

	<h2 style="color: #76b82a;">Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy</h2>
Version:	Final
Date:	March 2019
Approved by:	WayAhead Board March 2019
Review date:	March 2021
Scope:	<p>This policy applies to all staff receiving or managing complaints from the public made to or about WayAhead/ Collective Purpose regarding our services, staff and/or complaint handling. Staff grievances are managed through separate mechanisms.</p>

Introduction:

WayAhead – the Mental Health Association NSW plays a vital role in the development of mental health initiatives, the provision of information, support and advocacy which increases community awareness and knowledge of mental health issues. With the support of our board, staff, members, volunteers and students, we work towards a society free from prejudice and discrimination against people living with mental illness. We strive towards a society that understands, values and actively supports the best possible mental health and wellbeing for all people.

WayAhead is an ACNC registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. We are a quality accredited organisation by the Quality Improvement Council.

WayAhead-Mental Health Association NSW Ltd

A Company Limited by Guarantee Australian Company Number 602 666 437

Registered from 5th November 2014.

Policy:

WayAhead/Collective Purpose is committed to delivering quality customer service and effective communication with our customers and stakeholders. We realise that sometimes, despite our best efforts, people may not be satisfied with the way we have performed a service. When this happens, we rely on feedback from customers and stakeholders to identify and understand the source of dissatisfaction so we can identify and resolve the issue. WayAhead/Collective Purpose uses information gathered during the complaint process to ensure continuous improvement of its products and services.

The implementation of this policy should:

- Provide a second opportunity to deliver quality service and satisfaction to dissatisfied customers
- Identify areas or processes which need improvement
- Identify areas of good performance and customer satisfaction
- Influence planning and allocation of resources

Purpose:

This policy is intended to ensure WayAhead and Collective Purpose handle complaints fairly, efficiently and effectively.

Our complaint management system is intended to:

- enable us to respond to issues raised by complainants in a timely and cost-effective way
- boost public confidence in our administrative process, and
- provide information that can be used by us to deliver quality improvements in our services, staff and complaint handling.

Organisational Commitment :

This organisation expects staff at all levels to be committed to fair, effective and efficient complaint handling.

Definitions:

Complainant: A person, group or company that makes a complaint.

Complaint: An expression of dissatisfaction made to WayAhead/Collective Purpose related to their services, quality of service, decisions, policies, procedures, charges or fees, employees or the complaint handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.

Dispute: An unresolved complaint escalated either within or outside of our organisation.

Feedback: Opinions, comments and expressions of interest or concern, made directly or indirectly, to or about WayAhead/Collective Purpose where a response is not explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.

Grievance: A matter to be investigated following a formal grievance process. This includes complaints unable to be resolved through informal processes or mediation and matters relating to allegations of misconduct where disciplinary actions against a worker may be an outcome of the investigation.

Respondent: The person or organisation about which the complaint is made.

Responsibilities:

Senior Manager for WayAhead/General Manager for Collective Purpose

- Overall management and monitoring of complaints and/or grievances within WayAhead/Collective Purpose.
- Primary responsibility for receiving and resolving complaints in a timely, appropriate and fair manner.

- Wherever appropriate, advise people of their right to make a complaint.
- Provide advice and assistance to complainants.
- Confidentially provide independent and impartial information to complainants about the WayAhead/Collective Purpose complaints procedure.
- Conduct internal reviews of complaints in both process and content.
- Identify systemic issues arising from complaints and make appropriate recommendations of improvement to the CEO or WayAhead Board.

Complainants and Respondents

- Provide a clear and honest account of their concerns and their expectations regarding the outcome of their complaint. This includes providing all relevant information and/or documents assisting the investigation and/or resolution of the matter.
- Engage openly in the complaint handling process, including participation in discussion with other parties in order to resolve any concerns.
- Respond to Collective Purpose requests for information in a timely manner.
- Maintain confidentiality and respect all individuals involved in the complaint handling process.

Process:

The collection, monitoring and reporting complaints details of all complaints will be collated within a central register. This information will be provided to the Board on a regular basis unless the CEO considers a complaint should be referred to the Board as a matter of urgency.

