



Policy: Feedback, Complaints and Appeals		
Policy number: FCA 01		
Authorised by: Director		
Date last reviewed: 28 March 2022	Reviewed by: A. Lee-Ross & C. Barassi-Rubio	Date of next review: March 2024

Purpose

It is the objective of this policy to ensure that participants in the feedback and complaints procedure have the right for a grievance to be heard, with resolution by negotiation and discussion between the parties.

The purpose of this policy is also to ensure procedural fairness for both clients and staff of the organisation. Our feedback, compliment and complaint handling system address the principles of:

- visibility and accessibility;
- responsiveness;
- assessment and investigation;
- feedback;
- continuous improvement; and
- service excellence.

1. Policy Statement

Migrant Women's Emergency Support Service (MWESS Inc.) operating as Immigrant Women's Support Service (IWSS), is committed to practice improvement through feedback and complaints processes. We are committed to facilitating our clients' right to make a complaint about our service, 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. Encouraging feedback enables staff and management to have insight into the experience of clients and stakeholders; assists IWSS to deliver effective services; and provides an opportunity to continuously improve services.

Dealing with complaints and appeals contributes to service improvement and ensures that clients have their issues resolved quickly and effectively. Complaints and appeals



processes give clients a way of expressing any dissatisfaction with the service and this provides the service with an opportunity to evaluate and improve the service.

The IWSS approach to feedback, compliments and complaints management ensures:

- people understand their rights and responsibilities;
- information on the feedback, compliment and complaint management process is easily accessible;
- increased satisfaction of participants in the management of their compliments and complaints;
- the recording of data to identify existing or emerging trends or systemic issues;
- staff demonstrate an awareness of feedback, compliments and complaints management processes;
- staff develop the range of skills and capabilities required to manage compliments, complaints and feedback; and
- an organisational culture that is focused on effective, person-centred complaints resolution and utilising feedback for continuous improvement and reflective practice.

IWSS will never discontinue, reduce services and support, or in any other way take any recriminatory action in relation to a client or any other stakeholder making a complaint. We will only take action, if a complaint raises an issue, we will take action to ensure the safety of clients and others, or to prevent harm to the same.

2. Scope

This policy and procedure applies to IWSS as a whole, and covers both, clients, stakeholders and staff. It should be read in conjunction with the Client Service Charter Policy, the Continuous Improvement Policy and the Choice and Self-Reliance Policy.

3. Policy Context: This policy relates to the following

Human Services Quality Standards

- **Standard 5 Feedback, complaints and appeals Indicator 5.1** - The organisation has fair, accessible and accountable feedback, complaints and appeals processes.
- **Indicator 5.2** - The organisation effectively communicates feedback, complaints and appeals processes to people using services and other relevant stakeholders.
- **Indicator 5.3** - People using services and other relevant stakeholders are informed of and enabled to access any external avenues or appropriate supports for feedback, complaints or appeals and assisted to understand how they access them.
- **Indicator 5.4** - The organisation demonstrates that feedback, complaints and appeals processes lead to improvements within the service and that outcomes are communicated to relevant stakeholders



National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

Principle 6: Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused

- Domestic and Family Violence ST4 case management (DCSYW)
- Community T101 community support (DCSYW)
- Individuals (adults affected by sexual violence) T318 Support-Counselling (DCSYW)
- MWESS Strategic Plan (2019-2022)
- *Human Rights Act 2019*
- Anti-Discrimination legislation at State and Federal levels

4. Definitions

Feedback	Refers to the formal and informal process of providing written or verbal, positive or constructive feedback regarding the organisation, its services, staff, contractors, policies and procedures. The feedback can be anonymous unless the client or stakeholder submitting the feedback would like to receive a response by the organisation to the feedback.
Complaint	Refers to the formal process of a client submitting a complaint in writing to the organisation in regard to a service received from staff of the organisation.
Appeal	Refers to an appeal in writing from a client who is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation of a complaint by the organisation.

5. Procedure

We encourage feedback from our clients and stakeholders. Feedback can be provided to us by individual clients or stakeholders on their initiative or in response to requests by our organisation. We make it as easy as possible for people to provide feedback and ensure anonymity if required.

Risk assessment

Complaints are managed proportionately:

- staff will resolve minor issues immediately where possible (without neglecting to fulfil reporting requirements);
- the Director (or delegate) will investigate more serious complaints in an appropriate manner (and report appropriately).

