

Customer Feedback and Complaints Management Policy and Procedure



Purpose and Scope

Access4u is committed to ensuring that any person or organisation using Access4u services or affected by its operations has the right to provide feedback and or lodge a complaint or to appeal a decision of the organisation, as a source of ideas for improving services and activities.

Access4u will provide processes that:

- foster a service culture that encourages open and honest communication
- inform Customers and Stakeholders about the standard of service they can expect
- protect the right of Customers and Stakeholders to provide feedback and to make complaints about service delivery
- encourage and make it easy for young people and their families to provide feedback both positive or negative
- provide anonymity to people providing feedback
- concerns that are raised will be addressed in ways that ensure access and equity, fairness, accountability and transparency
- record and analyse information arising from feedback and use it to improve services
- facilitates complaints by cultivating a supportive environment in which they can be made
- is simple, accessible and easy to use
- is effectively communicated and promoted to all Customers and Stakeholders
- ensures complaints or appeals are fairly assessed and responded to promptly
- is procedurally fair and follows principles of natural justice
- complies with legislative requirements

Responsibilities and delegations

This policy applies to	Governing Body. Staff and Volunteers
Specific responsibilities	<p>The Board responsible for ensuring effective complaint handling and resolution management system in place.</p> <p>The CEO and Managers responsible for managing and responding to complaints in line with this policy and ensuring full investigation and communication in resolving complaints.</p> <p>Staff responsible for communicating complaints and adhering to this policy.</p>
Policy approval	CEO

Policy context – this policy relates to:

Standards	<p>NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission Complaints Management and Resolution Guidance</p> <p>National Disability Insurance Scheme Quality and Safety Framework</p>
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Legislation	<p>National Disability Insurance Scheme (Provider Registration and Practice Standards) Rules 2018</p> <p>National Disability Insurance Scheme (Complaints Management and Resolution) Rules 2018</p> <p>Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1992</p> <p>The Disability Services Act SA 1993</p>
Contractual obligations	NDIS Code of Conduct
Organisation policies and procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer Charter • Customer Rights Policy • Human Rights Policy • Privacy Policy
Forms, record keeping, other documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information to assist Customers to make a complaint or Suggestion Brochure • Complaint and Suggestion Form • Complaints Process Tracker Form • Complaints register • Customer Appeal Request Form • Customer Survey Tool

Definitions

Complaint: is an expression of dissatisfaction made to or about an organisation regarding its staff, services or products that warrants response or resolution.

Complainant: is an employee, customer, advocate, entity or member of the public who expresses their dissatisfaction about an organisation to either the organisation itself or an external body.

Escalation: is the process of reporting complaints to the NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Commission if the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint.

Principles

Access4u will:

- ensure that all Customers/ Young People and their families, carers and advocates are encouraged and supported to raise any concerns they have about the service provided by Access4u.
- consider all complaints it receives regardless of whether or not the complainant is a Customer or Stakeholder of Access4u.
- treat all complainants with respect, recognising that the issue of complaint is important to the complainant
- maintain confidentiality of parties involved, keeping any information private to those directly involved in the complaint and its resolution. Information will only be disclosed if required by

- law, or if otherwise necessary
- ensure support and advocacy is available to Customers and Stakeholders who make a complaint and require support
 - resolve complaints, where possible, to the satisfaction of the complainant
 - deal with all complaints in a timely manner, and aim to provide an acknowledgement within 2 days and a response within 14 days (if requested)
 - keep parties to the complaint appropriately involved and informed of progress of the complaint or appeal
 - ensure that Governing body, staff are given information about the complaints procedure as part of their induction and are aware of procedures for managing Customer feedback and complaints
 - ensure all Customers, stakeholders including families and advocates are aware of the complaints policy and procedures
 - ensure that all complainants are aware of and understand how to escalate their complaint to Residential Tenancies Tribunal (SACAT) and NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Commission.
 - ensure that a complainant is not penalised in any way or prevented from use of services during the progress of an issue
 - ensure that feedback data (both positive and negative) is considered in organisational reviews and in planning service improvements
 - review and evaluate the accessibility and effectiveness of the complaints management system and continually improve its processes

Procedure

Encouraging Customer and stakeholder feedback

The Senior Managers will be responsible for ensuring that Customers and Stakeholders are informed of what they can expect from the service and how they may provide feedback. Information will be provided to clients and stakeholders in readable easy English user-friendly form.

