

# SkillsFit Complaints & Whistleblowing Procedure

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## SkillsFit Complaints & Whistleblowing Procedure 2025-26

**Purpose • Positivity • Professionalism**

**Document Owner:** Director / Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

**Last Reviewed:** October 2025

**Next Review:** October 2026

**Applies to:** All staff, learners, parents/carers, commissioners and partners

**Related Policies:** Safeguarding Policy, Staff Code of Conduct, Safer Recruitment Policy, Behaviour & Conduct Policy, Equality & Diversity Policy, Data Protection Policy

### Alignment with DfE Non-School Alternative Provision Voluntary National Standards (August 2025)

Standard	Policy Alignment	Evidence in Document
1. Leadership & Governance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Director/DSL oversight, QA Board reporting, record keeping
2. Safeguarding & Welfare	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Whistleblowing protections, escalation routes, anti-victimisation
3. Curriculum, Teaching & Learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	Indirect link through safe environment
4. Behaviour, Attendance & Reintegration	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Fairness and consistency in handling behavioural concerns
5. Admissions, Support & Guidance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Accessible complaints routes for learners and families
6. Premises, Health & Safety	<input type="checkbox"/>	Covered separately in H&S Policy

### Policy Statement Summary

At SkillsFit, we are committed to openness, fairness, and accountability. We view all complaints as opportunities to learn and improve. We encourage feedback and aim to resolve concerns quickly, respectfully, and transparently. This procedure sets out how complaints are managed and how whistleblowers are protected when raising genuine

concerns. Our approach reflects SkillsFit's core values of Purpose, Positivity, and Professionalism.

### 1. Purpose and Principles

- Ensure all stakeholders can raise concerns or complaints without fear of disadvantage.
- Provide clear timelines and responsibilities for investigation and resolution.
- Promote continuous improvement by learning from feedback.
- Safeguard staff and learners by providing protected routes to report malpractice or safeguarding issues.

SkillsFit will always treat complainants with respect, maintain confidentiality, and act without bias.

### 2. Scope

Applies to learners, parents/carers, schools, commissioners, and community partners wishing to make a complaint, and to staff or volunteers raising whistleblowing concerns. Staff grievances are covered separately under the Grievance Policy.

### 3. Complaints Procedure

#### Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

Most issues can be resolved quickly through discussion with the relevant staff member or Programme Lead. A same-day response will be offered wherever possible. If unresolved, the matter moves to Stage 2.

#### Stage 2 – Formal Written Complaint

Submit a written complaint to the Director / DSL using the SkillsFit Complaint Form. An acknowledgment is issued within 2 working days; investigation and response occur within 5 working days. Investigation may include meetings, witness statements, and review of documentation.

#### Stage 3 – Appeal Panel

If dissatisfied, the complainant may appeal within 5 working days. A panel of two Governance Board members and one independent representative (none involved in earlier stages) will hear the appeal within 14 days. Findings will be communicated within 5 working days of the meeting.

#### Stage 4 – External Review

Complainants may refer the matter to the commissioning school, local authority, or funding body if unsatisfied with internal resolution.

## 4. Principles of Fair Handling

- All complaints and appeals handled confidentially and fairly.
- Anonymous complaints considered where sufficient evidence is provided.
- Decisions based on facts and procedure, not personal bias.
- No disadvantage for raising legitimate concerns.

### 4.1 Advocacy and Support

SkillsFit recognises that some learners, parents or partners may wish to receive support when raising a concern or complaint.

- Complainants may be supported by an **advocate or representative** at any stage of the complaints process. This may include:
  - a parent or carer
  - a school or referring professional
  - a youth worker or trusted adult
  - another appropriate advocate acting on their behalf.
- SkillsFit will make reasonable adjustments to ensure that individuals are able to raise concerns safely and confidently, particularly where additional support needs or vulnerabilities are identified.

## 5. Whistleblowing Procedure

Whistleblowing covers concerns raised in the public interest about malpractice, safeguarding failures, or wrongdoing. Examples include safeguarding failures, misuse of funds, health & safety risks, or fraud.

### Reporting Routes:

1. Internal DSL or Director (first point of contact)
  2. Chair of Governance & QA Board (if concern involves Director/DSL)
  3. External authorities such as the LADO or Ofsted
- (Whistleblowing Hotline: 0300 123 3155 / [whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk))

Anonymous disclosures will be considered and investigated where sufficient detail is provided. No one raising a concern in good faith will suffer detriment or dismissal.

## 6. Training and Awareness

All staff receive induction training on complaints and whistleblowing. Annual training includes case study examples and reflection on handling concerns effectively. Posters and digital resources display key contacts and timescales.

## **7. Monitoring and Governance**

Termly reports summarising themes and resolutions are reviewed by the Governance & QA Board. Anonymised summaries are shared with staff annually to promote transparency and learning.

## **8. Linked Policies and Documents**

- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Safer Recruitment Policy
- Equality & Diversity Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- Grievance & Disciplinary Procedures

## **9. Policy Review**

This procedure is reviewed annually by the Director / DSL and ratified by the Governance & QA Board. It forms part of the SkillsFit Safeguarding Framework and ensures all stakeholders can raise concerns safely, confidently, and fairly.

Approved by: *C. Wilde* (Director)

Date: 20<sup>th</sup> October 2025

Next Review: October 2026