

Graham House Community Centre - Policy & Procedure Manual	
<p>Human Services Quality Standards Standard 5:</p>	<p>Indicator 5.1 The organisation has fair, accessible and accountable feedback, complaints and appeals processes.</p> <p>Indicator 5.2 The organisation effectively communicates feedback, complaints and appeals processes to people using services and other relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>Indicator 5.3 People using services and other relevant stakeholders are informed of and enabled to access any external avenues or appropriate supports for feedback, complaints or appeals and assisted to understand how they access them.</p> <p>Indicator 5.4 The organisation demonstrates that feedback, complaints and appeals processes lead to improvements within the service and that outcomes are communicated to relevant stakeholders.</p>
<p>Policy Name:</p>	<p>Feedback and Complaints Policy</p>
<p>Scope</p>	<p>This policy applies to all complaints and or feedback received from service users of Graham House Community Centre. This policy does not cover complaints from staff, who should use Graham House Community Centre’s Employee and Volunteer Grievance policy.</p> <p>Complaints regarding criminal matters will be referred to the Queensland Police Department, or other relevant government departments for investigation.</p>
<p>Definitions</p>	<p>Complaint: A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of Graham House Community Centre; Is an objection to something that is unfair, unacceptable, or otherwise not up to normal standards.</p> <p>Complainant: A party that makes a complaint or files a formal charge.</p> <p>Formal complaint: Is when a person has a grievance that they want investigated and a formal response made to them.</p>

	<p>Grievance: A wrong considered as grounds for complaint, or something believed to cause distress: a complaint or resentment, a feeling of having been treated unfairly; a reason for Complaining or being unhappy with a situation; a statement in which you say you are unhappy or not.</p> <p>Informal complaint: A concern, dissatisfaction, or frustration which can be resolved informally and without the need for further action.</p> <p>Feedback: The return of a portion of the output of a process or system to the input, especially when used to maintain performance or to control a system or process. Information about reactions to a product, a person's performance of a task, etc. which is used as a basis for improvement.</p> <p>Natural justice: Means that everyone should be able to access the law and the legal system equally.</p> <p>Victimisation: To punish or discriminate against selectively or unfairly; to make a victim of.</p>
<p>Policy</p>	<p>Graham House Community Centre is committed to the provision of quality services and supports the use of feedback as a source for improving the services offered. We view complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to put things right for the person that has made the complaint.</p> <p>Graham House Community Centre promotes a client's right to provide comment and or to complain and to have their complaints fairly assessed and acted upon. This policy is to ensure all feedback and complaints are managed in a confidential, fair, and timely manner.</p>
<p>Procedure</p>	<p>All Clients have the right to lodge a complaint if they are not happy with the service and or support they receive from Graham House Community Centre.</p> <p>By providing us with feedback and complaints our clients are giving Graham House Community Centre the opportunity to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate our commitment to our clients and other stakeholders • Demonstrate our commitment to providing the best possible service • Helping us to find out about things that have gone wrong so we can fix them • Helping us to prevent things going wrong again in future.

In order to achieve this Graham House Community Centre will:

- provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint
- publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint
- make sure everyone at Graham House Community Centre knows what to do if a complaint is received
- make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way
- make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired
- gather information which helps us to improve what we do

The right of individuals to make complaints externally under relevant State and Federal legislation is not affected by this policy or its procedures.

- Concerns or complaints may be received verbally or in writing.
- Clients are to be informed of the complaints process, and external agencies to refer complaints, when accessing a program at Graham House.
- Information on concerns and complaints will be made available to stakeholders, particularly special needs groups, in a format they understand, whenever possible.
- Stakeholders may refer a complaint to an external agency at any time.
- Stakeholders are provided the opportunity to have a support person, advocate or interpreter present.
- Stakeholders are treated respectfully and sensitively.
- Confidentiality of complaints is maintained.
- Staff members are to work collaboratively with all parties with the aim of achieving a mutually beneficial outcome.

Natural Justice

In line with the principles of natural justice:

- All complaints are to be investigated promptly.
- The complainant has the right to be heard.
- The respondent will be informed of allegations, and provided with all the information in relation to the allegation.
- The respondent will be provided an opportunity to adequately respond to the allegation.
- The respondent is presumed to be innocent until allegations are proved to be true.
- Decision makers are to have no conflict of interest with parties

involved, remain impartial and non-judgemental, and base decisions on relevant evidence.

- No person will suffer victimisation or discrimination as a result of initiating or participating in the complaints process.
- Privacy and confidentiality will be maintained.

Confidentiality

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection requirements.

