



INVESTORS IN PEOPLE UK

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Purpose

The purpose of an effective complaints procedure is to ensure all complaints are resolved quickly and efficiently. The credibility of the Investors in People Standard is paramount and it should be perceived as a benchmark of quality. The information gained from complaints should be used to inform and improve practice within the both the company and the delivery network. It should also be used to influence the executive board of the Investors in People UK in defining and setting organisational strategies.

Scope

This procedure applied to all of the Investors in People UK Quality Management System and working practices. This procedure also extends into the delivery network, albeit that individual Quality Centres are required to have their own published complaints procedures to deal with complaints at a local level. This procedure is principally for complaints received directly by Investors in People UK but can be adopted by any delivery partner or associated organisation.

Responsibility

The Director of Quality has the ultimate responsibility for this procedure. The Quality Projects Manager has operational responsibility for day-to-day activities related to this procedure. The Information Executive will also be involved in the initial handling of complaints and general enquiries.

What is a complaint?

The Collins dictionary defines a complaint as *to express resentment, displeasure etc.; grumble*. For our purposes, we will deem any negative expression directly related to the Standard, or people's perception of the Standard, to be a complaint. Sometimes it will not be possible to differentiate between a complaint and a general enquiry. It has therefore been decided that the Quality Projects Manager responsibility for administering this procedure will decide whether or not a request constitutes a complaint for the purposes of this procedure.

How are complaints received?

Complaints are made through the Investors in People UK web site, via E-mail, letters, telephone calls, third parties such as Ministers, and the press. All enquires and complaints should be handled by the Information Executive in the first instance.

Complaints Procedure

It is company policy that all complaints are treated seriously, no matter how unrelated to the Standard they might seem. We must act courteously and professionally at all times, treating complainants with sympathy and empathy, using them as an opportunity to learn. Confidentiality is also a major consideration, given the highly sensitive nature of some allegations against organisations or individuals.

Whilst we receive many telephone calls from individuals, we cannot instigate a formal complaint investigation unless the complainant is prepared to present their complaint in writing. This is common practice in many organisations and ensures we only deal with bona-fide complaints. To investigate a complaint, we need the minimum information, which can be provided either by e-mail or letter:

- The name of the organisation
- The organisation's address
- Details of the complaint and preferably how it relates to the content of the Standard and/or is deemed to bring the Standard into disrepute
- Where appropriate, written permission from the complainant to discuss the details of their complaint with the organisation and/or individuals concerned (this does not include disclosing their identity, although complainants need to be aware that it might be easy for the organisation to identify them from their individual complaint)
- Which communication medium the complainant wishes us to use to keep them informed of progress towards resolution

Once a complaint has been received in writing, the Information Executive will determine whether it is a genuine complaint or not before passing it to the Quality Team for action.

The Quality Projects Manager will then ensure that the complainant receives some form of response. In most cases this will be a written acknowledgement using e-mail or letter, unless the complainant's preferred communication method is the telephone. If this is the case then the detail of the conversation will be recorded.

The details of the complaint and associated information will then be entered into the Investors in People Enquiry Management System Database. Each complaint will automatically receive a numeric identifier, which should be quoted on all written correspondence, should the complaint require formal investigation.

General enquiry, or where the complaint is clearly not related to the content of the Standard

Where a complaint falls under any of the two categories described above, the Information Executive or Quality Projects Manager will respond accordingly within the five working days. Where possible, the reply should explain why the complaint cannot be formally investigated by Investors in People UK or any of our delivery partners. Examples where there is no obvious link between the complaint and the content of the Standard could include:

- Customer Service
- Pay
- Some employment practices
- Application of internal processes such as exit interviews

In these situations we should try and 'add value' by signposting individuals to the correct source of advice or guidance such as other Government funded agencies, Citizens Advice Bureau, Trade Unions, Professional Bodies or the legal profession.