All staff working with Customers and Stakeholders are responsible for ensuring they are familiar with the procedures for Customers and Stakeholders to provide feedback, and for:

- accepting and reporting informal feedback
- offering Customers an opportunity to provide formal feedback when appropriate

All clients will be informed of their rights and responsibilities with regards to complaints and appeals at the earliest possible stage of their involvement with the organisation.

Initiating and collecting Customer and stakeholder feedback

- Feedback may be provided by individual Customers and Stakeholders on their initiative or in response to requests from Access4u.
- Individual Customers and Stakeholders may provide feedback directly, by phone, email or the website.
- The Manager will be responsible for receiving and making a record of feedback both in the customers file on the O drive and on the feedback/ complaints/ compliments register which is also in the O drive. The relevant Senior Manager will be responsible for reviewing feedback

records on a quarterly basis and identifying any action required.

- Access4u will seek feedback from Customers and Stakeholders by seeking feedback at service review, and through regular Customer contact.
- Anonymous complaints may be made by using the link on our website <https://access4u.org.au/about/feedback.html>

Training procedures

Staff will be trained on the complaints management procedures during their induction, and as part of ongoing refresher training.

Managers will undergo training for complaints management and resolution to support Customers throughout the complaint process and appropriately respond to complaints in an empathetic manner. This will include open communication strategies such as acknowledging the grievance without being defensive and making apologies while accepting responsibility for what occurred.

Providing Feedback and or Making a Complaint

A person wishing to provide feedback and or make a complaint may do so in writing or verbally to:

- the staff member they were dealing with at the time
- the manager/supervisor of that staff member
- the Complaints Management Team or the CEO
- NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission

Feedback or Complaints may be made by:

- Submitting a completed Customer Complaints & Feedback Form to Reception. The Form is available in hard copy at all receptions areas.
- Written complaints may be sent to feedback@access4u.org.au who will direct it to the appropriate person.
- Written complaints may also be made by using the link on our website <https://access4u.org.au/about/feedback.html>
- Feedback and complaints via telephone may be made on 1800022237
- All complaints can be made directly to the Complaints Management Team at feedback@access4u.org.au.

If the complaint is about:

- a staff member, the complaint will normally be dealt with by a senior staff member
- a senior staff member the complaint will normally be dealt with by the CEO
- the CEO the complaint will normally be dealt with by the Governing body Chair.

Access4u encourages and supports all of its customers, their stakeholders, our workers and others to make complaints and lodge appeals, in an environment where it is clear that complaints can be made without fear of any reprisal.

Lodging an appeal

Clients or their advocates may lodge an appeal if they disagree with a decision made by Access4u. An appeal should be made in writing and submitted to the CEO.

Procedure for complaints and appeals management

Any staff member may be a recipient of a complaint, and is responsible for:

1. Receiving the complaint:

- listening to the complainant, acknowledging the concern raised, and explaining the next steps to the complainant
- Depending on the type and severity of the complaint, either discussing with the complainant an agreed upon resolution (for smaller matters), or referring the complaint on to Senior Manager, Disability Services for further investigation and action. Sending a written acknowledgement within two days of receipt of the complaint (if required)

The person managing the complaint will be responsible for:

2. Processing the complaint or appeal:

- registering the complaint or appeal in the complaints register
- informing the complainant that their complaint has been received and providing them with information about the process and time frame within two working days in writing

3. Investigating the complaint or appeal:

- examining the complaint within two working days of the complaint being received or immediately if required
- investigating the complaint and deciding how to respond
- informing the complainant by letter within 14 days of the complaint being received of what is being done to investigate and resolve it, and the expected time frame for resolution

As far as possible, complaints or appeals will be investigated and resolved within 14 days of being received. If this time frame cannot be met, the complainant will be informed of the reasons why and of the alternative time frame for resolution.

