

Complaints, Compliments and Feedback Policy

Policy

Stable Home Care is committed to providing quality care and welcomes feedback from participants, supporters, staff and others, to ensure we are continuously improving our service standards.

All staff receive training on how to encourage and support participants to share feedback, raise concerns, or make a complaint. Stable Home Care commits to responding positively to complaints and to implementing a clear process of investigation to ensure issues are resolved promptly and to the satisfaction of all parties.

Stable Home Care will provide a range of opportunities and avenues by which participants and others can provide feedback and make suggestions for improvement. These include formal opportunities such as participation in advisory bodies, submission of the Complaints and Feedback Form, and surveys, and informal opportunities, such as during service delivery, during care plan reviews, via telephone, or ad hoc discussions. We also include Complaints and Feedback Forms for participants in our Welcome Pack and will make this available via our website.

Stable Home Care's complaints management processes will:

- Encourage and support participants and staff to make complaints free from reprisals.
- Be transparent, fair and respectful.
- Be accessible to all participants and staff.
- Provide access to advocates where required.
- Incorporate the principles of natural justice.
- Ensure investigations seek to identify causes while being blame-free.
- Use open disclosure and involve the participant in all parts of the process.
- Allow a participant to refuse formal recording of their complaint or to withdraw a complaint after it is made (unless the complaint meets the definition of a Serious Reportable Incident) or to withdraw a complaint after it is made.
- Be confidential.
- Integrate with our incident management system to ensure the detection and reporting of abuse and neglect in accordance with the Serious Incident Response Scheme.
- Be action and continuous improvement oriented.
- Support participants to make complaints to the Complaints Commissioner.



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- Provider whistleblower protections to eligible disclosers (see Whistleblower Policy).

Stable Home Care will maintain accurate and detailed records of all feedback, complaints, investigations, actions and outcomes.

Feedback

Provision of feedback to Stable Home Care is voluntary, but will be sought regularly, including:

- after each major interaction with the service (e.g. initial assessment and planning; reviews; exit);
- during participant service delivery;
- at participant forums; and
- through satisfaction surveys.

Stakeholders can provide feedback at any time through the Complaints and Feedback Form by phone, email, website or in writing.

Where feedback is provided verbally, the receiving care worker will transcribe the feedback onto the Stable Home Care Complaints and Feedback Form.

Support for Participants

To lodge a complaint, participants are encouraged to speak directly to their care worker first, in an attempt to resolve the matter without recourse to the complaints and grievances procedures.

Care workers will:

- Listen – openly to the concerns being raised by the complainant.
- Apologise – for any inconvenience, dissatisfaction, distress or harm the issues has caused
- Ask – the complainant what outcome they are seeking.
- Inform – the complainant clearly of the complaint process, the time the process takes and set realistic expectations.
- Be accountable – and empathetic towards the affected person and action all commitments made.
- Assess – situations that pose an immediate threat or danger or require a specialised response.



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All participants making a complaint will be encouraged to involve their Supporter, where applicable, or to use an advocate of their choice to act on their behalf if they wish. The advocate may be sourced (with the assistance of their Care Partner, if required) through the National Aged Care Advocacy Program.

All participants are made aware of their right to escalate their complaints where they feel their complaint has not been managed appropriately by Stable Home Care's Home Care services, or where they do not feel comfortable raising their concerns directly with us.

Participants can escalate their complaint to the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission can be lodged:

- by phone on 1800 951 822
- by email: info@agedcarequality.gov.au
- online at www.agedcarequality.gov.au
- by post to:

Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission - GPO Box 9819
in their Capital City

Complaint Management Process

Stable Home Care follows these key steps in the management of complaints:

1. **Prompt acknowledgement** – all complaints will be acknowledged by the Care Partner within 24 hours, or Quality and Compliance Officer if a complaint is about the Care Partner. Acknowledgement will be made verbally (e.g. via telephone) and followed up in writing within two working days to ensure all parties agree on the matter to be addressed and the associated facts.
2. **Assessment** - All complaints will be referred to the relevant supervisor for assessment. The relevant supervisor will discuss minor complaints directly with the party involved as a first step towards resolution or examine internal processes where the subject of the complaint is not an individual care worker. If a complaint alleges actual or possible criminal activity or abuse or neglect, it will be referred to the Quality and Compliance Officer immediately. The Quality and Compliance Officer will follow the Participant Incident Management (incl. SIRS) Policy, reporting the complaint to the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission, and working with relevant personnel and the participant to investigate the allegations.

3. **Planning** – In planning the investigation, Stable Home Care will seek desired outcomes from the participant, provide realistic expectations and timeframes and refer the matter to other organisations, where identified as being more suitable to handle (e.g. for the avoidance of a conflict of interest). Stable Home Care will advocate on behalf of the participant to investigate the complaint, regardless of the parties involved (e.g. internal or external support staff/providers of care).
4. **Investigation** – Investigations will follow the principles of procedural fairness and open disclosure, and ensure the participant is kept involved and informed at all times. Investigation of complaints will not be conducted by a person about whom a complaint has been made. If required, the Governing Body will determine the appropriate person to undertake the investigation.
5. **Response** - Stable Home Care will respond to all complaints as soon as possible and within 28 days from acknowledgement. If a complaint or grievance cannot be responded to in full within 28 days of acknowledgement, an update will be issued to the complainant. The update will provide the date by which a full response can be expected. The update should be provided verbally in the first instance then confirmed in writing.

