

COMPLAINTS POLICIES

The Equine Fitters Council (the Council) is a not-for-profit Company limited by guarantee.

The objects for which the Company is established are to secure the voluntary regulation of equine fitters through the creation and maintenance of a directory of equine fitters and training providers (the Directory), determine the criteria for listing in the Directory and lay down the regulations to be applied to those so listed in order to advance and provide for the welfare of horses and with that aim to support those working with horses.

The Council formulates policy and oversees the administrative structure for the Directory, including approving the eligibility requirements, procedures for listing and de-listing, setting fees for listing and generally exercising all the powers necessary to establish and operate the Directory and the linked website. In final dispute resolution, fitters found to have failed in their duty to their client, the horse, or their colleagues, will be removed from the Directory.

A complaint may be against a listed Equine Fitter or Training Provider, an officer of the Council, a Council policy or decision, or a breach of privacy.

The three sections below set out Council policies and procedures relating to complaints.

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SECTION 1

COMPLAINTS AGAINST LISTED EQUINE FITTERS OR TRAINING PROVIDERS

All listed Equine Fitters and Training Providers align themselves with the purpose and objectives of the Council and the importance of maintaining good practice. Listed Equine Fitters agree to abide by the Code of Conduct and Professional Practice. Listed Training Providers agree to abide by the Code of Practice. Both submit to the authority of the Council in the matter of professional practice and conditions of Listing.

A. The Scope of the Council as final arbiter.

Only a court of law has the authority to order compensation in connection with a complaint, and only a court of law can decide whether someone has acted unlawfully.

Consider whether you have a complaint, where you have experienced dissatisfaction with a product or service, or whether the matter should be reported to an animal welfare body or to the police, or whether you should seek legal advice.

Listed Equine Fitters and Listed Training Providers are required to hold a Complaints Policy which meet the minimum standards set by the Council, and to make their policy public. Those listed may also be associated with a representative body, which will operate a Complaints Policy.

The first recourse if you have a complaint is with the person or organisation with whom you have a grievance. A satisfactory outcome is often reached through clear and objective communication. The provider of goods or services must be given the opportunity to make good any substantiated claim.

If an acceptable outcome cannot be reached you should next seek resolution through the representative body to which the Equine Fitter or Training Provider belong.

Where there is no representative body or if you are not pleased with the outcome of the complaints process you may submit your complaint to the Council. It is strongly advised that all other appropriate means of settlement are pursued, including:

- Mediation services
- National trading standards bodies
- Small Claims or Monies Claims Courts

The Council can judge whether a Listed Equine Fitter or Training Provider has failed to abide by the applicable Codes or to follow due process when handling a complaint. It can suspend listing,

set corrective measures, or strike the Listed party from the Directory. However, it cannot usually act if:

- It has already concluded the complaint
- Criminal or civil proceedings have been brought against the listed party
- The person complaining has made public the complaint on social media
- The matter concerns a data or privacy breach, in which case the national body relating to privacy and data, such as the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) in the UK will investigate the matter.

Listed Equine Fitters and Training Providers are required to disclose when a complaint against them has been upheld by a representative body, small claims, civil or criminal courts. Equine Fitters or Training Providers may not be Listed if there is such a judgement against them in the past 2 years.

B. Process and outcomes

It is important to recognise that the powers of the Council are limited to breaches of Council Codes of Conduct and Practice.

If you wish to submit a complaint to the Council, you may do so using the form on our website: www.equinefitterscouncil.org/complaints or to The Registrar via email or in writing where your letter should be addressed 'for submission to the Standards Committee':

Email: office@equinefitterscouncil.org

The Equine Fitters Council
Saddlers Hall
40 Gutter Lane
EC2V 6BR

You must include:

- Your name, address, email address and telephone number
- The name of the party you claim a complaint against
- The Fitter's code, where applicable
- Your relationship to the party you have a complaint against, for example, this may be client, customer, student, or colleague.
- An objective summary of your complaint and the resolution you seek.
- The actions taken and outcomes to date.

Receipt of your complaint will normally be acknowledged within 5 working days.

The Standards Committee will review the complaint. They may contact the person making the complaint or subject of the complaint (the parties) for further information and may consult with other officers of the Council.

If the complaint falls outside the remit of the Council, if no breach of the applicable Codes and if no deviation from due process is found the case shall be closed and the parties notified in writing using the email address or address supplied to the Council.

Where the evidence supplied gives reason to believe that the applicable Code/s and due process were breached the Council shall open an investigation and notify both parties in writing using the email address or address supplied to the Council.

ABOUT THE REVIEW PROCESS

The Council are committed to upholding standards of excellence and supporting practitioners and training providers in providing the best service for human and equid. We want to offer a complaints process that is fair, proper, and open.

Your complaint, the response of the Equine Fitter or Training Provider that you have a grievance against, and all submitted material will be treated as confidential and in line with GDPR. We will inform you if it is necessary to share information beyond the complaints process.

Your complaint will be handled and reviewed by people independent of the issue with no conflicts of interest in reaching fair and proper resolution.

