

## Feedback Policy

Policy Area	Corporate Services
Policy Owner	EMBGS
Date Reviewed	16 March 2021
Next Review	16 March 2024

### Purpose & Scope

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance for the management of feedback and complaints to ensure the existence of a transparent and accessible process through which clients, including children and young people, stakeholders, staff members or members of the community can communicate any complaints regarding WHFS services or operations.

The organisation acknowledges that feedback and complaints can provide useful insight and therefore values the participation of clients and members of the community in developing and improving services. WHFS is committed to:

- enabling WHFS to benefit from all feedback and complaints ensuring that they are recorded, considered, resolved, and monitored.
- ensuring that clients, stakeholders, staff members or members of the community are aware of the content of this policy and relevant feedback process.
- ensuring that the complaints process is a mechanism to highlight areas for improvement in service delivery.
- ensuring WHFS use complaints and other feedback data to improve and develop its services and relevant policies and procedures are updated as required to reflect new improvements.

This policy applies to WHFS staff including employees, board members, students, volunteers, and anyone who represents WHFS.

### Policy Statement

WHFS aims to ensure that the delivery of its services is always of the highest quality and respects and promotes the right of individuals to express concerns or problems and/or lodge complaints identifying any dissatisfaction.

WHFS is committed to responding to feedback and complaints in a transparent, open and efficient manner and ensuring that all clients, children and young people, staff members, parents and carers feel they are supported in making feedback and complaints.

### Key Definitions

Feedback	is any compliment, comment and complaint
Complaint	is any expression (written or verbal) of dissatisfaction with WHFS policies, procedures, charges, conduct of employees or volunteers, quality of service, and/or its services or dealings with individuals, another client at the organisation, or the handling of a prior concern
Complainant	means a person who makes a formal complaint
Minor Issue	means minor dissatisfaction including a misunderstanding, an error in records or lack of advice
Assisting Staff	means staff member to whom a complaint is made
Service Provider	Partner agencies and/or shared client service providers

## Complaints Process

Complaints can be written or verbal and the process of investigation is the same. How a complaint is made, however, may be dependent on the age or ability of the complainant to provide the details. Any documentation gathered and retained during the complaints process must be provided to the office of the CEO for record keeping and all information relating to complaint must remain confidential to those involved in the formal process.

### Early Resolution

WHFS acknowledges the most effective way to resolve a minor, straightforward issue or concern is to discuss it with the complainant. WHFS encourages staff, as relevant to their role and responsibilities, to do this in person or by telephone wherever possible.

Staff have authority to obtain necessary information to assess the validity of and resolve minor issues or concerns, wherever possible.

If the matter is dealt with to the satisfaction of the complainant at this stage, the issues or concerns do not need to be recorded as a complaint under this Policy.

Only when this process is unsuccessful in resolving an issue or concern to the satisfaction of the complainant, should a formal complaint be lodged for investigation.

### Administration

WHFS will:

- Keep a confidential record of complaints on a Complaints Register including the outcomes and all documentation associated with the complaint, in a secure folder by the office of the CEO.
- Maintain a formal complaints process to ensure that all complaints are responded to in a timely and impartial fashion.

- Ensure that all feedback, suggestions for improvement and complaints are recorded, considered and retained for improvement purposes.
- Encourage any clients, stakeholders, staff or members of the community who have a complaint in relation to services or to the actions of one of its staff members, which is unresolved through early resolution, to express this through the formal complaints procedure.
- Assist women, children or young persons with low literacy or from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD) backgrounds who may require assistance to detail complaints.
- Ensure that the complainant is informed of the right to have a support person or advocate present to assist or represent them during the formal complaints process.
- Ensure investigations are planned, fair, proportionate and thorough, with findings supported by the available evidence.
- Ensure that the complaint investigation process is impartial, no assumptions made nor any action taken until all relevant information has been collected and considered.
- Ensure where a complaint is made by a child or young person, an adult's opinion is not prioritized over a child's in the event that they differ and children and young people are listened to without judgement and their views taken seriously.
- Ensure that any complaint is free of repercussions for the complainant. Management will take all necessary steps to ensure that no victimisation occurs against anyone who makes a complaint.
- Ensure the outcome, the reasons for the outcome and options for resolution and improvements (where applicable), are clearly explained to the complainant and subject of the complaint.
- Ensure that all employees are aware of this policy and relevant procedure.

### **Complaints by Children and Young People**

Children and young people are encouraged to complain or detail any dissatisfaction verbally, in writing, by email or use of child friendly complaints form in order to make it easy and comfortable for them to do so. Posters advising children and young people how to make complaints will be displayed in the front reception and in rooms where children and young people participate in activities. The posters will detail timeframes, confidentiality and advise children how they can elect to be kept informed.

While children and young people are not required to complete forms, 'child friendly' complaint forms are available on WHFS website and any complaint will be handled in the same manner as described in Administration and Investigation sections of this policy.

### **Verbal Complaints**

The organisation commits to considering verbal complaints seriously and acknowledges the complainant's courage in voicing the complaint.

