

## **Complaints Policy**

Interchange Outer East (IOE) actively supports and values people's right to complain about any aspect of a service IOE provides. This policy relates to any individual that has a concern about a service or interaction IOE has been involved in. Complaints can be made by a participant, family member, staff member, volunteer or community member. Complaints play an important role in ensuring the quality of our services. IOE is committed to ensuring that making a complaint is regarded as a positive experience, with the best possible outcomes achieved for individuals and the agency. Complaints, and their resolution, are taken seriously by IOE; there will be no retribution for anyone who makes a complaint. IOE strives to make our complaints policy and procedure accessible to all people using the service and we encourage anyone to raise any concerns with our staff at any time.

IOE acknowledges that mistakes happen, and considers feedback and complaints to be an opportunity to improve the quality of services and processes.

IOE considers a complaint to have occurred when a person tells us that they are unhappy or dissatisfied with:

- A decision made;
- The services provided;
- The environment in which a service has been provided;
- The way a service is provided;
- The staff/volunteers who work on an IOE program;
- The way in which you are treated in the workplace by your peers, participants and/or families;

And

- The person wishes IOE to acknowledge and respond to their complaint.

All complaints about IOE will be dealt with promptly, fairly, confidentially and without retribution. IOE complaints procedure will give people access to a fair and equitable process for dealing with complaints and disputes.

### **How to make a complaint**

Complaints can be made in a number of ways:

- On person;
- Over the phone;
- Via the feedback pathway found on staff emails and the website; or
- Using the complaints form available on the website (written or pictorial)

Complaints can be made at any time, but preferably as soon as possible after the issue has occurred. Complaints can be made directly to coordinators, a team leader, general manager or CEO. The preference is for a complaint to initially be made to the most relevant team member, e.g. if the complaint is related to a support worker the complaint can be made to the coordinator who arranged the shift. If the complaint is related to a coordinator the

concern can be raised with the supervising team leader. In the event of a conflict of interest, the complaint will be handled by a supervising staff member.

Interchange Outer East welcomes a person's right to involve an advocate or representative and will provide details of advocacy services most relevant to the situation when requested.

If a participant or family member is unhappy with IOE's management of a complaint contact should be made to either the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission or the Disability Services Commissioner for advice or assistance at any point in the process. Contact details can be found below under 'External complaint mechanisms'.

## **What Happens Next?**

### **IOE response**

Once a complaint has been received a staff member will make contact via email or phone with the person to confirm receipt of complaint within two working days.

### **Investigation**

The relevant staff member will begin gathering information and documentation of the complaint. This may involve confirming information and speaking to other relevant parties.

### **Information, resolution & implementation**

Using information gathered related to the complaint, a decision will be made regarding necessary action(s). If the resolution is agreed to it will be implemented as per the timeframes referred to in the report. When requested, a copy of the report will be provided detailing the complaint, investigation and resolutions.

Where possible, actions put in place should improve quality of services, processes and aim to minimise risk of reoccurrence. In instances where actions to improve quality are not possible, a clear explanation as to why and what is required should be noted. The person making the complaint must be provided with details as to why something the complainant asked to see happen has not been possible.

If the person making the complaint is not satisfied with the proposed resolution they can request to escalate the complaint to a higher level of management for review and/or take the complaint to an external party (details below). IOE will endeavour to resolve complaints within 10 working days. Where this is not possible, IOE will maintain contact with the person informing them of progress.

Depending on the nature of the complaint it may also be necessary for IOE to complete an incident report and/or to notify relevant authorities in line with purchasing agencies requirements and relevant legislation.

### **Quality review**

Each year a selection of complaints are randomly chosen for a quality audit. The purpose of the audit is to ensure complaints are being resolved in an equitable and timely manner. A review of actions implemented and their efficiency will be completed and recommendations to support improving processes for complaints considered.

## Confidentiality

Where possible complaints and information pertaining to complaints is kept confidential. The general manager of IOE signs off on complaints once they have been resolved and complaints are entered onto a secure internal register by the quality coordinator. Complaints are securely stored at IOE and can only be accessed by the general manager and quality coordinator.

## Retribution - What happens if it occurs?

IOE strives to resolve complaints in a genuine, fair and equitable manner. The Disability Amendment Act 2012 states that, 'all reasonable steps must be taken to ensure that a person with a disability, the person who made the complaint and any person on whose behalf the complaint was made, is not adversely affected because a complaint has been made'. If you are concerned that you are being treated unfairly as a result of your complaint, you can contact IOE CEO Fred Brumhead, or one of the external organisations listed below.

## External complaint mechanisms

IOE receives funds from various organisations and departments. Although IOE would encourage people to lodge a complaint directly with IOE, there are many external complaint mechanisms available if preferred.

### NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission:

The Commission can take complaints from anyone about:

- NDIS services or supports that were not provided in a safe and respectful way;
- NDIS services and supports that were not delivered to an appropriate standard; and
- how an NDIS provider has managed a complaint about services or supports provided to an NDIS participant.

As well as dealing with complaints, the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission works to educate providers about delivering quality and safe supports, and effectively responding to complaints. If a complaint raises a serious compliance issue, the Commission has powers to take action.

