POLICY AND PROCEDURE

CATEGORY: **ALL SERVICES (Residential Services also refer to feedback and requests policy and procedure)**

TOPIC: **COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT AND RESOLUTION**

POLICY

This policy provides guidance to staff and people who wish to make a complaint on the key principles and concepts of the South Burnett CTC Inc (CTC) complaint management process.

This policy applies to all staff (paid, work experience and volunteer), contractors and our governing body, receiving or managing complaints from the public and clients made to or about us, regarding our products, services and staff, or our complaint handling process.

CTC is committed to receiving feedback and complaints about our services, systems, practices, procedures, products and complaint handling.

Any concerns raised in feedback or complaints will be dealt with within a reasonable time frame. All complaints received by CTC will be processed under natural justice and rights-based principles.

People who make a complaint are generally seeking one or more of the following outcomes:

Acknowledgement. Making a complaint can be difficult for people. It is important that people feel that their concerns have been understood and that the impact on them is recognised. Acknowledgment can include:

- Genuinely listening to the person without interrupting
- Empathising
- Making sure the person feels comfortable talking to you, and being aware of whether you are feeling defensive and how this may be perceived
- Acknowledging how the situation has affected the person
- Rectifying by asking the person what a good outcome would look like for them, ensuring commitments aren't made that can't be fulfilled.

Answers. People want to know why something has or has not happened, or why a decision was made. People need to understand what has happened in order to better understand how they can move on to resolving their concern. Answers should include a clear explanation that is relevant to the concern raised but ONLY if you know the facts.

Actions. If a complaint can be satisfactorily resolved at first point of contact, send a case note to the Service Manager and the Human Resources Team for recording on the CTC Central Complaints Register.

People making complaints will be:

- Provided with information about our complaint handling process and how to access it
- Listened to, treated with respect by staff and actively involved in the complaint process where possible and appropriate,
- Provided with an outcome of the complaint where possible and appropriate, and
- Not be adversely affected or have service discontinued or reduced as a result of making a complaint.

CTC has a positive complaints culture and views complaints as a positive avenue for staff and organisational development. The receipt of complaints from clients or community members is viewed as a demonstration of trust in the organisation and the work we do and encourages people to advocate for themselves and/or clients of our services.

CTC fosters an organisational culture that values and learns from complaints to allow us to continually improve our services.

This document will be available externally on the CTC website and internally on the staff intranet. Every client and where appropriate, their immediate support network (eg. their family/carer/guardian/decision maker or substituted or informal decision maker/advocate etc.) will be provided information on how to make a complaint/the process in a form of communication appropriate to meet their needs and abilities.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Management Team

Undertake reviews of complaints raised and actions undertaken across each Service/the organisation and also identify and address any systemic issues by reflecting on:

- What information did complainants provide that enables us to identify and improve the relevant Service, policy and procedure or the organisation as a whole?
- What was the experience for the people who made a complaint, or for any affected person? Were the issues resolved for them?
- How effectively did we communicate with people making complaints or with any affected person, staff member or other stakeholder?
- Did people using our service (and if appropriate, people in their immediate support network) require more or improved information about their rights and the complaints process? Do they feel more comfortable about speaking up in the future?
- Does anything need to change in our complaints handling system or approach to dealing with complaints?
- Do staff require further resources or training?
- Did the handling of complaints reflect our stated values and expectations for complaint handling or were any complaints perceived as something negative that needed to be dealt with as quickly as possible?

Service Manager or Team Leader (as delegated by the Service Manager)

- Manage complaints that can't be dealt with immediately and appropriately by frontline staff at the point of contact.
- Assess complaints to determine the appropriate, proportionate process to follow.
- Ask the person making the complaint (as well as any other person affected) how they would like to be communicated with.
- Ensure complaints are referred or notified to other bodies if required under mandatory reporting, by law or under contractual requirements.
- Ensure appropriate support and assistance is provided to the person making a complaint, and any affected person, including how to contact other agencies
- Liaise with the Human Resources Team where a complaint is of a complex nature and requires significant investigation and/or a Risk Assessment to identify and control any risks to the safety, health and wellbeing of any parties.
- Where a complainant has requested to be informed of our resolution of their complaint, consider the confidentiality rights of any staff member and the legal obligations and confidentiality rights of the organisation.
- If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint, offer support to elevate their complaint to an appropriate external body.

Team Leader/Frontline Staff Member

- Discuss the Procedure for Responding to a Complaint at staff induction.
- Discuss the opportunity to provide feedback with all new clients during the intake process (e.g. Intake Form or Disability Services Welcome Pack).

Human Resources

- Make the most current version of this policy and procedure available to staff via the CTC staff intranet and to clients and the public via the CTC website.

- Display Complaints Posters and lockable Feedback Boxes prominently in the reception area of all sites.
- Monitor and manage the workflow for complaints received (as per flow chart).
- Assist Service Managers with complex complaints that require significant investigation or risk assessment or recommend and coordinate the appointment of an external person or body to investigate.
- Manage complaints about the CEO in consultation with the Board of Governance.
- Record complaint information relating to a staff member on their staff file.
- Ensure new staff and volunteers/student placements are provided with a copy of this policy and procedure.
- Monitor staff understanding and compliance with the CTC Complaints System and schedule refresher training where it is indicated this is required.
- Ensure all complaints are recorded on CTC's central complaints register and are provided to the Management Team and Board of Governance for review on a monthly basis.

