COMPLAINTS AND FEEDBACK POLICY & PROCEDURE

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out Deaf Children Australia's (DCA) commitment to receiving, responding to, and learning from feedback and complaints. It ensures that all concerns are handled fairly, transparently, and in a way that promotes safety, inclusion, and continuous improvement.

This policy is designed to:

- Protect and uphold the rights of people engaging with DCA to raise concerns free from retribution, victimisation, or any form of adverse treatment.
- Provide clear, accessible, and culturally safe ways for people to share feedback or make complaints.
- Support a consistent, fair, and timely approach to resolving complaints and using them to improve services.

Scope

This policy applies to all Deaf Children Australia (DCA) programs, services, and activities, including specialist services and our Inclusive Employment Australia service, Sign For Work.

It covers:

- All participants, their families and carers, community members, employers, interpreters, and other external stakeholders who engage with DCA.
- All feedback and complaints about DCA services, whether positive or negative, formal or informal, anonymous or identified.

Policy Statement

- Feedback and complaints are welcomed and valued as opportunities to improve services.
- Participants and stakeholders are encouraged to raise concerns promptly so they can be addressed quickly and fairly.
- People have the right to raise complaints free from retribution, victimisation, or disadvantage.
- Complaints will be acknowledged within 2 business days and resolved as promptly as possible (aim: within 21 business days).
- Processes will be accessible and culturally safe (e.g. Auslan, interpreters, easy-read, online forms, QR codes, staff assistance).
- All feedback, whether positive or negative, will be recorded and shared appropriately to recognise good practice, address issues, and inform service improvements.
- Feedback and complaints contribute to continuous improvement through DCA's quality management systems, including staff input, monitoring, audits, and service reviews.
- Participants will be informed of their right to make a complaint and provided with clear information on how to do so at first contact, referral, registration, and at any time upon request. Copies of this policy and information about the complaints process will be available, and DCA will provide this information in accessible ways wherever possible.
- DCA will ensure that participants and stakeholders are informed of their right to make a complaint and can access this policy and information about the complaints process in formats that meet their communication needs.

Principles

When managing feedback and complaints, Deaf Children Australia is guided by the following principles:

- **Respect:** Every person is valued and treated with dignity.
- **Accessibility:** People can raise concerns in ways that suit their needs, with Auslan, interpreters, and other supports available.

- **Transparency:** Processes are explained clearly, and people are kept informed of progress and outcomes.
- **Fairness:** Complaints are handled impartially, and everyone has the right to express their views.
- **Safety:** People are supported to raise concerns without fear of disadvantage or negative consequences.
- **Confidentiality:** Information is kept private and shared only with those who need to know.
- **Learning and Improvement:** Feedback and complaints help us to strengthen our services and make positive changes.

Responsibilities

- **All Staff:** Accept feedback and complaints, support people to raise concerns in their preferred way, record and escalate appropriately.
- **Managers:** Oversee investigations, ensure fairness, and communicate outcomes clearly.
- **Quality & Compliance Manager:** Maintain the Complaints and Feedback Register, monitor compliance with standards, analyse trends, and report to the Leadership Team and the Governance, Risk & Quality Committee.
- **CEO and Board:** Provide oversight of systemic issues and ensure effective management of serious complaints.

Procedure

Step 1 – Providing Feedback or Making a Complaint

- Feedback and complaints may be provided in person, in writing, online, by phone, through QR code, with interpreter support, or anonymously.
- Staff will support people to express their feedback or complaint in their preferred communication method.

Step 2 – Acknowledgement

- Complaints are acknowledged within 2 business days.
- People are informed of the process, expected timelines, and available external options.

Step 3 – Assessment

- Complaints are categorised as minor, complex, or serious (e.g. safeguarding, privacy, or misconduct).
- Where required, mandatory reporting obligations will be met in accordance with legislative and contractual requirements.

Step 4 – Investigation

- Investigations are carried out by a senior staff member not directly involved in the issue.
- Everyone involved has the opportunity to express their views and provide information.

Step 5 – Resolution

- Outcomes are communicated in writing or another accessible format.
- Responses include the outcome, reasons for decisions, and options for further review.

Step 6 – Recording & Reporting

- All feedback (positive or negative) and all complaints are logged in the Complaints and Feedback Register.
- The Quality & Compliance Manager reviews entries monthly and reports to DCA Leadership team monthly and DCA Governance, Risk and Quality Committee quarterly.

Step 7 – Continuous Improvement

- Analysis of feedback and complaints informs DCA's quality management systems and ISO 9001 management reviews.
- Improvements are communicated to staff and, where relevant, participants.

External Complaints Options

Participants, their families and carers, community members, employers, and other stakeholders have the right to raise a complaint directly with DCA and may also choose to contact an independent service for support or resolution at any stage.

Independent complaints services include:

- Complaints Resolution & Referral Service (CRRS): 1800 880 052
- Department of Social Services (DSS) Feedback Coordination Team:
    - Online complaint form
    - complaints@dss.gov.au
    - 1800 634 035
- National Customer Service Line (NCSL): 1800 805 260

The following services can help participants, families, and stakeholders to contact these complaints bodies if required.

Communication supports to access these services include:

- National Relay Service (NRS): includes Video Relay, Voice Relay, Captioned Relay and other options. More information is available at www.accesshub.gov.au
- TIS National (languages other than English): 131 450

Related Documents

This policy should be read alongside:

- DCA Quality Policy
- DCA Privacy Policy
- Sign for Work Participant Handbook
- Inclusive Employment Australia Service Guarantee
- Disability Services and Inclusion (Code of Conduct) Rules 2023

Review

This policy and procedure will be reviewed every two years, or earlier if required by:

- Changes in legislation, standards, or contractual obligations (including the DSI Act, IEA Guidelines, or NSDS).
- Outcomes of audits, complaints data, or participant/stakeholder feedback.

The Quality & Compliance Manager is responsible for ensuring reviews are completed and for presenting any recommended changes to the Leadership Team and the Governance, Risk & Quality Committee for approval.