Complaint against an organisation that may relate to the content of the Standard

Where a complaint appears to have some connection to the Standard or the actions of the organisation might bring the credibility of the Standard into disrepute, we must take prompt and decisive action to resolve the complaint as quickly as possible. Action should be taken regardless of whether the complainant has given their personal details or chosen to remain anonymous.

Once the complaint has been received in writing, the Quality Projects Manager will check the following information using the National Database of all the organisations that have achieved the Standard:

- Whether the organisation in question is recognised as an Investor in People
- The recognition or last review date, which may have a bearing upon which version of the Standard the organisation has been assessed against.
- The name of the local Quality Centre.

It may also be necessary to verify this information by contacting the local Quality Centre, Small Business Service, Business Link or Learning and Skills Council.

Once this information has been established, the following action should be taken:

- The Quality Projects Manager will pass on all the relevant information to whichever delivery partner is currently advising the client on Investors in People. This will be done in writing as soon as is practically possible. However, in the majority of cases it will be the Quality Centre who will be asked to lead any investigation into a recognised organisation.

- Quality Centres are required to investigate complaints against organisations that are located in their defined geographic locations, regardless of whether the Quality Centre has previously been responsible for assessment and review of the organisation concerned. The only exception is clients who have expressly chosen to work with a different Quality Centre.
- If the organisation is working towards recognition as an Investor in People, the delivery partner (Learning and Skills Council, Business Link, Learning and Enterprise Companies, ELWa, LECs, Department for Employment and Learning (NI) or National Training Organisations) might be informed of the complaint. The complainant will be informed that neither Investors in People UK nor one of their appointed Quality Centres can take any direct action against a 'non-recognised organisation' and in some circumstances, their complaint has been passed to a local delivery partner to discuss with the organisation. The purpose of this event is to ensure that the organisation uses this kind of feedback in a positive way to continuously improve its Investors in People related practices. The delivery partner must ensure they not divulge the complainant's identity.
- If the organisation is recognised as an Investor in People, the Quality Projects Manager will write/email to the respective Quality Centre, giving them all information related to the complaint. The complainant will also be contacted, giving them details of who is investigating their complaint at the local level. As previously stated, in the vast majority of cases the Local Quality Centre will be responsible for investigating the complaint and replying directly to the complainant.
- Where the claimant is embarking upon legal action or considering taking the organisation to a formal tribunal, the investigation should not begin until the outcomes of legal action or tribunal are known.
- The Quality Manager of the Centre (or nominated person) will decide on the most appropriate course of action, which may involve input from the Assessor, Adviser, Workforce Development Manager or Recognition Panel. The Quality Centre will respond to the complaint in line with its own complaints procedure, which is subject to periodic examination by Investors in People UK. All documentation related to the complaint should be copied to the Quality Projects Manager at Investors in People UK.

Investigations can take many different forms, varying from a discussion with the Assessor to a total re-examination of the organisation's practices relating to the Standard. It is not possible for Investors in People UK to define the format and depth of any investigation. This should be determined at the local level, once the initial evidence has been examined. During any investigation it is paramount that the complainant's personal details are not divulged to organisation concerned. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, investigations should be completed within twenty working days.

Once the investigation has been completed, the complainant should receive a full and substantive reply from the Quality Centre. However, care must be taken not to disclose any commercial, sensitive or confidential information to the complainant. Should either the complainant and/or the Quality Projects Manager be dissatisfied with the outcome of

the investigation or the way the complaint has been investigated, the matter shall be referred to the Director of Quality at Investors in People UK.

If the investigation uncovers practices inconsistent with the Investors in People Standard, the matter should be referred to the Quality Centre's Recognition Panel within fifteen working days of the completion of the investigation. The Recognition Panel will have access to all of the documentary evidence and personnel responsible for investigating the complaint. The Recognition Panel's role is to decide the most appropriate course of action, if any, which will be necessary to protect the integrity of the Standard. It is strongly suggested that the Recognition Panel formally convene with expert moderation when making important decisions of this type. The organisation, the Quality Projects Manager at Investors in People UK and the complainant should be informed in writing about any decision reached by the Recognition Panel.

