

Complaints & Dispute Resolution Policy

Youth Start Limited

Company Number: 16864238

Registered Office: 370 Osmaston Park Road, Derby, DE24 8FB

Website: youthstart.co.uk

Effective Date

1 January 2026

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1 January 2026

Introduction

This Complaints & Dispute Resolution Policy sets out Youth Start Limited's procedures for handling complaints and resolving disputes from candidates, employers, mentors, volunteers, and other stakeholders. Youth Start is committed to providing high-quality services and to addressing concerns promptly, fairly, and transparently.

This policy applies to all complaints and disputes relating to Youth Start's services, operations, and conduct. It outlines the process for raising a complaint, how complaints will be investigated, and the timescales for resolution.

Youth Start welcomes feedback and views complaints as an opportunity to learn, improve, and strengthen relationships with candidates, employers, and other stakeholders.

Purpose of This Policy

The purpose of this Complaints & Dispute Resolution Policy is to:

- Provide a clear and accessible process for raising complaints
 - Ensure that all complaints are handled fairly, promptly, and transparently
 - Investigate complaints thoroughly and impartially
 - Resolve complaints to the satisfaction of all parties where possible
 - Learn from complaints and use feedback to improve services
 - Maintain positive relationships with candidates, employers, mentors, volunteers, and other stakeholders
 - Comply with relevant UK legislation and best practice guidance
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Scope and Application

This policy applies to complaints and disputes from:

- Candidates participating in Youth Start placements
- Employers using Youth Start's services
- Mentors and volunteers involved with Youth Start
- Members of the public
- Any other stakeholders or individuals affected by Youth Start's operations

This policy covers complaints relating to:

- The quality of Youth Start's services
- The conduct of Youth Start staff, mentors, or volunteers
- Discrimination, harassment, or unfair treatment
- Breach of policy or procedure
- Data protection or confidentiality concerns
- Health and safety concerns
- Any other matter relating to Youth Start's operations

This policy does not cover:

- Staff grievances (covered by the Disciplinary & Grievance Procedures)
- Staff disciplinary matters (covered by the Disciplinary & Grievance Procedures)
- Safeguarding concerns (covered by the Safeguarding Policy and reported immediately to the designated safeguarding lead)

Legal Framework

Youth Start operates in compliance with the following UK legislation and guidance:

- **Equality Act 2010:** Requires fair treatment and prohibits discrimination
 - **Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR:** Governs the handling of personal data relating to complaints
 - **Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974:** Requires safe working conditions
 - **Employment Agencies Act 1973 and Conduct of Employment Agencies and Employment Businesses Regulations 2003:** Governs recruitment and employment services
 - **Consumer Rights Act 2015:** Governs the provision of services to consumers
 - **ACAS guidance:** Provides best practice guidance on resolving workplace disputes
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What Constitutes a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with Youth Start's services, operations, or conduct. Complaints may relate to:

- Poor service quality or delivery
- Unprofessional or inappropriate conduct by staff, mentors, or volunteers
- Failure to meet commitments or expectations
- Discrimination, harassment, or unfair treatment
- Breach of confidentiality or data protection
- Health and safety concerns
- Billing or financial disputes
- Any other matter that causes dissatisfaction or concern

Youth Start distinguishes between:

- **Informal concerns:** Minor issues that can be resolved through discussion and feedback
 - **Formal complaints:** Serious concerns that require investigation and formal resolution
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Informal Resolution

Youth Start believes that many concerns can be resolved informally without the need for formal complaint procedures. Individuals are encouraged to:

- Raise concerns directly with the relevant staff member, mentor, or manager
- Discuss the issue openly and constructively
- Seek to resolve the matter through discussion and negotiation
- Provide feedback to help Youth Start improve

If informal resolution is successful, no formal complaint record will be created. However, Youth Start will document the concern and any actions taken to ensure continuous improvement.

Formal Complaint Procedures

If informal resolution is not appropriate or has not been successful, individuals may raise a formal complaint using the following procedures.