A *proportionate* response will be determined by an assessment of the risk posed to the participant, staff and/or the organisation, including:

- the seriousness of the complaint in terms of client safety, health and wellbeing;
- the possibility that the complaint represents a deeper or more wide-spread



problem;

- the likely degree of difficulty in reaching a satisfactory and timely resolution;
- the risk to participant confidentiality posed by an investigation.

Privacy and confidentiality

- IWSS will respect client/stakeholder and staff privacy in managing complaints and grievances.
- Investigations will be sensitive to the personal trauma allegations may cause to all parties, including associated parties.
- Complaints can be submitted anonymously.
- Stored complaint records must be protected from unauthorised access.

Our feedback processes include:

Informing clients

In the first meeting with a client, or as soon as practicable, the client will be made aware of the Client Rights and Responsibilities policy and specifically the right to provide feedback. The mechanisms for providing feedback will be explained. The Client Service Charter outlines the client's statement of rights and responsibilities is displayed throughout the office).

Information about providing feedback and making complaints will be provided in a variety of formats including in alternative languages. Interpreters and referrals to advocates can be provided.

Clients are advised that voluntary feedback will be sought regularly throughout the support provided by IWSS and if possible, at the conclusion of the support period.

When clients indicate verbally or through their behavior that they are concerned with the service being provided, they are advised that they have the right to submit a complaint in writing and to have it investigated and resolved by the organisation.

Clients should be informed that the organisation's complaints process supports natural justice and procedural fairness and that no reprisals or detriment will result from making a complaint about the service.

Clients are informed that should they wish to make a complaint they can have a support person of their choosing to assist them.

Clients should be advised that they can access the funding body directly if they wish to submit a complaint about the service. The current process is by contacting the Office of the Regional Director, Brisbane Region by phoning 3895 3044 or by posting a letter to attention Regional Director, Brisbane Regional Office, PO Box 3022, South Brisbane Qld 4101.



Providing feedback

Clients are encouraged to speak directly to a staff member first, to resolve matters without recourse to the complaint's procedures.

Staff will:

- *Listen* – openly to the concerns raised by the client.
- *Ask* – the client what outcome they are seeking.
- *Inform* – the client clearly of the complaint process, the time the process takes and set realistic expectations.
- *Be accountable* – and empathic towards the affected person and action all commitments made.
- *Assess* – situations that pose an immediate threat or danger or require a specialized response.

Feedback to Caseworkers by clients, positive and negative, formal and informal, provided during the service period, should be passed on to the Senior Caseworker by the Caseworker, who will report to the Director.

At the end of the service period the Senior Caseworker may seek feedback from clients, and this can be provided face to face, over the phone or in writing. Continual feedback is sought throughout the support period, this means feedback is to be sought during the first engagement and then the third session and then the fifth session etc. and if possible, the last session. An interpreter will be provided if requested or required for this purpose.

If the client prefers to complete the Feedback Form in private, they will be given a stamped addressed envelope for its return to the organisation (feedback forms will not be posted to the client without their consent). Alternatively, the feedback questionnaire will be emailed to the client with their consent if it is safe to do so. All feedback will be acknowledged and responded to in writing by the organisation within four weeks.

If the client is not satisfied with the organisation's response to the feedback, they have the option of lodging a formal complaint.

Making a complaint

When a client indicates that it is their intention to submit a complaint, they will be advised:

- That they should use the Client Complaints Form provided to ensure that all possible information is provided to allow the organisation to deal fairly and effectively with the complaint (alternatively the complainant may write a letter addressed to the Director, using the Client Complaints Form as a guide of the information that should also be addressed in a letter);



- Of the process and procedures for making a complaint and the timeframe for receiving a response from the organisation (see below);
- That they can have a support person of their choosing to assist at meetings in relation to the complaint and that they must indicate to the organisation agreement that confidential matters related to their case work can be discussed/communicated openly by the organisation in the presence of the support person;
- That an interpreter will be provided if required for any meetings in relation to the complaint;
- That an acknowledgement of the receipt of the complaint can be expected within one week of lodging the complaint;
- That a response from the organisation can be expected within four weeks of lodging the complaint;
- That if the complainant is not satisfied with the response, the organisation may recommend that a facilitated conflict resolution process take place where both parties must consent to attend utilizing the services of an independent external facilitator who will make recommendations for a resolution to the complaint;
- At any time during this process, the complainant may request a referral to another appropriate service provider; and
- At any time during this process, the organisation may decide that it would be a conflict of interest or not in the best interests of the client (complainant) to continue providing services to them and thus recommend a referral to another appropriate service provider.

