



## Complaints and Feedback Management

This document is controlled within the SharePoint Document Management System.

Please refer to the electronic version on SharePoint to confirm you have the latest version.

	Title	Name	Date
<b>Owner:</b>	Network Manager	Jane Lander	Sept-2021

Revision	Date	Amended By	Details of Amendment
0	Sep 2021	S Fitzgerald	Document review and creation of standalone complaints and feedback management procedure

TABLE OF CONTENTS

**1. PURPOSE ..... 3**

**2. OBJECTIVES/PRINCIPLES ..... 3**

**3. DEFINITIONS ..... 4**

**4. PROCEDURE ..... 4**

    4.1. Information for individuals and stakeholders ..... 4

    4.2. Training Procedures ..... 5

    4.3. Making a Complaint ..... 5

    4.4. Lodging an appeal ..... 6

    4.5. Procedure for complaints and appeals management ..... 6

    4.6. Complaints involving specific staff members ..... 7

    4.7. Complaints involving organisation members of the Board ..... 7

    4.8. Cooperation in external investigations ..... 8

    4.9. Record keeping ..... 8

    4.10. Continuous improvement of the complaints management system ..... 8

**5. REFERENCES ..... 9**

## 1. Purpose

Valued Lives is committed to ensuring that any person or organisation utilising services from Valued Lives, or affected by its operations, has the right to lodge feedback, complaints or to appeal a decision of the organisation. All concerns that are raised will be addressed in ways that ensure access and equity, fairness, accountability, and transparency.

The organisation will provide a complaints and appeals management procedure that:

- allows any person to make a complaint or provide feedback
- 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 clients and stakeholders
- is proportionate to the size of the organisation and the services it provides
- ensures complaints or appeals are fairly assessed and responded to promptly
- is procedurally fair and follows principles of natural justice
- complies with legislative requirements

## 2. Objectives/Principles

Valued Lives will:

- ensure that all clients, and their families, carers and advocates are encouraged and supported to raise any concerns they have about the service or organisation
- consider all complaints it receives regardless of whether or not the complainant is a client of the organisation
- 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 clients who make a complaint and require support
- resolve complaints, where possible, to the satisfaction of the complainant
- clients, families and advocates have access to the organisation's complaints management policy
- deal with all complaints in a timely manner, and aim to provide a formal response to the complainant within an appropriate timeframe of the complaint being received
- keep parties to the complaint appropriately involved and informed of progress of the complaint

- ensure that Board members and staff are given information about the complaint's procedure as part of their induction and are aware of procedures for managing feedback and complaints
- ensure all service users, stakeholders and members are aware of the complaints policy and procedures
- ensure that all complainants are aware of and understand how to escalate their complaint to the relevant external body
- 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

### 3. Definitions

Name	Definition
<b>Complaint</b>	is an expression of dissatisfaction made to or about an organisation regarding its staff, services or products that warrants response or resolution.
<b>Complainant</b>	is an employee, client, advocate, entity or member of the public who expresses their dissatisfaction about an organisation to either the organisation itself or an external body.
<b>Escalation</b>	is the process of reporting complaints to the relevant external body, if the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint.
<b>Feedback</b>	

### 4. Procedure

#### 4.1. Information for individuals and stakeholders

Valued Lives complaints and feedback procedure will be documented for all persons and stakeholders which is made available via the Valued Lives website and internal document management system.

All participants will be informed of their rights and responsibilities with regards to complaints and feedback at the earliest possible stage of their involvement with the organisation. This will also be outlined in Service Agreements.

The complaints and feedback process will contain information on the following:

- how to make a complaint or lodge an appeal, or feedback including an anonymous complaint
- contact person for lodging a complaint or feedback

- how the organisation will deal with the complaint or feedback and the steps involved and the timelines
- the rights of the complainant to an advocate, support person or interpreter
- how the person will be informed about the outcome of their complaint or feedback
- how to make a complaint to an external body including contact details

#### 4.2. Training Procedures

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

Managers and relevant staff will undergo training for complaints management and resolution to support participants and other stakeholders to 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.