Stage 1: Submitting a Formal Complaint

How to Submit a Complaint:

Complaints should be submitted in writing to Youth Start using one of the following methods:

- Email: contact@youthstart.co.uk
- Post: Youth Start Limited, 370 Osmaston Park Road, Derby, DE24 8FB
- Website: youthstart.co.uk (via the contact form)

Information to Include:

The complaint should include the following information:

- The complainant's name and contact details
- The date or dates when the issue occurred
- A clear description of the complaint and the issue being raised
- The names of any individuals involved
- Any relevant evidence or documentation
- What outcome the complainant is seeking
- Whether the complainant has attempted informal resolution

Anonymous Complaints:

Youth Start will accept anonymous complaints, but it may be more difficult to investigate and resolve the matter without contact details. Youth Start encourages complainants to provide their details to enable effective communication and resolution.

Third-Party Complaints:

Youth Start will accept complaints from third parties (for example, family members or advocates) on behalf of candidates or other individuals, provided that the individual concerned has given their consent.

Acknowledgment:

Youth Start will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 48 hours (two working days) and will provide:

- Confirmation that the complaint has been received
- The name of the person handling the complaint
- An outline of the next steps and timescales
- Information about the complaints procedure

Stage 2: Investigation

Youth Start will investigate all formal complaints thoroughly and impartially.

Investigation Process:

- A manager or designated investigator will be appointed to investigate the complaint
- The investigator will gather all relevant evidence and information
- The investigator will interview the complainant, any relevant staff members, mentors, volunteers, or witnesses
- The investigator will review any relevant documents, records, or policies
- The investigator will produce an investigation report setting out their findings

Investigation Meeting:

- The complainant may be invited to a meeting to discuss the complaint in more detail
- The complainant will be given at least five working days' notice of the meeting
- The complainant will have the opportunity to present their case and provide additional evidence
- The complainant may be accompanied by a friend, family member, or advocate
- Notes will be taken of the meeting

Timescales:

Youth Start is committed to resolving complaints as quickly as possible. The investigation will normally be completed within 14 working days of receipt of the complaint. If the investigation is likely to take longer, the complainant will be informed and provided with an updated timescale.

Stage 3: Decision and Outcome

Following the investigation, Youth Start will make a decision on the complaint.

Decision:

- The investigator or manager will consider all the evidence and make a decision
- The decision will determine whether the complaint is upheld, partially upheld, or not upheld
- If the complaint is upheld or partially upheld, the decision will set out what action Youth Start will take to resolve the matter and prevent recurrence

Outcome Letter:

The complainant will be informed in writing of the outcome of the complaint. The outcome letter will include:

- A summary of the complaint
- A summary of the investigation process and evidence considered
- The decision and the reasons for it
- Any actions Youth Start will take to resolve the complaint
- Any changes Youth Start will make to prevent recurrence
- Information about the complainant's right to appeal
- The appeal procedure and timescale

Timescales:

The outcome letter will normally be sent within 21 working days of receipt of the complaint. If the investigation is complex or requires additional time, the complainant will be informed and provided with an updated timescale.

Stage 4: Appeal

The complainant has the right to appeal against the outcome of the complaint if they are not satisfied with the decision.

Appeal Notice:

- The complainant must submit a written appeal notice within ten working days of receiving the outcome letter
- The appeal notice must set out the grounds for appeal
- Grounds for appeal include:
 - The complaint was not investigated fairly or thoroughly
 - New evidence has come to light that was not available at the time of the investigation
 - The decision was unreasonable or disproportionate
 - The actions taken to resolve the complaint are inadequate
 - The complainant was treated unfairly or inconsistently

Appeal Review:

- The appeal will be reviewed by a senior manager or director who was not involved in the original investigation or decision
- The reviewer will consider all the evidence, the investigation report, and the grounds for appeal
- The reviewer may request additional information or conduct further investigation if necessary
- The reviewer will make a final decision on the complaint

Appeal Decision:

- The complainant will be informed in writing of the appeal decision
- The appeal decision will set out the reasons for the decision and any further actions to be taken
- The appeal decision is final

Timescales:

The appeal decision will normally be sent within 14 working days of receipt of the appeal notice.