Referring complaints externally

Clients can, at any time, access an external complaints agency or make a complaint to the funding body, including if they are not satisfied with how we have responded to their complaints. Staff are required to inform the client that complaints can be made to the funding body by contacting the Office of the Regional Director, Brisbane Region by phoning 3895 3044 or by posting a letter to attention Regional Director, Brisbane Regional Office, PO Box 3022, South Brisbane Qld 4101. For other external referrals, staff are required to escalate the request to the Director for advice on the relevant authority for the complaint, for instance, some complaints may need to be referred to police.

Recording complaints

- All information that is relevant to the compliment or complaint, is recorded in its original and simplest form, in the *Complaints Register*.
- Store and protect – the *Complaints Register* in a secure file, accessible only to the Management Team.
- The Complaints Register will record:
 - complaints,
 - investigation progress and outcomes,



- how the outcomes have been communicated to stakeholders.

Using feedback and complaints outcomes for service improvement

- All feedback and complaints and the organisation's responses to feedback and complaints are collated and analyzed by the Senior Caseworker, in consultation with the Director.
- Appropriate changes to improve service delivery responses will be entered onto the continuous improvement register; and
- Immediate changes will be implemented wherever possible.

6. Related Policies and Procedures
Client Service Charter
Clients Rights and Responsibilities Policy and Procedure
Continuous Improvement Policy and Procedure
Choice and Self-Reliance Policy and Procedure

7. Review processes

The Immigrant Women's Support Service will undertake a review of this policy and procedure to consider the application of the policy and whether there are any changes necessary.

Policy review frequency: Every 2years	Responsibility for review: Director and Management Committee
Review process: Director to initiate review. Director reports to Management Committee as per GOV/MC15	
Documentation and communication Any ratified changes to this policy will be communicated to all staff. An electronic version of the updated policy will be filed according to IWSS filing convention A hard copy version of the updated policy will be filed in the Policies and Procedures Manual folder and Management Committee Induction Manual.	

8. Attachments

- Client/Service Users Feedback and Complaint Form
- Feedback and Complaints Flowchart
- Complaints Register



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Complaints Register

Date	Complainant's name, Address and Contact number	Type of complaint	Nature/details of complaint	Comments and follow- up action (employee responsible for follow- up)	Feedback from client (matter closing date)	Status and date



IWSS Client/Service Users Feedback and Complaints Form

The Immigrant Women's Support Service greatly values your feedback, whether it be a compliment, complaint, or just a general comment on the services you receive, or our organisation as a whole. We are committed to good governance, strong management, and providing services that meet your needs. Your feedback can be used in a number of ways, not only to address an issue regarding services you have received from us, but also to help us improve our processes, or feeding into our strategic plan.

Please tick one:

I am providing Feedback I am making a Complaint

Name:
If you require an interpreter, which Language?
Is there an interpreter we should not engage? Please provide full name:
Address:
Email address:
Phone/Mobile number:
Advocate- on behalf of:
Advocate's Name:
Advocate's Address:
Advocate's Phone Number:
Advocate's email address:

When complaints are made against individual IWSS workers the principles of natural justice shall be used. These principles apply to both the worker and the complainant and include:

- Each person has a right to be heard – this means the right to a fair hearing with the opportunity to present one's case;
- Where possible and appropriate, decisions are to be made by an unbiased decision maker;
- Efforts should be made to substantiate the facts, and only relevant submissions will be considered;
- Decisions should be based on specific examples rather than on generalisations or assumptions; and
- Both parties are entitled to have a support person present when discussing issues relating to the complaint.

What is your relationship with IWSS?

- Woman accessing IWSS as a client
- Service user of IWSS community education/professional training
- Another professional with a co-working relationship with IWSS



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- Participate with IWSS workers in networks, collaborations and other meetings
- Other (please specify) _____

Regarding which IWSS services/functions are you lodging a complaint?

- Counselling
- Support and advocacy
- Information and referral
- Emergency Relief
- Community education/professional training
- Networking and collaboration
- Organisational policies and procedures
- Staff member
- Other (please specify) _____

Please give a summary of your complaint noting the following:

- Relevant dates
- Any relevant background information
- What happened and where
- Who was involved

(Attached additional notes if necessary)

Who has this incident/circumstance/policy impacted on and in what way?

