**DENTAL SUPPORT SERVICES (DSS)**

**COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

**Introduction & Purpose**

DSS is committed to providing high quality training to all learners. Taking account of stakeholders’ views enables DSS to promote and develop capacity for sustainable improvement. This document details the Compliments, Complaints Policy, and Procedure that will be followed by the Centre.

Complaints will be monitored and administered by the Head Tutor under the direction of the Operations Manager. The complaints procedure is designed to help gain a clearer view of how learners and other users perceive DSS and its training provision. It sets out to ask for compliments as well as complaints so that good practice can be identified as well as areas where DSS has fallen short of the required high standards.

DSS defines a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction in relation to:

* Standards of service
* Action or lack of action by DSS or its employees
* Provisions of DSS affecting learners, visitors or other stakeholders

A complainant may be a learner, prospective learner, parent, employer or visitor to the Centre.

A ‘Class Rep’ is elected at the start of each new cohort who can speak on behalf of the class when more than one learner has the same complaint. However, they are unable to speak on any specific individual learner.

Assessment appeals are not part of this policy or procedure and will be dealt with following the Centre’s Appeals Policy.

If the complainant is a staff member, they should refer to DSS Grievance Procedure found in their ‘Staff Handbook’ as a means for ensuring that their issue is dealt with promptly and satisfactorily.

The objectives of the Compliments and Complaints Policy is to provide:

* An easily accessed, transparent process, which is fair to all parties.
* A procedure designed to resolve problems quickly.
* A thorough investigation into complaints received.
* Improvements to services for learners and the quality of provision by acting on feedback and the recommendations made following investigations.
* Accurate recording, monitoring and reporting of complaints.

DSS will identify actions and trends from complaints received to improve and develop its services.

Learners individually, or in the case of a group of learners, Class Representative, should follow the procedures as described in Stages 1 - 4 below.

DSS will investigate complaints thoroughly and objectively and the Operations Director will regularly monitor the progress of the investigation.

DSS aims to respond to complaints within 15 working days; however, some complaints, especially if the issue is more complex, may take longer to investigate. DSS will contact the complainant to advise them if the investigation is likely to take more than 15 working days and will keep them informed of progress.

DSS will ask for equality and diversity information (for example, gender and ethnicity) to help to ensure that all people are treated fairly.

Complaints should ideally be brought to the attention of DSS in writing. The decision to handle complaints made verbally will be at the discretion of the Head Tutor.

All complaints received by Centre staff must be forwarded to the Head Tutor. immediately upon receipt, who will acknowledge the complaint within 3 working days, and will be provided with details so that they have all information required to undertake the investigation. Once the Head Tutor has completed their investigation, all records must be sent to the Operations Manager.

DSS reserves the right not to pursue any malicious, vexatious or abusive complaints (i.e. complaints that are not true or use offensive or abusive language in communication to staff).

DSS is unable to accept or act upon anonymous complaints.

All complaints must be raised within 6 months of the original issue so that evidence is available for investigation.

Compliments received by DSS will normally be passed on to the individual or individuals who are the subject of the compliment. The Head Tutor will maintain a central record, and will use compliments to motivate staff and, where appropriate support the promotion of DSS ’s activities.

This policy reflects the Education and Skills Funding Agency guidance relating to the management of complaints and the arrangements for appeals including the right of appeal to the funding agency when DSS ’s procedure has been exhausted.

# Responsibilities

The Operations Director is responsible for the policy and for ensuring DSS responds to compliments and complaints in accordance with the procedure set out below as well as ensuring analysis of complaints and compliments is reported to the awarding bodies and funding agencies.

The Head Tutor is responsible for investigating all complaints, ensuring the investigation is conducted thoroughly, and for reporting the finding to the Operations Director. The Head Tutor will then provide a written response to the complainant.

The Head Tutor is responsible for day-to-day implementation of this procedure including the administration of compliments and complaints and maintaining records of those received and is also responsible to providing a written response to the complainant.

# Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

DSS monitors complaints carefully reports are produced on any complaints which have occurred or is ongoing at DSS Team Meetings. In addition, DSS reports any complaints which have occurred on an annual basis to the awarding bodies and funding agencies.

# Procedure - How to Complain

If learners have concerns regarding their experiences at DSS they should communicate their concern to DSS using the following procedure. DSS will then provide any support required to achieve a satisfactory resolution and will respond appropriately.

## Stage 1 – Informal Procedure

DSS anticipates that most of concerns raised will be resolved at an early stage through informal discussion. This is referred to in this policy as ‘stage 1 – Informal Procedure’.

Therefore, if a concern arises, the first step is to bring it to the attention of the relevant staff member and discuss it with them. It should be noted that a written record or response to issues raised at this early stage would not normally be made if both parties feel satisfied with the outcome.

For current learners, in the first instance, they should discuss the matter with the person(s) concerned. For example, class Tutor, Mentor or Assessor. Other staff members may also be able to help with the complaint at this stage.

If the complainant is not a current learner, they should speak to DSS Administrator who will be able to provide advice.

For employers, in the first instance, concerns should be raised with the Class tutor, or the learner’s assessor.

All other stakeholders, in the first instance should contact DSS Administrator.

Complainants may be contacted by the Head Tutor or the Operations Director to ensure the complainant is satisfied that your concern has been dealt with satisfactorily.

If the issue remains unresolved, a formal complaint should be instigated through the ‘Centre Complaints Procedure’ as shown in Stage 2 Formal Complaints.

## Stage 2 - Formal Complaints

If a complainant’s concerns are not resolved informally at stage 1, they may wish to make a formal complaint.

Formal complaints should be made in writing and a complaint form is available to help you do this. Complaints can also be made by letter or email.

Complaint forms can be obtained from DSS Administrator. Alternatively, complainants may prefer to write a letter. Letters should be addressed to Amanda Henson , Dental Support Services, Abbey Road Health Centre, 28a Abbey Road, Stratford, London E15 3LT . If you would like to email your complaint, please email amanda.henson@dentalsupportservices.co.uk

If help is needed to complete the complaints form or writing a letter, a member of staff will be able to help.

Formal complaints are dealt with by the Head Tutor and overseen by the Operations Director. Written acknowledgement of the complaint will be provided within 3 working days and the Head Tutor will give a date by which a response should be received. Usually this is within 15days from receipt.

The Head Tutor will then investigate the complaint talking to all those involved and may share the details with all of those implicated in the complaint.

The findings of the investigation will be discussed with the Operations Director and a response agreed. If it is not possible to provide a formal response within 15 working days, the complainant will be informed of the reason for the delay and kept informed of the progress of the investigation.

Operations Manager will continuously monitor the complaint and the matter will be closed on the complaint system only when the issue has been resolved or at the end of stage 2. Access to the confidential file will be restricted.

## Stage 3 - Appeals

Most complaints are resolved promptly and amicably and result in service improvements, however, should the complainant wish to appeal against the outcomes of Stage 2, formal complaint, they should submit this appeal in writing, within 10 days of the stage 2 outcome to the Operations Director who will acknowledge receipt, review the documentation, the investigation and the resolution to come to a judgement on the validity of the appeal. The possible judgements are:

1. Appeal rejected – the original resolution will be pursued
2. The appeal is upheld – the Operations Director will propose and alternative solution to the appellant.

Following the outcome of the appeals stage, a formal response will be sent to the complainant within 20 working days of receipt of the appeal. The Operations Director’s decision is final and any resolution they propose will be implemented.

## Formal Complaints – External Resolution

If a complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the stage 3 process and the complaint relates to a course funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency and the above complaints and appeals procedure has been exhausted, the complainant can contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency within three months of the complaint decision using the contact details below:

complaints.esfa@education.gov.uk

Or via: The Complaints Team, Education and Skills Funding Agency, Cheylesmore House, Quinton Road, Coventry, CV1 2WT