



SHAR-SERV-PRO-01

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS PROCEDURE

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Complaints and Appeals Procedure of Northside Community Service Ltd (Northside) ensures that relevant parties understand their rights and responsibilities when making complaints or appeals at Northside.
- 1.2. This procedure ensures that employees and other stakeholders understand their roles and responsibilities when dealing with complaints or appeals at Northside.

2. Purpose

- 2.1. This procedure aims to ensure that all complaints and appeals are investigated in a thorough, transparent, fair, sensitive, and objective manner.
- 2.2. This procedure outlines the process and principles that Northside holds when dealing with complaints and appeals.

3. Scope

- 3.1. This procedure applies to all Northside stakeholders including volunteers, employees, contractors, sub-contractors and consultants employed by Northside, apprentices or trainees, students gaining work experience, and volunteers, whilst they are on Northside property or engaged in Northside business.
- 3.2. This procedure applies to all clients, family members, carers and authorised contacts nominated by the client or legally appointed Enduring Power of Attorney (EPOA). This procedure also extends to their visitors and/or guests.

4. Procedure Owner and Review Requirements

4.1. Procedure Owner

- 4.1.1. The procedure owner for the Complaints and Appeals Procedure is the General Manager – Corporate Services

4.2. Review Requirements

- 4.2.1. This procedure is to be reviewed annually.

5. Procedures

Complaints and Appeals Policy 4.2.1.1 Northside adopts the Australian Open Disclosure Framework principles in managing complaints.

Early Childhood Governance Policy 5.1.1: Any complaint raised by a family member, carer, authorised contact, visitor or external stakeholder will be handled promptly and professionally.

Client Services Governance Policy 5.4.1: Any complaint or grievance raised by a client will be handled promptly and professionally.

5.1. Complaints Handling

Document Type: Procedure	Doc Ref No: SHAR-SERV-PRO-01	Distribution: Shared Services
Version No.: V3	Effective Date: 08/2024	Northside Community Service

SHAR-SER-PRO- 01

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS PROCEDURE



1.1.1. Complaints and Appeals Policy 4.4.2 *The complainant will be offered an opportunity to meet with a Northside representative in person to discuss the details of their complaint or appeal. The complainant will be encouraged to have a support person present throughout the duration of the meeting.*

5.1.1. Being Open and timely in responding

5.1.1.1. The person receiving the complaint will respond to the complainant in a timely manner, ensuring transparency of process and clarity of expectations.

5.1.2. Acknowledge the complaint

5.1.2.1. The person managing the complaint will:

- 5.1.2.1.1. Advise their Supervisor/Manager and escalate to the appropriate person to handle the complaint;
- 5.1.2.1.2. Acknowledge and provide receipt of all complaints within *24 hours* of receiving the complaint;
- 5.1.2.1.3. Complete an internal Incident Form through the QR code or webpage accessed Internal Incident Management System *as soon as possible* after receiving the complaint;
- 5.1.2.1.4. Arrange a time to discuss the complaint with the client, in person or over the phone at their earliest convenience.

5.1.3. Assess the complaint

5.1.3.1. Northside will collect relevant information from parties involved and make an assessment relating to how the complaint will be handled and managed.

5.1.3.2. The employee meeting with/discussing the complaint with the client will:

- 5.1.3.2.1. Allow complainants to present their point of view;
- 5.1.3.2.2. Repeat what they have heard in their own words to create a shared understanding and establish empathy;
- 5.1.3.2.3. Express regret using words 'I/we are sorry' but do not admit liability or apportion blame.

Document Type: Procedure	Doc Ref No: SHAR-SERV-PRO-01	Distribution: Shared Services
Version No.: V3	Effective Date: 08/2024	Northside Community Service

SHAR-SER-PRO- 01

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS PROCEDURE

- 5.1.3.2.4. Ask the client and/or complainant how they would like to see the complaint resolved;
 - 5.1.3.2.5. Advise the client what will happen next with their complaint and provide contact details for the employee handling the complaint;
 - 5.1.3.2.6. Reassure all parties that confidentiality is respected;
 - 5.1.3.2.7. Give an estimate of how long the process may take;
 - 5.1.3.2.8. Show a positive, professional attitude and thank the complainant for bringing the matter to your attention.
- 5.1.3.3. After discussing the complaint with the client, a Northside employee will assess the complaint and determine a suitable action to resolve the complaint.
- 5.1.3.4. When assessing a complaint:
- 5.1.3.4.1. The complaint is assessed against other complaints the service is handling to evaluate fairness;
 - 5.1.3.4.2. Further clarify the concerns and issues raised by the complainant if required;
 - 5.1.3.4.3. Determine the level of risk to the client, other clients and the service to support resolutions being prioritised where necessary;
 - 5.1.3.4.4. Prepare a short-written plan of how the complaint is to be managed and any information to be collected;
 - 5.1.3.4.5. Investigate further (if required);
 - 5.1.3.4.6. Gather any further relevant information to resolve the complaint;
 - 5.1.3.4.7. Keep written notes of all discussions and add to the clients profile.

