



1.5 COMPLAINTS POLICY

Policy Statement:

Interchange Inner East is committed to ensuring any complaints regarding the services provided are managed in accordance with the requirements of the Disability Act 2006 and in accordance with the guidelines for Complaints Management under the Office of the Disability Services Commissioner. Interchange Inner East encourages a culture of open communication which is both responsive and accountable in relation to any grievance or complaint.

Definition of a complaint:

For the purpose of this policy a complaint means an expression of unhappiness or dissatisfaction with a situation or any services or failure to provide services.

A complaint can:

- relate to a specific occurrence or episode,
- be an issue that has had an impact on an individual or a group.

Complaints will be managed in accordance with the following principles:

- That mutual respect, responsiveness, accountability and transparency underpin the processes by which Interchange Inner East seek to resolve any complaints / grievances.
- That Interchange Inner East' clients/families benefit from a service which encourages feedback and the raising of any issues of concern.
- That encouraging a culture in which 'it's ok to complain' provides the feedback necessary to enable Interchange to develop and improve services.

Procedure:

Information about complaint resolution for clients and care givers

Interchange Inner East will promote a culture in which it's ok to complain through display and distribution of the Disability Services Commissioner campaign brochure 'It's ok to complain' -a copy will be provided to all families on registering with Interchange.

Participants, families and volunteers will be reminded on a cyclical basis, through the organisational newsletter, of the existence and purpose of the Disability Services Commissioner and Interchanges' Complaints Policy and Procedures and how to obtain a copy of the policy.

An accessible, easy to follow, flow chart for the making of a complaint, will be provided to clients/families.

Access to Advocacy support for making a complaint or lodging an appeal against a decision

Interchange Inner East will inform clients and families of their right to use an advocate of their choice, or the support of an Advocacy Service, to assist with making a complaint or lodging an appeal against a decision.

Recording a complaint

Any client, care giver or family member on behalf of a client, can lodge a complaint about the service. The staff member receiving the complaint has an obligation to make their Manager aware of the complaint.

All complaints will be documented in writing on reception by the Manager.

If there are complaints of a serious nature, the Senior Manager/Executive Officer will ask that the complaint be put in writing to the organisation.

Complaints will be recorded in accordance with the requirements for complaints management outlined by The Office of Disability Services Commissioner.

Client/family privacy will be respected and protected in relation to the recording, management and resolution of the complaint.

Reporting Complaints or Allegations of Physical or Sexual Assault

Physical or sexual assault constitutes a Category One, Critical **Incident and must be** immediately reported to the most senior staff member available or the Executive Officer. In the event of such an incident management and staff will be required to refer to/follow the Interchange Inner East "Incident Reporting Procedures" and the Victorian Government Department of Human Services Guidelines 'Responding to physical and Sexual Assault'. All suspected, actual or alleged incidents of physical or sexual assault must be reported immediately to the Supervising staff member and the Executive Officer who will respond in accordance with Government Guidelines.

Failure to Disclose Offence

Obligations to report sexual abuse or suspected abuse

Under the Crimes Amendment (Protection of Children) Act 2014 **it is now an offence for you NOT to disclose**

The required process for you to follow if you reasonably suspect sexual abuse during the course of your duty, as an employee/volunteer of Interchange Inner East is as follows:

- contact Senior Management - IIE Executive Officer or Manager of Programs to discuss your concerns
- complete an incident form (the Manager will assist you) - this will be treated as a Critical Client Incident, under Interchange Inner East and our government funding bodies' Incident Reporting requirements
- under this law, reporting child sexual abuse is your obligation
- Interchange Management will support you to meet your obligations as a worker in a funded service in relation to the Crimes Amendment (Protection of Children) Act 2014.
- remember your duty of care regarding privacy and confidentiality for our participants, families, staff and volunteers (i.e. do not discuss with your informal contacts or colleagues

Anonymous Complaints

We are unable to deal with anonymous complaints. This is because we are unable to investigate and follow-up such complaints. However, in the event that an anonymous complaint is received we will note the issues raised and, where appropriate, try to investigate and resolve them appropriately.

Complaints Management/Resolution

The Senior Manager/Executive Officer will investigate the complaint within 2 working days of having been made aware of it.

The investigation will include where appropriate;

- Contact with the person or the representative making the complaint
- Discussions with Interchange Inner East's staff directly involved in the issue
- Discussions with any witnesses or outside agencies involved
- A review of the circumstances leading to any event or situation related to the issue

- Discussions with all parties to enable the negotiation of a resolution of the issue and strategies to avoid recurrence
- A review of any policy or documents related to the issue
- A written report outlining the nature of the complaint, the impact on the client, the proposed resolution, and the action taken.

Where a complaint is believed to be unfounded or showing a misunderstanding, it will still be recorded and the appropriate comments will be written on the report.

Where a complaint has been lodged in writing, a written report will be sent to the person who has made it.

Any formal complaint made will be reported to the Committee of Management to enable them to monitor the organisations response, ensure a client focused approach and minimise the risk to the organisation.

Mediation

A complaint to the Disability Commissioner can be lodged at any time during this process but more specifically:

Where a person believes that a disability service provider has not properly investigated, or taken action on, a complaint which has been made to the disability service provider.

Current contact details of the Disability Services Commissioner will be provided in the Newsletter, in information to new clients/ families and available on request from Interchange. Interchange Inner East will be a willing participant in any mediation between clients, our service and the Office of the Disability Commissioner in order to come to resolve any ongoing grievance.

Reporting complaints

The Senior Manager/Executive Officer will assume the role of Complaints Officer at Interchange Inner East and will record complaints using the template provided as requested by the Disability Services Commissioner's Office. A 'non- identifying' report of all complaints received will be sent electronically to that office on an annual basis within the required timelines.

References/Related Documents:

IIE Privacy Policy/Complaints Management
IIE Incident Reporting Policy
1.11b DHHS Guideline Failure to Disclose Offence
1.5a Complaints Record
1.5b Complaints Flow Chart
It's Ok to Complain Brochure
It's Ok to Complain Accessible Format