

## **P09.9 Service User and Stakeholder Feedback, Complaints and Appeals**

### **1 What You Need To Know**

Twenty10 incorporating GLCS NSW (Twenty10) actively seeks the input of service users and stakeholders and encourages them to provide feedback, both positive and negative, as part of a culture of ongoing review and improvement of its services and activities and promoting the right of service users to be heard. The organisation will:

- take a person-centred approach to service delivery rather than a one-size fits all approach, seeking to meet the needs of individual service users wherever possible and practical;
- foster a service culture that encourages open and honest communication with service users and stakeholders;
- meet best practice standards in child safety and protection;
- ensure that children and young people are protected from abuse or neglect, and that any incidents of harm are promptly addressed and investigated;
- inform service users about the standard of service they can expect;
- inform service users, including children and young people about their rights and responsibilities;
- protect and uphold the right of service users and stakeholders to provide feedback and to make complaints about service delivery;
- encourage and make it easy for people to provide feedback or make a complaint through a range of methods;
- recognise and reward good complaints handling by staff and volunteers;
- clearly display feedback and complaints processes in client spaces and online, including how to escalate a complaint if they are dissatisfied with the complaints process;
- provide anonymity to people providing feedback and complaints if desirable;
- treat all parties to a complaint with respect and privacy;
- treat all complaints and parties to a complaint with integrity, fairness and objectivity;
- record and analyse information arising from complaints and use it to improve services;
- follow up on complaints in a timely and efficient manner.

### **2 Procedures**

#### **3.1 Service User and Stakeholder Feedback**

##### **3.1.1 Encouraging feedback**

Staff are responsible for ensuring that service users are informed of what they can expect from the service and how they may provide feedback. All staff, volunteers, and students must be familiar with the feedback process and accept any feedback given to them.

Information on feedback, complaints and grievances is provided on the website and will be provided by staff, volunteers and students to service users verbally during intake for most programs. Visual reminders of feedback and complaints processes will be displayed in all client spaces (including offsite groups).

All staff, students and volunteers working with service users and stakeholders are responsible for ensuring they are familiar with the procedures for providing feedback, and for:

- accepting and reporting informal feedback
- reminding service users and stakeholders of the various avenues for feedback, and assisting them with the process
- offering service users an opportunity to provide formal feedback or complaints when appropriate

### **3.1.2 Initiating and collecting service user and stakeholder feedback**

Feedback may be provided by individual service users and stakeholders on their initiative or in response to requests from the organisation.

Individual service users and stakeholders may provide feedback by:

- Verbally telling a staff member, volunteer, or student placement
- participating in a program review
- completing an evaluation form or online survey
- leaving feedback on paper forms in a suggestion box
- sending a letter by post, fax or email
- completing a form on the website
- contacting Twenty10 via social media platforms, SMS or phone

Feedback about a particular service or program is initially reviewed by the staff member responsible for that program. All feedback must be reported to the Management Team, who will track it through [R10 Register of feedback](#).

The organisation will seek feedback from service users and stakeholders through annual surveys and consultations.

## **3.2 Service User and Stakeholder Complaints**

### **3.2.1 Supporting service users and stakeholders to make a complaint**

All staff and volunteers who induct service users are responsible for ensuring that service users are informed of what they can expect from the service, how they may provide feedback or make a complaint and where to find that information. Information on feedback, complaints and appeals are provided on the website and will be provided by staff and volunteers to service users verbally during intake for most programs. Staff will check with children and young people that they understand how to make a complaint. Visual reminders of feedback and complaints processes will be displayed in all client spaces.

Individual service users and stakeholders may make a complaint by:

- sending a letter by post, fax or email;
- Getting in touch by phone, SMS, social media platforms;
- speaking directly to a staff member or volunteer who will transcribe the complaint.

All staff and volunteers working with service users and stakeholders are responsible for ensuring they are familiar with the procedures for providing feedback and making a complaint.

### **3.2.2 Receiving and Handling Complaints**

Twenty10 encourages service users to provide feedback and make complaints.

All parties in a complaint, including service users, staff and volunteers, are entitled to be treated with respect and courtesy at all times. Where a service user involved in a complaint behaves in a threatening, rude or harassing manner toward staff or volunteers, the Co-Executive Director(s) will

become involved and may decline to further consider the complaint and if deemed appropriate, may take further action under P09.6 Service user rights and responsibilities.

Services users or stakeholders making a verbal complaint will be encouraged to submit a complaint in writing to the manager of the relevant program. The volunteer or staff member will offer to document the complaint for the service user wherever possible.

Overall management and monitoring of complaints handling is done within a particular program or service area by the Manager responsible for that program. Complaints will be handled by staff in a respectful, effective and timely manner. Complaints will be assessed and resolved promptly, wherever possible within 7 working days. All stakeholders will be kept up-to-date with the progress if there is a delay.

