

UNITINGCARE GOULBURN NORTH EAST

3.12 CLIENT COMPLAINTS

Purpose

UnitingCare Goulburn North East acknowledges that people have the right to make complaints without the fear of retribution. Complaints may arise when a person, his/her carer and/or advocate, and staff disagree about a course of action and no compromise is reached. Complaints also arise concerning levels of satisfaction with services received.

Policy

A person can make a complaint orally, in writing, or by other means appropriate for that person's circumstances. All persons have the right to make a complaint directly to the relevant statutory body.

In seeking resolution, complaints will be handled, promptly and confidentially, through a fair and equitable process which is based on conciliation. Clients will not adversely be affected by making a complaint.

People have the right to appeal decisions made by UnitingCare Goulburn North East. These can include:

- determination of eligibility;
- determination of priority;
- level of service approved;
- fee charged; and
- matters related to tenancy.

People will be encouraged to use advocacy throughout any appeal process. Appeal procedures should be explained to the person by the Program Manager when a decision regarding eligibility, priority, level of service, and fee determination and matters related to tenancy is made, or when a person expresses dissatisfaction with a decision made.

Staff will ensure that residents, clients, carers and/or advocates are aware of their right to make complaints.

Procedure

- The complaints procedure will be explained to residents, clients, carers, and/or advocates at the time of initial assessment and reinforced during formal reviews in their language of choice.
- Residents, clients, carers and advocates will be given a written copy of the organisation's complaints procedure in their language of choice.
- Complaints will be dealt with fairly, promptly and in the strictest confidence.
- When a complaint is made, it is documented (in the complaints register) and acknowledged within 5 working days by the Chief Executive Officer or relevant Program Manager. The time frame for investigation of the complaint is 14 days from receipt of the complaint.

- The organisation will undertake to resolve the complaint within 28 days of receipt, and provide written notice to the person making the complaint of the outcome.

Dispute Resolution

- Should a dispute arise between a client, his/her carer and/or advocate and staff of Uniting Care Goulburn North East, a number of options are available to resolve the dispute.
- All parties will be consulted and negotiated with until a mutually accepted resolution is reached. The first person to contact should be the relevant Program Manager, who will do his/her utmost to resolve the dispute with the resident, client, carer and/or advocate.

Level 1 The person will be encouraged to approach the staff concerned to informally discuss the relevant issue.

Level 2 If the person is not satisfied with the result of these informal discussions then the person should approach the Chief Executive Officer or relevant Program Manager for more formal discussion

Level 3 All clients of UnitingCare Goulburn North East have the right to be informed and given access to written or verbal information on how to make a complaint to the relevant statutory bodies. For example:

- Department of Human Services;
 - The Office of the Public Advocate Victoria;
 - The Disability Services Commissioner Victoria;
 - The Aged Care Complaints Investigation Scheme; and/or
 - Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal.
- Throughout the resolution process, full documentation of formal discussions and outcomes will be made by the Program Manager/Chief Executive Officer.
 - People will be reminded about the complaints procedure, and reassured that no recriminations will occur, though the biannual client newsletter.

Responsibilities

The relevant Program Manager is responsible for ensuring that clients and advocates have received an explanation and a written copy of the complaints procedure in their language of choice.

References

- Department of Health and Ageing: Aged Care Complaints Investigation Scheme
- Aged Care Act 1997: Aged Care Principles 1997
- Disability Act 2006
- HACC National Service Standards
- Retirement Villages Act
- Residential Tenancies Act 1997
- Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) www.vcat.vic.gov.au

Performance Criteria

Element	Performance Criteria
1. Information	The complaints policy is explained on initial assessment. People receive a written copy of complaint procedure (Information Package).
2. Documentation of Complaints	UnitingCare Goulburn North East maintains a complaints register in which all complaints are documented.
3. Complaints Resolution	Complaints are responded to according to the designated times.
4. Outcomes	Full documentation of discussion and outcomes is made.
5. Staff Education	Training is provided to staff in complaints procedure, conflict resolution, and notifiable reporting.

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