

Adult Training Network (ATN)

The Customer Complaints Policy and Procedure including the Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure

1. ATN Vision and Mission

Aiming for Excellence

1.1 ATN is a training provider that strives for excellence and aims to continually raise the standard of training, learning and services provided to customers

1.2 ATN aspires to be an excellent Training Organisation and values the learning opportunity presented by complaints to enable us to make changes and improve services.

2. Business Ethos

2.1 ATN is committed to business excellence, business ethics and corporate social responsibility.

2.2 ATN has adopted the Nolan Committee's Seven Principles of Public Life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, leadership.

2.3 The ATN will respond to any dissatisfaction with its services fairly and promptly:

- An initial response will be provided within 10 working days
- A further more detailed response will be made if appropriate
- You may be offered a meeting with the parties involved if appropriate
- You may appeal to the Director if you are dissatisfied with the outcome.
- Information on how to take the complaint further will be provided if you are not satisfied with the ATN's response

3. Policy Summary

3.1 The Customer Charter provides the framework within which:

- Anyone who has experienced dissatisfaction with ATN services can raise their concerns, and
- Staff should deal with complaints from customers, parents, customers, employers, contractors, local residents, visitors and others.

3.2 It does not replace ATN procedures for academic appeals and disciplinary action: those procedures should be used where appropriate.

4. Standards of Service

4.1 ATN's Customer Charter sets out the standards and services customers can expect us to provide, as well as the learner's responsibilities.

4.2 Anyone not satisfied with the level of service should feel able to approach relevant staff to address their concern promptly and directly.

4.3 Every attempt should be made to resolve complaints informally through a dialogue with those immediately concerned.

5. ATN Accountability

5.1 **All ATN staff** have a responsibility for receiving complaints, treating them seriously, and dealing with them promptly and courteously in accordance with the procedure set out below.

5.2 **Members of the Board of Trustees, Director and ATN Managers** have a responsibility for resolving a complaint, and leading or contributing to an investigation into a complaint when this is considered appropriate.

5.3 **The ATN Trustees** are responsible for resolving complaints which have reached the appeals stage and may nominate a Manager that has not been previously involved to investigate.

5.4 Where a complainant remains dissatisfied with how their complaint has been dealt with by the ATN after all internal stages have been exhausted, they have the right to lodge a complain with the relevant funding authority.

5.5 **The Trustees** are responsible for ensuring that the complaints policy is operating effectively and may become directly involved if a complaint is directed against the Director or members of staff.



6. Procedures for Dealing with Complaints in the ATN

6.1 Stage One [Informal - up to Manger level]

6.1.1 Concerns should be raised in the first instance with the trainer/member of staff concerned as soon as possible, and not later than within ten weeks of the incident.

6.1.2 Complainants should only be directed to the relevant Centre Manager when the customer's tutor or other member of staff approached cannot easily resolve the issue.

6.1.3 Every reasonable effort should be made to resolve the complaint promptly at local Manager level.

6.1.4 If appropriate a meeting will be offered between the person complaining and the area they are complaining about to arrive at an agreed resolution.

6.1.5 If a complaint is about a member of staff it should be referred to their Manager.

6.1.6 Verbal complaints to Reception and staff in public areas and requests to meet with the Director should be referred to the relevant Centre Manager.

6.1.7 At this informal stage complaints may be made in person, by phone or by email. The complainant must be kept informed of progress at all stages, with an acknowledgement of the complaint made within 3 working days, and an initial response within 10 working days. All outcome letters should be copied to the relevant. If the issue is not resolved to the complainant's satisfaction the complaint moves to stage 2.

6.2 Stage Two [Formal - up to Director level]

6.2.1 If the Manager and area are unable to resolve the issue it should be referred to the Director.

6.2.2 If a complainant has been through Stage 1 and remains dissatisfied they should be advised to submit their complaint in writing or by email to the Director. All letters of complaint addressed to the Director:

6.2.3 The Director of ATN dealing with the complaint will investigate and decide to:

- Dismiss the complaint as unfounded, giving reasons.
- Propose an amicable settlement.
- Uphold or partially uphold the complaint, offer an apology, take appropriate steps to address the issue and to avoid a similar problem arising in future.

6.2.4 All complaints should be dealt with as quickly as possible. All formal complaints will be acknowledged, an initial response will be given within 10 working days and a further more detailed response provided where appropriate. All formal complaints will receive a formal written response outlining the outcome, and the right of appeal where appropriate.



6.3 Appeals

- If a complainant remains dissatisfied with the ATN's response to their complaint they may appeal in writing to the Trustees.
- The Trustees nominated representative, who should be an ATN manager not previously involved in the case, will investigate the complaint and the ATN's response and report to the Trustees.

6.3.3 The Trustees will decide to:

- Uphold the original decision/dismiss the complaint as unfounded.
- Refer the complaint back to an area and propose an amicable settlement.
- Uphold or partially uphold the complaint, offer an apology, recommend appropriate steps are taken to address the issue and to avoid a similar problem arising in future.

6.3.4 The decision of the Trustees is final and the complainant will be advised in writing of the outcome within 5 working days.

7. Taking a Complaint Further

7.1 If a complainant remains dissatisfied with the ATN's response following appeal they should seek advice from the ATN Director on how to take their complaint further.

7.2 Only after all ATN procedures for dealing with complaints have been exhausted can a complaint be referred to the external funders. This does not apply where a complaint is the subject of legal proceedings or relates to the quality of service provided by external bodies such as an examination board.



8. Complaints Against the Director or Members of the Governing Body

8.1 Complaints against the Director should be addressed to the Chair of Board of Trustees

8.2 Complaints against the Chair, a governor or the Governing Body should be addressed to the Director.



9. Unsure How to Proceed

9.1 For any instances where it is felt that the complaints procedure does not set down a precise course of action, reference should be made back to the underlying principles of natural justice and equity: when in doubt the basic principles of timely response, appeal and fair hearing should apply and the ATN Trustees advice sought.



10. Getting Help

10.1 A clear leaflet summarising how to make a complaint will be available for customers from ATN staff and tutors.

10.2 Staff requiring help should contact their Managers and the Director

10.3 Customers requiring help should approach their tutor and the Centre Manager.



11. Related Policies

11.1 Academic Appeals, Customer Disciplinary, Data Protection and Accident Book [Health and Safety].



12. Record-Keeping and Reporting

12.1 ATN Managers and Directors should maintain a clear record of all complaints dealt with. Issues should be fed into the ATN's Monitoring and Evaluation and other quality improvement processes as appropriate.

12.2 Complainants will be advised that, while confidentiality will be respected as far as possible, it is not normally possible to resolve complaints without disclosing details of a complaint to relevant staff in order to allow the ATN a fair opportunity to resolve the issue.

13. Responsibilities of the customer

13.1 ATN expects customers to treat ATN staff with courtesy and dignity

13.2 Keep an appointment with ATN or inform the relevant member of staff of any cancellations.

13.3 Adopt a professional and responsible attitude to all scheduled training and be punctual to all training sessions.

13.4 ATN expects customers to take ownership of their training, complete their assignments on time, and to adopt a proactive approach to their job search endeavours.

14. Whistleblowing

ATN has achieved a reputation for maintaining good systems of control and is committed to combating fraud and corruption. In order to maintain these standards this strategy aims to reinforce ATN's commitment.

ATN's strategy is designed to:

Encourage prevention

Promote detection

Identify a clear pathway for investigation

ATN is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability.

In line with that commitment ATN encourages employees and others with serious concerns about any aspect of the work of ATN work to come forward and voice those concerns about malpractice, wrongdoing, fraud and corruption without fear of recrimination, victimisation or harassment.

Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of ATN and its officers are set out below:

Trustees

Elected Trustees of ATN have a duty to act with integrity and only in the public interest, uphold the law and do whatever they can to ensure that ATN uses its resources efficiently and effectively.

Director

The Director of ATN is designated as the officer having responsibility for the proper administration of ATN's financial affairs. Where irregularities, fraud or corruption are suspected he should be informed. On being informed of an alleged irregularity, fraud or corruption the Director will determine the arrangements for investigating the matter. He will also consider whether the matter requires investigation by the police, whether the external auditor should be notified. In appropriate cases, he will seek the advice of the Trustees.

Managers

It is the responsibility of all managers within ATN to establish and maintain proper systems of internal control and to ensure that the resources of ATN are properly applied to the delivery of services in accordance the policies and procedures of ATN.

It is also the responsibility of managers to ensure that the purchase of goods and services, the receipt of income and the safeguarding of the assets of ATN are carried out in accordance with its procedures and regulations. This includes responsibility for the preventing and detection of fraud and corruption. The internal audit service of ATN is available to assist in this task.

Staff

All staff have a duty to inform their Manager on becoming aware of any suspected irregularity or fraud.

External audit

The external auditor is responsible for assessing the adequacy of ATN's arrangements for preventing and detecting fraud and corruption. Where the Director considers it appropriate the external auditor will be notified of any suspected irregularity or fraud.

ATN recognises the following principles:

Malpractice or wrongdoing within ATN's services will not be tolerated

Respect for the confidentiality of the person reporting their concerns.

Protection from any recriminations, victimisation or harassment for those reporting their concerns.

The need for the rapid investigation of complaints and the effective resolution of justified complaints

Persons who are aware of malpractice or wrongdoing and unreasonably fail to take appropriate action to eliminate it or report it, become implicated themselves in the malpractice or wrongdoing.

ATN will view very seriously anyone who makes false or malicious allegations

ATN recognises that certain cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis in relation to our **Whistle blowing Policy** and our **Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy**.

This could be reporting someone who you suspect is committing fraud or reporting an ATN employee or contracted representative for fraud or corruption.

Where criminal activity is identified, the matter will always be referred to the police.

Employees have a right to remain anonymous, although anonymous allegations are more difficult to investigate and less likely to lead to a satisfactory conclusion.

In exceptional circumstances staff may raise their concerns either with the Director or the Trustees of ATN.

Name: Sarjeet Singh Gill

Signature: **S Singh Gill**

Designation: Director

Date: 1/04/21

Date of Review: 1/4/22