

February 2013

## Quality and Service Development Unit - Complaints team

The Department for Communities and Social Inclusion (DCSI), through the Funds Management directorate in Disability SA, aims to work collaboratively with funded non-government organisations to ensure quality services are provided to people with a disability, their families and carers.

In July 2012, Funds Management was restructured to bring together the existing disability sector and the SA HACC Program; resulting in the development of the **Quality and Service Development Unit**. The unit is made up of five teams, one of which is the Complaints team.

The **Complaints team** looks at complaints processes, as well as managing complaints and serious incidents related to funded non-government organisations. The team works closely with non-government organisations to address complaints and serious incidents, particularly:

- when client safety has been compromised;
- where systemic or cultural issues are impacting on the quality of services being provided; or
- when there are issues of non-compliance with the National Standards for Disability Services.

The Complaints team responds to matters raised as:

- formal complaints;
- serious incidents;
- care concern investigations; or
- complaints to the Minister.

In the first instance, anyone wanting to make a complaint will be encouraged to raise their concerns directly with the non-government service provider. Many complaints are the result of a lack of communication between the people involved. Individuals will be encouraged to offer the service provider a chance to address the issue, as this is often the easiest and quickest method of resolution. Most importantly, complaints are feedback about services and are an opportunity to make disability services safer and better for everyone.

If the person making the complaint does not feel comfortable raising their issue directly with the service provider, or the outcome is not satisfactory, individuals can contact the Complaints team for information and support, or to lodge a complaint.

## The role of the Complaints team

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The Complaints team has a role in managing complaints and serious incidents to ensure that services provided by DCSI funded non-government organisations are of a high quality, consistent with their contractual obligations. Complaint and incident data will also be collated, analysed and distributed across the sector for the purpose of supporting continuous improvement.

Complaints are managed through assessing the level of risk, seeking further information, liaising with the service provider involved, negotiating agreed outcomes and monitoring progress. This process will often involve engaging staff from Disability SA Service Coordination, to clarify the needs or immediate safety of the person with a disability and to identify what steps have been taken to try and resolve the matter.

In addition to the management of complaints and serious incidents, the Complaints team will also have a focus on:

- empowering people with a disability, their families, carers, advocates and service providers to effectively resolve complaints;
- helping build the capacity of service providers to effectively manage complaints at the point of service;
- working collaboratively with stakeholders to develop appropriate resources;
- promoting service improvement by analysing data and trends to identify systemic issues; and
- engaging with stakeholders to help influence and / or address systemic change.

## Communications

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The Complaints team is planning to distribute a quarterly bulletin highlighting the numbers and types of matters, the nature of the complaints or incidents and some analysis of any trends, therefore helping to promote the opportunity for service improvement. Individual providers and clients will not be identified. It is anticipated the first bulletin will cover complaints data for the Jan-March 2013 quarter.

It is intended that the report will help build the connection between complaints and quality improvement, so that we as a sector can learn from complaints data and what it tells us about opportunities for improvement. The bulletin will also contain information about a range of resources, sector wide policies and links to help inform and guide best practice in the sector.

## How to contact the Complaints team

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The Complaints team can be contacted through the DCSI Client Feedback system by:



**Telephone during business hours (9am-5pm):**  
Disability SA: 1300 786 117



[Complete the online form here and submit](#)



**Print off, complete and send in reply paid (no postage required) the:**  
[DCSI Client Feedback form](#) - Generic  
[DCSI Client Feedback form](#) - Easy Read  
[DCSI Client Feedback form](#) - Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander design



**Email:** [clientfeedback@dcsi.sa.gov.au](mailto:clientfeedback@dcsi.sa.gov.au)



**Letter addressed to:**  
DCSI Client Feedback  
GPO Box 292  
Adelaide SA 5001