

Bristol NHS Foundation Trust

Apprenticeship Centre

Complaints Policy & Procedure

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Contents

1. Quick-Reference Summary	3
2. Introduction.....	3
3. Purpose and Scope	3
4. Definition of Terms	4
5. Roles and Responsibilities	4
6. Procedures.....	5
7. Complaint Stages	6
8. Monitoring Effectiveness	12
9. Associated Policies/Documents.....	14
10. Policy review.....	19
11. Associated Documents and References	19
12. Document History.....	20

1. Quick-Reference Summary

This policy specifies the process to follow when a learner or member of staff within, or associated with, the Bristol NHS Foundation Trust (BFT) Apprenticeship Centre makes a complaint. It includes recommendations of how to manage and escalate the complaint using informal or formal methods.

2. Introduction

2.1 This policy sets out the process for apprentices, learners, line managers, and Apprenticeship Centre staff to follow when raising a complaint about any aspect of the service provided by Bristol NHS Foundation Trust (BFT) Apprenticeship Centre. It explains the steps for escalation, the parties involved, and the timescales for resolution.

2.2 BFT Apprenticeship Centre is committed to delivering high-quality training and vocational education that meets the standards required by awarding organisations, employers, and regulatory bodies such as Ofsted, DfE, City & Guilds, and MATRIX. We value feedback from learners, employers, and stakeholders as part of our continuous improvement process.

2.3 We are dedicated to ensuring fairness, transparency, confidentiality, and accessibility in handling complaints. The Centre assesses individual learner needs and provides tailored support and reasonable adjustments to ensure an inclusive learning experience for all apprentices.

3. Purpose and Scope

3.1 Purpose

3.1.1 The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear and consistent framework for managing complaints within the Bristol NHS Foundation Trust Apprenticeship Centre. It sets out the steps to follow, the roles and responsibilities involved, and the timescales for resolution.

3.1.2 Complaints will always be treated seriously, fairly, and without prejudice. Apprentices and others raising a complaint in good faith will not suffer any disadvantage or

recrimination. All parties are expected to engage with the process respectfully and constructively.

3.1.3 Wherever possible, complaints should be resolved informally and promptly between the relevant parties. Formal procedures should only be initiated if informal resolution is unsuccessful. Evidence of an attempt at informal resolution will be required before progressing to the next stage.

3.1.4 Complaints must be supported by relevant evidence, presented clearly and concisely, and submitted within the specified timescales. Late submissions will only be considered in exceptional circumstances where valid reasons are provided and supported by evidence.

3.1.5 Complainants will be informed early in the process if the requested outcome cannot be delivered by the Apprenticeship Centre. The Centre reserves the right to decline, suspend, or discontinue a complaint if legal proceedings are initiated on the same matter. The Office of the Independent Adjudicator cannot consider issues that are, or have been, subject to court proceedings.

3.2 Scope

This policy applies to apprentices registered with BFT Apprenticeship Centre and any learners undertaking vocational programmes delivered or co-delivered by the Centre. It also applies to employers and staff involved in the delivery, design, coordination, management, and quality assurance of apprenticeship programmes.

4. Definition of Terms

Abbreviations used throughout the document:

BFT: Bristol NHS Foundation Trust

DfE: Department for Education

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 Apprentices: Raise concerns promptly and engage respectfully in resolution processes

5.2 Assessors: Attempt informal resolution and escalate all concerns to the management team

5.3 Curriculum Managers: Manage Stage 2 complaints

5.4 Senior Leadership Team: Oversee Stage 3 complaints and ensure compliance

5.5 Quality Team: Monitor trends and report outcomes

5.6 Employers: Support apprentices in raising concerns and cooperate with resolution process

6. Procedures

6.1 Grounds for Complaint or Appeal:

6.1.1 Concerns relating to BFT's curriculum or service provision, or an academic decision

6.1.2 The subject of the complaint should relate specifically to one or more of the following, or comparable issues

6.1.3 Concerns about the delivery of a programme, teaching, supervision, assessment, or administration provided by BFT Apprenticeship Centre or End Point Assessment Organisations