4. Responding to and resolving the complaint:

- making a decision or referring to the appropriate people for a decision within 14 days of the complaint being received wherever possible, which will involve:
 - informing the complainant of the outcome and the reasons for any decisions made
 - upholding (and if so, what will be done to resolve it)
 - resolving (and how this has been achieved); or
 - or not taking any further action, if required.
- informing the complainant of any options for further action if required
- if an apology is in order, ensuring that the appropriate person makes the apology and informs the complainant what the organisation intends to do to avoid further grievance

5. Reviewing the complaint:

If the complainant is not satisfied with the investigation and proposed resolution of their complaint or appeal, they can seek a further review of the matter by the CEO.

6. Referral to external procedure:

A formal external complaints procedure may follow Step 4 if the complainant is still not satisfied with the outcome. The complainant will be referred to NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission and provided information and support to make the complaint externally if necessary.

Complaints involving specific staff members

The Senior Manager or Manager has delegated responsibility for resolving complaints or disputes involving staff members in their area of responsibility.

Internal complaints, where a staff member makes a complaint concerning another staff member, will be dealt with in accordance with the Access4u's grievance policy.

External complaints by Customers or stakeholders made against a staff member will be managed by the relevant Senior Manager who will:

- notify the staff member of the complaint and its nature
- investigate the complaint and provide the staff member with an opportunity to respond to any issues raised
- attempt to mediate the dispute (if appropriate) and/or attempt to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of the outside party
- take any other action necessary to resolve the issue

Any disciplinary action against a staff member arising from a complaint will be taken in accordance with the procedures contained in Access4u's disciplinary procedures.

Complaints involving the CEO will be managed by the Board.

Complaints involving organisation members or Governing body members

Complaints made against a Governing body member will be referred to the Chair. The Chair, or their delegate, will:

- notify the person about whom a complaint is being made of the complaint and its nature
- investigate the complaint and provide the member with an opportunity to respond to any issues raised
- attempt to mediate the dispute (if appropriate) and/or attempt to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of the outside party

Where the Chair is the subject of a complaint, the complaint should be referred to Torrens Foundation Management Company Director.

If the matter remains unresolved, the Chair will raise the matter at the next Governing body meeting. Depending on the seriousness of the complaint, the Governing body may:

- deal with the matter at its meeting

or

- refer the matter to an Independent Advocate or the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission or the HSCC.

Record keeping

A register of complaints and appeals will be kept in a Complaints register in the Access4u drive for a minimum of seven years. after the complaint has been made. The register will be maintained by the Complaints Management Team and will record the following for each complaint or appeal:

- Details of the complainant and the nature of the complaint
- Date lodged
- Action taken
- Date of resolution and reason for decision
- Indication of complainant being notified of outcome
- Complainant response and any further action

Copies of all correspondence will be kept in a secure file.

The complaints register and files will be confidential and access is restricted to CEO and Complaints Management Team

A statistical summary of complaints and appeals will also be kept and a report provided to the Board. Results from this report will be reviewed by the CEO and used to:

- inform service planning by including a review of complaints and appeals in all service planning, monitoring and evaluation activities
- inform decision making by including a report on complaints and appeals as a standard item on staff and management meeting agendas

Continuous improvement of services and the complaints management system

The complaints management system will be reviewed and evaluated every 12 months. This will include:

- review of all complaints and feedback
- customer and staff feedback about the accessibility and effectiveness of the complaints management system
- implementation of a continuous improvement plan based on the review and feedback received

The relevant Senior Manager will be responsible for including in their monthly report any customer or stakeholder feedback which the CEO can include in their monthly report to the Board.

Results from Customers and stakeholder feedback will be reviewed by the CEO and Board and used to:

- inform service planning by including a review of Customer and stakeholder feedback in all service planning, monitoring and evaluation activities
- inform decision making by including a report on Customer and stakeholder feedback as a standard item on staff and management meeting agendas.