

Complaints & Whistleblowing Policy

1. Purpose of This Policy

This policy explains how learners, employers, staff and stakeholders can raise complaints or report serious concerns about our Skills Bootcamp delivery. We are committed to providing a high-quality experience and take all complaints seriously.

This policy outlines:

- How to submit a complaint
 - How we investigate and respond
 - Timescales
 - How to escalate internally or to the Department for Education (DfE)
 - How whistleblowing concerns are handled
 - How we use complaints to improve our service
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2. Our Commitment

We are committed to:

- Handling all complaints fairly, promptly and transparently
 - Investigating concerns thoroughly
 - Providing clear written outcomes
 - Ensuring no learner is disadvantaged for raising a complaint
 - Protecting whistle-blowers wherever possible
 - Improving our service based on feedback
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3. What Counts as a Complaint?

A complaint may relate to:

- Teaching, training or assessment
- Communication or customer service
- Course delivery, structure or resources
- Behaviour or actions of staff
- Enrolment, eligibility checks or progression decisions
- Support, accessibility or learning needs
- Any aspect of the Skills Bootcamp experience

4. What Counts as Whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing concerns involve serious issues in the public interest, including:

- Fraud or financial irregularity
- Misuse or mis-claiming of public funds
- Illegal or unethical activity
- Serious safeguarding or welfare concerns
- Breaches of contract or funding rules
- Cover-ups or deliberate wrongdoing

Whistleblowers have legal protection under the Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA).

5. Informal Resolution (Stage 0)

We encourage learners to raise concerns informally first, as many issues can be resolved quickly.

You may speak to your tutor or contact the programme team directly.

If the issue is not resolved informally, a formal complaint may be submitted.

6. Submitting a Formal Complaint (Stage 1)

Formal complaints must be submitted in writing to:

complaints@aiforwomen.co.uk

Please include:

1. Your full name
2. Contact details
3. Course/cohort
4. Description of the issue
5. Dates and any relevant evidence
6. The outcome you are seeking

We will acknowledge receipt within **5 working days**.

7. Investigation and Response (Stage 1)

A senior staff member, not previously involved, will investigate your complaint. This may include reviewing evidence, speaking with staff, or requesting further information.

You will receive a written response within **20 working days**.
If more time is needed, we will let you know.

8. Escalation (Stage 2)

If you are unhappy with the Stage 1 outcome, you may request an internal review. You must submit this request within **10 working days** of receiving the decision.

A senior manager/director will review the case and issue a final written response within **20 working days**.

This completes our internal complaints process.

9. Escalation to the Department for Education (Stage 3)

If you remain dissatisfied after completing our internal process — or your concern involves serious wrongdoing, funding misuse, or issues in the public interest — you may escalate your complaint to the Department for Education.

How to Contact the DfE

DfE Online Complaint / Whistleblowing Form:

<https://form.education.gov.uk/service/Contact-the-Department-for-Education>

DfE Complaints Procedure:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-and-skills-funding-agency/about/complaints-procedure>

DfE Whistleblowing Policy:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfe-whistleblowing-policy/how-dfe-handles-whistleblowing-disclosures>

Email/Post Contact (alternative):

Complaints Team
Department for Education
Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry
CV1 2WT

DfE Helpline:

0370 000 2288

<https://www.gov.uk/contact-dfe>

10. Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints are accepted, but investigations may be limited if we cannot request clarification or provide a response.

11. Safeguarding or Serious Risk Concerns

Concerns involving safeguarding, harassment, discrimination, extremism, or illegal activity will be directed immediately to our Designated Safeguarding Lead and managed under the Safeguarding Policy.

If anyone is at immediate risk, contact emergency services.

12. Record Keeping

We securely record:

- All complaints received
- Investigations and evidence
- Outcomes
- Timescales
- Actions taken

- Service improvements resulting from complaints

Records are maintained in line with GDPR and data-retention policies.

13. Continuous Improvement

Complaints and whistleblowing data are reviewed periodically to identify:

- Trends
 - Training needs
 - Policy improvements
 - Service enhancements
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14. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

We are committed to ensuring that complaints and whistleblowing disclosures:

- Are handled respectfully and without discrimination
 - Do not disadvantage any learner or staff member
 - Are used to support fairness and accountability
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15. Contact Summary

Purpose	Contact
Internal complaints	complaints@aiforwomen.co.uk
Escalation to DfE	DfE Online Form: https://form.education.gov.uk/service/Contact-the-Department-for-Education
DfE Complaints Guidance	https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-and-skills-funding-agency/about/complaints-procedure
DfE Whistleblowing Policy	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfE-whistleblowing-policy/how-dfe-handles-whistleblowing-disclosures
DfE Helpline	0370 000 2288