6.1.4 Poor quality of facilities, learning resources or services

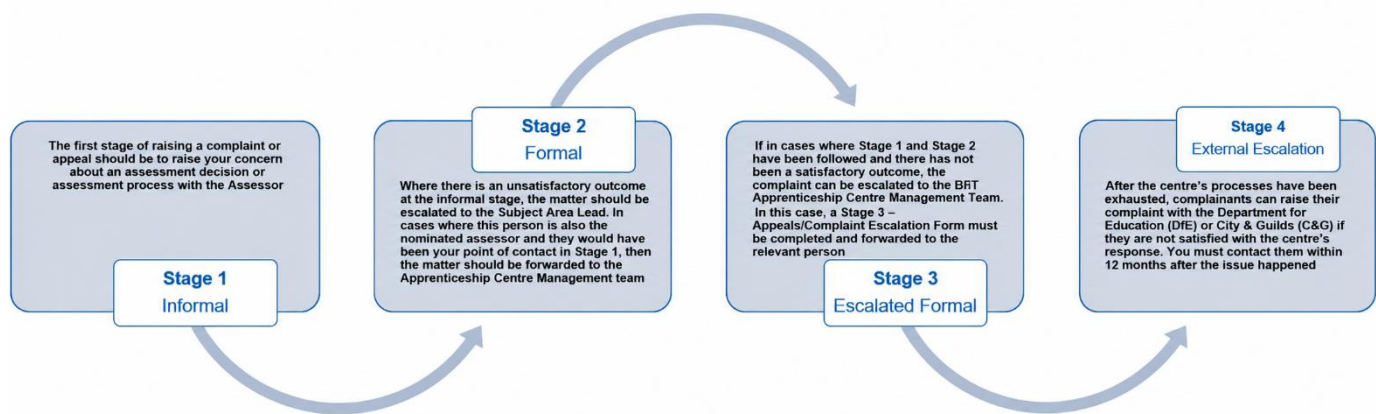
6.1.5 Complaints involving other organisations or contractors providing apprenticeship services on behalf of BFT Apprenticeship Centre

Complaints relating to allegations of bullying, harassment, or victimisation by members of staff, are associated with Bristol NHS Foundation Trusts wider policies and procedures and should be reviewed and escalated within the specified way.

7. Complaint Stages

7.1.1 Below stipulates the stages that complaints should be raised. Complaints or appeals can be submitted either by the apprentice directly or from the employer. It is expected that apprentices/employers will follow the reporting structure for issuing complaints or appeal:

7.1.2 There are three stages where you can raise complaints through within BFT Apprenticeship Centre. Where you are not satisfied with the outcome this can be escalated externally (Stage 4)



Stage 1 – Informal

The first stage of raising complaints or appeal should be to raise your concern about an assessment decision or assessment process with the apprenticeship assessor.

It is recommended that during this stage, complaints or appeals are sent via email to the assessors Trust email address. When the complaint or appeal is raised it is expected that the assessor will acknowledge the complaint or appeal within 5 working days. If you receive an automatic response saying that your assessor will be out of the office, then it is expected that you will forward the message to the person stipulated within the automated response. If after 5 working days no acknowledgement has been sent, then you should escalate this through to Stage 2.

Although there are no set timescales for resolution of informal concerns, it is expected that:

- Apprentices/Employers will discuss concerns about assessment decisions within 20 working days of being notified
- Apprentices/Employers will raise a concern about a lack of assessment opportunities with the assessor at the earliest opportunity, e.g., their next scheduled visit or before
- Most informal concerns can be resolved within 1 month
- Where this is not possible, a review of the situation will occur at least monthly until it is resolved
- The situation should not exceed 1 month without evidence of progress towards resolution being made

The concern should be raised formally in instances where resolution within 1 month is unlikely.

If appropriate, the assessor may suggest a tripartite meeting with the employer and apprentice to agree the plan, especially if additional support or time is needed.

If there is no resolution within the specified timelines, you should follow this policy through to Stage 2 – Formal Reporting.

Stage 2 – Formal

If after following the informal stage there has been an unsatisfactory outcome, the matter should be escalated to the Programme Manager/s. In cases where this person is also the nominated assessor and they would have been your point of contact in Stage 1, then the matter should be forwarded to the BFT Apprenticeship Centre Management team.

In this case a Stage 2 – Appeal/Complaints Form must be completed and forward onto the key contact listed in the below tables:

<u>Healthcare Apprenticeships</u> Level 3 – Senior Healthcare Support Worker Standard Concerns about the delivery of a programme,	Melody Potdar – Melody.Potdar@uhbw.nhs.uk
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teaching, supervision, assessment, or administration provided by BFT Apprenticeship Centre or End Point Assessment Organisations	
<u>Healthcare Apprenticeships</u> Historic Frameworks relating to Health apprenticeships	

