

Customer Complaints & Feedback Policy

November 2017

A large, abstract graphic on the right side of the page. It consists of several overlapping teal-colored rectangular shapes with white scalloped edges. The shapes are arranged in a grid-like pattern, with some overlapping others, creating a sense of depth and movement. The overall effect is a modern, geometric design.

Descriptor	Changes made	Date	Version
Policy first implemented	-	Nov 17	0.1
Review no.1			
Review no.2			
Review no.3			

Name of policy being superseded (if applicable)	Customer Complaints Policy
Related policies	
Related SOPs	Managing unacceptable behaviour in centres
Related Guidance	Complaints Handling Procedure
Equality Impact Assessment completed	Yes
Intended Audience	SDS Customers and Staff
Team responsible for policy	Customer Services Team
Policy owner contact details (email)	Service Delivery Manager, Customer Services Team
Policy due for review (date)	Nov 2018

Contents

1. Policy summary	4
2. Policy purpose and objectives	5
3. Strategic context	5
4. Definitions	5
5. Scope.....	5
6. Policy detail.....	5
7. Further guidance.....	7

1. Policy summary

We put our customers at the heart of everything we do and we welcome feedback, positive or negative, from people affected by our work. We use this information to continually improve the services we offer where we can. We also have a responsibility, as a public body, to handle customer complaints effectively and within parameters set by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). This policy details our position in dealing with customer feedback and complaints.

2. Policy purpose and objectives

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that a clear, effective, responsive and fair system is in place for managing, monitoring and responding to any feedback or complaints received about the services Skills Development Scotland (SDS) provides.

3. Strategic context

As a public agency, we have a responsibility to deal with customer feedback and complaints effectively. The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman's (SPSO) guidance¹ on a model complaints handling procedure, published in 2011, is the definitive authority for best practice in complaints handling for the Scottish public sector. We have taken their guidance, and that of the Scottish Government², into account in developing this policy to help us meet best practice and our responsibilities as a public body.

4. Definitions

We define feedback as: Statements of opinion about, and reactions to, our services or service delivery. We would also consider a compliment as a form of feedback. We define a compliment as: An expression of appreciation in writing, card or gift. Verbal compliments are not formally recorded, although these compliments should be reported and the service or member of staff recognised as a result.

We define a complaint as: Any expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about SDS's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of SDS.

We define unacceptable actions as: Actions that result in unreasonable demands on our services or unreasonable behaviour towards our staff.

5. Scope

This policy applies to all SDS customers and stakeholders. This policy does not apply to complaints against SDS Board Members. These should be made directly to the Public Standards Commission. <http://www.publicstandardscommissioner.org.uk/>

6. Policy detail

We value the opinions of our customers and always aim to put them at the heart of everything we do, in line with the values expressed in our corporate plan³. This policy encompasses both feedback and complaints and we treat each with equal importance, so that our customers are heard and that our services can improve.

We welcome feedback, positive or negative, from people affected by our work. It gives us valuable insight into what the public think about the services we provide. It can also help us to develop and improve our services. We collect feedback proactively through some of our evaluation activities and we value any additional feedback that customers may have.

¹ <http://www.valuingcomplaints.org.uk/csa-guidance/spsa-principles-and-guidance/>

² Thematic Report on Complaints Handling, December 2015: <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2015/12/1001/2>

³ <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/40263/sds-corporate-plan-2015-20-non-interactive-10-1.pdf>

Responding to Feedback and Complaints

To manage feedback and complaints effectively, we will:

- Provide a fair complaints and feedback process which is clear, accessible and easy to use
- Ensure that SDS staff respond to complaints and feedback received appropriately and consistently, in line with our internal operating procedures
- Ensure that all complaints and feedback are dealt with fairly and within our prescribed timescales⁴
- Ensure that, where possible, complaints are resolved
- Use customer complaints and feedback to help us to improve our services and how we operate

We will treat all complaints and feedback, including anonymous complaints, seriously and will take action to consider them further, where this is appropriate.

Unacceptable Actions by Complainants

SDS may refuse to deal with complaints received from the relatively few complainants whose actions or behaviour we consider unacceptable. We do not view behaviour as unacceptable just because a complainant is forceful or determined. In fact, we accept that being persistent may sometimes be a positive advantage when pursuing a complaint. However, we do consider actions that result in unreasonable demands on our services or unreasonable behaviour towards our staff to be unacceptable.

We will not, under any circumstances, tolerate aggressive or abusive behaviour towards our staff. Unacceptable actions may also take the form of written correspondence including letters, texts and emails; verbal communication either in person or by phone and inappropriate comment on and use of social media and content on the internet.

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

If you are dissatisfied with how SDS has handled your complaint you are entitled to raise that with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). The SPSO is the final stage for complaints about most organisations providing public services in Scotland. Their service is independent, free and confidential.

If you wish to contact the SPSO you can do so directly at:

SPSO
4 Melville Street Edinburgh
EH3 7NS

Or

SPSO
Freepost
EH641
Edinburgh
EH3 0BR

⁴ We will aim to provide a suitable response within 5 working days of receipt of a complaint. If a complaint is handled within the Investigation stage, we will aim to acknowledge this within three working days and respond within 20 working days. Where it will take us longer than 5 or 20 working days to respond with a resolution, we will contact the complainant to agree a reasonable timescale for conclusion within the terms of our complaints handling procedure.

Freephone: **0800 377 7330**

Online contact www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us

Website: www.spsso.org.uk

Mobile site: <http://m.spsso.org.uk>

7. Further guidance

All related documents, including a more detailed description of our complaints procedure and a standard form for feedback and complaints are available on our corporate website at: <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/about/policies/complaints>