The staff member to whom the complaint is made (assisting staff) will document the complaint on the WHFS Feedback online– Employee Assisted, requiring either the complainant or assisting employee to record this on the online form.

Responsibility for taking immediate action on a verbal complaint rests with the assisting staff. This may include:

- Assisting to clarify the complaint or concern.
- Completing online Form and checking accuracy with the complainant.
- Providing the details of the complaint to their reporting supervisor/manager.

### **Written Complaints**

All written complaints for investigation are to be promptly directed to the relevant Coordinator/Manager/Executive Manager. The Coordinator/Manager/Executive Manager is responsible for managing written complaints and will take the necessary action to resolve the complaint.

WHFS commits to the following actions:

- Online feedback form on the WHFS website is available 24/7 for anyone who wish to make a complaint
- Complaints will be responded to in writing within 5 working days.
- The relevant Coordinators/Manager/Executive Manager will be responsible for informing any employee/s involved.
- A process of de-briefing employees and informing them of access to appropriate counselling services will be undertaken when deemed necessary by the relevant Coordinators/Manager/Executive Manager.
- Where a complaint is made by a client, the client will be assured of their continued access to services provided by WHFS and alternative services or employees (if available) offered.
- Where a complaint is not resolved to the satisfaction of a client, they will be advised that the matter can be taken up with the Office of Health Review or the appropriate professional body for example:
  - the Australian Medical Board,
  - the WA Nurses Board,
  - the Australian Association of Social Workers Limited,
  - the Australian Psychologists Board.
- An independent mediator may be used if requested by any party.
- Full and accurate records about complaints are kept, in line with legislative and record-keeping requirements including The State Records Act 2000.

### **Investigation and Resolution**

The CEO is ultimately responsible for the investigation of a complaint, but may delegate activities accordingly. Action to resolve a complaint will commence within 5 working days of the complaint being made, this includes contacting the complainant.

Only the people directly involved in making, investigating or resolving a complaint will have access to information about it. Where the complainant is a client, no information will be documented in the client's file without consent.

In the investigation of a complaint, employees who may be the subject of the complaint will be given adequate opportunity to state their case and be involved in resolving the complaint, where possible.

WHFS recognises the right of individuals to approach an external agency if the formal complaints procedure has not resolved the issue to their satisfaction.

The final outcome of a complaint is the responsibility of the CEO. The outcome, the reasons and options for resolution are to be clearly explained to the complainant and subject of the complaint.

### **Communication**

Clients will be informed of their rights and responsibilities (Mutual Respect Agreement) when they first arrive at WHFS as a new client and by signage on notice boards in premises occupied by the organisation. This includes the right to access a fair complaints process.

The organisation encourages communication from stakeholders including children and young persons through the online feedback form. All comments/suggestions are directed to Human Resources Department who will discuss with the relevant Executive Managers and/or CEO actions to be taken.

All feedback received by children or young persons will be considered without judgement and their views taken seriously.

### **Complaints involving External Service Providers**

WHFS responds to complaints not only about the actions of its employees but also the actions of other service providers. Where WHFS services are contracted out, WHFS anticipates contracted service providers have an accessible complaint management system.

Where a complaint involves external service providers, WHFS will work with the other service providers, where possible, to ensure that communication with the individual making a complaint and/or their representative is clear and coordinated.

When feedback from a client regarding an external service provider is received and identified as a complaint, the process as set out in this Policy should be followed.

### **Managing Unreasonable Conduct**

WHFS is committed to being accessible and responsive to all individuals who provide feedback or complaints.

When, however, individuals behave unreasonably in their dealings with WHFS staff, Management will take decisive action to manage any conduct negatively affecting the health, safety and security of its employees. WHFS supports its staff to do the same in accordance with this Policy.

### **Matters involving a Police Investigation or Possible Serious Criminal Conduct**

If WHFS becomes aware that a matter involves a Police investigation or possible serious criminal conduct, the CEO or their delegate must be informed immediately and no further action taken until the CEO's advice is received.

Conduct will be referred to the Police if the CEO determines that referral to a law enforcement agency is required. If a complaint is currently being investigated by the Police, any further action by WHFS will be undertaken on advice from the Police. Further, if a matter involves a Police investigation, the CEO is responsible for liaison with the Police or delegation of any liaison with the police and will determine the extent to which any WHFS resolution process or investigation can proceed.

The CEO may direct that a client involved in conduct that could, if proven, amount to serious criminal conduct, not attend WHFS premises or, if an employee, be suspended from their employment (as per the WHFS EBA).

If, after discussions with Police, the investigation proceeds, any record documenting the outcome of the process or communications about the outcome must be approved by the CEO.

## **Responsibilities**

This Policy is the responsibility of the Office of the CEO and will be reviewed in accordance to WHFS policy review process. Where a staff member becomes aware of a complaint that relates to WHFS, the situation and circumstances should be reported immediately to their relevant Manager/Executive Manager. The Manager/Executive Manager should promptly advise the CEO.

## **Related Policies and Procedures**

Online Feedback Form Mutual Respect Agreement  
Complaints and Feedback Child Friendly Poster