In handling and resolving complaints, staff will:

- Aim to sensitively and objectively understand the complaint;
- Investigate the circumstances involved by gathering relevant evidence using relevant supporting documents and interviews with relevant persons;
- Ensure all stakeholders know what to expect during the complaint handling process;
- Ensure all parties have equal opportunity to participate in the process;
- Treat all parties in a respectful manner;
- Provide reasons for decisions made;
- Ensure the person or persons making the complaint will not be disadvantaged through lodging a complaint;
- Maintain the privacy and confidentiality of all stakeholders where practical and appropriate;
- Keep accurate records and forward them to the Executive Director to be kept in a file separate to personnel files, including recording of reasons for all significant decisions;
- Ensure opportunities for further concerns are minimised;
- Take preventative and corrective action to eliminate the causes of complaints and to improve the quality of Twenty10 incorporating GLCS NSW's policies, procedures and services.

### **3.2.3 Child Safety and Mandatory Reporting**

Twenty10 has a legal and ethical duty of care to protect children and young people from abuse (sexual assault, physical, emotional, financial) and neglect and ensure any incidents of suspected child abuse are dealt with in a prompt and appropriate manner.

All complaints/reports of risk of harm, must be handled in accordance with [P09.25 Safeguarding Children and Young People] and reported to the Child Protection Officer (or Co-executive Director(s) immediately.

*For more information see [P09.25 Safeguarding Children and Young People]*

### **3.2.4 Record Keeping**

Accurate written records must be kept of all communications that form part of the complaint process. This includes notes taken of conversations between the parties which relate to management of the complaint and all decisions made in relation to the complaint. All records must be marked "Confidential".

Only the people who are directly involved in the complaint, or help to resolve it, are to have access to information about the complaint.

All documentation of complaints managed under this Policy which relate to a staff member or volunteer's performance will be held by Executive Director or Co-Chairs. The Volunteer and Community Education Officer would also receive a copy if related to a volunteer's performance).

### 3.2.5 Resolution

The time limit set out in these procedures must be complied with if reasonably practicable. In exceptional circumstances, where it is not possible for an action to be completed within the time limit, steps must be taken to ensure that the process is completed within a reasonable time. Under such circumstances the complainant will be kept informed of the progress.

Outcomes, processes and other areas for improvement are used to inform service planning and strategies are put in place to address any areas requiring change at an individual or organisational level.

### 3.3 Receiving, Handling and Resolving Appeals

In some instances, achieving a suitable resolution to a complaint that is agreeable to all stakeholders may not be possible.

If resolution of the complaint is not achieved and the stakeholders wish to proceed, then it is escalated to an “appeal” and handed on from the Manager to the Executive Director. If the complaint is regarding the Executive Director, then it is handed on to the Co-Chairs of the Board of Governance. In instances where the appeal may include allegations of misconduct by staff or volunteers, refer to [P5.10 Performance management].

Expectations for the appeals management process by the Co-Executive Director(s) and all stakeholders are the same as in section 3.2.

Accurate written records must be kept of all communications that form part of the appeals process. This includes notes taken of conversations between the parties which relate to management of the appeal and all decisions made in relation to it. All records must be marked “Confidential”.

All documentation of appeals managed under this Policy which relate to an employee’s performance will be held by the Executive Directors or Co-Chairs.

If a satisfactory resolution to the appeal is not found, the complainant may take their complaint to the Ombudsman.

### 3.4 Using feedback, complaints and appeals for service improvement

The Co-Executive Director(s) will be responsible for maintaining and managing feedback for the organisation and reporting this to the Management Team and Board.

Results from service user and stakeholder feedback, complaints and appeals (where appropriate) will be reviewed by the Management Team and used to:

- inform service planning by including a review of service user and stakeholder feedback in all service planning, monitoring and evaluation activities;
- inform decision making by including a report on service user and stakeholder feedback as a standard item on staff and management meeting agendas;
- Inform staff and volunteer training and development and potentially performance management.

## 4 Frequently Asked Questions

### What happens after I make a complaint?

Wherever possible you will receive a response within 7 working days. You will be notified if there is any delay in the processing of your complaint.

### What if I’m not happy with how my complaint is handled?

You have the right to escalate the complaint to an appeal, which is handled by the Executive Director (or the Co-chairs of the board if the complaint is regarding the Executive Director). If you are not happy with that result of the appeal, you would be able to contact the Commonwealth Ombudsman.

**Q: Why might someone's feedback not be acted upon?**

A: Certain ideas from service users and stakeholders may not be feasible for our organisation to undertake. This could be due to lack of resources, incompatibility with the values and purpose of the organisation, or duplication of effort with another service. It is also possible that a person's feedback will be acted upon in a way that is not immediately visible to them.

