



Guard Business Solutions Limited

Complaints Policy

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Introduction

This document incorporates how we will as a business:

- What a complaint is – reference 1
- How to raise a complaint – reference 2,3,4
- How long it takes for a complaint to be resolved – reference 3, 3.1, 3.2,3.3

Guard Business Solutions Ltd (GBS) prides itself on delivering first class customer service. The delivery of an outstanding customer experience is a key tenant of its strategic objective and organisational values.

1 What is a complaint-?

GBS recognises that sometimes things may not meet the high standards that GBS aim to achieve and individuals may deem the service provided as unsatisfactory or unacceptable. GBS actively encourages feedback from all of our service users and will be open and transparent in its investigation procedures, reporting procedures, resolution of complaints, and lessons learned.

This procedure aims to ensure that complaints are resolved promptly and fairly, and that all members of GBS Staff, Learners and Apprentices are aware of the procedures that are in place for the reporting of a complaint/potential complaint. The procedure covers all areas of operational activity. The procedure can therefore be used by any Apprentice or Learner, parent, carer or guardian, employer, member of staff, visitor, contractor or member of the local community who has reason to be unhappy with the service provided by GBS.

The procedure covers complaints in whatever form they are received. GBS encourage feedback, both positive and negative, through a range of channels including over the telephone, email, through the post to the GBS registered business address, in person to a specific member of staff, via the 'contact us' button on the website and via social media channels. In whatever form complaints are received, the principles of this procedure shall still apply.

GBS strongly believe that most issues can be resolved quickly and informally. However, serious incidents or incidents where the informal stage has not been able to resolve matters may need to be escalated to the next stage in the process.

There are two further formal stages to the complaints process and then recourse for individuals to take their complaint to external bodies who have oversight of the quality and funding for all aspects of GBS's provision.

2 How to raise a complaint

A formal complaint must be made within three months of the issue first arising and should be made in writing to:

Operations Director
Guard Business Solutions Limited
4th Floor, Markham House
Markham Road
Chesterfield, S40 1TG

Alternatively, formal complaints can be provided over the telephone. If this is the case, full details of the complaint issue should be taken alongside contact details for the complainant. The complaint details should then be passed over to the Safeguarding and Communications Manager within the hour; initially on email and followed with a telephone call to perform a warm handover.

GBS will act on anonymous complaints in exceptional circumstances and where it feels that matters are significant or serious enough to warrant investigation without knowing the details of the complainant.

GBS will acknowledge receipt of the formal complaint within two working days of the complaint being made. An Investigating Officer, usually a Manager from within the team subject to the complaint will be identified by the Safeguarding and Communications Manager. In particularly serious matters, the CEO may be asked to act as Investigating Officer.

All complaints made to the Directors directly will be logged as per the procedure above with an Investigating Officer appointed.

Upon receipt of a complaint, the Investigating Officer will consider the issues raised by the complainant and may contact them to gather further information. As part of the investigation, the Investigating Officer may contact other members of Staff or interview other individuals in order to aid them in their investigation. They will aim to respond in writing to the complainant within ten working days, however, where this is not possible, an update will be provided to the complainant within ten working days.

Their response will:

- detail their findings,
- explain the reason for the investigation,
- propose a resolution or workaround if appropriate,
- state whether their investigation has upheld the issues raised by the complainant.

A copy of the response will be logged in the Central Complaints Record and will be subject to Document Maintenance Procedures regarding the safe storage of records and documents.

3 Resolving a complaint

3.1 Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

If you have a potential complaint, you should raise this informally in the first instance with your Line Manager (if you are a GBS employee) or Trainer/Skills Coach (if you are a GBS Apprentice or Learner). They are trained to deal with complaints and will aim to resolve this with you to a satisfactory outcome within 48 hours.

GBS will record the complaint for future reference and to track all complaints received by the Business. A copy of the response will be logged in the Central Complaints Record and will be subject to Document Maintenance Procedures regarding the safe storage of records and documents.

If you are not satisfied with the manner in which your complaint has been dealt with, you should proceed to Stage 2 below.

3.2 Stage 2 – Formal Resolution

If resolution cannot be found at the informal stage or matters are too significant for the informal approach to be appropriate, individuals may wish to make a formal complaint.

You can make a formal complaint as detailed in Section 2 of this Policy Document.

A formal complaint will be dealt with in the following manner:

- The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) will appoint an Investigating Officer. In the event the complaint is about the CEO, the CEO will refer this to the Board to appoint an Investigating Officer.
- The Investigating Officer will acknowledge receipt of the complaint from the complainant formally within 48 hours of receiving it and will set out the process to be followed which will follow the format below:
 - Initial research and investigation
 - Interviews with the relevant parties
 - Collecting of evidence and the discovery process
 - Formulating conclusions
 - Report writing and determining outcomes
 - Final evaluations and lessons learned
 - Communication of outcomes and lessons learned
- The timescale for a full resolution to a formal complaint is set at 7 days; however, where this is not possible, the Investigating Officer will contact the Complainant to advise of the reasons for delay. The Complainant will receive communication every 3 working day, either verbally or preferably by email.

The Complainant will receive a copy of the final report as well as a copy of the recommendations, and the CEO will respond formally to the Complainant-with official details of what the business propose to do about the Complaint that was raised.

3.3 Stage 3 – Internal Appeal

In most cases, complaints can be resolved within Stage Two. However, it may be that the Complainant is not satisfied with the resolution proposed or the outcome of the complaint. In these instances, individuals have the right to appeal.

Appeals should be made in writing to the Managing Director and should be made within ten working days from the receipt of the original response letter.

The Managing Director will acknowledge receipt of the appeal within two working days. They will then consider the original investigation, any evidence that was not considered as part of the original complaint and the reasonableness of the proposed resolution. They will determine whether the appeal has grounds and will respond in writing within ten working days from the date of receipt.

The response made by the Managing Director will outline whether the appeal has been upheld in full, partially, or not at all, and may suggest an alternative resolution to that proposed in the original response.

The decision of the Managing Director is final and as such, internal procedures for complaints are deemed to have been exhausted at this stage.

3.4 Complaints about a senior post-holder or concerns about potentially fraudulent, corrupt or irregular activity and Whistleblowing

GBS is committed to the highest standards of integrity, probity, transparency and openness at all levels of the business. We maintain a Whistleblowing Procedure in line with relevant legislation and best practice, which covers complaints against a senior post-holder or concerns about potentially fraudulent, corrupt or irregular activity.

Should you wish to understand more about the Whistleblowing Procedures, please refer to the GBS Whistleblowing Policy on the GBS website.

4 Continuing a complaint beyond GBS

For apprentices and learners as well employers and employees involved in accredited/regulated programs, individuals have the right to seek independent external review via the relevant Awarding Body or End Point Assessment Organisation (EPAO) Complaints Procedure if they remain unsatisfied with the outcome of any complaint once all internal procedures have been followed.

For all none Awarding Body or EPAO related issues, individuals have the right to contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency 08000 150 600 or helpdesk@manage-apprenticeships.service.gov.uk Both agencies will want to satisfy themselves that the internal complaints processes of GBS have been exhausted prior to acting upon complaints.