

Wellington City Mission Policy Document

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Feedback and complaints

"I feel welcome and encouraged to give feedback whether negative or positive."

Nāku tē rourou nau tē rourou ka ora ai tē iwi.
With your basket and my basket the people will thrive

Intent

Complaints will be resolved carefully and promptly with a focus on early resolution. We will learn from the feedback and complaints we receive.

People will be informed of their right to complain and about the complaints process on entry to the service.

Complaints will be dealt with equitably, fairly, and in an unbiased way. Rights to rangatiratanga and equality for Māori under Te Tiriti of Waitangi will be respected in the resolution process.

Incident management policy and processes will also apply if a complaint of harm in the course of our service/treatment is received.

Responsibilities

The Board will:

- promote a culture that encourages, responds and learns from feedback and complaints
- support follow up on systemic issues identified through complaints.

Management will:

- lead a culture that is positive about and learns from feedback and complaints
- manage feedback and complaints processes and delegate responsibility for receiving and responding to them
- check, through monitoring and analysis of complaints data, that processes support equitable access and outcomes for Māori
- ensure kaimahi have skills and training to adequately support use of the feedback and complaints process
- report to the board about the feedback and complaints.

Kaimahi/volunteers will:

- when necessary, support or arrange support for people wanting to make a complaint or give feedback
- engage in reflective and responsive practice
- cooperate in the investigation of complaints.

Definitions

"Complainant" is a person who makes a complaint.

A "complaint" is feedback expressing dissatisfaction with the standard, type or way in which a service is provided, or not provided, changed or withdrawn. It may be a complaint about a breach of privacy or how the organisation responded to a conflict of rights.

"Feedback" is information about a personal/whānau experience or reaction to our service. It includes suggestions and compliments. It may be an informal complaint that provides opportunity for service improvement and will be recorded in the Feedback and Complaint register.

"Privacy officer" is a role that is performed by the manager or a delegated staff member. See [here](#) for their role and functions.

"Stakeholders" refers to external people and agencies that have a stake/interest in WCM.

Principles for complaints resolution

These principles must be applied when dealing with complaints:

Early resolution - complaints will be addressed in an early and timely way to prevent undue escalation and deterioration of relationships. Ideally, complaints are addressed as they are raised.

Open and transparent - we advise complainants of the process, expected time frames for the process, their likely involvement and possible or likely outcomes. We are clear about what can and can't be done and pass on complaints about other organisations with the complainant's consent.

Respect – complaints are promptly acknowledged. The views and input of parties will be respected and if appropriate, Tikanga Māori observed.

Protection of rights – parties to the complaint must be advised of their rights and given the information they need to exercise those rights including:

- their right to participate
- access support and advocacy
- a fair and impartial investigation and decision
- not be adversely treated for making a complaint.

Information - the parties must be kept informed through the process and given reasons for the decision on the complaint. The information will be provided in a way that is understandable to each party having regard to that person's age, level of understanding, language and culture needs, abilities/disabilities. Personal information will only be shared when allowed by the law and policy.

Support - parties are encouraged to access support and advocacy throughout the complaints process (eg whanaunga, kaumātua, Kuia, Health and Disability Commissioner, Disability support, union representation, community law centre, VOYCE for rangatahi in care, Mana Mokopuna/ Children & Young Person's Commission). People living with dementia or cognitive disabilities and care partners will be supported to participate in the processes.

Requirements

Complaint-friendly culture

A positive approach to feedback and complaints will be promoted:

- people are informed about our feedback and complaints processes in different ways
- feedback is routinely sought and received in our mahi
- staff have the training/skills to support people with their complaints including tamariki/rangatahi
- information about independent advocacy and support agencies will be available
- we reply to feedback and complaints we receive.

Accessible processes

Different avenues are provided to give feedback and make complaints, for example:

- clients/whānau and other stakeholders are encouraged to raise issues with kaimahi as they arise
- we regularly ask for feedback from those we are working with
- we inform clients/whānau about external and independent complaint and advocacy mechanisms (eg Human Rights Commission, Officer of the Privacy Commissioner, Health and Disability Commissioner, Commissioner for Children)
- we may have specifically designated staff to deal with complaints, including privacy complaints.

Facilitate support and assistance

Support will be provided to people wanting to give feedback or make a complaint. It must be appropriate to their needs and wishes (eg developmentally appropriate for a rangatahi; culturally appropriate).

