

# Customer Complaints Policy

Descriptor	Changes made	Date	Version
Policy first implemented	-	Nov 17	0.1
Review no.1		Feb 21	0.2
Review no.2			
Review no.3			

Name of policy being superseded (if applicable)	Customer Complaints & Feedback Policy
Related policies	Code of Conduct
Related SOPs	Managing unacceptable behaviour in centres Complaints Handling Procedure
Related Guidance	Employee Complaints Guidance CIAG Our Statement of Services Reset and Restart Face to Face support in a centre
Equality Impact Assessment completed	Yes
Intended Audience	SDS Customers and Staff
Team responsible for policy	Customer Services Team
Policy owner contact details (email)	Stewart Forrest, Customer Service Manager, <a href="mailto:customer.services@sds.co.uk">customer.services@sds.co.uk</a>
Policy due for review (date)	Feb 2023, or if any changes made by SPSO

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## 1. Policy summary

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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 complaints.

## 2. Policy purpose and objectives

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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 complaints received about the services Skills Development Scotland (SDS) provides.

## 3. Strategic context

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As a public agency, we have a responsibility to deal with customer complaints effectively. The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman's (SPSO) guidance<sup>1</sup> on a model Complaints Handling Procedure, published in 2011 and updated in 2020, 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 Government, into account in developing this policy to help us meet best practice and our responsibilities as a public body.

## 4. Definitions

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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

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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](#).

## 6. Policy detail

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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 2019-22 Strategic Plan<sup>2</sup>.

Customer complaints can give 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 our evaluation activities and we value any additional feedback that customers may have.

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

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/a-human-future-strategic-plan/strategic-plan-2019-22/>

## Responding to Complaints

To manage complaints effectively, we will:

- Provide a fair complaints process which is clear, accessible and easy to use
- Ensure that SDS staff respond to complaints received appropriately and consistently, in line with our internal operating procedures
- Ensure that all complaints are dealt with fairly and within our prescribed timescales<sup>4</sup>
- Ensure that, where possible, complaints are resolved, and corrective actions are identified to prevent future occurrences
- Use customer complaints to help us to improve our services and how we operate

We will treat all complaints, 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 a customer remains dissatisfied with how SDS has handled their complaint they 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 a customer wishes to contact the SPSO they can do so

directly at:

Postal Address: Freepost SPSO

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<sup>4</sup> We will aim to provide a suitable response within five 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 five or 20 working days to respond with a resolution, we will contact the complainant to advise 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](http://www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us)

Website: [www.spsso.org.uk](http://www.spsso.org.uk)

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

## 7. Further guidance

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