Feedback

Clients not wanting to lodge a complaint may still wish to provide feedback if they feel it may assist Graham House to improve their services, or to provide positive feedback in relation to something they feel Graham House has done well.

Anonymous complaints

Some service users may wish to remain anonymous when lodging a complaint. This should be respected and the complaint will be investigated, however the outcomes may be limited due to the anonymity of the complainant.

Contact Details for Complaints:

Written complaints may be sent to:

Graham House Community Centre
21 Taylor Street East, Murgon Qld. 4605 or

by e-mail to: admin@grahamhouse.org.au.

Verbal complaints may be made by phone to (07) 4169 8400 or in person to any of Graham House Community Centre's staff, at 21 Taylor Street East, Murgon.

Practical Guidance for Staff when Handling Verbal Complaints

- Remain calm and respectful throughout the conversation
- Listen - allow the person to talk about the complaint in their own words. (Sometimes a person just wants to "let off steam")
- Don't debate the facts in the first instance, especially if the person is angry
- Show an interest in what is being said
- Obtain details about the complaint before any personal details
- Ask for clarification wherever necessary

- Show that you have understood the complaint by reflecting back what you have noted down
- Acknowledge the person's feelings (even if you feel that they are being unreasonable) - you can do this without making a comment on the complaint itself or making any admission of fault on behalf of Graham House e.g "I understand that this situation is frustrating for you"
- If you feel that an apology is deserved for something that was the responsibility of Graham House, then apologise
- Ask the person what they would like done to resolve the issue
- Be clear about what you can do, how long it will take and what it will involve.
- Don't promise things you can't deliver
- Give clear and valid reasons why requests cannot be met
- Make sure that the person understands what they have been told
- Wherever appropriate, inform the person about the available avenues of review or appeal

Complaints received by telephone or in person need to be recorded.

The person who receives a phone or in person complaint should:

- Write down the facts of the complaint
- Take the complainant's name, address and telephone number
- Note down the relationship of the complainant to Graham House Community Centre (for example: client, member)
- Tell the complainant that we have a complaints procedure
- Tell the complainant what will happen next and how long it will take
- Where appropriate, ask the complainant to send a written account by post or by email so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant's own words.

If a client does not have the ability to prepare a written complaint, Graham House Community Centre staff are obligated to:

- Link the client with an independent individual/service that may assist them with written preparation of the complaint, or
- Without breaching program guidelines or workplace policies and procedures, assist the client to complete a *Client Feedback* document.

The client may, at their discretion:

- nominate singular or multiple issues within one feedback document

	<p>or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> lodge one client feedback document for each issue <p>In all such cases, it will be at the discretion of the Manager and/or the Management Committee of Graham House Community Centre whether the issues are considered individually or together.</p> <p>Resolving Complaints - Stage One</p> <p>In many cases, a complaint is best resolved by the person responsible for the issue being complained about. If the complaint has been received by that person, they may be able to resolve it swiftly and should do so if possible and appropriate.</p> <p>If the complainant is comfortable to do so, they are to try talking to the respondent in the first instance and this may resolve the problem. If not they may be able to get a friend or representative to do so for them.</p> <p>The complainant may discuss the matter with the respondent concerned or with the Centre Manager. This discussion will help the complainant and the respondent to identify ways to resolve the concern. The complainant does not need to make a written statement and no formal investigation will be conducted.</p> <p>All respondents should aim to handle and resolve every complaint immediately, wherever possible, using the following process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen carefully and respond to the service user in a polite and respectful manner Clarify your understanding of the complaint and ask the complainant how they would like the complaint resolved. Wherever possible, try to resolve the complaint at the time. If the circumstances do not allow the complaint to be resolved immediately, it will become a Stage Two Complaint and must be directed to the Centre Manager. The respondent involved is obliged to notify the Centre Manager of the issue and document that there has been a complaint made and actions to this point. If the complainant wishes only to speak with the Centre Manager, arrange a meeting between the Centre Manager and the complainant at a time that is mutually convenient. If the complaint cannot be resolved immediately, advise the complainant that they should submit the complaint in writing and provide them with a copy of the 'Statement of Consumer Rights' form. Complete the Complaints or Client Feedback Form Record the complaint in the Complaint Register.
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If the complaint is about the Centre Manager, it will be addressed as a stage three complaint and will be forwarded to the President of the Management Committee, and will be addressed as soon as possible by them.

Resolving Complaints - Stage Two

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, they can request that the complaint is reviewed at Management level.

When a complainant wishes to make a formal complaint against an employee, the Centre Manager, a volunteer or Management Committee member, they may do so by writing a letter, or sending an email or fax, or by contacting Graham House Community Centre in person and requesting to speak to the Centre Manager.

