



Feedback and Complaints Policy

Policy Number:	4	Version:	3
Date of Approval:	24 March 2020	Review Date:	March 2022

Explorability Inc. (the Association) is a not-for-profit community organisation established to support people with disability, their families and carers.

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to ensure feedback, including a complaint, is managed in a prompt, fair, equitable and transparent way, and will be considered in relation to the ongoing service improvement.

The policy has been framed around natural justice principles and individuals' rights as they are specified in the Standards Australia Complaint Handling Standard AS 4269-1995, the Disability Services Act (1993) and Standard 4 of the National Standards for Disability Services (2013).

This policy applies to all the Association's services and activities. It does not apply to an employee grievance, which is covered by the Association's Policy and Procedure on Resolution of Employee Concerns.

Policy Statement

The Association strongly believes that feedback, including complaints, suggestions and compliments, are essential to ensuring effective and high quality service delivery and the continual improvement of services and systems.

It is the Association's policy to recognise, respect and encourage the rights of individuals, families and carers to provide feedback and raise complaints without fear of retribution.

Feedback and complaints are accepted verbally, in writing, by email, fax, or any other communication method. How the feedback or complaint is received will in no way influence the priority given to, or quality of, the response provided.

The Association is committed to managing feedback and complaints in a prompt, fair, equitable and transparent way, always with the goal of achieving positive outcomes.

Principles

- Individuals, families and carers have the right to provide feedback and raise complaints about the services they receive, and have these addressed in a supportive manner.
- Children have the right to provide feedback and raise complaints with service providers who listen carefully, consider a child's vulnerability, and avoid the use of adult 'complaint' language.
- The Association is committed to the process of managing feedback and complaints in an unbiased manner, encouraging good listening and communication in order to facilitate decision making based on logical proof of evidence, rather than on speculation or suspicion.
- The Association is committed to establishing a standard approach to feedback and complaints management, and ensuring feedback and complaints are recorded to enable review of individual cases, accumulated complaint information, trends, and risks.
- The Association is committed to ensuring trends, risks and accumulated complaint information is reviewed and used to inform continuous service improvement.
- The Association is committed to regularly seeking feedback outside of the formal feedback and complaints mechanism, through surveys, service reviews, formal client consultation meetings and informal feedback from individuals receiving a service.

Definitions

Advocacy:

Promoting, supporting and representing the rights and interests of an individual. An advocate may act, speak or respond on behalf of an individual.

Apology:

An expression of sympathy or regret, or of a general sense of benevolence or compassion, in connection with any matter whether or not the apology admits or implies an admission of fault in connection with the matter.

Complaint:

Any expression of dissatisfaction made to an organisation related to its service, or the complaints management process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.

Informal Complaint

- A simple straightforward complaint.
- A complaint that is not of significant threat to the individual's well being.
- Usually encountered in the course of daily living.
- A complaint that can usually be resolved in a short period of time by any member of the staff.

Formal Complaint

- A complaint that is complex.

- A complaint that may involve breach of the law.
- A complaint from a person not receiving support from the service.

Any complaint where the complainant is requesting further action from the Association is considered a formal complaint, regardless of severity of the complaint.

Serious Complaint

- Any complaint involving serious misconduct of staff, volunteers or others.
- Any complaint involving suspicion or allegation of physical, emotional or sexual abuse.
- Any complaint involving breach of duty of care.

Vexatious Complaint

A complaint made without sufficient grounds and/ or it has been made primarily to embarrass, annoy or place an unreasonable burden on the person it refers to.

Complainant:

An individual (including children), carer, family member, community organisation representative or volunteer.

A complainant may choose to remain anonymous.

Complaint Management:

Involves notification and acknowledgement, assessment, information collection, analysis and review, and appropriate action.

Compliments:

Any expression of satisfaction made to an organisation related to its service and/or staff performance.

Feedback:

An overarching term of all comments from individuals, carers, family members or community members. In this policy, it covers: suggestions, compliments and complaints.

Grievance:

A personal complaint or difficulty about a work related issue that affects a staff member and that he/she considers discriminatory, unfair or unjustified.