Facilitate complaints/compliments

Relevant information is easily accessible to clients and stakeholders about how to communicate feedback, comments and complaints. If a person prefers or needs another person or organisation to assist or represent them in the making and/or resolution of their complaint, we will communicate with them through their representative if this is their wish. Anyone may represent a person wishing to make a complaint with their consent (e.g. advocate, family member, legal or community representative, member of Parliament, another organisation).

People making complaints will be:

- provided with information about our complaint handling process
- provided with multiple and accessible ways to make complaints
- listened to, treated with respect by staff and actively involved in the complaint process where possible and appropriate, and
- provided with reasons for our decision/s and any options for redress or review

No detriment to people making complaints

WayAhead/Collective Purpose will take all reasonable steps to ensure that people making complaints are not adversely affected because a complaint has been made by them or on their behalf. When managing a complaint, we will uphold all relevant legislation. A complainant will not be disadvantaged by lodging a complaint in good faith, regardless of the outcome. Complainants and respondents are entitled to assistance by a support person who can be an advocate, a member of the person's family, a friend, carer or other person.

Anonymous complaints

We accept anonymous complaints and will carry out an investigation of the issues raised where there is enough information provided.

Confidentiality

Privacy and confidentiality of all parties will be respected to the extent practicable and appropriate.

- For complaints regarding our service, quality of service, decisions, policies, procedures, charges or fees, the Manager(s) will ensure accurate records are kept, including documenting reasons for all significant decisions.
- For complaints against a staff member, the complaint handler will ensure that accurate documentation is collected. Documentation should include reasons behind all significant decisions and should be forwarded to Human Resources to be stored in a confidential, secure file (separate to personnel files).

Responding to complaints

WayAhead/Collective Purpose will promptly acknowledge receipt of complaints.

We will assess and prioritise complaints in accordance with the urgency and/or seriousness of the issues raised. If a matter concerns an immediate risk to safety or security the response will be immediate and will be escalated appropriately.

We are committed to managing people's expectations, and will inform them as soon as possible, of the following:

- the complaints process
- the expected time frames for our actions
- the progress of the complaint and reasons for any delay
- their likely involvement in the process, and
- the possible or likely outcome of their complaint

We will advise people as soon as possible when we are unable to deal with any part of their complaint and provide advice about where such issues and/or complaints may be directed (if known and appropriate). We will also advise people as soon as possible when we are unable to meet our time frames for responding to their complaint and the reason for our delay.

Natural Justice and Procedural Fairness

WayAhead/Collective Purpose will address each complaint with integrity and in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner. We will ensure that the person handling a complaint is different from any staff member whose conduct or service is being complained about.

Responding flexibly

Our staff are empowered to resolve complaints promptly and with as little formality as possible. We will adopt flexible approaches to service delivery and problem solving to enhance accessibility for people making complaints and/or their representatives.

We will assess each complaint on its merits and involve people making complaints and/or their representative in the process as far as possible.

Conflicts of Interest

Conflicts of interests, whether actual or perceived, will be managed responsibly. In particular, internal reviews of how a complaint was managed will be conducted by a person other than the original decision maker.

Individuals involved in the handling of a complaint, investigating a complaint or adjudicating on a complaint, must not do so in cases where they have a conflict of interest.

Managing unreasonable conduct by people making complaints

WayAhead/Collective Purpose is committed to being accessible and responsive to all people who approach us with feedback or complaints. At the same time our success depends on:

- our ability to do our work and perform our functions in the most effective and efficient way possible
- the health, safety and security of our staff and volunteers , and
- our ability to allocate our resources fairly across all the complaints we receive

When people behave unreasonably in their dealings with WayAhead/Collective Purpose, their conduct can significantly affect the progress and efficiency of our work. As a result, we will take proactive and decisive action to manage any conduct that negatively and unreasonably affects us and will support our staff to do the same in accordance with this policy.

Complaint management system

Staff should also consider any relevant legislation and/or regulations when responding to complaints and feedback.