All Staff

- Understand and comply with the CTC Complaints System after induction.
- Understand and comply with any relevant mandatory reporting or other obligation under Australian law.
- Respect the culture and the privacy and confidentiality rights of people making a complaint and any persons affected by the issues raised in a complaint.
- Respectfully acknowledge a complaint without becoming upset or defensive.
- Follow the steps in the Procedure for Responding to a Complaint

PROCEDURE FOR RESPONDING TO A COMPLAINT

Any staff member may receive details of a complaint at any time. Staff receiving a complaint will collect the basic details of the complaint and details of the complainant and pass on to a Team Leader, Service Manager or the Human Resources Team for follow up. The staff member receiving the complaint will ensure that the complainant feels that they have been listened to and their opinion valued. The CTC Complaints Form may be used by the receiving staff member to ensure required information is received.

1. Acknowledgement

CTC will endeavour to acknowledge receipt of each complaint promptly. When appropriate we may offer an explanation or apology.

2. Assess

After acknowledging receipt of the complaint, we will confirm whether the issue/s raised in the complaint is/are within our control. We will also consider the outcome/s sought by the person making a complaint and, where there is more than one issue raised, determine whether each issue needs to be separately addressed.

When determining how a complaint will be managed, we will consider:

- How serious, complicated or urgent the complaint is
- Whether the complaint raises concerns about people's health and safety
- How the person making the complaint is being affected
- The risks involved if resolution of the complaint is delayed, and
- Whether a resolution requires the involvement of other organisations.

If the complainant is unable to provide specific information regarding the issue they are concerned about, the complaints management process may not progress.

3. Investigation

After assessing the complaint, we will consider how to manage it. We may:

- Give the person making a complaint information or an explanation
- Gather information about the issue, person or area that the complaint is about, or
- Investigate the claims made in the complaint.

If the investigation reveals that the allegations outlined in a complaint are substantiated, depending on the nature and seriousness of the issue, CTC may seek additional assistance in resolving the complaint/be transparent about the details of the complaint by liaising with:-

- A Peak Body or external advisor
- The CTC Board of Governance
- The relevant funding body
- Any other agency where there is a legal or contractual requirement to do so

4. Communicate

We aim to complete complaint processes within 2 weeks and will endeavour to notify affected parties if there is a delay.

5. Finalise the complaint and document and analyse data

Upon finalisation of the complaint, we will communicate the outcome of the complaint using the most appropriate medium where the complainant has requested an outcome. Which actions we decide to take will be tailored to each case and consider any statutory requirements.

We will keep records about:

- The process used to manage the complaint
- The outcome/s of the complaint (including whether it or any aspect of it was substantiated, any recommendations made to address problems identified and any decisions made on those recommendations), and
- Any outstanding actions to be followed up, including analysing any underlying or root causes.

We will ensure that outcomes are properly implemented, monitored, and reviewed at the Managers Meeting and Board of Governance Meeting.

Identified opportunities for continuous improvement will be recorded on the Continuous Improvement Register and periodically reviewed.

PROCEDURE – WHERE A COMPLAINT IS IN RELATION TO A STAFF MEMBER

Complaints by a staff member about another staff member will be processed under the Staff Grievance Policy and Procedure.

If a complaint is assessed to be of a serious nature the accused staff member may be suspended with pay while the complaint is being investigated.

The Human Resources team will inform the staff member of the outcome of the complaint verbally and in writing when the investigation has been completed. Documentation in relation to the complaint will be placed on the relevant staff member's file.

Employers do not have an unfettered right to regulate the out of hours conduct of staff. If a complaint is in relation to behaviour outside of work hours (while not in uniform or not representing CTC), CTC's obligation/legal responsibility to investigate the complaint may be limited, unless the actions directly impact on the reputation of CTC, or there is substantiated evidence of illegal activity.

EXTERNAL AVENUES FOR COMPLAINTS

If a client would like to complaint to any organisation that provides funding to CTC they may do so via the following avenues:

- Domestic Violence Services - https://www.justice.qld.gov.au/about-us/contact/compliments-complaints
- Child, Family, Safe Haven or Foster Care Services - https://www.dcssds.qld.gov.au/contact-us/compliments-complaints
- Housing Services - https://www.housing.qld.gov.au/contact/complaints-compliments
- Money Management and Emergency Relief Services –
- Disability Services
    - NDIS Commission - https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au/contact-us/makeacomplaint
    - Australian Disability Enterprise (ADE) - https://www.jobaccess.gov.au/complaints/crrs

Disability Services Advocacy and Support

Clients may access an advocacy agency if they wish to gain support to interact with our services. Available advocacy agencies include but are not limited to:

- National Disability Advocacy Program (NDAP) - https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/disability-and-carers/program-services/for-people-with-disability/national-disability-advocacy-program-ndap
- TASC Social Justice Advocate – Ph: (07) 4616 9700/ https://www.tascnational.org.au/
- For other regional and specialist advocacy services visit - http://www.qld.gov.au/disability/legal-and-rights/advocacy

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