All complaints of a serious nature, e.g. corruption, fraud, harassment, etc. should be submitted in writing and referred to the Centre Manager for investigation.

Alternatively, they may have a representative make the complaint for them, as long as it is clear that the person has the client's permission to act on their behalf.

The letter, email or fax from the complainant or their representative must outline what the complaint is about, what the complainant has done to try to resolve the matter informally with the person concerned or with the organisation and a full description of the allegation/s being made.

The complaint must be signed by the complainant and marked 'Strictly Confidential' and lodged with the Centre Manager within twelve months of the last incident which is the subject of the complaint.

Upon receiving a written complaint, the Centre Manager should provide a written response to the service user or member within ten (10) working days. The response may include the following:

- confirmation that the complaint has been received and the matter is being investigated
- suggested actions for resolving the complaint
- the estimated timeframe for resolution
- the importance of service user and member satisfaction and their right to appeal
- a contact name and number for the complainant to follow up with.

The actions taken to attempt to resolve the complaint may include:

- The Centre Manager may organise a meeting between the complainant and/or their representative, the respondent and the Manager to try and resolve the problem if the complainant is comfortable in doing so;
- If the complainant is not comfortable doing this, or if this has been tried and not been successful, then the Centre Manager will negotiate with the complainant and the respondent separately.
- If the issue is resolved through any of these steps, both the issue and the resolution will be recorded by the respondent, the complainant and the Centre Manager. All parties must sign the resolution.

If the matter cannot be resolved through any of these actions, or the matter is a more serious allegation, such as misconduct, abuse or infringement of rights then the complaint will go to stage three.

On receiving the complaint, the Manager will record it in the complaints log.

If it has not already been resolved, the Manager will delegate an appropriate person to investigate it and to take appropriate action.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, this person will be informed of the complaint by the Manager and given a fair opportunity to respond.

Complaints should be acknowledged by the Manager within ten (10) working days of receipt. The acknowledgement should state who is dealing with the complaint and when the person complaining can expect a reply. A copy of this complaints procedure should be attached.

Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within four weeks from receipt. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Whether the complaint is justified or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

Resolving Complaints - Stage Three

If the complaint is about the Centre Manager, it will be forwarded directly to the President of the Management Committee.

If a complaint has gone through stage two and the complainant is still not happy with the outcome the complaint will be passed to the President of the Management Committee.

The request for Management Committee level review should be acknowledged within one week of receiving it. The acknowledgement should say who will deal with the case and when the complainant can expect a reply.

The President of the Management Committee may investigate the facts of the case themselves or delegate a suitably senior person to do so. This may involve reviewing the paperwork of the case and speaking with the person who dealt with the complaint at Stage one or two.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they must be informed and given a further opportunity to respond.

Depending on the issue a decision may be made at this stage to seek legal advice.

The President will advise the respondent concerned that a complaint has come before them and arrange a time with the respondent to discuss the issue. A copy of the complaint must be provided to the respondent at least one week prior to the meeting.

A meeting will be held between the complainant, the respondent, the Centre Manager and the President, to attempt to resolve the issue.

If necessary the issue will be taken to the full Executive of the Management Committee. All complaints should be resolved and actioned (where possible) within 30 days.

The respondent and the complainant may each bring a support person to the meeting and if an interpreter is required, this must be requested prior to the meeting convening.

If it appears that there is substance to the complaint – the President and the Centre Manager are to decide upon a course of action which may include:

1. A further interview with the respondent
2. An apology to the complainant
3. A recommendation that the respondent be removed from the volunteer/ membership register

4. A recommendation that the respondent receive an official warning which is to be recorded in their personnel file

Depending on the complaint, the resolution may involve disciplinary action in accordance with the relevant organisational policy.

Within two full working days of the close of the investigation process, the complainant and the respondent will be provided with a written statement of the outcome including the details of the reasons for the outcome.

Any decisions made which support the complainant and any corrective and/or preventative action required must be immediately implemented and the complainant advised of the outcome.

If it appears that there is no substance to the complaint or that it resulted from a misunderstanding, a letter to both the complainant and the respondent is to be sent advising of this conclusion.

Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

The Management Committee may vary this procedure for good reason. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest, for example, a complaint about the President should not also have the President as the person leading a complaints review.

The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the Management Committee decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution.

Complaints lacking in substance

If the allegations are found to be frivolous, malicious, misconceived or lacking in substance, the President of the Management Committee may decline to investigate the complaint and take any necessary action.

Withdrawal of a Complaint

The complainant may withdraw a formal complaint by lodging a written statement of withdrawal with the Centre Manager or President.