When the complaint relates to actions likely to bring the Standard into disrepute, the complaint shall be investigated in accordance with the guidance set out in latest version of the Practitioner Handbook. All of the available evidence should be presented to a Recognition Panel for discussion. Once again, it is strongly suggested that the Recognition Panel formally convene with expert moderation to discuss cases of this type.

Complaints relating to Advisors, Assessors, Recognition Panel members or other delivery partner employees.

Occasionally, Investors in People UK receives formal complaints about the actions, attitude and behaviour of Practitioners. In the majority of cases, we will ask the Local Quality Centre to investigate and present the findings to the Quality Projects Manager within twenty working days from receiving the complaint. The Quality Projects Manager will then respond to the complainant in writing unless it has been agreed that the Quality Centre will manage the communication. However there are instances where an internal investigation may be deemed a conflict of interest. These will be investigated by one of the Quality Assurance Team at Investors in People UK. Examples could include allegations of misconduct, fraud, disclosure of confidential information, impropriety or behaviour inappropriate with the role. In these cases, each situation will need careful examination and dealt with according to its individual circumstances. Serious matters, such as described, will be referred to the Director of Quality at Investors in People UK.

Reporting of complaints

Using the Enquiry Management System database as the principal source of information, the Quality Projects Manager will prepare a written report for the executive team of Investors in People UK. This report will be presented to the Quality Director shortly before each meeting on the second Monday of each calendar month. The report will provide information on the following:

- Details of complaints made over the period since the last report
- Suggestions for improvements
- Any additional information that is considered useful for the Board

Four times a year, the Quality Projects Manager will also extrapolate information from the Quarterly Reports produced by each Local Quality Centre and add this to the report presented to the Investors in People Board. This should enable to the Board to understand more about complaints received by each Quality Centre.

Quality Centre Managers will also be allowed open access to the database and the Quality Projects Manager at Investors in People UK will grant reasonable requests for reports or statistical information. Investors in People UK will also periodic report the nature and type of complaints to DfES, if requested.

Storing information relating to the complaint

The Information Executive shall be responsible for ensuring all documentation relating to individual complaints is copied and stored for a minimum period of three years. All letters, e-mails and notes from substantial phone calls are referenced against the relevant database number and stored within our London Offices.

Costs relating to investigating complaints

Investor in People UK employs the Quality Projects Manager whose role includes dealing with complaints and technical enquiries relating to the Investors in People Standard.

Occasionally, it is necessary for delivery partners to visit an organisation or even carry out interviews, to determine whether a complaint is genuine. In most cases, the costs associated with any investigation are indirect and can be borne by the local delivery network. However, if the investigation involves payment to a practitioner, the costs would usually have to be borne by either the organisation in question or a delivery partner. If there is any possibility of costs being incurred during the course of an investigation, it is the Quality Centre's responsibility to ensure all parties agree and understand who will fund the investigation. Disputes should be referred to the Board of the Quality Centre, local Recognition Panel, or in extreme cases, the Quality Projects Manager at Investors in People UK.

Freedom of Information

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 provides a general right of access to information held by a public body, including Non-Departmental Public Bodies, such as Investors in People UK. There are certain exemptions to this right. Complaints will come within these exemptions and therefore will not be available under this general right of access.

The Act states that there are absolute exemptions for personal information (section 40) and information provided in confidence (section 41). These exemptions cover the information that will form the record of the complaint and as such they will not be released.

When a complaint is made, it may contain requests for information. The complainant, under the Freedom of Information Act, has a general right of access to this information. Unless the information is considered exempt, it will be released to the complainant in accordance with the Act.

Data Protection

The Data Protection Act 1998 regulates the processing of information relating to individuals including the obtaining, holding, use or disclosure of such information. Complaint records will hold personal information and as such the data subject will have a right to see the information held about them. This right also enables the subject to request the rectification of an incorrect data on the record. A fee of £10 may be charged for a request under the Data Protection Act (referred to as a subject access request).