Dispute Resolution

In addition to the formal complaints procedure, Youth Start offers the following dispute resolution options:

Mediation

Youth Start may offer mediation as an alternative or additional method of resolving disputes. Mediation involves:

- A neutral third party (mediator) facilitating discussion between the parties
- Both parties working together to find a mutually acceptable solution
- A voluntary and confidential process
- No formal decision or judgment by the mediator

Mediation may be appropriate for disputes involving:

- Relationship breakdowns between candidates and employers
- Disagreements about expectations or performance
- Communication difficulties
- Any other dispute where both parties are willing to engage in constructive dialogue

External Dispute Resolution

If the complaint cannot be resolved through Youth Start's internal procedures, the complainant may seek external dispute resolution through:

- **ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service):** For employment-related disputes (www.acas.org.uk)
- **Citizens Advice Bureau:** For general advice and support (www.citizensadvice.org.uk)
- **Information Commissioner's Office (ICO):** For data protection complaints (www.ico.org.uk)
- **Health and Safety Executive (HSE):** For health and safety concerns (www.hse.gov.uk)
- **Legal action:** Through the civil courts or employment tribunal (as a last resort)

Youth Start will cooperate fully with any external investigation or dispute resolution process.

Complaints About Specific Issues

Discrimination and Harassment

Complaints about discrimination or harassment will be treated with the utmost seriousness and investigated promptly. Youth Start has a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination and harassment.

If a complaint involves discrimination or harassment:

- The matter will be investigated in accordance with the Equal Opportunities Policy
- Appropriate action will be taken to protect the complainant and prevent further harm
- Disciplinary action may be taken against staff, mentors, or volunteers if the complaint is upheld
- The complainant will be provided with support and signposted to external support services if appropriate

Data Protection and Confidentiality

Complaints about data protection or confidentiality breaches will be investigated in accordance with the Data Protection Policy and UK GDPR requirements.

If a complaint involves a data breach:

- The matter will be reported to the Data Protection Lead immediately
- The breach will be assessed and appropriate action taken to mitigate harm
- The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) will be notified if required
- The complainant will be informed of the outcome and any actions taken

Health and Safety

Complaints about health and safety concerns will be investigated in accordance with the Health & Safety Policy.

If a complaint involves a health and safety risk:

- The matter will be reported to the Health & Safety Lead immediately
- Immediate action will be taken to eliminate or reduce the risk
- The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) will be notified if required
- The complainant will be informed of the outcome and any actions taken

Safeguarding

Complaints involving safeguarding concerns (risk of harm to a young person) will be handled in accordance with the Safeguarding Policy.

If a complaint involves a safeguarding concern:

- The matter will be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately
- Appropriate action will be taken to protect the young person
- External agencies (police, social services) will be notified if required
- The complaint will be investigated in accordance with safeguarding procedures

Safeguarding concerns take priority over the standard complaints procedure.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

All complaints will be treated as confidential. Information will only be shared with those who need to know in order to investigate and resolve the complaint.

Youth Start will handle all personal data relating to complaints in accordance with the Data Protection Policy and UK GDPR requirements. This includes:

- Only collecting and processing information that is necessary for the complaint
- Storing information securely

- Only sharing information with relevant individuals on a need-to-know basis
- Retaining information in accordance with the Data Retention Policy
- Providing complainants with access to their information upon request

Complainants have the right to request that their personal data be kept confidential, but this may limit Youth Start's ability to investigate the complaint fully.