The Centre Manager shall within two full working days, forward to the respondent a copy of the withdrawal statement and advise them of their right to make a written statement through the Centre Manager to all those involved in the complaint up to that stage.

The Centre Manager shall within two full working days, notify all persons thus far involved in the complaint of the withdrawal.

External Stage – (External Third Party Complaints)

The complainant, if they wish to take the matter further, can at any time lodge a formal complaint with an external third party in order to have a complaint investigated.

Information about the kind of complaints the following external parties can become involved in can be found on their websites.

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission

1300 656 419 or at their web page: www.humanrights.gov.au/

or

The Office of Fair Trading at:

<http://www.fairtrading.qld.gov.au/marketplace/make-a-complaint>

or

Queensland Ombudsman

Phone: (07) 3005 7000

Freecall: 1800 068 908 (Outside Brisbane in Queensland only)

Email: ombudsman@ombudsman.qld.gov.au

Website: www.ombudsman.qld.gov.au

or

Anti-Discrimination Commission of Queensland

Phone: 1300 130 670

TTY: 1300 130 680

Email: info@adcq.qld.gov.au

Website: www.adcq.qld.gov.au

or

If the complaint is in relation to our **Broadband For Seniors Program**

Contact the Broadband For Seniors Helpline 1300 795 897

Or a complaint can be lodged through the Broadband For Seniors web page on: www.necseniors.net.au

or

If the complaint is in relation to our **Transport or Social Support Service**

Queensland Aged and Disability Advocacy Inc.

121 Copperfield Street

GEEBUNG QLD 4034

Phone: (07) 3637 6000 or 1800 818 338 (freecall)

Email: info@gada.org.au

Website: www.gada.org.au

The National Aged Care Advocacy Line is 1800 700 600.

	<p>or</p> <p>If the complaint is in relation to one of our Family Support Funded Programs Contact : www.qld.gov.au/contact-us/complaints/</p> <p>or</p> <p>Email: feedback@communities.qld.gov.au</p> <p>Post: Complaints and Review Unit GPO Box 806 Brisbane Qld 4001</p> <p>Phone: 1800 080 464</p> <p>Continual Improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All complaints are to be recorded in the complaints register, monitored and reviewed. • Corrective actions will be taken to address identified improvement areas. • Relevant stakeholders will be informed of amendments or changes that affect them. <p>Monitoring and Learning from Complaints</p> <p>Complaints are reviewed annually to identify any trends which may indicate a need to take further action.</p> <p>Record Keeping and File Management</p> <p>The organisation is committed to maintaining the privacy of personal information. All personal information collected will be held and used in accordance with the Graham House Privacy Policy.</p>
	<p>Complainants should be informed that:</p> <p>The Centre Manager will keep confidential original notes and other working papers created or used in relation to complaints on a file. This file will be marked Strictly Confidential and stored in locked cabinets to which only the Centre Manager has access.</p> <p>Notes kept on files are the property of the organisation not the complainant or the employee and as such are subject to privacy legislation.</p> <p>Notes are to be kept only in hard copy format and not on a computer hard drive or on disks which can be removed from the organisation.</p> <p>Service users have the right to access their file on request in accordance with the provisions of privacy legislation.</p> <p>Employees are encouraged to keep notes to a minimum stating only facts and relevant details as described by the service user.</p> <p>Employees should record the outcome of each interview and where</p>

	<p>appropriate have the complainant initial these as a correct record. The outcome recorded could include the complainant's preferred course of action (if any) and any undertaking the employee makes to the complainant.</p> <p>Any additional follow up notes or subsequent contacts with the complainant should be recorded in the same way.</p>
Responsible Officer:	Management Committee / Staff / Centre Manager
Breeches:	Breaches of this policy will be dealt with by the Centre Manager. Any breach of this policy or procedure may result in disciplinary action or dismissal
Related Legislation:	<p>Racial Discrimination Act 1975 Sex Discrimination Act 1984 Equal Opportunity (Commonwealth Authorities) Act 1987 Disability Discrimination Act 1992 Racial Hatred Act 1995 Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012 Age Discrimination Act 2004</p> <p>Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 Workplace Health and Safety Act 2011</p>
Associated Policies:	<p>Client Services Charter Access and Equity Policy Advocacy & Interpreters Policy Privacy Policy Confidentiality Policy</p>
Associated Forms:	<p>Client Feedback Sheet Client Consent Form Client Exit Form Client Referral Form Complaints Register</p>
Related Documents:	Code of Conduct
Version: 3	
Date of Review:	3 years from date ratified
Date of Next Review:	30/9/2017