5.1.4. Respond to the complaint

- 5.1.4.1. A suitable employee will provide a response to the client, outlining proposed actions, within *5 days* of meeting with/ discussing the complaint with the complainant.
- 5.1.4.2. When responding to the complainant:
- 5.1.4.2.1. Respond to the complainant with a clear decision and explain your reason for the decision;
 - 5.1.4.2.2. Provide a written response for more complex matters;
 - 5.1.4.2.3. Recognise it may take several meetings to come to a resolution.

5.1.5. Follow up

Document Type: Procedure	Doc Ref No: SHAR-SERV-PRO-01	Distribution: Shared Services
Version No.: V3	Effective Date: 08/2024	Northside Community Service

SHAR-SER-PRO- 01

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS PROCEDURE

5.1.5.1. Northside will follow up on complaints in a timely manner, including the provision of information regarding actions taken in response to the complaint to the complainant *within 15 working days*, using the following steps:

- 5.1.5.1.1. Advise the client of actions taken
- 5.1.5.1.2. Initially discuss if the complainant is satisfied with the resolution/s;
- 5.1.5.1.3. Ask the complainant for feedback;
- 5.1.5.1.4. Outline alternative options available for the complainant, if required;
- 5.1.5.1.5. Reviews should ideally be carried out by employee who have not been previously involved;
- 5.1.5.1.6. Complaints are evaluated and discussed at the relevant committees e.g. Governance Committee (with consideration to confidentiality).

5.1.6. Evaluation and considerations

5.1.6.1. When reviewing and consider the outcomes for the client, the following is to be considered:

- 5.1.6.1.1. Evaluate the outcome for the complainant; ask yourself/the team for reflective feedback and document;
- 5.1.6.1.2. Enquire if there are issues or problems which could be repeated;
- 5.1.6.1.3. Enquire if there was a delay in resolving the complaint;
- 5.1.6.1.4. Enquire if policies and procedures could be improved as a result of this complaint and subsequent outcomes.

5.2. Notifiable Events

5.2.1. If the complaint or appeal is a notifiable event; please refer to the below relevant procedure:

- 5.2.1.1. Early Childhood Notifiable Events Procedure
- 5.2.1.2. Client Services Notifiable Events Procedure
- 5.2.1.3. Aged Care Notifiable Events Procedure

5.3. External Supports

1.1.1.2. Complaints and Appeals Policy 4.6.1 For some Northside services or types of complaints, you may be able to make a complaint to an external body, if you are not happy with the response or outcome you have received from Northside.

Document Type: Procedure	Doc Ref No: SHAR-SERV-PRO-01	Distribution: Shared Services
Version No.: V3	Effective Date: 08/2024	Northside Community Service

SHAR-SER-PRO- 01

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS PROCEDURE



5.3.1. If the client is dissatisfied with the response or outcome they have received from Northside; please see **Complaints and Appeals Policy** for other external support services available.

5.4. Record Keeping

5.4.1. All Complaints and Appeals are to be lodged internally via the incident reporting system.

5.4.2. Copies of all documentation relating to the complaint is to be uploaded to or kept within the client's appropriate profile/file.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

6.1. Roles and Responsibilities are detailed below:

6.1.1. Northside Community Service

6.1.1.1. Ensuring that this policy follows the requirements of the Open Disclosure Framework.

6.1.1.2. Ensuring policies are subject to regular review.

6.1.2. General Managers

6.1.2.1. Ensure a fair and supportive process is followed.

6.1.2.2. All complaints and appeals are taken seriously.

6.1.2.3. Where disclosed, all matters of misconduct are reported to the relevant regulatory bodies.

6.1.2.4. Ensure all Northside employees are notified of any changes to policies and procedures.

6.1.2.5. Ensure policies and procedures are kept available and accessible to employees.

6.1.3. Managers/Supervisors

Document Type: Procedure	Doc Ref No: SHAR-SERV-PRO-01	Distribution: Shared Services
Version No.: V3	Effective Date: 08/2024	Northside Community Service

