

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Policy

Carers NSW recognises the important role of an effective complaints management process in providing high quality person centred customer service. Carers NSW acknowledges their accountability for decisions and actions, with the complaints management process designed to ensure responses in a timely and appropriate manner to complaints. The complaints management process plays an important role in identifying problems and providing information to improve business processes.

Carers NSW Complaints Policy has been developed in accordance with the principles outlined in *AS ISO10002:2014*, the *NSW Ombudsman Complaint Handling Toolkit for Community Services*, *National Disability Insurance Scheme Complaints Management and Resolution Rules 2018* and the *Aged Care Complaints Commissioner*. All of these sources provide the guidelines for formal and informal complaints resolution and provide information on external review for unresolved complaints.

Carers NSW maintains accreditation and quality service provision against the Quality Improvement Council Health and Community Care Standards and the NSW Disability Services Standards (DSS).

Our Commitment

Carers NSW Board of Directors, CEO and Management are committed to:

- promoting and supporting an effective complaints process that is receptive to service user and service provider complaints that encourages and facilitates feedback
- developing and implementing strategies which provide opportunities for clients to provide feedback through targeted questions in evaluations, surveys, newsletters etc. to inform complaint policy development and implementation
- providing a range of opportunities for input into how complaint handling policies and processes are developed and implemented at the local level
- providing feedback and reporting outcomes of complaints to clients, their families, carers and advocates
- developing a culture that respects people's right to complain about any aspect of the organisation's operations
- ensuring that appropriate resources are allocated to manage the complaints process including adequate employee training
- determining and implementing remedies through the complaints management process
- documenting complaints and reporting on the operation of the complaints management process
- utilising information gathered through the complaints management process to review and improve our internal business processes.

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Complaints Management Process

Carers NSW complaints management process is structured to ensure there is a fair and detailed consideration of complaints that will result in a satisfactory resolution for the complainant. It provides for internal review of the complaint as well as an external and independent review where necessary.

1. Frontline Complaints Function

Empower all Carers NSW employees to resolve less serious complaints at the outset quickly and efficiently.

Involves

- Complaints registration
- Attempted resolution of the complaint
- Refer higher level complaints directly to the next stage as required

2. Internal Complaints Review

Undertaken by the designated Complaints Advisor to resolve complaints when a review of the frontline decision is requested or the matter is unsuitable for frontline review.

Involves

- Coordinating the internal complaint resolution process
- Providing timely and consistent responses to the complainant
- Resolution of the complaint
- Feedback and reporting of the outcome to the client and their families, carers or advocates

3. Independent External Review

When complaints remain unresolved after internal review the complainant will be advised of their external review rights. Depending on the circumstances, service users can approach a number of external review organisations and tribunals.

Involves

- Referring complainants to the NSW Ombudsman (the independent and impartial overseer of community services in NSW) **or** the NDIS Quality & Safeguard Commission, (for complaints about NDIS Service Provision) **or** the Aged Care Commission, (for complaints about Aged Care Services) **or** other appropriate external agencies.
- Responding to enquiries from the Ombudsman or other agencies in a thorough, prompt and consistent manner, addressing all requests for information.

Carers NSW may also identify that a complaint should be referred to an external agency for review.

Roles and Responsibilities

Employees - All Carers NSW employees are responsible for providing high quality services to service users and service providers and play an integral role in the frontline complaints handling process. Employees will work with the Executive Manager, Executive Management team and Coordinators where appropriate, to find a satisfactory resolution to all complaints.

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Employees have the authority to address less serious complaints as they are received, quickly and efficiently. This would include complaints such as incorrect address, errors in records, lack of response to correspondence or telephone calls.

Complaints Advisor - is responsible for coordinating the internal complaint resolution process when a less serious complaint has not been satisfactorily resolved through the frontline complaints handling process or the complaint is of a more serious nature. The Complaints Advisor is responsible for providing feedback and reporting the outcome to the complainant, their families, carers or advocates. The Complaints Advisor is also responsible for the maintenance and monitoring of the Complaints Management Record System.

Managers and Coordinators - are involved in frontline complaints resolution as well as assisting the Complaints Advisor to investigate and resolve complaints. Managers also play an important role in identifying and recommending improved business processes to enhance service provision to service users and service providers.

Executive Managers – are responsible in consultation with the CEO for the management and resolution of complaints of a serious nature.

CEO - is responsible for overseeing the appeals process. On receipt of a written appeal from the complainant, the CEO will investigate all aspects of the complaints handling process with the view to resolving the complaint satisfactorily. The CEO will advise the complainant in writing of any actions or decisions made.

The CEO is also responsible for complaint resolution where it is identified the complaint is against the Complaints Advisor, or the complaints advisor is compromised in undertaking the complaints handling procedure.

