



AWEN Complaints Management and Resolution Policy

1. Introduction and Purpose

AWEN Case Management & Advocacy is committed to providing high-quality, person-centred services that meet the needs and expectations of our participants and stakeholders. We recognise that feedback, including complaints, is a valuable opportunity for continuous improvement and a fundamental right of all individuals.

This policy outlines AWEN Case Management & Advocacy's commitment to effectively managing and resolving complaints in a fair, transparent, timely, and respectful manner, in line with the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Quality and Safeguards Commission requirements and the ethical principles and practice standards of the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW).

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Ensure all participants, their families, carers, advocates, and other stakeholders feel safe and empowered to raise concerns or complaints without fear of retribution.
- Provide a clear, accessible, and understandable process for making and resolving complaints.
- Ensure complaints are handled consistently, impartially, and confidentially.

- Promote a culture of learning and continuous improvement based on feedback received.
- Comply with all relevant legislative and regulatory requirements, including the NDIS Act 2013, NDIS (Provider Registration and Practice Standards) Rules 2018, and the AASW Code of Ethics.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all complaints received by AWEN Case Management & Advocacy regarding its services, staff (including volunteers and contractors), and operations. It covers complaints made by:

- NDIS participants
- Their families, carers, or guardians
- Advocates acting on behalf of participants
- Other stakeholders (e.g., community members, other service providers)
- Staff members (where the complaint relates to a service delivery issue or participant safety/well-being).

This policy does not cover internal staff grievances, which are addressed under AWEN Case Management & Advocacy's Human Resources policies.

3. Principles

Our complaints management and resolution process is guided by the following principles:

3.1. NDIS Principles

- **Person-Centred:** The participant's voice, preferences, and goals are central to the process.
- **Accessibility:** The complaints process is easy to understand and access for all, including those with communication barriers or diverse cultural backgrounds. Support persons or advocates are welcomed and encouraged.
- **Transparency:** The process is clear, and complainants are kept informed at every stage.
- **Fairness and Impartiality:** Complaints are handled objectively, without bias, and with respect for all parties involved.
- **Timeliness:** Complaints are addressed promptly and within reasonable timeframes.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Complaints are viewed as opportunities to learn, improve services, and prevent recurrence of issues.
- **Safety and Quality:** The process contributes to the overall safety and quality of NDIS services.

3.2. AASW Ethical Principles

- **Respect for Persons:** Upholding the dignity and worth of all individuals, ensuring their right to self-determination and participation in decisions affecting them.
- **Social Justice:** Advocating for fair and equitable access to resources and opportunities, and addressing systemic barriers that may contribute to complaints.

- **Professional Integrity:** Acting honestly, reliably, and transparently in all dealings, maintaining professional boundaries and accountability.
- **Competence:** Ensuring that staff involved in complaints resolution possess the necessary skills and knowledge to handle matters effectively and ethically.

4. Definitions

- **Complaint:** An expression of dissatisfaction about the quality of services provided or not provided, or the conduct of staff, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.
- **Complainant:** The person or entity making the complaint (e.g., participant, family member, advocate).
- **Resolution:** The outcome of the complaints process, which addresses the issues raised and is acceptable to the complainant where possible, and/or leads to systemic improvements.
- **Advocate:** A person who supports a participant to express their views and exercise their rights.
- **NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission (NDIS Commission):** The independent body responsible for regulating NDIS providers and ensuring the safety and quality of NDIS services.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1. Management Committee

- Oversee the implementation and effectiveness of this policy.
- Ensure adequate resources are allocated for complaints management.
- Receive and review regular reports on complaints data and trends.

5.2. Adam Hicks - Director

- Primary point of contact for receiving and coordinating complaints.
- Ensure adherence to this policy and associated procedures.
- Oversee the investigation and resolution of complaints.
- Maintain accurate complaints records.
- Provide training and support to staff on complaints management.
- Report to management on complaints trends and outcomes.

5.3. All Staff (including volunteers and contractors)

- Understand and adhere to this policy and associated procedures.
- Encourage and support participants and others to provide feedback and make complaints.
- Actively listen to concerns and attempt to resolve them at the earliest opportunity, if appropriate and within their scope.
- Immediately escalate formal complaints to the Director.

- Cooperate fully with any complaint investigation.
- Maintain confidentiality throughout the process.

6. Complaints Process

AWEN Case Management & Advocacy aims to resolve complaints efficiently and effectively.

The process generally involves the following stages:

6.1. How to Make a Complaint

Complaints can be made by:

- **Verbally:** In person or over the phone to any staff member.
- **In Writing:** Via email, letter, or using a dedicated complaints form available at AWEN's office or website.
- **Through an Advocate:** A participant may choose to have an advocate make a complaint on their behalf.

Contact details for making a complaint:

- **Phone:** 0434 151 864
- **Email:** support@awencma.com.au
- **Address:** PO Box 357, Broadbeach QLD 4218
- **Website:** <https://www.awencma.com.au/>

We will provide assistance to anyone requiring support to make a complaint, including access to interpreters, Easy English resources, or alternative communication methods.

