

Client (External) Complaints Resolution Policy

1. PURPOSE and SCOPE

- 1.1. This Policy outlines the commitment of UnitingCare Wesley Port Adelaide (UCWPA) in relation to complaints lodged by clients, their advocates or any other external stakeholder.
- 1.2. Complaints are seen to have an important role in contributing to service improvement in the organisation. The policy has been framed around natural justice principles and individuals' rights. This policy applies to all of the organisation's programs and activities.

2. DEFINITIONS

- 2.1. Complaint: An expression of dissatisfaction made to an organisation, related to its services or products, or the complaints handling process itself, where a response or resolution is clearly expected. Disputes arise when there is an unresolved complaint.
- 2.2. Informal complaint: a complaint made verbally.
- 2.3. Formal complaint: a complaint made in writing.
- 2.4. Simple complaint: A complaint will be classified as a simple complaint if it is likely to be easily resolved e.g. the Community Bus is running late, the maintenance person has not arrived etc. It is expected complaints of a simple nature will be responded to immediately or within one working day.
- 2.5. Serious complaint: A complaint which refers to claims of misconduct of staff or Volunteers, breach of confidentiality, suspicion of discrimination etc. A complex complaint is one that can not be resolved until an investigation has been conducted.
- 2.6. Natural Justice: In any complaint situation it is important that the principles of natural justice are applied. These principles involve ensuring that all parties affected by a grievance are granted a fair hearing prior to any resolution being attempted.
 - 2.6.1. The person(s) complained about should be furnished with details of any allegation(s) made against them, and be given a reasonable time to put their side of the story before resolution is attempted;
 - 2.6.2. Investigations, interviews and all other proceedings associated with the resolution of a complaint should be conducted honestly, fairly and without bias, and in strict confidence; and
 - 2.6.3. The process should not be unduly delayed.
 - 2.6.4. External agencies exist to provide advice and support.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1. UCWPA recognises the right of clients and other external stakeholders to raise concerns regarding any aspect of our services.

- 3.2. UCWPA welcomes complaints and views them as integral to a continuous improvement approach which enhances the ability of the organisation to identify trends and eliminate causes of complaints.
- 3.3. Access to mediation services, external complaints handling services or advocacy agencies will be facilitated if the need arises and at the request of the complainant.

4. POLICY

- 4.1. UCWPA is committed to ensuring that all clients of the organisation and their families are free to lodge complaints, to have those complaints dealt with promptly and fairly by the organisation and to have those complaints resolved if possible.
- 4.2. All complaints will be managed in a confidential manner.
- 4.3. Each UnitingCare Wesley Port Adelaide service will have effective Complaints Management guidelines/procedures in place, appropriate to the relevant client group.
- 4.4. The treatment of disputes and complaints will be fair to both the complainant and respondent, will be responded to courteously and will be given high priority for resolution and rectifying the issue.
- 4.5. Where complaints are unable to be solved at the service level, complaints will be referred to a Senior Manager or the Chief Executive Officer.
- 4.6. Each UCWPA service will maintain records that can provide a summary report, detailing the number of complaints received, issues of concern, identified trends and planned strategies for improvement.
- 4.7. All complaints of a criminal nature must be handled immediately and the Senior Manager of the service notified. All criminal investigations will be referred to the police.

5. PROCEDURE

- 5.1. Complainants have the option of raising any concern and seeking a resolution to any complaints formally or informally. It is the intent of these procedures that complaints be settled as early as possible, therefore UCWPA encourages a claimant to make an informal complaint in the first instance.
 - 5.1.1. Informal Complaint: The complainant should discuss the matter with the person concerned in the first instance. The response should be provided within five days.
 - 5.1.2. Formal Complaint: The complainant has the option of providing details of the complaint in writing to the appropriate site supervisor.
- 5.2. There is a program manager within each service who is responsible for coordinating complaints and to whom all complaints are referred.
- 5.3. Receipt of each complaint should be acknowledged to the complainant within 5 working days. Complaints should be addressed promptly in accordance with their urgency. For example, significant health and safety issues should be processed immediately. The complainants should be treated courteously and be kept informed of the progress of their complaint through the complaints-handling process. A written response will be provided within 30 days of receiving the complaint.
- 5.4. In the event of the proposed course of corrective action being unacceptable to the complainant, the person managing the complaint has advised the complainant of his or her rights and avenues to take the matter further.

- 5.5. All complaints, resolved and unresolved, have been recorded in a confidential complaints register and a non-identifying summary of complaints are tabled at the next Quality and Planning Committee meeting to inform future service improvement efforts.

6. LEGISLATION

- 6.1. Equal Opportunity Act, 1987 (SA)
- 6.2. Privacy Act 2000
- 6.3. Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986
- 6.4. Sex Discrimination Act 1984
- 6.5. Racial Discrimination Act 1975
- 6.6. Disability Discrimination Act 1992

7. DOCUMENTATION

- 7.1. Individual services Complaints Management Guidelines and Procedures
- 7.2. Service Records of Complaints
- 7.3. 6-monthly Complaints Summary Reports
- 7.4. 'Complaint Follow Up Record' Form