**Q: What happens when someone's feedback is reactive, unnecessarily harsh, personal, or untrue?**

A: First and foremost, the organisation will determine if there is a core truth within the feedback. A member of the Management Team will organise a time to speak with the complainant in a format and time that works for them to get a better understanding of what the problem is. For more information, refer to [P09.9 Managing complaints].

## 5 Where to Go For Help

For more information on this Policy, speak with the Co-Executive Director(s) or your manager.

## 6 Definitions

**Appeal** - An Appeal is a matter to be investigated according to formal appeal processes. This includes complaints which are not able to be resolved through informal processes or mediation, and matters relating to allegations of misconduct where disciplinary action against a worker may be an outcome of the investigation.

**Child/Children:** Every human being below the age of sixteen years (NSW Children & Young Persons Act 1998 No. 157).

**Child abuse:** Child abuse and neglect refers to any non-accidental behaviour by parents, caregivers, other adults or older adolescents that is outside the norms of conduct and entails a substantial risk of causing physical or emotional harm to a child or young person. Such behaviours may be intentional or unintentional and can include acts of omission (i.e. neglect) and commission (i.e. abuse). Child abuse can be categorised as physical, sexual, emotional, neglect and exposure to family violence (Child Family Community Australia)

**Complaint** - A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction made to an organisation related to its services or service quality, decisions, policies, procedures, fees, staff or volunteers, other service users or the complaint handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected. *(Adapted from Australian Standard: Customer Satisfaction – guidelines for complaints handling in organisations (AS ISO 10002/2006))*

**Feedback** - Feedback is information about reactions to a service, a person's performance of a task, the programs offered and the organisation generally which is used as a basis for improvement. Feedback from service user or stakeholder is usually put in writing or told to staff or volunteers, although it may also have been overheard or observed.

**Mandatory Reporting:** Mandatory reporting is the legislative requirement for selected classes of people (healthcare, welfare, education, children’s services, residential services and law enforcement) to report suspected child abuse and neglect to government authorities.<sup>1</sup>

**Ombudsman** - An ombudsman is an independent person who can investigate and resolve disputes between people and government. It is a free service.

**Service users:** People who use the organisation’s services and programs. Examples include groups participants, people living in housing, QLife callers and education customers.

**Stakeholders:** People or organisations with an interest in the outcome of an action, project, or program. Examples include funding bodies, service users and staff.

**Working days** - A reference to days means ‘week days’ or the days between Monday to Friday, unless otherwise stated. While Twenty10 delivers services 365 days of the year, the office is only open Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays or shut down periods).

**Young Person:** Generally, at Twenty10 a person between 12 and 25 years but in the context of this policy, a person who is aged 16 years or above but who is under the age of 18 years (NSW Children & Young Persons Act 1998 No. 157)

## 7 Publication and distribution of information

Communication and Development Officer will upload this document to Google Drive.

The Client Services Manager will be responsible for the distribution of service information to service users via the website and posters in client spaces.

### DOCUMENTATION

Documents related to this policy	
Related policies	P09.8 Service User and Stakeholder Feedback P09.6 Service user rights and responsibilities. P09.25 Safeguarding Children and Young People. P05.10 Performance management P05.6 Professional ethics and conduct
Forms, record keeping or other organisational documents	<a href="#">ED’s register of complaints</a>

Roles referred to this policy
Co-Executive Directors Client Services Manager Co-Chairs

<sup>1</sup> Childstory Reporter, “What Is Mandatory Reporting” (2018).  
<https://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/article/What-is-Mandatory-Reporting>, cited 20/05/2019.

Board of Directors  
Child Protection Officer

**Policy context:** This policy relates to

Standards or other external requirements	NSW Government's Commitments to Effective Complaint Handling
Legislation or other requirements	<p>Community Services (Complaints, Reviews and Monitoring) Act 1993 (CS-CRAMA)</p> <p>The Disability Inclusion Act 2014</p> <p>The <i>Anti-Discrimination Act 1977</i> (NSW)</p> <p>The <i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992</i> (Cth)</p> <p>Australian Consumer Law (ACL) is a single, Australia-wide law that governs and protects fair trading practices, introduced on 1 January 2011.</p> <p>The Competition and Consumer Act The Competition and Consumer Act 2010 sets out terms for fair and competitive business trading - including returns, refunds and warranties - and defines consumer and business rights and responsibilities.</p>
Contractual obligations	

**Reviewing and approving this policy**

Frequency	Person responsible	Approval
Six months after initial release, then annually	Co-Executive Directors	Board Co-Chairs

**Policy review and version tracking**

Version	Date Approved	Approved by	Next Review Due
1.0	02/02/2018	Philip Busfield	02/02/2019
2.0	23/03/2021	Julie Catt	01/04/2022

3			
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