



COMPLAINTS POLICY

Secondary, Primary and Early Years

OBJECTIVES

High quality teacher education and development designed to inspire high levels of personal and professional conduct and to contribute to pupil progress in partner schools

Bright Futures SCITT

QTS and EYTS education

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Introduction

Bright Futures SCITT is committed to running a programme that has the maximum positive impact for all staff and trainees. We understand that there may be times where things do not work as they should and the SCITT believes that it is in everyone's best interest to resolve concerns and complaints at the earliest possible stage. Before a formal commencement of a complaint, it is expected that the trainee discusses a grievance with the appropriate mentor, professional mentor, SCITT Age Phase Lead, SCITT Manager or Director of SCITT.

(Please note Lead Partner Trainees should discuss their grievance with their ITT Provider before escalating the concern to the SCITT).

The majority of issues raised by partnership trainee teachers/staff are concerns rather than complaints. The Bright Futures SCITT is committed to taking concerns seriously, at the earliest stage, in the hope of keeping the number of formal complaints to a minimum and without needing to implement formal procedures. However, depending on the nature of the complaint, individuals may wish or be asked to follow the SCITT's formal complaints procedure. Bright Futures SCITT reserves the right to reject a formal complaint that it considers to be unsubstantiated or frivolous.

For the Bright Futures SCITT to be able to investigate a complaint, it needs to be made within three months of the incident occurring. If a complaint is older than three months it will not be investigated. The prime aim of the policy is to resolve the complaint as fairly and speedily as possible. Formal complaints will be dealt with in a sensitive, impartial and confidential manner.

Concern or Complaint?

The Department of Education Best Practice Guidance (2000) distinguishes between a concern and a complaint in the following way:

- A **concern** may be treated as 'an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought'.
- A **complaint** may be generally recognised as 'an expression or statement of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action'.

Scope

The scope of this policy covers most complaints that the Partnership is likely to receive.

This includes, for example –

- Complaints about ITT personnel
- Complaints about placement schools
- Issues with the ITT programme
- Health and safety issues
- The working environment
- Harassment and discrimination

Interpersonal relationships or bullying

It is usual to disregard anonymous complaints unless somebody is prepared to substantiate them. However anonymous complaints may be investigated, at the discretion of the Director of SCITT, if it is felt the complaint is of sufficient seriousness to warrant this.

General Principles

Bright Futures SCITT Complaints Procedure will:

- encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible;
- be easily accessible and publicised
- be simple to understand and use;
- be impartial;
- be non-adversarial;
- allow swift handling with established time-limits for action and keeping people informed of the progress;
- ensure a full and fair investigation
- respect people's desire for confidentiality;
- address all the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary;

Procedure

Bright Futures SCITT Complaints Procedure has four main stages, as follows:

Stage 1: A complaint is raised informally with a mentor or professional mentor;

Stage 2: A complaint is heard by the SCITT Age phase lead and or nominated Lead Partner representative:

Stage 3: A formal complaint is heard and responded to by the Director of SCITT (this has been escalated, or new evidence has been provided).

Stage 4: if the complaint is not resolved or following an appeal, the complaint will be directed to an independent panel of ITT partners. (A re-investigation has been granted as new evidence has been provided).

Note: Salaried trainees are employed trainees and therefore they are subject to their Trust/School's policies and procedures, however the SCITT/Lead Partner do still have a duty of care and can be contacted if there is a concern/complaint.

At each stage, the person investigating the complaint will ensure that they

- Clarify the nature of the complaint and unresolved issues
- Clarify what the complainant feels would put things right
- Interview those involved in the matter and/or those complained of, allowing them to be accompanied if they wish
- Keep notes of the interview(s) and keep a running timeline of the process.

At each stage, the person investigating the complaint will seek ways to resolve the complaint satisfactorily. It may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- An acknowledgement that the complaint is valid in whole or in part and/or acknowledgement that the situation could have been handled differently or better (this is not the same as an admission of negligence)
- An apology

- An explanation
- An assurance and an explanation of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again
- An undertaking to review SCITT procedures in light of the complaint.

Where it is not felt that a complaint is valid in whole or in part, this will be communicated with in writing offering an explanation of why the complaint is not upheld.

If after the complaint is closed and the complainant is able to present new pertinent evidence in support of their complaint, and the complaint is still within the three-month time period, the complainant will be able to request that the complaint is reinvestigated and this reinvestigation will be escalated to a stage 3 or stage 4 complaint.

Unreasonable Complaints and Behaviours

Bright Futures SCITT may close the procedure if the complainant is deemed unreasonable.

This includes:

- refusing to specify the complaint or desired outcome
- making unjustified complaints or allegations
- refusing to accept investigation findings
- making excessive demands on time
- using abusive language or behaviour

Office of Independent Adjudicators

If a complaint cannot be resolved the trainee has the right to make a formal complaint to the OIA however, before a trainee/student can complain to the OIA, they must normally have first completed their provider's internal complaints or appeals procedures. Once they have done so, the provider should issue a Completion of Procedures Letter. This letter should set out clearly the issues that have been considered, the provider's final decision and the deadline for bringing a complaint to the OIA.

WEB SITE: <http://www.oiahe.org.uk>

OIA

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