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Highfield Complaints Procedure

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document sets out the Highfield Complaints Procedure and is aimed at Highfield Centres, learners and all interested parties who encounter a direct or indirect service from Highfield.
- 1.2 Highfield value all the Centres delivering our qualifications and the learners who undertake them. Our aim every day is to exceed the expectations of our customers.
- 1.3 Highfield are confident of providing a high-quality service and would be extremely disappointed if this is not the case.
- 1.4 Therefore, it is important should you feel you have encountered a level of service that is below both yours and our expectations that you raise concerns you may have with us immediately so that we may address them and learn lessons.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This procedure covers complaints that learners, members of the public, tutors/assessors or Centres may wish to make in relation to the qualifications and associated services offered by Highfield.
- 2.2 It is not to be used to cover appeals in relation to decisions made by Highfield. These areas are covered by the Highfield Appeals Procedure. Should a complaint be submitted which is in fact an enquiry or an appeal we will respond to inform the relevant party that the issue is being considered, where appropriate, in accordance our Appeals Procedure.
- 2.3 If you are unhappy about the way an examination or assessment was delivered and conducted and you suspect malpractice or maladministration may have occurred, you should send your concern to Highfield in accordance with the arrangements in the Highfield Maladministration and Malpractice Policy.

3. Centre's Responsibility

- 3.1 Centres should take all responsible steps to ensure that their staff involved in the management, assessment and quality assurance of Highfield qualifications, and your learners are aware of the contents of this procedure. Centres should also ensure that it has a complaint handling procedure and appeal process in place to deal with complaints from learners about the services provided by your Centre. If an individual is unhappy about a service or activity being delivered by a Centre, they must first of all go through the Centre's complaints process before bringing the matter to Highfield.

4. **Review Arrangements**

- 4.1 Highfield will review the procedure and its associated procedures annually as part of our self-evaluation arrangements and revise it as and when necessary in response to customer, learner or regulatory feedback (for example, to align with any appeals and complaints process established by the Regulators) and any trends that may emerge in the subject matter of complaints received.

5. **How should I Complain?**

- 5.1 All Highfield employees have been trained to help customers and they all *like* to help, so you should first try to sort out any problem at the earliest opportunity by speaking to your Account Manager.

- 5.2 If your Account Manager cannot help or you wish to speak to someone else, you can ask to speak to a Manager within Highfield's Centre Support and Compliance team.

- 5.3 If this is not possible, or if you are not satisfied with the help provided, please send a written complaint, within 1 calendar month of the event you are complaining about and address it to the Head of Centre Support and Compliance at the contact details outlined at the end of the procedure.

- 5.4 Learners and/or members of the public who wish to complain about a level of service provided by the Centre at which they have taken a Highfield qualification should have exhausted their Centre's own complaints process before bringing the complaint to Highfield. However, learners can make the complaint directly to Highfield in exceptional circumstances where they feel there was a significant breach by the Centre of our various procedures.

6. **If I Complain what details do I have to give?**

- 6.1 When you contact us, please give us your full name, contact details including a daytime telephone number along with:

6.1.1 a full description of your complaint (including the subject matter and dates and times if known);

6.1.2 any names of the people you have dealt with so far; and

6.1.3 copies of any papers or letters to do with the complaint.

7. **Complaints Brought to Highfield's attention by the Qualification Regulators**

7.1 Where the Qualification Regulators notify Highfield about failures that have been discovered in the assessment process or other activities of another Awarding Organisation, these will be reviewed in the same manner as other external complaints in accordance with the procedures below to ascertain if the same issue could affect Highfield qualifications.

8. **Confidentiality and Whistle-Blowing**

8.1 Sometimes a complainant will wish to remain anonymous. However, it is always preferable to reveal your identity and contact details to us. If you are concerned about possible adverse consequences, please inform us that you do not wish for us to divulge your identity. If it helps to reassure you on this point, we can confirm that we are not obliged (as recommended by the Qualification Regulators) to disclose information if to do so would be a breach of confidentiality and/or any other legal duty.

8.2 While we are prepared to investigate issues which are reported to us anonymously and/or by whistle-blowers we shall always try to confirm an allegation by means of a separate investigation before taking up the matter with those the complaint/allegation relates.

9. **What will happen to my Complaint?**

9.1 We will normally acknowledge receipt of your complaint within 3 working days, letting you know who is investigating your complaint.

9.2 We aim to investigate the complaint within 10 working days. If your complaint is more complex, we may extend this time at our discretion. We may contact you within this period to seek further information or clarification (in some instances we may recommend a meeting). At the end of the investigation we shall write/email to inform you of our decision.

9.3 Highfield may choose not to consider a complaint that has not been made within the time-frame set out in 5.3 above, to be determined at Highfield's absolute discretion.

9.4 In the event that Highfield receives a complaint during the course of an investigation, Highfield reserves the right to delay hearing the complaint until the outcome of the investigation is known.

10. **Successful Complaints and/or Issues Brought to our Attention by the Qualification Regulators**

10.1 If any part of your complaint is upheld Highfield will of course respond to the complainant accordingly and give due consideration to how we can improve our service and arrangements. For example, by reviewing our procedures to assess the impact on our qualification development, delivery or awarding arrangements and assessment process (if relevant) or arranging for staff training. In extreme circumstances, internal disciplinary procedures may be exercised where the performance or behaviour of our employee(s) is deemed inappropriate.

10.2 In situations where a complaint has been successful, or where an investigation following notification from the Qualification Regulators indicates a failure in our processes, Highfield will give due consideration to the outcome and will take appropriate actions such as:

10.2.1 identify any other learner/Centre who has been affected by that failure;

10.2.2 correct, or where it cannot be corrected, mitigate as far as possible the effect of the failure;

10.2.3 ensure that the failure does not recur in the future; and

10.2.4 apply sanctions and actions to the relevant Centre(s) if a failure has occurred in the arrangements of the Centre(s).

11. **Scottish Public Service Ombudsman**

11.1 In Scotland, if you have taken your qualification at a local authority Centre or a college, you have the legal right to be able to complain to the SPSO (Scottish Public Service Ombudsman) once all other/relevant complaint processes have been followed.

12. **What if I am not happy with the reply?**

12.1 If you disagree with the decision the first point of call is the Head of Centre Support and Compliance.

12.2 If you are still unhappy with the decision taken by Highfield in reviewing the complaint you can, where relevant (and if eligible), take the matter through our Appeal arrangements which are outlined in our Appeals Procedure.

12.3 If you are not happy with an appeal decision made by Highfield you can complain directly to the qualification regulators.

13. **Contact Details**

- 13.1 If you have any queries about the contents of the procedure, please contact your Account Manager directly on 0845 226 0350 or email confidentialenquiries@highfieldabc.com