#### 4.3. Making a Complaint

A person wishing to make a complaint may do so in writing, via our website or verbally to:

- the staff member they were dealing with at the time
- the Manager of that staff member
- Valued Lives directly and referred to Operational Manager
- the Board, or
- appropriate Regulatory Authority

Complaints may be made by:

- submitting a completed Feedback and Complaints form via our website.
- Written complaints may be sent to PO Box 642, Cloverdale, WA 6985. The Complaints Officer will be responsible for receiving this correspondence and directing it to the appropriate person.
- Feedback and complaints via telephone may be made on 08 9274 7760.
- Anonymous complaints may be made by contacting us via any of the above methods anonymously.

If the complaint is about:

- a staff member, the complaint will normally be dealt with by their Manager
- a Manager, the complaint will normally be dealt with by the Operational manager
- Operational Manager or Executive Management, the complaint will normally be dealt with by the Board.

#### 4.4. Lodging an appeal

Participants or their advocates may lodge an appeal if they disagree with a decision made by the organisation, or by a staff member, related to their complaint. An appeal should be made in writing and submitted to [complaintsandfeedback@valuedlives.org.au](mailto:complaintsandfeedback@valuedlives.org.au).

#### 4.5. 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 their Manager for further investigation and action.

The person managing the complaint will be responsible for:

2. Processing the complaint or appeal:
  - registering the complaint or appeal in Brevity
  - informing the complainant that their complaint has been received and providing them with information about the process and time frame
3. Investigating the complaint or appeal:
  - examining the complaint within one week of the complaint being received
  - investigating the complaint and deciding how to respond
  - informing the complainant by letter within two weeks 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 30 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 two weeks of the complaint being received
    - informing the complainant of the outcome and the reasons for any decisions made
    - upheld (and if so, what will be done to resolve it)
    - resolved (and how this has been achieved); or
    - if no further action can be taken, the reasons for this
  - 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.

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 the appropriate Regulatory Body and provided information and support to make the complaint externally if necessary.

#### 4.6. Complaints involving specific staff members

The relevant Manager has delegated responsibility for resolving complaints or disputes involving staff members or volunteers.

Internal complaints, where a staff member or volunteer makes a complaint concerning another staff member or volunteer, will be dealt with in accordance with Valued Lives' grievance, complaints and disputes policy.

External complaints by clients or stakeholders made against a staff member or volunteer will be managed by the appropriate Manager who will:

- notify the staff member or volunteer of the complaint and its nature
- investigate the complaint and provide the staff member or volunteer 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 or volunteer arising from a complaint will be taken in accordance with the procedures contained in Valued Lives' disciplinary procedures.

Complaints involving an Executive Manager, will be managed by the Board.

#### 4.7. Complaints involving organisation members of the Board

Complaints made against a Board member will be referred to the Chairperson and CEO. The Chairperson and CEO 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 Chairperson or CEO is the subject of a complaint, the complaint will be referred as appropriate.

If the matter remains unresolved, the Chairperson or CEO, will raise the matter at the next Board meeting. Depending on the seriousness of the complaint, the Board may:

- deal with the matter at its meeting or
- refer the matter to the [process outlined in the organisation's constitution]

### 4.8. Cooperation in external investigations

If any person makes a complaint about Valued to an external body (including police, Ombudsman) the Complaints Officer will be responsible for liaising with the body responsible for investigating the issue. Valued Lives will fully cooperate in any investigation which may take place, this includes participating in early resolution, conciliation, and/or reporting to the body about resolution and corrective actions if required.

### 4.9. Record keeping

A register of complaints and appeals will be kept in Brevity for a minimum of seven years after the complaint has been made. The register will be maintained by appropriate staff 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 on Brevity, attached to the record.

The complaints records and files will be confidential, and access is restricted to administrative staff and assigned user roles.

A statistical summary of complaints and appeals will also be available in Brevity. The Operational Manager will be responsible for preparing a report on complaints and feedback to be provided at each Board meeting.

Results from this report will be reviewed by the Board 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

### 4.10. Continuous improvement of the complaints management system

The complaints management system will be reviewed and evaluated every 2 years. This will include:

- review of all complaint and feedback policies and procedures



- client 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

## 5. References

### Valued Lives Documentation

Complaints and Grievances for Service Users Policy

Complaints and Grievances for Service Users Policy Annexure

Employee and Volunteer Grievance and Dispute Resolution

Grievance Policy

### NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission

[Effective Complaint Handling Guidelines for NDIS Providers](#)