

Concerns, Complaints and Allegations Policy

We aim to give everyone an excellent experience during their time training with the Inspiring Leaders SCITT, so we welcome your comments, suggestions, and feedback about your experience. We understand that occasionally you may need to raise an issue with us.

Most issues raised by trainees are concerns rather than complaints or allegations. The Inspiring Leaders 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 recourse to formal procedures. However, depending on the nature of the concern, individuals may wish or be asked to follow the SCITT's formal complaints and allegations procedure.

Whilst there is no timeframe for when a complaint or allegation can be raised, we advise that you speak to a relevant person as close to the time of incident as possible in order for us to address and resolve it as quickly as possible. Investigating incidents that occurred historically can be a challenge so we would encourage trainees to raise concerns as early possible to help us address problems.

Definitions (Taken from KCSIE)

- **Concern:** A concern is an expression of worry or doubt about the welfare or safety of a child. Concerns can be raised by anyone who has contact with a child, and may relate to a range of issues, such as abuse, neglect, exploitation, or radicalization. It is important to take all concerns seriously and to respond promptly and appropriately to safeguard the welfare of the child.
- **Complaint:** A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction or unhappiness about any aspect of the provision of education or care for a child, including concerns related to safeguarding. Complaints may be made by parents, carers, or children themselves, and should be addressed in accordance with the organisation's policies and procedures for handling complaints.
- **Allegation:** An allegation is an assertion or claim that someone has engaged in behaviour that may be harmful to a child. Allegations may involve a range of issues, including abuse, neglect, exploitation, or inappropriate conduct. All allegations of harm or abuse should be taken seriously and investigated thoroughly in accordance with the organisation's safeguarding policies and procedures.

Scope

The scope of this policy covers most complaints that we are likely to receive. This includes:

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

Key Stages

The Inspiring Leaders SCITT complaints and allegations Procedure has four main stages, as follows:

Stage	If the concern is about the SCITT programme or its staff	If the concern is about the school, its staff or students
Stage 1	The concern is raised informally with a member of SCITT Staff	The concern is raised informally with an in-school mentor (Keep SHL informed as appropriate)
Stage 2	The concern is brought to the attention of the Hub Leader	The concern is brought to the attention of the Headteacher
Stage 3	The concern is escalated to the SCITT Programme Director	The concern is escalated to the MAT's Director of Education (or equivalent)
Stage 4	A formal complaint is heard and responded to by the SCITT Accounting Officer and Managing Director	
Stage 5 / 6	<i>If Appropriate</i>	

Procedure

Stage 1 – Raising a concern.

Concerns can be raised at any time and will often generate an immediate response which will resolve the concern. Unless the concern involves them, trainees should make their first contact with their in school mentor or professional tutor. It is anticipated that the vast majority of concerns will be satisfactorily dealt with in this way.

Stage 2 – Concern reviewed

If the in-school mentor or professional tutor deems that they cannot resolve the concern themselves, or the trainee is not happy with the initial response given, then it may be passed to the Headteacher of the school or SCITT Hub Leader.

Stage 3 – Concern escalated.

If the concern is deemed to need escalating to the point where it may become a formal complaint, then it will be passed to the SCITT Programme Director (if it relates to the SCITT) or the MAT Director of Education or equivalent for that phase (if it relates to the school).

Stage 4 - Making a complaint.

Formal complaints/allegations should be put in writing and addressed to both the SCITT Accounting Officer and the Partnership Director. The complaint/allegation will be logged, including the date it was received. The Accounting Officer will acknowledge receipt of the complaint. The complaint/allegation will be delegated to the Senior Leadership Team member with direct responsibility for the particular area. An investigation will be carried out, and conclusion reached. The Senior Leadership Team member will write to complainant within 10 school days of the complaint being received.

Stage 5 – Complaint/allegation has still not been resolved.

Trainees have the right to appeal the conclusions of their complaint/allegation by writing to the SCITT Accounting Officer within 10 school days of receiving the outcome. They will then acknowledge the response within 5 school days and will seek to form an appeals panel made up of the Accounting Officer, one other member of the assessment panel and 3 people not involved in the matter of the complaint/allegation. The appeals panel will take place within 25 school days of the Accounting Officer's acknowledgement to the appeals letter.