The Care Partner (or assigned respondent) will:

- Discuss the outcome – where possible, verbally with the complainant before providing written advice and allowing them the opportunity to make further contact following receipt of the written advice.
- Confirm that the participant is satisfied with the outcome, and the way the complaint was managed.
- Include information on recourse – further action available to the complainant at the conclusion of the complaint investigation. An action of recourse may be to escalate the matter further with the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission, or for a further review within the organisation.

Support will be provided to assist complainants in understanding correspondence regarding complaints where required (e.g. interpreters, referral to advocates, etc.).

Options for actions responding to a complaint include, but are not limited to:

- explaining processes
- rectifying an issue
- providing an apology
- ongoing monitoring of issues
- training or education of care workers.

6. **Safeguarding** – where a complaint relates to the poor performance or behaviour of a care worker, the Care Partner will proactively seek feedback from other participants receiving services from the same care worker, to determine whether they have been subject to the same alleged performance or behaviour. This is to ensure that participants who are unable to complain (for example, due to cognitive impairment) or feel uncomfortable about making a complaint.
7. **Review** - Stable Home Care' Complaints Register will be used by Stable Home Care's Quality and Compliance Officer to record every complaint, track investigation progress and outcomes and how the outcomes have been communicated to stakeholders. Reviews follow through on the application of complaint outcomes with appropriate departments, teams and care workers to ensure actions are implemented and service delivery improved. Stable Home Care will also seek feedback from the complainant regarding their experience of the complaints process.
8. **Consideration of systemic issues and continuous improvement** - Complaints, Compliments and Feedback causes and trends are analysed and reported at team meetings, Quality Care Advisory Body meetings and Governing Body meetings for future improvement plans. The Complaints Register will be reviewed and reported monthly to identify any themes or potential systemic issues, to inform continuous improvement activities, and for inclusion in reports to the Governing Body.
9. Information from the Complaints Register will also be included in Stable Home Care's Provider Operations Reporting and be provided to the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission when requested.

Records Management

Quality and Compliance Officer will:

- Record – all information that is relevant to the compliment or complaint, in its original and simplest form, in the Feedback and Complaints Register.
- Store and protect – the Feedback and Complaints Register in a secure file, accessible only to the Management Team.

Procedural Fairness

Procedural fairness:

- is impartial
- requires a response proportionate to the complaint, accusation and likely remedial action
- ensures that a complainant or participant is not disadvantaged by the complaint or the process of resolving a complaint
- ensures that persons who are likely to be adversely affected by a complaint process are given the opportunity to present their views and have them heard.

Procedural fairness must be afforded to a person if their rights or interests may be adversely or detrimentally affected in a direct and specific way. In those circumstances:

- the person must be given notice of each prejudicial matter that may be considered against them
- the person must be given a reasonable opportunity to be heard on those matters before adverse action is taken, and to put forward information and submissions in support of an outcome that is favourable to their interests
- the decision to take adverse action should be soundly based on the facts and issues that were raised during that process, and this should be apparent in the record of the decision
- the decision maker should be unbiased and maintain an unbiased appearance.

The precise requirements of procedural fairness can vary from one situation to another. The required steps can vary according to:

- the nature of the matter being dealt with
- the options for resolving it
- the timeframe for resolution
- whether facts in issue are in dispute
- the gravity of possible findings that may be reached
- the sanctions that could be imposed based on those findings.



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Encouraging Feedback and Complaints

Stable Home Care is committed to making participants, their supporters, care workers and staff, feel welcome to provide feedback and make complaints, and reiterating the important role they play in continuous improvement.

Participants and their supporters are encouraged to provide feedback and raise concerns through monthly reminders issued via email and regular newsletters.

Care workers are constantly reminded and encouraged to provide feedback and raise concerns they may have about the quality of care provided, or on behalf of participants, through monthly email reminders and staff meetings.

Reviewing and Improving the Complaints Management System

Stable Home Care will review and improve the effectiveness of the Complaints Management System to ensure it meets the needs of participants, care workers, and the organisation by:

- evaluating how complaints are managed as part of internal audits
- evaluating the effectiveness of the complaints system in detecting abuse and neglect
- evaluating whether any external complaints received could have been prevented by more effective management of complaints internally.
- analysing the causes and trends of dissatisfaction, including those that may be the cause of participant discharges and transfers to other providers
- examining whether there are any barriers to accessibility based on the diversity of participants using our service
- assessing care worker knowledge and use of the complaints system
- direct consultation with care workers about the complaints system
- benchmarking against sector performance reports published by the Commission.

Continuous improvements arising from these review processes will be managed in accordance with the Continuous Improvement Policy, and the outcomes from these reviews will be reported to participants and care workers through regular newsletters.

Supporting Documents

Relevant documents relating to this Policy:

- Complaints and Feedback Form
- Feedback and Complaints Register



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Applicable Aged Care Standards

- Standard 2 - The Organisation:
 - Outcome 2.3 Accountability, quality system and policies and procedures
 - Outcome 2.6a Complaints and feedback management for aged care workers
 - Outcome 2.6b Complaints and feedback management for individuals.