<u>Business Administration, Customer Service & Team Leader Apprenticeships</u> Level 3 – Business Administrator Standard Level 2 – Customer Service Practitioner Standard Level 3 – Team Leader Standard Historic Frameworks relating to Business Administration and Customer Service qualifications Concerns about the delivery of a programme, teaching, supervision, assessment, or administration provided by BFT Apprenticeship Centre or End Point Assessment Organisations	Jonathan Newton Jonathan.Newton@nbt.nhs.uk
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<u>Functional Skills</u> Level 1/2 Functional Skills Mathematics Level 1/2 Functional Skills English Concerns about the delivery of a programme, teaching, supervision, assessment, or administration provided by BFT Apprenticeship Centre or End Point Assessment Organisations	Alexandra Hurst Alexandra.Hurst@uhbw.nhs.uk
<u>Apprenticeship Business Services Management</u> Poor quality of facilities, learning resources or services. Complaints involving other organisations or	Tori Howells Victoria.Howells@uhbw.nhs.uk

contractors providing apprenticeship services on behalf of BFT Apprenticeship Centre	
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The set timescales for a Stage 2 complaints procedure are as follows:

- Acknowledgement of your complaint within 5 working days
- Review and initial action plan and next steps within 10 working days of submission
- Issue to be resolved within 1 calendar month from submission

Stage 3 – Escalated Formal

If in cases where Stage 1 and Stage 2 have been followed and there has not been a satisfactory outcome, the complaint can be escalated to the Learning and Workforce Development Senior Leadership Team.

In this case a Stage 3 – Appeals/Complaint Escalation Form must be completed and forwarded on to the relevant person from the below table:

Senior Leadership Team	Key Contact
<u>Head of Learner Quality Curriculum & Improvement</u> Concerns about the delivery of a programme, teaching, supervision, assessment, or administration provided by BFT Apprenticeship Centre or End Point Assessment Organisations	Debra Evans – Debra.Evans@uhbw.nhs.uk
<u>Head of Learner Business, Resource and Innovation</u> Poor quality of facilities, learning resources or services Complaints involving other organisations or contractors providing apprenticeship services on behalf of BFT Apprenticeship Centre	Julian Newberry julian.newberry@UHBW.nhs.uk

The set timescales for a Stage 3 complaints procedure are as follows:

- Acknowledgement of your complaint within 5 working days
- Review and initial action plan and next steps within 10 working days of submission
- Issue to be resolved within 1 calendar month from submission

Stage 4 – External escalation

After the Centre's processes have been exhausted, complainants can raise their complaint with the Department for Education (DfE) if they are not satisfied with the Centre's response. You must contact the DfE within 12 months after the issue happened.

Complaints are made via an online portal which can be accessed [HERE](#)

OR

If the complaint is about the assessment or the internal quality assurance of the qualification or functional skills, then the complainants can raise their complaint email feedbackandcomplaints@cityandguilds.com or put them in a letter to:

Customer Experience Team
City & Guilds
5-6 Giltspur Street
London EC1A 9DE

The DfE will inform you about what will happen next.

7.2 Recording and monitoring of complaints or appeals

It is important that complaints are monitored to improve the apprentice experience. The BFT Apprenticeship Centre management team, including the IQA's, will record and provide reports to indicate the nature of complaints and complainants, and resultant action. Such reports will:

- Feed into the monitoring and evaluation procedure at various Levels
- Be used to improve services for all apprentices
- Assist in identifying problems and trends across BFT Apprenticeship Centre.

All complaints will be handled in the strictest confidence.

Grounds and reasons for the complaint will only be passed to those directly involved with the complaint. It might be necessary for the BFT Apprenticeship Centre to use the complaint as a learning process.

8. Monitoring Effectiveness

The below table details the monitoring procedures in order that BFT can be assured that compliance with a policy is being met. It identifies both the processes for monitoring compliance and the actions to be taken where deficiencies and non-compliance are identified. This table must be completed in all policies

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis, at the request of management or in line with updates to the requirements from the Awarding Organisations or external government entities that the Centre is approved by or governed by.

What will be monitored	Monitoring/ audit method	Monitoring responsibility (individual/group/ committee)	Frequency of monitoring	Reporting arrangements (committee/group the monitoring results are presented to)	How will actions be taken to ensure improvements and learning where the monitoring has identified deficiencies
Number and nature of complaints	Review of complaints log and categorisation by type	Apprenticeship Centre Management Team	Quarterly		Identify trends, update training, revise processes
Timeliness of complaint resolution	Audit against policy timescales (Stage 1–3)	Centre Management	Bi-Annually		Escalate delays, implement corrective actions
Compliance with escalation procedures	Spot checks on completed complaint forms and escalation records. Post-resolution feedback survey.	Centre Management	Bi-Annually		Provide refresher training, update guidance

Apprentice satisfaction with complaint handling	Post-resolution feedback	Centre Management	Annually		Action plan based on feedback, share improvements
Lessons learned / integration	Review of changes implemented following complaints	Centre Management	Annually		Document improvements, update policy and training