6.2. Receiving and Acknowledging a Complaint

1. **Receipt:** All staff are responsible for receiving complaints. If a complaint is made verbally, the staff member will document the details accurately.
2. **Referral:** All formal complaints must be immediately referred to the Director.
3. **Acknowledgement:** The Director will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing (email or letter) within **2 business days** of receipt. The acknowledgement will include:
 - Confirmation that the complaint has been received.
 - A unique reference number for the complaint.
 - An outline of the complaints process and expected timeframes.
 - Contact details of the person managing the complaint.
 - Information about external avenues for review (e.g., NDIS Commission).

6.3. Assessment and Initial Response

1. **Assessment:** The Director will assess the complaint to determine its nature, severity, urgency, and the desired outcome.

2. **Initial Resolution:** Where appropriate and possible, minor complaints may be resolved immediately by the staff member who received them, or by the Director through direct communication with the complainant. This will be documented.
3. **Complex Complaints:** For more complex complaints requiring investigation, the Director will develop an investigation plan.

6.4. Investigation

1. **Impartiality:** Investigations will be conducted impartially and objectively.
2. **Information Gathering:** This may involve:
 - Interviewing the complainant and relevant staff.
 - Reviewing relevant documentation (e.g., service agreements, progress notes).
 - Gathering information from other relevant parties (with consent, where required).
3. **Fairness:** All parties involved will be given an opportunity to present their perspective.
4. **Timeframes:** Investigations will be completed within **21 business days** from the date of acknowledgement, or a revised timeframe communicated to the complainant if the investigation is complex.

6.5. Resolution and Decision

1. **Outcome Determination:** Based on the investigation, a determination will be made regarding the validity of the complaint and appropriate resolution.
2. **Resolution Options:** Resolution may include:
 - An explanation or apology.
 - Corrective action (e.g., staff training, policy review).
 - Changes to service delivery.
 - Financial compensation (in rare and justified circumstances).
 - No further action if the complaint is deemed unfounded.
3. **Communication:** The Director will communicate the outcome and reasons for the decision to the complainant in writing within **3 business days** of the investigation's completion. This communication will also inform the complainant of their right to seek an external review.

6.6. External Review

If a complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome or handling of their complaint by AWEN Case Management & Advocacy, they have the right to escalate their complaint to an external body.

- **NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission:**
 - **Phone:** 1800 035 544 (free call from landlines) or TTY 133 677

- **Website:** www.ndiscommission.gov.au (Go to 'Contact Us' or 'Make a Complaint')
- The NDIS Commission can resolve complaints about NDIS providers, including issues related to the quality or safety of services.
- **Other avenues:** Complainants may also seek advice from advocacy services (e.g., Disability Advocacy Network Australia - DANA), legal services, or other relevant consumer protection bodies.

7. Confidentiality and Privacy

All complaints will be handled with strict confidentiality and in accordance with the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) and the Australian Privacy Principles.

- Information relating to a complaint will only be shared with those directly involved in the investigation and resolution process, on a need-to-know basis.
- Complainants' identities will be protected where possible, unless disclosure is necessary for investigation or required by law.
- Personal information collected during the complaints process will be stored securely and only used for the purpose of managing and resolving the complaint.

8. Record Keeping

Accurate and comprehensive records of all complaints will be maintained by the Director.

Records will include:

- Date and method of complaint receipt.

- Details of the complainant and participant (if different).
- Nature of the complaint.
- Dates and details of all communications.
- Details of the investigation undertaken.
- Outcome and resolution.
- Any corrective actions implemented.
- Date of closure.

Complaint records will be stored securely for a minimum of 7 years, or as required by relevant legislation.

9. Review and Improvement

AWEN Case Management & Advocacy is committed to using complaints as a mechanism for continuous improvement.

- The Director will regularly analyse complaints data to identify trends, systemic issues, and areas for improvement.
- This policy and its associated procedures will be reviewed as required due to legislative changes or identified areas for improvement, to ensure their ongoing effectiveness and compliance.

10. Related Documents and Legislation

- NDIS Act 2013

- NDIS (Provider Registration and Practice Standards) Rules 2018
- NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission – Complaints Management and Resolution Guidance
- Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) Code of Ethics
- Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) Practice Standards
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) and Australian Privacy Principles
- AWEN Case Management & Advocacy's Privacy Policy
- AWEN Case Management & Advocacy's Incident Management Policy
- AWEN Case Management & Advocacy's Feedback Policy

AWEN Case Management & Advocacy
0434 151 864
support@awencma.com.au
www.awencma.com.au

Document Control:

- Policy Number: 053
- Version: 1.0
- Date of Issue: 23/08/2025
- Next Review Date: 23/08/2026
- Approved by: AWEN Case Management & Advocacy