

October 2013

## Complaints management: Information for providers

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 (NGOs) to ensure the provision of quality services to people with disability, their families and carers.

The Complaints Team, within the Funds Management directorate, works closely with service providers to address complaints, incidents and care concerns to help improve the safety and quality of disability services. The Complaints Team also aims to build the connection between complaints and quality improvement, so as a sector we can learn from incidents and complaints data and what it tells us about opportunities for improvement.

A complainant is usually seeking a specific resolution to an issue and will often raise their concerns directly with the service provider. The Complaints Team will encourage anyone wanting to make a complaint to raise their concerns directly with the service provider in the first instance, as many complaints can often be the result of a breakdown in 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.

### Complaint Resolution by a Service Provider

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Successful resolution of a complaint often involves four key things people seek when they make a complaint:

- *Acknowledgement* - their views are heard and the service recognises their concerns and how the issue has affected them.
- *Answers* - an explanation of what happened or information that may be needed to address the person's concerns.
- *Action* - agreement on steps to address the concern and improve services.
- *Apology* - for some people, a genuine apology may be all that is sought.

Resolving complaints almost always involves finding ways to improve communication. Some resources are attached to this document that may assist you to ensure the complaints service you provide is person centred, responsive and accessible.

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

### The Funds Management Complaints Team Process

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The Complaints Team in Funds Management handles matters related to funded NGO's with the aim of ensuring safe, high quality client services and that funded providers meet their contractual responsibilities.

The Complaints Team is involved with matters categorised as either:

- *a complaint* (raised with the Complaints Team by a complainant about a service)
- *an incident* (a serious event raised with the Complaints Team that has occurred in a service, raised either by a client, their families or carers, or the service provider or third party)
- *a care concern* (a serious allegation that must be raised with SAPOL and DCSI's Care Concern Investigations by the service provider)

### Complaints and Incidents

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In the case of complaints and incidents, the matter will be assessed by a Project Officer from the Complaints Team. The Project Officer may speak with a range of people including the client and/or the complainant, service provider, representatives from Disability SA Community Services or the Contracting and Sector Liaison Unit in Funds Management to gather information.

Once the Project Officer has assessed the matter the service provider will be advised of the need to provide a formal response. Written responses are to be provided to the Director, Funds Management within 14 days of the request. In some cases, we may seek documentation in addition to a response, such as a behaviour support plans or copies of relevant policies.

When the response is received from the service provider, the Complaints Team will then assess whether the response is reasonable and appropriate, whether the outcome the complainant is seeking has been achieved, or if a request for additional information is required. If there were serious or systemic issues identified, further action might be requested. For example, this may include the development of an agreed action plan to address the systemic issues.

### Care Concerns

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Serious matters are referred (either direct by the service provider, or through the Funds Management Complaints Team) to DCSI's Care Concern Investigations (CCI). CCI will assess the matter and determine if they will undertake an investigation. Where they (or SAPOL) undertake an investigation, the Funds Management Complaints Team will take no action in terms of managing the complaint/incident until those investigations have been completed. Once those investigations have been completed, outstanding matters requiring further action may be referred back to the

Funds Management for follow up to ensure that providers are meeting their contractual responsibilities.

### Contacting the Funds Management Complaints Team

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The Complaints team can be contacted 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

### What if the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome?

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If the complainant is still not happy with the outcome of their complaint, they may choose to initiate contact with the:

#### **SA Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner (HCSCC)**

08 8226 8666 or 1800 232 007 (outside metro SA only)

[www.hcsccl.sa.gov.au](http://www.hcsccl.sa.gov.au)

#### **SA Ombudsman**

08 8226 8699 or 1800 182 150 (outside metro SA only)

[www.ombudsman.sa.gov.au](http://www.ombudsman.sa.gov.au)