To establish the facts the Standards Committee may request additional material. It is in your interest to submit such evidence as quickly as possible to expedite the process.

Following a full review of the submitted material you, and separately the person or body you are complaining about, may be invited to discuss the complaint and to provide further detail. Where an invitation to interview is issued, you may bring with you and at your cost an independent person to mediate, interpret, and/or advocate for you.

Complaints will usually be decided during a Council or Standards Committee meeting. The speed of the process will depend on the calendar of meetings, but we will keep you informed of the status of your case and the date it will be reviewed.

At the review meeting a vote shall be taken of all present using the civil standard of proof, being a balance of probabilities, on whether a breach has taken place.

The following actions may be taken:

- a. Dismiss the complaint
- b. Uphold the complaint and exercise one or more of the following procedures:
 - i. Suspend listing for a period no longer than 2 years
 - ii. Request a letter of apology to be written by the Listed party to the party making the complaint which is to be submitted to the Council Chair within for approval within 5 working days
 - iii. Issue a warning containing consequences should the applicable Code/s be further breached with 4 years
 - iv. Demand a performance improvement plan be submitted to the Council Chair
 - v. De-list the Listed party and publish this action in Trade Press.

The review shall be recorded and both parties notified of the outcome of the review in writing using the email address or address supplied to the Council. We will clearly and transparently set out the process followed, and actions taken

APPEALING THE DECISION

Either party may appeal the finding within 14 days of the date notification was issued.

New information must be submitted as soon as it becomes available.

The Chair of the Council will consider existing and newly submitted evidence to test and establish the facts. Once a decision has been reached, we will write to both parties setting out our conclusion and actions, and the case will be closed.

C. Minimum Complaints Policy standards for Listed Equine Fitters and Training Providers

Listed Equine Fitters and Training Providers are required to have, keep up to date, and make public their Complaints Policy. To meet minimum standards of service set by the Council, the Policy and procedures must:

- a. Your complaints policy and procedures must be freely available on your website, social media pages, and on request.
- b. Your complaints policy must meet those standards set out by national legislation, for example consumer protection regulations
- c. Your complaints policy and procedures documentation must be dated, and show the next review date
- d. It must be clear to a client, learner, or customer who they must contact, and how to contact them. Contact details must be provided (i.e., email address or phone number)
- e. When handling a complaint, you must:
 - i. Acknowledge receipt
 - ii. Request the information you need to respond in a constructive manner
 - iii. Make available evidence to defend your position. Evidence may include correspondence, signed Terms & Conditions, signed appointment records, learning records, assessment records, accounts, supplier invoices.
 - iv. Explain what action you will take to investigate the matter
 - v. Explain the possible outcomes, e.g., repair, exchange of goods, refund, or none.
 - vi. Set a timeframe for each process
 - vii. Clearly state when you consider the matter closed.

SECTION 2

COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE COUNCIL

The Equine Fitters Council stand for excellence in practice and for continued improvement so that together we may lift professional Equine Fitting standards in the interests of the horse. We apply those same high standards to how we operate and interact with all our stakeholders.

Consider whether you have a complaint, where you have experienced dissatisfaction with a policy, decision, or service, or whether the matter should be reported to the police, or whether you should seek legal advice.

If you have a complaint against an officer of the Council or against Council policy or decisions, you may submit your complaint to The Registrar via office@equinefitterscouncil.org or in writing to The Chair of the Council :-

The Equine Fitters Council
Saddlers' Hall
40 Gutter Lane
EC2V 6BR

You must include:

- Your name, address, email address and telephone number
- Details of the complaint:
 - o The name of the role against whom you have a grievance and/or
 - o The decision you against which you have a grievance and/or
 - o The policy against which you have a grievance
- Where relevant, your relationship to the party against whom you have a grievance
- An objective summary of your complaint and the resolution you seek.
- Actions taken and outcomes to date

Receipt of your complaint will normally be acknowledged within 5 working days.

We want to offer a complaints process that is fair, proper, and open. Where the complaint is against the Chair it will be processed by the Standards Committee. Where the complaint is against the Registrar it will be processed by the Council Chair. Your complaint, and all related and submitted material will be treated as confidential and in line with GDPR. We will inform you if it is necessary to share information beyond the complaints process and request further



information if it is needed to establish the facts. It is in your interest to submit such evidence as quickly as possible to expedite the process.

Your complaint will be handled and reviewed by people independent of the issue with no conflicts of interest in reaching fair and proper resolution.

Complaints will usually be decided during a Standards Committee meeting. The speed of the process will depend on the calendar of meetings, but we will keep you informed of the status of your case and the date it will be reviewed.

The review shall be recorded and both parties notified of the outcome of the review in writing using the email address or address supplied to the Council. We will clearly and transparently set out the process followed, and actions taken

SECTION 3

PRIVACY & WEBSITE USE.

Please see the following policies:

- a. Equine Fitters Council Privacy Policy
- b. Directory Application Terms & Conditions

REVIEW

This Policy will be reviewed in	2026	and re-issued
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Other Documents of interest:

- a. Equine Fitters Council Ethics Policy