When making a complaint, complainants will be encouraged to provide full details along with any relevant documentation eg names of people, a timeline of events.

If a complainant nominates a person to represent them with their complaint, communication will be with their representative.

Manage “unreasonable” complaints

Complaints will be addressed with integrity and good faith. However, a complaint will not be progressed if it is vexatious, abusive or otherwise unreasonable. Management will advise the complainant and other parties of any decision to this effect.

Use the complaints process

The complaints process will be used for dealing with a complaint unless otherwise specified.

If a complaint raises concerns about child abuse or abuse of a vulnerable adult the Abuse and Protection policies and processes will apply. Arrangements will be made, if necessary, to safeguard the complainant and any other person potentially at risk.

Complaints will usually be in writing unless otherwise agreed.

If a verbal complaint is made to a staff member, it must be recorded and forwarded to management or their delegate in a timely way.

Unless otherwise specified, a complaint will be acknowledged in writing within 5 days of receipt and finalised within 20 days of receipt. The complainant will be advised and kept informed of progress if there is a delay in dealing with it.

The investigation of a complaint will be written up with conclusions, reasons and recommended follow up. The investigation must be conducted fairly and impartially. Interviews and communications during the investigation must be properly documented.

The Complainant and any involved staff will be sent a letter outlining the decision on the complaint, a copy of the investigation report and findings.

A copy of the investigation report will be given to the staff involved, and a copy included in the client's file.

The Social Media policy will be applied to feedback and complaints made through social media channels.

Follow up

Feedback and complaints we receive will be tracked and recorded, for example:

- a complaints and feedback register, or
- a complaint about risk - in the risk register, or
- a complaint about an adverse incident - in the Incident/accident register.

Feedback should be passed on to those it concerns and a response given to the person who gave the feedback.

Review

Feedback should be obtained about how a complaint was handled. If a party is not satisfied with the complaint process, they will be advised of their right to:

- seek an internal review of the process by someone not involved in the complaint, or
- ask for the complaint to be referred to and reconsidered by the higher management (eg board).
- If they are not satisfied with the internal review process, they can complain to an external body for example:
 - Health and Disability Commissioner
 - the Office of the Privacy Commissioner (if the complaint concerns privacy); phone 0800 803 909 Monday to Friday, 10:00 am to 3:00 pm)
 - a relevant professional membership organisation (ie one to which our staff belong)
 - the funding or regulatory agency.

WCM complaint form

If a complaint is received and is not immediately resolvable, the complainant will be offered and supported to complete a complaint form. The following must be recorded:

- time and date complaint received
- signature and the designation of the person reporting the complaint
- a short explanation of the complaint will be included also.

An Incident/Accident form must be completed by the staff member who takes the complaint and sent with the complaint to management.

Access to Independent Disputes Service

A complainant may complain to the Transitional Housing Independent Disputes Service (IDR Service) if they are not happy with how their complaint is dealt with and if:

- they are or were a party to a Housing Agreement; and
- the alleged action/inaction complained of occurred during the term of the Housing Agreement and after 1 December 2023; and
- if the complaint is about an alleged breach or an alleged invalid term of the Housing Agreement; and
- the complaint is lodged with the IDR Service within 15 days of the complainant being informed of the outcome (unless an extension to complain is given by the IDR Service); and
- the complainant has not made the same complaint previously about the same matter (unless a new instance of the issue has occurred).

Complaints that cannot be considered

The IDR Service will not consider a complaint about a security deposit or a Housing Contribution and may decline to consider, or stop considering, a complaint if it is satisfied that:

- the complaint has no reasonable prospect of success; or
- the complaint is frivolous or vexatious, or
- the complainant is not pursuing the complaint matter in a reasonable way.

The IDR Service

See here about the IDR Service purpose and processes

See here for FAQ about IDR Service

Helpful links

Complaints process

Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights

Quality improvement or Quality & Risk

Compliance

Social Sector Accreditation Standards Level 2, Client-centred services 1.1, 1.4; Resolution of complaints related to service provision; Community wellbeing 1.0

Social Sector Accreditation Standards Levels 3& 4, Resolution of complaints related to service provision 1.0

NZS 8134:2021 Our Rights, Criterion 1.8

Privacy Act 2020

Health Information Privacy Code 2020

Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights, Right 10

Review

Date: March 2025

Next review: February 2027

Responsibility: Chris Stewart

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