Complaints Procedure

The following procedure must be adhered to for every complaint received:

1. Request the complainant to complete the *Complaints Form*, which must be made available to the complainant. The form can be accessed on the website at www.carersnsw.org.au/about-us/contact-us/complaint/.
2. If the complaint is received by telephone the employee will commence recording the complaint on the *Complaints Register*, ensuring all details are completed and data is updated to reflect the current status of the complaint.
3. Assistance can be provided to complete the form, including the provision of a translating and interpreting service through the Translation and Interpreting Service (TIS) on 13 14 50, or the National Relay Service on 1300 555 727.
4. Advise the complainant of their right to access an advocate and that assistance can be provided to access advocacy services if required.
5. Advise the complainant of their right to nominate the Carers NSW employee they wish to have as their contact regarding the complaint.
6. Review all written responses for consistency, accuracy and completeness.
7. Take the necessary steps to rectify the complaint, communicating and working with the appropriate Carers NSW employee to find a satisfactory solution.
8. Additional information may be sought from the complainant during the complaint resolution process.

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9. Where applicable, notify the complainant in writing if the matter is resolved.
10. Update the Complaints Register to record the action that has been taken to resolve the complaint and any corrective action that is necessary to finalise the resolution of the complaint and to avoid further similar complaints.
11. Where, after initial assessment the complaint is found to be unsuitable for frontline review the complaint should be forwarded to the Complaints Advisor, or if of a serious nature to the appropriate Executive Manager for further investigation. The Complaints Advisor and/or the Executive Manager are to utilise the *Complaints Investigation Template* to ensure a consistent and documented approach is taken to adequately resolve the complaint.
12. Where the complainant requests a review of the initial response, the complaint should be forwarded to the Complaints Advisor for further action.
13. The Complaints Advisor, Coordinator or Executive Manager will provide timely and consistent updates of the complaints resolution process to the complainant, the CEO and to Carers NSW employees who are involved.
14. Report the outcome of the complaint to the complainant, their families, carers or advocates.
15. Report the outcome of the complaint to Carers NSW Executive Management and any relevant employee making recommendations for system enhancements that may prevent complaints of a similar nature in the future.
16. If the complainant requests a review of the complaints handling process or appeals the decision, the Complaints Advisor will advise the complainant to appeal in writing to the CEO of Carers NSW.

Note

- If the complaint is against the Complaints Advisor, the complainant should be referred directly to the CEO who will be responsible for undertaking the complaints handling procedure.
- If the complaint is of a legal or criminal nature, the Complaints Advisor should inform the CEO of the complaint. The CEO will then notify the President of the Board and the matter will be referred on to the appropriate authorities.

Response Timeframes and Communication

Carers NSW is committed to responding quickly and courteously to complaints from service users and service providers and to making it easy to lodge a complaint.

- The Complaints Register is accessible to all Carers NSW employees where all complaints are recorded and monitored
- A copy of the Complaints Policy and the Complaints Form that can be lodged electronically are on the website
- Assistance can be provided to people wishing to make a complaint including access to a translating and interpreting service.

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The following table outlines the response times for each type of complaint.

Nature of Complaint	Referred to	Initial Verbal Contact	Resolution
Lower level/less serious complaints	Frontline employee	Immediately	2 working days
Referred complaint from frontline employee	Complaints Advisor	Within 2 working days	10 working days
Higher level/more serious complaints	Complaints Advisor	Within 2 working days	10 working days
Complaints Appealed	CEO	Within 5 working days	15 working days
Unresolved Complaints	NSW Ombudsman (for state funded programs), NDIS Quality & Safeguard Commission (for NDIS Service Provision), Aged Care Commission (for Aged Care Services), or other External Authorities		

Objectivity and Fairness

Carers NSW is committed to responding to complaints objectively and fairly.

- All complaints are recorded in our Complaints Register and are objectively evaluated to ensure fairness and compliance with all relevant legislative requirements
- The Complaints Advisor will act in an impartial and unbiased manner and if it is deemed that the Complaints Advisor has a personal interest or involvement, the complaint will be referred to the CEO.
- All complaints are treated confidentially
- The lodgement of a complaint will not compromise the complainant's ability to access services provided by Carers NSW.

Resources and Training

To support an effective complaints management process, training is undertaken during the induction process to ensure awareness of the Complaints Policy and procedure to be followed, which is available to all employees on the Business Management System in SharePoint.

Carers NSW has a dedicated Complaints Advisor to manage the internal review process.

The *Complaints Register* records and tracks complaints to ensure accuracy and quick response times and is also used as a reporting tool to analyse complaint trends and assess business practices.

Business Improvement

Carers NSW regards the complaints management process as an important component of the review of business practices and is committed to learning and improving as a result of complaints. The effectiveness of the complaints process is monitored and reported to the CEO and Executive Management on a regular basis and the information is utilised to increase the effectiveness of overall business operations.

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External Review

Carers NSW acknowledges that its decisions and actions in the complaints handling process can have a significant impact on individuals and attempts to resolve all complaints in a fair manner. Carers NSW also recognises the right to appeal all decisions and undertake to advise complainants of their rights to review by an external independent agency. Contact details for the NSW Ombudsman, NDIS Quality & Safeguard Commission, Aged Care Commission or other external authorities will be provided on request.

References

- [AS ISO10002:2014 - Customer satisfaction, Guidelines for complaints handling in organisations](#)
- [Complaints Form](#)
- Complaints Investigation Template
- Complaints Register
- [NSW Ombudsman](#)
- [NDIS Quality & Safeguard Commission](#)
- National Disability Insurance Scheme Complaints Management and Resolution Rules 2018
- Aged Care Commission

Review

This policy is to be reviewed every two years, or as required.