



Hunter Children's Clinics Pty Ltd

Complaints Policy

Current as of: 31st August 2022

Introduction:

Hunter Children's Clinics Pty Ltd expects staff at all levels to be committed to fair, effective, and efficient complaint handling. Hunter Children's Clinics Pty Ltd promotes a culture that values complaints and their effective resolution.

Purpose and objectives:

This policy is intended to ensure that we handle complaints fairly, efficiently and effectively.

Our complaint management system is intended to:

- Enable us to respond to issues raised by people making complaints in a timely and cost-effective way.
- Boost public confidence in our administrative process.
- Provide information that can be used by us to deliver quality improvements in our services, staff and complaint handling.

This policy provides guidance to our staff and people who wish to make a complaint on the key principles and concepts of our complaint management system.

Scope:

This policy applies to all staff receiving or managing complaints from the public made to or about us, regarding our services, staff and complaint handling.

Staff grievances, code of conduct complaints and significant events are dealt with through separate policies and mechanisms.

Definitions:

The organisation: Refers to Hunter Children’s Clinics Pty Ltd.

Complaint: Expression of dissatisfaction made to or about us, our services, staff or the handling of a complaint where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.

Dispute: An unresolved complaint escalated either within or outside of our organisation.

Feedback: Opinions, comments and expressions of interest or concern, made directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly, to or about us, about our services or complaint handling where a response is not explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.

Grievance: A clear, formal written statement by an individual staff member about another staff member or a work-related problem.

Policy content:

Facilitate complaints:

- **People Focus:**
 - We are committed to seeking and receiving feedback and complaints about our services, systems, practices, procedures, products and complaint handling.

- Any concerns raised in feedback or complaints will be dealt with within a reasonable time frame.
- People making complaints will be:
 - Provided with information about our complaint handling process.
 - Listened to, treated with respect by staff and actively involved in the complaint process where possible and appropriate.
 - Provided with reasons for our decision/s and any options for redress or review.
- **No detriment to people making complaints:**
 - We will take all reasonable steps to ensure that people making complaints are not adversely affected because a complaint has been made by them or on their behalf.
- **Anonymous complaints:**
 - We accept anonymous complaints and will carry out an investigation of the issues raised where there is enough information provided.
- **Accessibility:**
 - We will ensure that information about how and where complaints may be made to or about us is well publicised. We will ensure that our systems to manage complaints are easily understood and accessible to everyone, particularly people who may require assistance.
- **No charge:**
 - Complaining to us is free.

Respond to complaints:

- **Responsiveness:**
 - We will promptly acknowledge receipt of complaints.
 - We will assess and prioritise complaints in accordance with the urgency and/or seriousness of the issues raised. If a matter concerns an

immediate risk to safety or security the response will be immediate and will be escalated appropriately.

- We are committed to managing people's expectations, and will inform them as soon as possible, of the following:
 - The complaints process
 - The expected time frames for our actions
 - The progress of the complaint and reasons for any delay
 - Their likely involvement in the process
 - The possible or likely outcome of their complaint.
- We will advise people as soon as possible when we are unable to deal with any part of their complaint and provide advice about where such issues and/or complaints may be directed (if known and appropriate).
- We will also advise people as soon as possible when we are unable to meet our time frames for responding to their complaint and the reason for our delay.
- **Objectivity and fairness:**
 - We will address each complaint with integrity and in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner.
 - Conflicts of interests, whether actual or perceived, will be managed responsibly.
- **Responding flexibly:**
 - Our staff are empowered to resolve complaints promptly and with as little formality as possible. We will adopt flexible approaches to service delivery and problem solving to enhance accessibility for people making complaints and/or their representatives.
 - We will assess each complaint on its merits and involve people making complaints and/or their representative in the process as far as possible.

- **Confidentiality:**
 - We will protect the identity of people making complaints where this is practical and appropriate.

Complaint management:

- **Introduction:**
 - When responding to complaints, staff should act in accordance with our complaint handling procedures.
 - Staff should also consider any relevant legislation and/or regulations when responding to complaints and feedback.
 - The five key stages in our complaint management system are set out below.
- **Receipt of complaints:**
 - All complaints should be addressed to the directors.
 - All complaints will be entered on our complaints record.
 - The record of the complaint will document:
 - The contact information of the person making a complaint.
 - Issues raised by the person making a complaint and the outcome/s they want.
 - Any additional support the person making a complaint requires.
- **Acknowledgement of complaints:**
 - We will acknowledge receipt of each complaint promptly, and preferably within seven working days.
 - Consideration will be given to the most appropriate medium (e.g., email, letter) for communicating with the person making a complaint.
- **Initial assessment:**
 - After acknowledging receipt of the complaint, we will confirm whether the issue/s raised in the complaint is/are within our control.

- We will also consider the outcome/s sought by the person making a complaint and, where there is more than one issue raised, determine whether each issue needs to be separately addressed.
- When determining how a complaint will be managed, we will consider:
 - How serious, complicated, or urgent the complaint is.
 - Whether the complaint raises concerns about people's health and safety.
 - How the person making the complaint is being affected.
 - The risks involved if resolution of the complaint is delayed.
 - Whether a resolution requires the involvement of other organisations.
- **Addressing complaints:**
 - After assessing the complaint, we will consider how to manage it.
 - To manage a complaint, we may:
 - Give the person making a complaint information or an explanation.
 - Gather information from the person or area that the complaint is about.
 - Investigate the claims made in the complaint.
 - We will keep the person making the complaint up to date on our progress, particularly if there are any delays.
 - We will also communicate the outcome of the complaint using the most appropriate medium.
- **Providing reasons for decisions:**
 - Following consideration of the complaint and any investigation into the issues raised, we will contact the person making the complaint and advise them:
 - The outcome of the complaint and any action we took.

- The reason/s for our decision.
 - The remedy or resolution/s that we have proposed or put in place.
 - Any options for review that may be available to the complainant, such as an internal review, external review, or appeal.
- Closing the complaint, record keeping, redress and review:
 - We will keep comprehensive records about:
 - How we managed the complaint.
 - The outcome/s of the complaint (including whether it or any aspect of it was substantiated, any recommendations made to address problems identified and any decisions made on those recommendations.
 - Any outstanding actions that need to be followed up.
 - We will ensure that outcomes are properly implemented, monitored and reported to the directors.

Continuous improvement:

- We are committed to improving the effectiveness and efficiency of our complaint management system. To this end, we will:
 - Support the making and appropriate resolution of complaints.
 - Implement best practices in complaint handling.
 - Recognise and reward exemplary complaint handling by staff.
 - Regularly review the complaints data.

Related policy and procedures:

Complaints Procedure Hunter Children's Clinics Pty Ltd

Related legislation and policy:

- Australian and New Zealand Standard Guidelines for complaint handling in organizations AS/NZS 10002:2014
- NSW Ombudsman Effective complaint handling guidelines, 2nd Edition, December 2010

Policy review statement:

This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure it reflects the current processes and procedures of the organisation and current legislation requirements.

Approvals:

Date of approval: 31st August 2022

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