

GOV – Complaints Management

POLICY STATEMENT

Headway Gippsland will implement and maintain a system to manage and resolve complaints about the supports and services we provide. Our complaints management and resolution system will ensure that people can easily make a complaint and that all complaints are dealt with fairly and quickly.

We will ensure people are provided with information about how to make a complaint to Headway Gippsland and the Commissioner and will keep records about complaints that we receive. Headway Gippsland actively supports a participant's rights to complain about any aspect of the care and services provided. We recognise that feedback, both positive and negative, is essential in providing a quality service that best suits the needs of the participant.

All complaints will be dealt with promptly, fairly, confidentially and without fear of retribution. The complaints procedure allows a fair and equitable process for dealing with complaints or disputes. Headway Gippsland considers a complaint to have occurred when a participant or their representative expresses dissatisfaction or concern with the service provided, the environment or way in which a service has been provided and/or the staff who have provided a service. People will be supported to access an independent advocate of their choice when making a complaint. Staff will be provided with information and training in the management of complaints and are required to comply with this procedure.

Records of complaints will be maintained confidentially and retained for seven years.

PROCEDURE

COMPLAINTS PROCESS

The complaints procedure will be explained to participants and/or their advocate on initial assessment and reinforced during formal service reviews.

Participants or their representatives will be given a copy of the Participant information handbook which includes complaints and feedback processes including contacting the Commissioner.

Complaints can be made verbally, and/or in writing via the form accessible on the website, or other written correspondence.

Participants are encouraged to discuss concerns with the staff member involved for a prompt resolution.

If a staff member receives a complaint, they should communicate this to the Chief Executive Officer even in the event they may have resolved it.

The Chief Executive Officer can be freely contacted to discuss issues or concerns where the participant is not comfortable talking to the staff member or is not satisfied with the outcome. They will do their utmost to resolve the complaint.

Participants will be supported to choose the organisational representative they wish to deal with when making a complaint.

Where a person wished to make a complaint to the Commissioner, Headway Gippsland staff will support them to access an external advocate.

GOV – Complaints Management

On receipt of a complaint the Chief Executive Officer will gather factual information regarding the complaint and options for complaint resolution will be discussed. The complainant will be reassured that there will be no retribution for making the complaint and affirm that complaints and their resolution are taken seriously and dealt with objectively, fairly, promptly and without bias.

Complaints are documented on a complaints form if not received in writing; logged in the Continuous improvement register and verbally acknowledged within 2 working days.

Headway Gippsland will endeavour to investigate and resolve complaints within 28 days of acknowledgement. Written feedback will be given to the complainant about the action taken and outcome.

In the event the Chief Executive Officer cannot reach a resolution with the participant, the participant will be reminded they are able to contact an external complaints resolution body and/or Dispute Resolution within Headway Gippsland can be implemented.

Complaints Review

The Chief Executive Officer will review all complaints on a regular basis to ensure that they have been dealt with promptly, fairly and appropriately; and any changes in practice have been implemented.

Statistical data will be reviewed at the Meeting to support Headway Gippsland managers to:

- identify and address systemic issues raised through the complaint's management and resolution process; and
- report information relating to complaints to the Commissioner, if requested to do so by the Commissioner.

Dispute Resolution

A number of options are available should a dispute arise between a participant, their representative and Headway Gippsland Inc. All parties will be consulted, informed and negotiations undertaken until a mutually accepted resolution is reached.

The Chief Executive Officer will commence an immediate investigation of the complaint and maintain communication with the complainant if details are available.

The Chief Executive Officer will also ensure that staff involved in the complaint are kept informed of progress being made.

Throughout the resolution process the Chief Executive Officer will keep confidential records of all formal discussions and outcomes.

GOV – Complaints Management

Appeals

An appeal can be defined as:

A request by a participant for reconsideration of any adverse decision made by Headway Gippsland. This can include but is not limited to:

- Refusal to accept a request for service
- Decisions to deny, suspend or withdraw services
- Any other action that impedes the persons rights.

All appeals must be made in writing to the Chief Executive Officer.

The Chief Executive Officer will acknowledge receipt of any appeal and contact the participant to ensure the nature of the appeal is fully understood. The appellant will be provided with ongoing progress reports at a minimum weekly. This initial contact may lead to a satisfactory resolution. Where resolution is achieved, the conversation is documented and the appeal is considered closed.

If unresolved and following investigation by the Chief Executive Officer or a management representative, a meeting will be held where all evidence from all parties will be heard in confidence. External parties may be involved should resolution not be satisfactory.

Headway Gippsland will maintain a Continuous improvement register, in order to document any appeals received, as well as Headway Gippsland response in relation to each appeal.

Complaints and Appeals will be kept confidential.

Complaints and Incident Reporting

Where a complaint raises an issue that is an incident, or a reportable incident staff and managers must also follow the Process for Incident reporting.

REFERENCES

National Disability Insurance Scheme (Complaints Management and Resolution) Rules 2018.

National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2024.

National Disability Insurance Scheme (Incident Management and Reportable Incidents) Rules 2018)