SHAR-SER-PRO- 01

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS PROCEDURE

6.1.3.1. Address complaints and appeals promptly, escalate complex cases, and foster a supportive team environment.

6.1.3.2. Supporting employees to understand and follow policies and procedures.

6.1.4. Employees

6.1.4.1. Following policies and procedures.

6.1.4.2. Treating others with dignity and respect at all times

6.1.4.3. Ensuring the privacy and confidentiality of others.

6.1.4.4. Raise issues promptly.

6.1.4.5. Co-operate in investigations.

7. Associated Northside Forms & Documents

7.1. Associated Northside Documents

7.1.1. **Feedback Form**

7.1.2. **Service User Code of Conduct**

7.1.3. **Privacy and Confidentiality Policy**

7.1.4. **Grievance Policy**

7.1.5. **Early Childhood Notifiable Events Procedure**

7.1.6. **Client Services Notifiable Events Procedure**

7.1.7. **Aged Care Notifiable Events Procedure**

7.2. Additional Associated Documents

7.2.1. [Children’s Education and Care Assurance \(CECA\)](#)

7.2.2. [Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority \(ACECQA\);](#)

Document Type: Procedure	Doc Ref No: SHAR-SERV-PRO-01	Distribution: Shared Services
Version No.: V3	Effective Date: 08/2024	Northside Community Service

SHAR-SER-PRO- 01

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS PROCEDURE

- 7.2.3. [ACI: Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission \(ACQSC\);](#)
- 7.2.4. [Housing: National Regulatory System Community Housing \(NRSCH\);](#)
- 7.2.5. [Youth and Engagement: ACT Community Services.](#)
- 7.2.6. [Open Disclosure Framework](#)

8. Definitions

- 8.1. **Northside:** Northside Community Service, including all Services operated by both Community Services and Children’s Services business units.
- 8.2. **Employee:** means the employees of Northside, and contractors, sub-contractors and consultants employed by Northside, apprentice or trainee, student gaining work experience, and volunteer, whilst they are on Northside property or engaged on Northside business.
- 8.3. **Client/s:** is/are the person receiving Northside services in any program areas, including children’s services, Aged Care and Inclusion, Housing, Youth and Engagement, and other shared program areas.
- 8.4. **Appeal:** is an expression of dissatisfaction requested by a tenant, applicant, or their representative for a review of a decision made by Northside.
- 8.5. **Appellant:** is the person appealing or whom the appeal is being made on behalf of.
- 8.6. **Complaint:** is an expression of dissatisfaction made by tenant, applicant, stakeholder or their representative with the services provided by Northside. Reasons for complaints might include but not limited to:
 - 8.6.1. Inappropriate behaviour by Northside employee;
 - 8.6.2. Northside employee not following the Policy;
 - 8.6.3. Poor delivery of service from Northside employee such as not returning phone calls, not recording changes in circumstances, or not sending out appropriate forms;
 - 8.6.4. Fail to provide a service or an aspect of a service;
 - 8.6.5. Provide an inconsistent or inaccurate service such as responding differently in different circumstances or providing incorrect advice on Northside Policy.

Document Type: Procedure	Doc Ref No: SHAR-SERV-PRO-01	Distribution: Shared Services
Version No.: V3	Effective Date: 08/2024	Northside Community Service

SHAR-SER-PRO- 01

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS PROCEDURE



- 8.7. **Complainant:** is the person who makes the complaint.
- 8.8. **External Appeals and Complaints:** are the appeals or complaints made against Northside decisions to an external agency with powers to review that decision, including referrals to external bodies when complainants are dissatisfied with Northside’s response.
- 8.9. **Formal Appeals and Complaints:** are appeals or complaints made against Northside decisions that require formal investigation and response by Northside.
- 8.10. **Informal Appeals and Complaints:** are minor appeals or complaints that can be managed directly and promptly by suitably trained employee in an informal manner.
- 8.11. **Notifiable Events:** are the certain events or incidents that damage, or have the potential to damage, the reputation of the sector and cause harm to those involved.
- 8.12. **Representative:** is the person assisting an applicant or tenant or acting on behalf of an applicant or tenant, including but not limited to a tenant advocate, a family member, or a friend of the applicant or tenant.
- 8.13. **Vexatious Complaints:** are the complaints initiated without sufficient grounds or evidence with the intention of causing disruption, harm, or damage to a person or Northside.

Document Type: Procedure	Doc Ref No: SHAR-SERV-PRO-01	Distribution: Shared Services
Version No.: V3	Effective Date: 08/2024	Northside Community Service