What is your desired outcome? What response would you like from the workers/organisation?



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Is there any other relevant information? For example, are there other witnesses/persons that we could contact?

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

You will hear from us regarding your feedback/complaint within one week. Our aim is to respond to complaints within 4 weeks.



Feedback and complaints – A flowchart for clients/service users

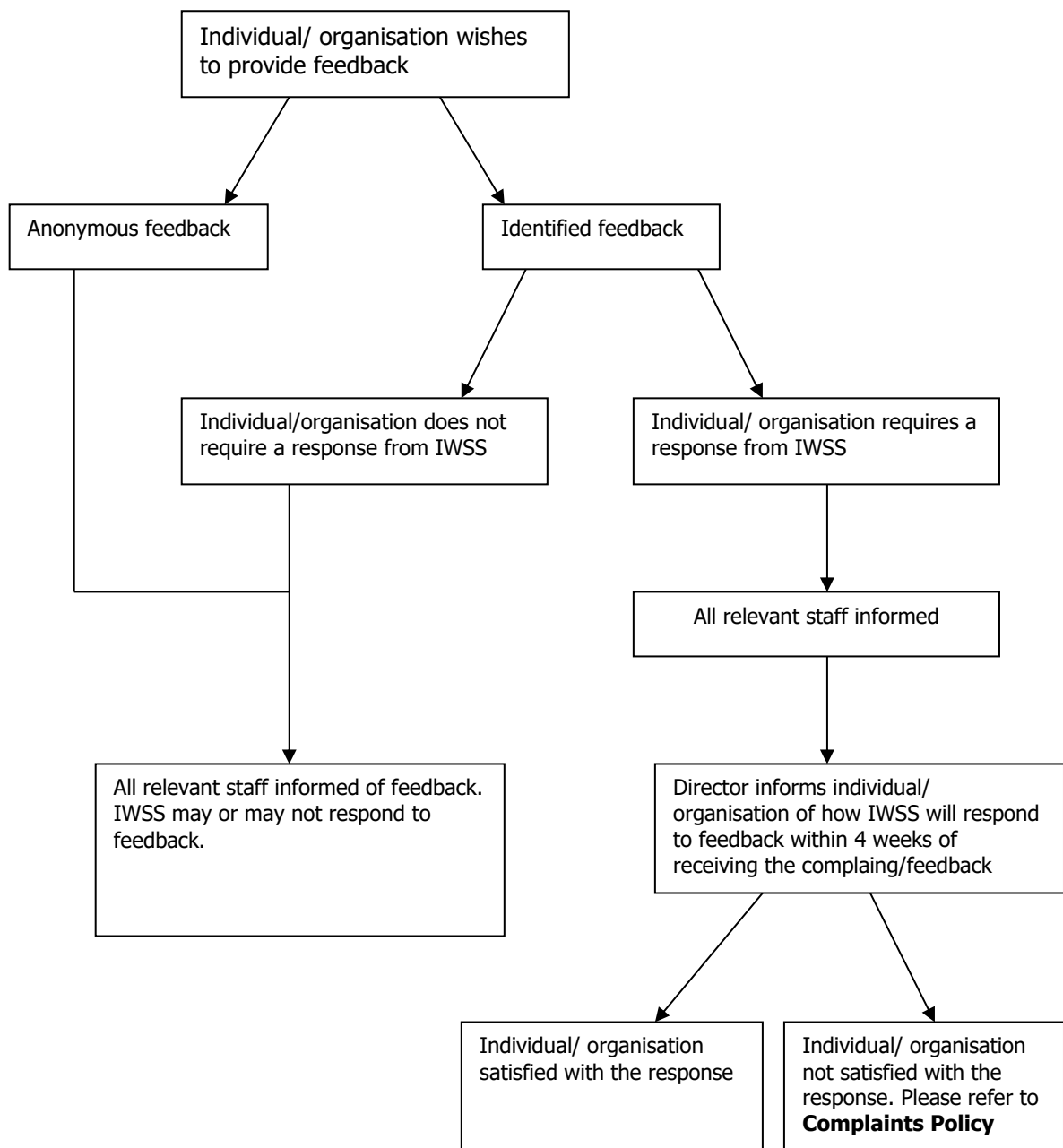
Providing Feedback:

Anyone can provide feedback to IWSS

Feedback can be:

- Written or verbal
- Anonymous or identified

Complainant is encouraged to have an advocate/ support person present during any interaction in managing the complaint





Making a Complaint:

