COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

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Approved by: Directors

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Policy Owner: Directors

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Document Title : Compliments and Complaints Policy	
Organisation	Reach Education and Employment
Author	Christopher Murray
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Next Review	Annual

Key Feedback, Complaints & External Escalation Contacts

Role / Authority	Contact Name / Detail	Contact Information
Designated Complaints Lead / DSL	Christopher Murray	07583695771 / chris@reach-education.org
Designated Complaints Lead / DDSL	Jade Wilso	07772303522 / jade@reach-education.org
Executive Director / Appeal Officer	Andrew Mallin	07740606684
Awarding Organisation (NCFE Customer Support)	NCFE Quality Assurance & Appeals	0191 239 8000 / service@ncfe.org.uk
Statutory Qualifications Regulator (Ofqual)	Public Complaints Team	0300 303 3344 / public.enquiries@ofqual.gov.uk
Funding Agency (DfE / ESFA Complaints)	Complaints Team	complaints.esfa@education.gov.uk / www.gov.uk/contact-dfe
Commissioning Local Authority	North Yorkshire Council (NYSCP/Adults)	0300 131 2131 / www.northyorks.gov.uk

1. Policy Statement

Reach Education and Employment (REACH) is committed to providing outstanding education, vocational skills training, and supported employment pathways. We actively welcome feedback from learners, parents/carers, employers, and external partners as invaluable opportunities to celebrate exceptional practice, identify areas for improvement, and resolve grievances promptly, fairly, and transparently.

We strive to foster a supportive, open environment where concerns can be raised without fear of disadvantage or prejudice. All complaints will be investigated thoroughly, objectively, and resolved at the earliest possible stage in accordance with defined statutory timescales.

2. Scope

This policy applies across all Reach Education and Employment operations, covering all enrolled learners (aged 16–18 and adult learners/adults at risk), parents/guardians, designated carers, partner employers, work placement hosts, contractors, volunteers, and members of the public. It governs all aspects of operational delivery, customer care, support services, learning facilities, and subcontracted community provision.

3. Definitions & Mandatory Academic Exclusion Clause

- **Compliment:** Positive feedback recognising high standards of teaching, coaching, learner support, or professional conduct.
- **Comment:** Constructive suggestions or observations regarding organizational operations or facilities.
- **Complaint:** A formal or informal expression of dissatisfaction regarding the actions, service quality, standard of support, or conduct of the organisation or its personnel, where a response or remedial resolution is sought.

ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT APPEALS EXCLUSION:

MANDATORY ACADEMIC EXCLUSION CLAUSE (NCFE / JCQ CRITERIA):
This policy strictly governs non-academic operational complaints and service delivery issues. Any disputes, grievances, or appeals relating to official academic marks, portfolio assessment judgements, external examination results, assessment conditions, or Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) decisions MUST NOT be processed under this complaints policy.
All academic assessment disputes must be immediately redirected to the standalone REACH Qualifications Appeals Policy in strict compliance with NCFE Centre Agreement standards and JCQ General Regulations.

4. Core Principles

- Accessibility: Clear, easy-to-understand procedures available in standard and accessible formats (including Easy Read upon request).
- Impartiality & Fairness: Objective, balanced investigations conducted by independent leaders not directly involved in the matters raised.
- Strict Confidentiality: Information shared strictly on a need-to-know basis in compliance with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.
- Defined Timescales: Strict adherence to published response SLAs at every stage.
- Protection from Detriment: Zero detriment—learners and stakeholders will never face adverse treatment, retaliation, or disadvantage for raising a complaint in good faith.

5. Compliments Procedure

Positive feedback helps us identify what works well and share best practice. Learners, parents, employers, and visitors can submit compliments verbally to any staff member or in writing via email (chris@reach-education.org) or through annual learner voice surveys. Compliments are acknowledged within 5 working days, shared with relevant staff and directors, and recorded centrally to inform our Quality Improvement Plan (QIP).

6. Operational Complaints Procedure (Step-by-Step)

Reach Education and Employment operates a structured, time-bounded 3-stage internal resolution procedure designed to resolve concerns swiftly at the lowest appropriate level:

Resolution Stage	Operational Process & Investigation	Statutory Timescales & Outcomes
Stage 1: Informal Resolution	The complainant raises the concern directly with the relevant tutor, job coach, or operational manager. Staff listen actively, explore practical solutions, and offer a restorative conversation where appropriate.	• Response within 5 WORKING DAYS. • Informal resolution achieved without bureaucratic delay. • If dissatisfied, escalate to Stage 2 within 10 working days.
Stage 2: Formal Investigation	The complainant submits a formal written complaint (via email to chris@reach-education.org or formal form). An independent Director (Christopher Murray or Andrew Mallin) reviews all evidence, interviews relevant personnel, and investigates impartially.	• Written acknowledgement within 3 WORKING DAYS. • Comprehensive written Outcome Letter within 15 WORKING DAYS. • States whether complaint is upheld, partially upheld, or not upheld with remedial actions.
Stage 3: Internal Executive Appeal	If unresolved, complainant submits an appeal within 10 working days on grounds of: procedural failure, new material evidence, or unreasonable findings. An Appeal Panel led by Executive	• Appeal acknowledged within 3 WORKING DAYS. • Final Appeal Panel Determination issued in writing within 15 WORKING DAYS.

Director Andrew Mallin (with independent senior oversight) convenes.	• Concludes all internal procedures.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST & LEADERSHIP COMPLAINTS PROTOCOL:

Protocol for Complaints Involving Executive Directors / Leadership:

• If a formal complaint involves the Designated Complaints Lead (Christopher Murray) or DDSL Jade Wilson , the investigation will be transferred directly to Executive Director Andrew Mallin (07740606684).

• If the complaint involves Andrew Mallin, the matter will be investigated by Christopher Murray alongside an independent external governance professional.

• If the complaint involves the entire Board of Directors, the matter will be referred directly to an independent external arbitrator or the relevant commissioning authority (North Yorkshire Council / DfE).

7. External Escalation Pathways & Regulatory Oversight

If a complainant has fully exhausted all three internal stages of Reach Education and Employment's complaints procedure and remains dissatisfied with the outcome, they have the statutory right to escalate the matter externally:

- **7.1 NCFE Regulated Delivery:** Awarding Organisation (NCFE): If the complaint relates to the delivery, quality, or administration of an accredited NCFE qualification framework, the complainant may contact the NCFE Customer Support Team (0191 239 8000 / service@ncfe.org.uk) or submit a case via www.ncfe.org.uk.
- **7.2 Regulatory Oversight (Ofqual):** Statutory Qualifications Regulator (Ofqual): If the complainant believes NCFE has handled their qualification complaint inappropriately or failed to follow its regulatory framework, the matter can be escalated to Ofqual (0300 303 3344 / public.enquiries@ofqual.gov.uk).
- **7.3 DfE / ESFA Public Funding Escalation:** Department for Education (DfE) / ESFA Complaints Team: For complaints regarding publicly funded education, training delivery, or post-16 governance, complainants can contact the DfE Complaints Team online at www.gov.uk/contact-dfe or write to complaints.esfa@education.gov.uk.
- **7.4 North Yorkshire Council (Local Authority Placements):** Commissioning Local Authority (North Yorkshire Council): For complaints involving high-needs SEND placements, EHCP provisions, or supported employment delivered under local authority contract, complainants may contact North Yorkshire Council (0300 131 2131 / www.northyorks.gov.uk).

8. Safeguarding, Prevent, and Malpractice Fast-Track Protocols

Any complaint that discloses or uncovers allegations relating to the following high-risk domains must bypass the informal complaints phase and be escalated immediately to specialist statutory officers:

- Safeguarding or Child / Adult Abuse: Immediate transfer to Christopher Murray (Designated Safeguarding Lead) within the same working day, governed by the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
- Prevent Duty & Radicalisation: Immediate notification to the Prevent SPOC and escalation to the local Channel panel.
- Criminal Conduct or Serious Breaches of Law: Immediate notification to North Yorkshire Police (999 for emergencies / 101 for non-emergencies).
- Suspected Malpractice or Maladministration: Immediate transfer to the REACH Malpractice Policy and mandatory notification to the NCFE Provider Assurance Team.

9. Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints will be reviewed and logged on the central complaints register. While REACH will investigate genuine concerns regarding safety or fraud, anonymity may limit the organisation's capacity to verify facts or provide direct outcome communications.

10. Vexatious, Serial, or Malicious Complaints

REACH is committed to resolving all genuine grievances. However, where an individual repeatedly raises complaints that are demonstrably groundless, abusive, aggressive, or designed to harass staff, the Board of Directors reserves the right to declare the complaint vexatious. Any decision to terminate correspondence will be formally communicated in writing with full justification.

11. Monitoring, Quality Improvement & Reporting

All compliments, comments, and formal complaints are tracked centrally. The Board of Directors reviews complaints data, milestone compliance, and systemic themes termly. Anonymized trends directly inform REACH's annual Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) and continuing professional staff development.

12. Data Protection & Mandatory 3-Year Retention Mandate

All records, witness statements, investigatory findings, and outcome letters collected throughout the complaints lifecycle will be stored confidentially in strict accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.

3-YEAR MANDATORY RECORD RETENTION:
MANDATORY AWARDING BODY RETENTION MANDATE (NCFE / JCQ CRITERIA):

> To satisfy NCFE Centre Approval criteria and regulatory monitoring checks, a complete, highly structured electronic audit trail of all formal complaints, investigatory witness notes, panel determinations, and resolution sign-offs must be securely archived and retained for a minimum period of 3 YEARS (36 months) from the formal case closure date.

REACH EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

APPENDIX: FORMAL COMPLAINTS FORM (STAGE 2)

Official Complaint Submission Form | Reach Education and Employment

Please complete this form if your concern could not be resolved informally at Stage 1. Once completed, submit this form to Christopher Murray (Complaints Lead) via email at chris@reach-education.org.

Section 1: Complainant Details

Full Name: _____

Date of Submission: _____

Status: [ ] Learner [ ] Parent / Carer [ ] Employer / Placement Host [ ] Member of Public [ ] Staff

Contact Telephone: _____

Contact Email: _____

Course / Vocational Programme (if applicable):

_____

Section 2: Details of Your Complaint

1. Please describe the nature of your complaint clearly (include dates, times, locations, and names of staff or persons involved):

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. What informal steps were taken at Stage 1, and why was the matter not resolved?

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. What desired outcome or resolution are you seeking?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Section 3: Declaration & Signature

I confirm that the details provided above are accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Complainant Signature: _____

Date: _____

For Office / Internal Use Only:

[ ] Formal Stage 2 Complaint logged on Central Register

Case Reference: _____

[ ] Acknowledged within 3 working days by: _____

Date: _____

[ ] Investigating Director Appointed: _____

Investigation Deadline (15 Days): _____