



## Severn Mentoring Complaints Policy

*(Community Mentoring & Alternative Provision – September 2025)*

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### 1 | Purpose and Scope

Severn Mentoring aims to provide a high-quality, transparent and respectful service to every learner, parent/carer, partner school and commissioner.

We recognise that, on occasion, individuals may wish to raise a concern or make a formal complaint.

This policy:

- Explains how complaints will be managed quickly, fairly and confidentially.
- Ensures learning and improvement from any mistakes or service failures.
- Promotes openness, accountability and resolution without fear of disadvantage.

It applies to:

- Learners and their parents/carers
- Partner schools, LAs and commissioners
- Members of the public or community organisations
- Severn Mentoring staff and volunteers (in relation to service delivery)

Employment-related grievances from staff are covered by the **Grievance Policy**, not this document.

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### 2 | Statement of Purpose

Severn Mentoring welcomes feedback — positive or negative — as part of its commitment to continuous improvement.

We will:

- Treat all complainants with respect and without prejudice.
  - Handle complaints fairly, promptly and in accordance with natural justice.
  - Protect confidentiality and personal data under the **UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018**.
  - Keep complainants informed at each stage of the process.
  - Use complaints to identify trends and drive service development.
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### 3 | Principles of Handling Complaints

1. **Accessibility & Transparency** – Information on how to complain is available on request and can be made verbally or in writing.
  2. **Fairness & Impartiality** – Investigations are objective, evidence-based and free from bias.
  3. **Confidentiality** – Only those directly involved will have access to complaint details.
  4. **Protection** – Complainants and staff raising concerns in good faith will not face retaliation.
  5. **Timeliness** – We aim to acknowledge complaints within **5 working days** and conclude most within **20 working days**.
  6. **Resolution & Learning** – Each complaint is logged, reviewed and followed by reflective action where required.
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### 4 | How Complaints Are Handled Internally

#### Step 1 – Informal Resolution

- Wherever possible, issues should first be raised directly with the staff member or team involved.
- The aim is to resolve concerns quickly through discussion, explanation or immediate action.
- Most minor issues are expected to be resolved at this stage within **5 working days**.

#### Step 2 – Formal Complaint

If the matter cannot be resolved informally, or is more serious, the complainant should submit a **Formal Complaint** (email or letter) to:

#### Complaints Officer

Severn Mentoring – Director / DSL: Richard Kear

✉ Rich@prostars-fse.com    ☎ 07717840231

The complaint should include:

- Name and contact details
- Nature of the complaint and relevant dates / people involved
- Steps already taken to resolve it
- Desired outcome (if any)

**Acknowledgement:** within 5 working days.

**Investigation:** the Complaints Officer will review records, interview relevant parties and seek evidence.

**Outcome:** a written response within 20 working days (outlining findings and any actions taken).

#### Step 3 – Appeal / Review Stage

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the Stage 2 response:

- They may appeal in writing within 10 working days to a **Senior Director or Independent Reviewer** not previously involved.
- A review will consider the process and evidence afresh.
- A final written decision will be issued within 15 working days.
- This decision is final within the organisation.

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## 5 | Handling Sensitive Information and Confidentiality

- All complaints and associated documents are held securely in accordance with **UK GDPR** and the **Data Protection Act 2018**.
- Information is only shared with those directly involved in investigation or resolution.
- Records are retained for **six years** or longer if required by statute or commissioner contract.
- Complainants may request copies of their own data under a Subject Access Request (see Data Protection Policy).
- If a complaint raises a safeguarding issue, the **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** and where necessary the **LADO or local authority safeguarding team** will be informed immediately.

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## 6 | Escalation and External Resolution

If a complainant remains dissatisfied after Stage 3 or feels their concern was not handled fairly, they may escalate to the relevant external body:

Type of Complaint	External Body / Contact
Safeguarding or child protection issues	Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) / Children's Services
Education placement or funding issues	Referring School or Local Authority Commissioning Team
Data protection / privacy	Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) – <a href="http://www.ico.org.uk">www.ico.org.uk</a> / 0303 123 1113
Employment concerns (whistleblowing)	Protect (Independent Whistleblowing Charity) – 020 3117 2520
General education provider complaints (England)	Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) – Complaints Team

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## 7 | Recording and Learning

- All formal complaints are logged in the **Complaints Register**.
- The Director reviews trends termly to identify systemic issues or training needs.
- Lessons learned are fed into policy reviews, staff training and service planning.

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## 8 | Monitoring and Review

- This policy is reviewed **annually** or sooner if legislation or guidance changes.
  - Summary data may be shared with commissioners to demonstrate openness and quality assurance.
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**Approved by:** Directors / DSL

**Date:** September 2025

**Next Review:** September 2026

**Applies to:** All Severn Mentoring staff, service users and partners