Vexatious or Malicious Complaints

Youth Start takes all complaints seriously. However, Youth Start reserves the right to decline to investigate complaints that are:

- Vexatious (made repeatedly without reasonable grounds)
- Malicious (made with the intention to cause harm or damage)
- Frivolous (trivial or lacking substance)
- Made in bad faith

If Youth Start determines that a complaint is vexatious or malicious:

- The complainant will be informed in writing
 - The complaint will not be investigated further
 - Youth Start may take action to prevent further vexatious complaints
 - Youth Start may take legal action if the complaint is defamatory or causes harm
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Learning and Continuous Improvement

Youth Start views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve. Following the resolution of a complaint, Youth Start will:

- Review the complaint and identify any lessons learned
- Identify any changes to policies, procedures, or practices that are needed
- Implement changes to prevent recurrence
- Monitor the effectiveness of changes
- Share learning across the organisation
- Report on complaints and trends to senior management

Youth Start will maintain a complaints register to track all formal complaints, outcomes, and actions taken. The register will be reviewed quarterly to identify patterns and trends.

Support for Complainants

Youth Start recognises that making a complaint can be stressful and difficult. Youth Start will:

- Treat all complainants with respect and dignity
- Provide clear information about the complaints procedure
- Keep complainants informed of progress throughout the process
- Respond to queries and concerns promptly
- Signpost complainants to external support services if appropriate
- Ensure that complainants are not disadvantaged or victimised as a result of making a complaint

Complainants may be accompanied by a friend, family member, or advocate at any meetings or discussions.

Responsibilities

All Staff, Mentors, and Volunteers

All staff, mentors, and volunteers are responsible for:

- Treating complaints seriously and responding promptly
- Listening to concerns and seeking to resolve issues informally where possible
- Escalating formal complaints to the appropriate manager
- Cooperating with complaint investigations
- Maintaining confidentiality
- Learning from complaints and implementing improvements

Managers

Managers are responsible for:

- Receiving and acknowledging formal complaints
- Appointing investigators and overseeing investigations
- Ensuring that complaints are investigated fairly and thoroughly
- Making decisions on complaints and determining appropriate actions
- Communicating outcomes to complainants
- Implementing changes to prevent recurrence
- Maintaining the complaints register

Senior Management

Senior management is responsible for:

- Overseeing the complaints procedure and ensuring compliance with this policy
 - Reviewing the complaints register and identifying trends
 - Implementing organisational changes based on learning from complaints
 - Ensuring that resources are available to handle complaints effectively
 - Reporting on complaints to the Board of Directors (if applicable)
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Monitoring and Review

This Complaints & Dispute Resolution Policy is reviewed annually to ensure that it remains current and effective. The review considers:

- Changes to UK legislation or best practice guidance
- Changes to Youth Start's operations or services
- Feedback from complainants and stakeholders
- Trends and patterns in complaints
- The effectiveness of the complaints procedure
- Lessons learned from complaints

Youth Start will monitor the following metrics:

- Number of complaints received
 - Types of complaints
 - Outcomes of complaints (upheld, partially upheld, not upheld)
 - Timescales for resolution
 - Number of appeals
 - Complainant satisfaction
 - Actions taken to prevent recurrence
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Contact Information

To submit a formal complaint or for more information about this policy, please contact Youth Start Limited using the following contact details:

Youth Start Limited

Registered Office: 370 Osmaston Park Road, Derby, DE24 8FB

Email: contact@youthstart.co.uk

Telephone: 07470435603

Website: youthstart.co.uk

Relationship with Other Policies

This Complaints & Dispute Resolution Policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Disciplinary & Grievance Procedures
- Safeguarding Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Whistleblowing Policy

External Support and Resources

Complainants may seek external support and advice from:

- **ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service):** www.acas.org.uk
- **Citizens Advice Bureau:** www.citizensadvice.org.uk
- **Information Commissioner's Office (ICO):** www.ico.org.uk (for data protection complaints)
- **Health and Safety Executive (HSE):** www.hse.gov.uk (for health and safety concerns)
- **Equality and Human Rights Commission:** www.equalityhumanrights.com (for discrimination complaints)

Last Updated: 1 January 2026

Next Review Date: 1 January 2027

