



Complaint Policy Client and Community

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework for prompt, consistent, fair and confidential handling of complaints from clients and the community. Its implementation is described in the Complaint Procedure (Client and Community). The policy is based on the principle that complaints and feedback provide an opportunity to improve services and programs and to address any concerns of the public, clients and others affected by Hut services and programs. It acknowledges the right of service and program users to complain or comment

Definitions

Complainant	The person making a complaint
Complaint	An expression of dissatisfaction made either orally or in writing about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by The Hut or its staff affecting the individual customer or group of customers.
Formal Complaint	A complaint where the complainant wishes the issue to be referred to management, and any complaint that relates to Hut policy, procedures, staff or individual and public safety.
Informal Complaint	A comment on an operational matter that can be readily resolved by a program coordinator or staff member of the program or service concerned.
Staff	Paid employees and volunteers.

Background

The Health and Community Services Complaints Act 2004 provides for a Charter of Community Service User's Rights. The Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner (HCSCC) Charter was developed to fulfil this legislative requirement. The Charter sets out the rights of people who use a wide range of health and community services in the public, private and non-government sectors in South Australia. As well as the family members, carers and nominees who act on behalf of a person using a service.

The HCSCC Charter is based on:

- principles that recognise diversity and support customers and clients in decision making (with the exception of any legal orders that may apply) and
- a partnership approach including mutual respect.

The Charter presents a list of customer /client rights which are in line with the values of The Hut.

Policy

- Information on The Hut's Complaint Policy and Procedure will be easily accessible by all Service and Program Users and the general community.
- Where a funding body requires a separate complaints process that is program specific (e.g. No Interest Loan Scheme) Service and/or Program users will be advised.
- Staff will receive information and training on the Complaint Policy and Procedure relevant to their role.
- Informal complaints can be managed at the first point of contact where it is within the capacity and role of the Staff member, with outcomes reported to management.
- Formal complaints will be managed by the EO, CDM, or the Chair or Board in the first instance as applicable, which may involve appointment of an independent complaints or grievance officer.
- Complaints can be made either in person or in writing.
- The complainant will be informed of outcomes of the complaint and any changes to policy, procedures, services or programs as a result of their complaint.
- Records of complaints will be maintained and monitored for ongoing trends, and to inform improvement activities.
- All formal complaints received will be reported to the next Board meeting with due attention to the commitment to confidentiality.
- If a complaint cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant, they will be advised of their right to refer to an external agency such as the Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner (HCSCC), or the Adelaide Hills Council (HACC clients).

Responsibilities

The EO is responsible for maintaining records of complaints and reporting outcomes to the Board.

References

Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (South Australia)
Health and Community Services Complaints Act 2004

Policy Approved (Board Chair)		Date 10/06/2016
Signature		Deborah Turnbull
Date for review 01/03/2019	Responsibility	Hut Board
To be reviews every 3 years		



Complaint Procedure – Client and Community

Documentation

Comments and Complaints Brochure
Service and Program User Rights and Responsibilities Handout
Complaint Form
Complaint Register
Complaint Policy – client /community

Procedure

The Hut places great importance on creating and maintaining good relations with service and program users and the community. Where an issue is raised The Hut aims to deal with it quickly and effectively.

General guidelines:

- Complaints will be received positively. Staff will display empathy, listen to the complaint and be open to resolution.
- In the face of threatening or abusive behaviour staff should not continue to try to resolve the complaint but summon aid and support.
- Service and program users are provided with information on the Complaints Procedure. Information is included on The Hut website, through brochures at site and provided as part of program and service intake information.
- A complaint can be made in person or in writing. Written complaints should be marked 'Confidential' and addressed to the appropriate person - Program Coordinator, CDM, EO, Chairperson or the Board.
- Informal (minor and operational) complaints can be managed at the first point of contact and is the preferred option if possible and agreed to by the complainant.
- All staff can assist the complainant with complaints within their capacity and role.
- Formal complaints will be managed by the Community Development Manager (CDM) or Executive Officer (EO), who may refer the management of the complaint to an independent Complaints Officer (currently the Mt Barker Community House Complaints Officer). Complaints relating to Hut policy or governance matters should be referred to the EO, who will direct them to the independent Complaints Officer and or the Chairperson of The Board.

- If the complaint is against the EO, it should be directed to the Chairperson of the Board who will determine if it is managed by the Independent Complaints Officer.

To follow are the steps in the Complaint procedure:

A service or program user or community member raises a concern with any member of The Hut staff. Staff identifies the nature of the complaint. An informal complaint is a comment on an operational matter that can readily be resolved by a program coordinator or staff member. A formal complaint is one where the complainant wishes the issue to be referred to management or one that relates to Hut policy, procedures, staff or individual and public safety.

If the complaint is identified as informal:

- if the complainant agrees that the complaint can be managed at the point of contact:
 - the staff member should listen and discuss the complaint and if possible resolve the complaint immediately;
 - staff offer the complainant the opportunity to be supported by a representative of their choice. (family member or interpreter);
 - staff refer the outcomes of resolved informal complaints to the Program Coordinator who will record the complaint and outcome on the Complaint Form and forward to the EO or CDM, this record should include any propositions for change to reduce the potential for future similar complaints;
 - the EO will record the complaint and outcome on the Complaint Register.

If the complaint is identified as being formal:

- the staff member with support from the Program Coordinator should complete the Complaint Form and attach any written complaint or supporting documents;
- staff should provide the complainant with The Hut Complaints and Comments Brochure and inform the complainant that they should expect a response from management within seven days;
- the Complaint Form should be forwarded to the EO or CDM the same working day.

Formal Complaints

The complainant is contacted within seven days and informed an investigation into their complaint will occur and that they will be contacted within 15 days. Investigation of the complaint may involve the Complaints Officer calling witnesses, written reports and or expert opinion.

If the complaint is not resolved within 15 days, the complainant will be informed that the complaint is to be referred to the Chairperson and or the Board, where a decision will be made within 7 days and communicated to the complainant.

Unresolved Complaints

If the complaint cannot be resolved by the Independent Complaints Officer, EO or Board, or the complainant is unhappy with the outcome, the complainant has the right to involve an external agency. This includes the Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner (HCSCC) or the Adelaide Hills Council if they have a responsibility or interest in the complaint.

A list of other external agencies is included on the Complaints and Comments Brochure.

Monitoring and Improvements

All complaints will be reported to the Board at the next meeting as part of the EO report.

The Complaint Register will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to note any evolving trends in complaints and subsequent improvement activities required.

Procedure Approved (Board Chair)		Date...../...../2016
Signature		
Date for review 01/03/2019	Responsibility	Hut Board-
To be reviews every 3 years		