Incident: an event or circumstance, which could have or did lead to unintended or unnecessary harm to a person, and/or a complaint, loss or damage. An incident may or may not result in an injury.

Incident Management:

A systematic process for identifying, notifying, prioritising, investigating and managing the outcomes of an incident.

Investigation:

1. Evidence Focussed Investigation
Investigation directed at gathering and carefully documenting evidence that may later be considered in formal proceedings against one or more individuals or agencies.
2. Outcome Focussed Investigation
Investigation directed at quickly identifying and remedying problems uncovered by the complaint, including addressing the concerns of the complainant.

Personal advocate:

An informal support person such as a friend providing support and advocacy for an individual at their request.

Professional advocate:

A person employed by an agency to advocate for people by promoting, supporting and representing the rights and interests of an individual.

Resolution:

The outcome or solution to the complaint. A resolution may range from an apology, a change in how a service operates, to an external review of the complaint.

Retribution: Act of revenge for perceived wrong.

Severity Rating:

Rating that reflect the seriousness of a complaint. A complaint could escalate from one rating to the next depending on the facts and information gathered in the investigation.

5. Negligible – complaint has no impact or risk to service provision or the organisation.

4. Minor – complaint is able to be resolved at the frontline.

3. Moderate – complaint has issues that may require comprehensive assessment or investigation.

2. Major – complaint has significant issues or issues causing lasting detriment that requires investigation.

1. Extreme – issues include serious adverse events, long term damage or death and are those that require investigation.

Suggestion:

An idea that promotes thinking about how to improve a service.

Responsibility

The Explorability Board is responsible for:

- the final review and approval of this policy.

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for:

- Encouraging an environment where feedback and complaints are handled seriously and thoroughly.
- Ensuring an effective, fair, timely and transparent feedback and complaint management system is developed and in place for the Association.
- Ensuring appropriate resources are available and utilised for effective feedback and complaint management.
- Conducting a review on an annual basis of complaints by type, identify issues and provide recommended actions.
- Reporting on feedback and complaint trends to the Board on a regular basis.
- Providing half yearly reports to the Board of Directors to inform them of the nature of complaints received, action taken, emerging trends and strategies to address systemic issues identified from complaints received.
- Ensuring appropriate actions are implemented to resolve a complaint and prevent or minimise similar problems from occurring.
- Ensuring individual satisfaction of the feedback/complaints process.
- Promoting the Feedback and Complaints Policy and Procedure to staff and individuals, as well as demonstrating commitment to the on-going improvement of the complaint management system.
- Modelling a positive attitude towards resolving complaints and encouraging individuals and staff to feel confident about raising issues.
- Supporting staff if a complaint has been raised against them, giving them the opportunity to respond to the concerns raised by a complainant so their version of events is taken into account.
- Ensuring staff have skills in timely and effective management of complaints.
- Reviewing and evaluating the implementation and effectiveness of the feedback and complaint management system, and ensuring any recommendations for improvement progress in a timely manner.
- Maintaining the Feedback and Complaints Policy, its related procedures and associated documents.
- The overall management of all complaints related to the Association's services.

All employees are responsible for:

- Supporting the Association's commitment to the timely and fair resolution of complaints.
- Understanding complaints, compliments and suggestions are welcomed and are a valued opportunity to improve service.
- Understanding their role for receiving, responding to or forwarding complaints outlined in the Feedback and Complaints Policy and Procedure.
- Respecting the privacy and dignity of the complainant and ensuring the information about a complaint will only be shared on a need to know basis, both with the organisation and externally.
- Participating in review of the Feedback and Complaints Policy and Procedure and providing input on ways the process could be improved, including whether they feel adequate support is provided by management when complaints are made.

Review of this Policy

This policy will be reviewed on a two-yearly basis. However, if at any time the legislative, policy or funding environment is so altered that the policy is no longer appropriate in its current form, the policy shall be reviewed and amended accordingly.

Authorised by:

Name: Deane Criddle
Title: Chair, Board of Directors
Date: 24 March 2020
Review date: March 2022