The panel will review the investigation for procedure and fairness and come to a conclusion. The panel will write to the complainant confirming the decision or request a re-run of relevant stages of the investigation within 21 school days of the appeals panel meeting. The SCITT will then issue a Completion of Procedures Letter outlining its conclusion.

Where appropriate our partner MAT Safeguarding Leaders or HR Professionals will be involved in this process.

Stage 6 - Dissatisfied by the outcome of the appeals panel.

A trainee can raise a complaint with the Office of Independent Adjudicators (OIA). A letter to the OIA 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. Below are the details required:

- Website: <http://www.oiahe.org.uk>
- Address: OIA, Second Floor, Abbey Gate, 57-75 Kings Road, Reading, RG1 3AB
- Telephone: 0118 959 9813

In the case of an allegation is not resolved through this process we will advise the complainant about legal next steps.

Timelines and Expectations

Stage	Action	Suggested Timeframe
Stage 1	Initial response from mentor or Professional Tutor	Within 5 school days
Stage 2	Response from Headteacher or SCITT Hub Lead	Within 10 school days
Stage 3	Escalation to MAT Director or SCITT Director	Within 10 school days
Stage 4	Investigation and written response	Within 10 school days of acknowledgement
Stage 5	Appeal submitted	Within 10 school days of outcome
	Appeal panel convened and outcome shared	Within 25 school days of appeal submission
Stage 6	Referral to OIA	As per OIA guidelines (usually within 12 months of Completion of Procedures Letter)

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

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

At each stage, the person investigating the complaint or allegation 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 an explanation of why the complaint is not upheld.

Third-Party Complaints

A family member or other third party can submit a complaint on behalf of the trainee. However, we will require written consent from the trainee to handle the complaint due to data protection regulations (GDPR). This consent confirms that the trainee agrees to the complaint being made and the details being shared with the third party.

Whistleblowing

Inspiring Leaders SCITT is committed to the highest standards of openness, integrity, and accountability. We encourage all trainees, staff, and stakeholders to report any serious concerns about malpractice, wrongdoing, or risks to the safety and wellbeing of individuals within the organisation.

What is Whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work. Within the SCITT, partners, trainees and staff may feel they need to whistle blow if they observe or are concerned about the conduct of other colleagues for the following reasons:

- Safeguarding breaches or failures to follow safeguarding procedures.
- Criminal offences (e.g., fraud, theft).
- Miscarriages of justice.
- Health and safety risks.
- Breaches of legal or professional obligations.
- Attempts to cover up any of the above.

A whistleblower is a person who raises a genuine concern in good faith relating to any of the above. If you have any genuine concerns related to suspected wrongdoing or danger affecting any of the SCITTs or placement school's activities (a whistleblowing concern) you should report it to the key contacts listed below.

How to Raise a Whistleblowing Concern

- Concerns should be raised as soon as possible, ideally in writing, to the SCITT Programme Director.
- If the concern involves this individual, it should be escalated directly to the Accounting Officer.
- Whistleblowers may request confidentiality. We will make every effort to protect the identity of individuals raising concerns in good faith.
- No whistleblower will suffer any detriment for raising a concern, even if it turns out to be mistaken, provided it was raised honestly and reasonably.

External Reporting

If internal reporting is not appropriate or has not resolved the issue, concerns may be raised with external bodies such as:

- The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)
- Ofsted
- The Department for Education (DfE)
- The Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)

Key policies for all areas

We have clear systems in place and contact details to hand for you to get in touch in the event of any concerns outlined in this statement. Please follow the guidance below.

Organisation	If you have a <u>whistleblowing</u> concern relating to:	Please refer to your partner MATs whistleblowing policies:
School	Your school/placement	Refer to your school's whistleblowing policy
Your MAT/Delivery partner	Leicestershire Primary and Secondary Hub	Discovery Trust - Policy
	Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Primary	Redhill Trust - Policy
	Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Secondary	Flying High Trust - Policy
The SCITT Central Team or other concerns	Staff and Trainees in the SCITT	Dirk Smith – SCITT Director – dsmith@iltoday.co.uk
	If you have a whistleblowing concern related to the SCITT director.	Paul Stone – Accounting Officer – pstone@discoverytrust.org