

Complaints Handling Policy

Responsibility:	Liz Scott-Walter, Responsible Officer	Date doc. approved:	V4.0 March 2024
Print name sign off:	Simon Little, Managing Director	Last review date of doc:	V1.0 Nov 2020 V2.0 June 2022 V3.0 August 2023 V4.0 March 2025
Signature:		Next review date:	March 2026

Document Control

Version Number	Date	Changes
V4.0	18 September 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Changed name of Responsible Officer (RO)Amended Section 4 How to make a complaint?

Please Note: This policy has been reviewed at a time when apprenticeship reform is in progress and organisations are transitioning from End-Point Assessment Organisations (EPAOs) to Assessment Organisations (AOs), and from end-point assessment to apprenticeship assessments. The terminology used within this policy is EPAO and End-Point Assessments (EPA), to be updated to AO etc. once that transition is complete.

1. Introduction

This Complaints Handling Policy reflects BPN's commitment to valuing complaints. Our aim is to resolve issues of dissatisfaction as close to the initial point of contact as possible and to conduct thorough and fair investigations of complaints so that, where appropriate, we can make evidence-based decisions on the facts of each individual case.

Resolving complaints early saves time and resource and contributes to the overall efficiency of BPN. Concentrating on achieving an early resolution of a complaint as close to the point of contact as possible will free up the time of staff and ultimately contribute to the continued positive experience of our apprentices and employers.

2. Raising Awareness

This policy is available to employers and training providers upon selection and appointment of BPN as the end-point assessment (EPA) service provider. It is also available on the BPN website <https://www.bestpracticenet.co.uk/Apprenticeship-Assessment>

This policy must be made available to apprentices, by their employer, prior to the start of the EPA period.

3. Definition

A complaint may be defined as an expression of dissatisfaction, the standard of service, action, or lack of action by or on behalf of BPN.

A complaint may relate to:

- The quality and standard of the EPA service
- The quality of facilities or EPA resources
- Treatment by, attitude or behaviour of a BPN staff member or assessor
- The failure of BPN to follow an appropriate administrative or assessment process

The definition of a complaint is very broad, and the list above is not exhaustive. However, not every concern raised is a complaint.

For example, the following are not:

- A query on the operation of EPA
- A request for information or an explanation of policy or practice
- A response to an invitation to provide feedback through a formal mechanism such as a survey
- An issue which is being, or has been, considered by a court or tribunal
- An appeal about an EPA grading decision

The policy covers complaints from anyone who receives, requests or is affected by our services. This includes, although is not limited to:

- An apprentice's experience during their EPA
- An employer's experience during EPA
- A training provider's experience during EPA

Please note that training providers are not involved in the delivery of EPA activities, but will be involved in the overall journey as the lead provider:

- A BPN-EPAO assessor experience delivering EPA services on behalf of BPN-EPAO
- Members of the public where they have a complaint about matters which are the responsibility of BPN

Sometimes complainants may be unable or reluctant to make a complaint on their own. BPN-EPAO will accept complaints brought by third parties, as long as the complainant affected has given their personal consent under the requirements of General Data Protection Regulation. This usually means that the apprentice must give clear written authority for the third party to act on their behalf. Complaints made by a third party with the explicit permission of the complainant will be dealt with according to the same timescales.

4. How to make a Complaint?

Complaints can be sent through via email (epa@bestpracticenet.co.uk) phone (01179 209200) or letter to:

Best Practice Network End Point Assessment Organisation
Newminster House
Baldwin Street
Bristol
BS1 1LT

5. Maintaining Confidentiality

Confidentiality is an important factor in conducting complaints investigations. BPN will always have regard to any legislative requirements, for example, data protection, legislation, and also internal policies on confidentiality and the use of complainant information.

Complaints will be handled with an appropriate level of confidentiality and information released only to those who need it for the purposes of investigating or responding to the complaint. No third party will be told any more about the investigation than is strictly necessary in order to obtain the information required from them.

An anonymised summary of complaints and resolutions will be shared with the relevant EQA upon request.

6. Anonymous Complaints

Complaints submitted anonymously will be considered if there is enough information in the complaint to enable BPN to make further enquiries. If, however, an anonymous complaint does not provide enough information to enable us to take further action, we may decide not to pursue it further.

7. Complaints involving other organisations involved in EPA

This relates to complaints that involve services provided by a separate organisation (such as certification bodies). If enquiries to an outside organisation in relation to the complaint are required, care will be taken to comply with data protection legislation and the guidance on handling personal information. Such complaints may include, for example:

- A complaint made in relation to provision of third-party services, for example IT systems
- A complaint made to BPN about apprenticeship certification where the dissatisfaction relates to the service the certification body has provided

If a complaint is received about the service of another organisation, but BPN has no involvement in the issue, the complainant should be advised to contact the appropriate organisation directly.

8. Time Limit for Making Complaints

Complaints should be raised with BPN as soon as problems arise to enable prompt investigation and swift resolution. This policy sets a time limit of one month to raise a complaint with BPN, starting from when the complainant first became aware of the problem, unless there are special circumstances for requesting consideration of a complaint beyond this time.

Beyond the one-month time limit, BPN will exercise discretion in the way that the time limit is applied.

9. Extensions to the Investigation Timeline

Not all investigations will be able to meet the 20-day deadline; for example, some complaints may require investigation involving others.

Where there are clear and justifiable reasons for extending the timescale, the BPN Responsible Officer will exercise judgement and will set time limits on any extended investigation, with the agreement of the complainant. In such circumstances, the complainant must be given a revised timescale for bringing the investigation to a conclusion. It is expected, however, that this will be the exception and that BPN will always strive to deliver a definitive response to the complaint within 20 working days.

10. Mediation

Some complex complaints (where, for example, the complainant and / or other involved parties have become entrenched in their position) may benefit from a different approach to resolving the complaint. Using mediation can help both parties to understand what is driving the complaint and may be more likely to result in a mutually satisfactory conclusion being reached. Where BPN and the complainant agree to mediation, revised timescales will be agreed.

11. Independent External Review

If a complainant is not satisfied with the result of the investigation, they are entitled to request an independent external review. The request must be in writing within 10 working days of the notification of the investigation outcome.

The independent external reviewer will be a subject specialist that has not been involved in the original complaint appeal or connected to the organisation or individual that is subject to the complaint.

The independent external reviewer may call a panel to review the complaint and has 15 working days from notification to make a decision. The decision of the independent external reviewer is final.

12. Recording and Reporting Complaints

All complaints will be recorded on the internal BPN confidential data collection system. Anonymised summaries of complaints will be shared with the relevant bodies. Information reported internally will include:

- Response and resolution timescales
- Complaint categories
- Resolution levels (immediate, investigation or independent panel)
- Outcomes of complaints and the actions taken in response including examples to demonstrate how complaints have helped improve services.

13. Contact Information

If you have any queries relating to enquiries and appeals, please contact BPNs EPA

Quality and Compliance team in writing:

Email: epa@bestpracticenet.co.uk

Post: Best Practice Network EPAO

Newminster House, 27-29 Baldwin St

Bristol, BS1 1LT