosure is not appropriate or safe.

12. Monitoring, Reporting and Learning

- Trends analysed quarterly
- Reporting to Senior Leadership Team and Governance
- ISO9001 non-conformity reports raised where required
- Continuous improvement actions tracked

13. Roles and Responsibilities

- **All staff:** Recognise and escalate issues appropriately
- **Investigating Managers:** Conduct fair, evidence-based investigations
- **Governance Team:** Oversight, consistency, reporting, quality assurance
- **COO:** Organisational accountability

14. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

We ensure equal access to the complaints process for all, with adjustments provided on request.

15. Training and Awareness

Induction, annual refresher training, and manager-level investigation training.

16. Linked Policies

- 016 Child & Adult at Risk Policy
- 224 Whistleblowing Policy
- 121 Data Protection Policy
- 370 General Organisation Privacy Statement
- 430 Staff Code of Conduct
- 089 Quality policy

17. Publication

- The policy and a simple “How to Complain” guide will be published on our website.