9. Associated Policies/Documents

Supporting Documents	Exemptions
This guidance should be read in conjunction with the following Centre policies/guidelines: - Centre Code of Conduct - Centre Assessment Policy - Equality and Diversity / Equal Opportunities - Recognition of Prior Learning - Malpractice Policy - Quality Assurance Also, reference should be made to: The relevant policies for the organisation employing the learner: - Work Experience - Quality Placement Strategy - Induction Policies - Employer/Training Provider/Learner Agreements - Information Management and Governance The relevant Awarding Organisation's and End Point Assessment Organisation's policies, procedures, and manuals: - Quality Assurance Requirements - Guidance on the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessments - Centre Manuals - Recognition of Prior Learning - Malpractice - Delivery documents for specific qualifications Wider National documents as appropriate: - Ofsted EIF (Education Inspection Framework) - ESFA delivery and funding guidance - Apprenticeship Standard (those applicable) - Apprenticeship Standard Assessment Plan (those applicable) - Innovate Awarding EPAPro	This document does not cover any BFT learners who are undertaking their learning pathway with another Centre or Training Provider, unless BFT co-delivers the training in part or completely, and as such would be responsible for the quality assurance processes involved in delivery. This document does cover learners from other organisations who undertake their learning pathway through the BFT Apprenticeship Centre. It will also cover learners not employed, but on work experience or employability programmes such as Traineeships and Sector Based Work Academies with BFT. This document applies to all vocational learning pathways including competency packages, stand- alone units, full qualifications, and standards.

Complaints Form - Stage 2 – Formal Complaint

This form is to be completed in conjunction with the process stipulated in the BFT Apprenticeship Centre Complaints Policy. This form should only be completed when stage 1 has been followed with no successful outcome.

Email completed form to the key contact in the Complaints Policy.

Apprentice Name:		Apprenticeship Programme:	
Apprenticeship start date:		Apprenticeship planned end date:	
Apprentice Assessor		Apprentice place of employment	

Use the space below to give a brief overview of the complaint:

Use the space below to give a brief explanation of what was put in place to resolve this during stage 1:

Date Submitted		Signed by Apprentice		Signed by Employer	
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The set timescales for a Stage 2 complaints procedure are as follows:

- Acknowledgement of your complaint within 5 working days.
- Review and initial action plan and next steps within 10 working days of submission.
- Issue to be resolved within 1 calendar month from submission.

Complaints Form - Stage 3 – Escalated Formal Complaint

This form is to be completed in conjunction with the process stipulated in the BFT Apprenticeship Centre Complaints Policy. This form should only be completed when stage 1 & 2 has been followed with no successful outcome.

Email completed form to the key contact listed as listed in the Complaints Policy.

Apprentice Name:		Apprenticeship Programme:	
Apprenticeship start date:		Apprenticeship planned end date:	
Apprentice Assessor		Apprentice place of employment	

Explain what concerns remain in place after stage 2:

Date Submitted		Signed by Apprentice		Signed by Employee r	
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The set timescales for a Stage 3 complaints procedure are as follows:

- Acknowledgement of your complaint within 5 working days
- Review and initial action plan and next steps within 10 working days of submission
- Issue to be resolved within 1 calendar month from submission

10. Policy review

This policy will be formally reviewed on an **annual basis** to ensure its ongoing effectiveness and compliance with organisational, regulatory and sector requirements.

The policy may be reviewed sooner where there are:

- Changes in legislation
- Changes to funding or regulatory requirements
- Organisational changes
- Quality assurance findings requiring amendment
- Changes in professional standards or best practice

Last review date: 02 February 2026

Next review date: 02 February 2027

11. Associated Documents and References

Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) Funding Rules

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apprenticeship-funding-rules>

Ofsted Education Inspection Framework (EIF)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-education-and-skills-inspection-toolkit-operating-guide-and-information>

Department for Education Complaints Guidance

<https://customerhelpportal.education.gov.uk/anonymous-access/>

City & Guilds Complaints and Appeals Policy

<https://www.cityandguilds.com/help/contact-us/complaints>

Bristol NHS Trust Policies (Fairness at Work, Harassment & Bullying, Equality & Diversity)

Innovate Awarding EPAPro Appeals Guidance:

<https://www.innovateawarding.org/learners/learner-appeal-form/>

12. Document History

Document Change Control				
Date of Version	Version Number	Lead for Revisions	Type of Revision	Description of Revision
02 February 2026	BFTAC-001 v1.0	Apprenticeship Manager	Major	New policy to cover delivery across sites