Complaints hotline: 1800 035 544

Online form: <https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au>

TTY: 133 677

National Relay Service: [www.relayservice.gov.au](http://www.relayservice.gov.au) and then 1800 035 544

### Disability Services Commissioner

The Disability Services Commissioner handles complaints about Victorian disability service providers registered with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) which includes:

- Services for people with a disability delivered through service systems outside the NDIS;
- Matters which fall outside the jurisdiction of the NDIS commission;
- All existing clients that have not transitioned to the NDIS; and
- All in-kind supports, which do not fall under the remit of the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission because they are not funded under the NDIS Act.

Complaints hotline: 1800 677 342

Email: [contact@odsc.vic.gov.au](mailto:contact@odsc.vic.gov.au)

TTY: 1300 726 563

National Relay Service: [www.relayservice.gov.au](http://www.relayservice.gov.au) and then 1800 677 342

### Victorian Disability Worker Commission (VDWC)

The VDWC regulates all disability workers in Victoria, regardless of the funding source of the service. You can make a complaint about any disability worker in Victoria. You can complain about:

- Their standard of work;
- The knowledge, skill or judgement of the disability worker;
- Their capacity to provide services safely; and/or
- An alleged breach of the Disability Service Safeguards Act 2018 (Vic) or the Disability Service Safeguards Code of Conduct

Tel: 1800 497 132

Online form: [www.vdwc.vic.gov.au](http://www.vdwc.vic.gov.au)

### Health and Community Care, Box Hill office:

Address: 883 Whitehorse Road, Box Hill VIC 3128

Tel: (03) 9843 6000

Fax: (03) 3 9843 6100

[www.health.vic.gov.au](http://www.health.vic.gov.au)

### Fair Work Australia

The Fair Work Ombudsman is an independent statutory office. Services are free to all workers and employers in Australia.

[www.fairwork.gov.au](http://www.fairwork.gov.au)

### Volunteering Victoria

Volunteering Victoria is the state peak body for volunteering. Services include support and advocacy.

Tel: (03) 8327 8500

[www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au](http://www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au)

### **Related policies**

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## **Procedure - Responding to Complaints**

On receiving a complaint, the coordinator or staff member will reassure the person making the complaint that they will receive no retribution as a result of making the complaint. The coordinator or staff member will also reaffirm how highly IOE values complaints and their resolution. The preference is that contact should be in person or over the phone.

When a complaint is received verbally, the staff member to whom the initial complaint is made will fill out an IOE complaint form. If a written complaint is received it can be attached to the complaint form. If a volunteer or support worker receives a complaint they should refer the matter to their immediate supervisor.

When a complaint is received, the staff member who first receives the complaint will determine whether the complaint is serious or routine using the following criteria:

### **Serious Complaints Involve:**

- Staff or volunteer misconduct
- An alleged breach of:
  - The rights of a family or participant
  - The rights of a staff member or volunteer
  - Duty of care
  - Family, participant, staff or volunteer safety
  - Privacy and confidentiality
- An alleged incident of harassment/bullying

### **Routine Complaints:**

- Operational issues involving:
  - Activities
  - Transport arrangements
  - Lost or damaged property
  - Staff/volunteer support

Coordinators must inform their team leader when a complaint has been received. The team leader, or general manager of IOE, will be informed of all serious complaints within 24 hours. Dependent on the nature and severity of the complaint, the coordinator may address and respond to the complaint in consultation with their team leader.

### **Confirm Complaint**

Once a complaint is received, the staff member allocated to respond to the complaint should confirm via phone call or in writing to the person that the complaint has been received. The staff member will check the following:

- Confirm and clarify exactly what the complaint is about.
- Ask the person making the complaint what they would like to happen.
- Send, or ensure the person has access to, the IOE complaints policy.
- Let the person know they have the right to use an advocate. Provide details if requested.

- Apologise; where appropriate acknowledge where support/process has been inadequate.

## **Report**

All documents pertaining to the complaint need to be kept and filed in the complaints register.

The program coordinator or team leader will investigate and document the complaint on an IOE complaint form. If a written complaint is received it can be attached to the complaint form and the coordinator or team leader can proceed to complete the other sections of the form. The staff member should keep the person who made the complaint informed at all stages of the progress of the complaint.

After attempting to resolve the complaint, the coordinator or team leader will contact the person to inform them of any decisions reached and/or any actions IOE has taken, or will take, in response to the complaint. This notification will occur within 10 working days of the complaint being documented. When requested in writing a written report will be provided. If the person is dissatisfied with the way IOE has responded, they will be directed to the complaints policy which details pathways to escalate the complaint.

In the event that a resolution cannot be reached to satisfy the person, be very clear about why this is the case.

When finalising the complaint form the following questions must be completed:

- How satisfied was the complainant with the outcomes?
- How satisfied was the complainant with the way the complaint was handled?
- How satisfied was the complainant with access provided to an advocate?

This information is collected and provided to the Disability Services Commissioner and forms part of our annual quality audit.

All complaint forms or documentation regarding a complaint will be kept in a complaints register which will be held and accessed by the general manager and quality coordinator of IOE.

## **Review**

The quality coordinator reviews the complaints register to ensure that complaints have been responded to promptly, fairly and appropriately and that appropriate policy and procedural changes have been made. The register will be used to monitor dissatisfaction with IOE services and IOE's ability to use details of complaints and grievances to ensure programs are responsive to meet the needs of participants and families.

## **Quality Review**

Each year a selection of complaints are randomly chosen for a quality audit. People who have made a complaint may be contacted for feedback about their experience of the complaints process.