

CLIENT COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS PROCEDURE

Description

Dealing well with complaints and appeals helps to maintain and improve service quality and to ensure clients have any service issues resolved. The complaints and appeals processes give clients a way of expressing any dissatisfaction with Strengthening Family Connections (SFC) service delivery and to have their concerns dealt with quickly and effectively. The complaints and appeals procedure guides SFC staff in responding appropriately and fairly to complaints and to appeals and provides opportunity to improve service delivery.

SFC is committed to facilitating our clients' right to make a complaint about our services, to appeal a decision we have made that directly concerns them, and to ensuring that their complaint or appeal is fairly assessed and responded to promptly. We want our clients to feel able to voice their dissatisfaction with any aspect of our service, and to be confident that our organisation will manage their complaints well and respond quickly and appropriately. Clients also have the right to use an advocate of their choice to negotiate on their behalf with the staff of SFC.

Scope

All SFC staff

Procedure

Informing Clients:

To ensure clients are aware of their right to make a complaint or to appeal a decision, SFC staff will ensure that clients are informed of:

- Who they can speak to should they be unhappy regarding a service provided or a decision or action of staff /services, and
- What their options are under Livingstone Shire Council (LSC) policy and procedures for responding to complaints.
- The rights and responsibilities of clients are discussed, including the right to make a complaint without fear of reduced service and how feedback can improve service delivery.
- Clients are advised, as part of the intake process, of their rights to make a complaint, have a support person if they choose, the procedure used to resolve complaints and of LSC general Complaints Processes. This information may also be provided at periodic intervals such as service reviews and when ending service delivery.
- Both the client and SFC Counsellor sign the checklist within the client file to ensure that this information is discussed. The client is provided with a copy of the SFC Client Complaints Statement at their initial appointment.
- A copy of the SFC Client Complaints and Appeals Procedure is available on the LSC website and clients are informed of this at the first session and during 3-monthly reviews.

- As part of service delivery SFC staff are required to be informed about relevant policies and procedures and have access to these on the intranet. The management complaint procedure ensures that Management is informed about service user complaints.

Handling of Complaints

All complaints will be recorded in Councils' official recordkeeping system. The person/s affected by the complaint will be fully informed of the complaint and given the opportunity to respond appropriately, as per relevant Complaints Procedures.

Complaints may be lodged either verbally or in writing via the following options;

- Molly Saunders, Manager Community and Cultural Services
 - Email molly.saunders@livingstone.qld.gov.au / Phone 1300 790 919;
- or
- Complete and lodge Councils' General Complaints Form that is available on the Livingstone Shire Council website <http://www.livingstone.qld.gov.au>

All complaints will be dealt with in accordance with applicable LSC Council policies and procedures relating to the type of complaint lodged.

These include the following LSC Complaints Policy and Procedures:

- Administrative Action Complaint Management Policy
- Actionable Communications and General Complaints Procedure
- Administrative Action Complaint Management Procedure

Receipt of Complaints

- The person registering the complaint will determine if the complaint has previously been investigated by the relevant Council department. If it has not previously been investigated, the complaint will be tasked through Objective ECM or Pathway to the relevant Department for investigation under the **Actionable Communications and General Complaints Procedure**.
- In the instance of communication regarding an un-actioned Complaint or an appeal against a response to a Complaint refer to the **LSC Complaint Management Procedure - Administrative Action**.
- In all of the above situations, the staff member receiving the communication must record as much information as possible about the communication to ensure that it is managed in a manner that endeavours to provide the appropriate response to the customer.
- If the LSC Department has previously investigated the complaint, it will be tasked to the LSC Ethics and Integrity Unit for investigation under this Procedure. The CEO may refer complaints directly to the Ethics and Integrity Unit for investigation under this Procedure.

Alternatively, if clients are not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint, they can make a complaint to the funding body - Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability

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Services (Rockhampton) on (07) 4848 4305 or write to PO Box 1503, Rockhampton, QLD 4700. Clients also have the right to complain to the Queensland Ombudsman Office on 1800 068 908.

All Complaints are confidential and are not to be discussed with other personnel, contractors or outside parties. Disciplinary action may eventuate for personnel who fail to maintain confidentiality around the handling of complaints.

Related Documents

- LSC Right to Information Policy
- LSC Information Security Policy
- LSC Privacy Complaint Handling Procedure
- SFC Client Service Charter
- SFC Confidentiality and Privacy Statement
- SFC Confidentiality and Privacy Procedure
- SFC Service Delivery Procedure