

Mountains Outreach Community Service Inc

Operations Policy No. 5

Service User Feedback and Complaints Resolution

Service User Feedback and Complaints Resolution

DEFINITIONS

This policy relates to the seeking of feedback from service users and to complaints received by Mountains Outreach Community Service Inc (MOCS) from users of the service. It may refer to use of facilities and resources or services provided by MOCS staff or matters concerning the Management Committee and Project Committees. For the purposes of this policy, the service user making the complaint will be referred to as '*the complainant*'.

Please note, this policy does not cover situations where there is disclosure of abuse, inappropriate behaviour, or suspicion of abuse or harm to a child or young person. All these matters are dealt with separately and must be reported to the appropriate authorities, as detailed in MOCS' Child Protection Policy*.

POLICY

MOCS regularly seeks feedback from service users by a number of means including:

- Written feedback surveys
- Informal verbal feedback one to one or in a group
- Anonymous feedback via a suggestion box
- Feedback is also sought from children via conversations and drawings

MOCS uses this feedback to make changes to service provision as appropriate in order to improve our services to the community.

MOCS acknowledges that many people find it difficult to raise their anxieties, concerns or problems about organisations they are involved with. Children and young people, in particular are often reluctant to raise a concern or complain. They may feel powerless or worried about peer pressure; they may fear they will be excluded from their activities and friends if they make a complaint.

MOCS is, therefore, committed to encouraging all service users to speak up when they have a concern or complaint and respecting the rights of complainants to have their complaint dealt with by the organisation in a prompt, fair and equitable manner. Accordingly, when a complaint has been made, all efforts will be made to resolve the issue in a manner that:

- Is timely, with it being dealt with at the time it arises, or as soon as possible thereafter,
- Is clear, so that complainants have access to and understand how the process works,
- Is flexible, with informal and formal, internal and external options of mediation offered,

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- Is accessible. Some complainants may need support to help them assert their rights, such as children, people with a disability and people who are isolated by poverty, location, limited literacy or English skills. They have the right to access this support,
- Acknowledges the rights of complainants to access external complaints' mechanisms. Complainants will be provided with information on the Community Services Commission, and/or other appropriate complaints' authorities,
- Ensures that the views of all involved are seen as having equal validity, unless proved otherwise,
- Ensures the process is non-discriminatory,
- Respects the confidentiality of the complainant and all involved parties, other members of staff, management and other relevant parties,
- Acknowledges that the outcome of resolving a complaint is the improvement of organisational systems, and relationships between people and thus an improvement in the organisation.

PROCEDURES

If a complaint is made by a service user, either verbally or in writing, the following procedure must be followed:

Step 1 If the complaint relates to maintenance of facilities or resources, details of the complaint are taken by the staff member receiving it, and, if possible, resolved immediately or if not possible, referred to the MOCS Manager or relevant Project Co-ordinator for follow up action.

Step 2 If the complaint is more than a matter requiring maintenance, the complainant is requested to present the complaint in writing. The Complaints Record Form may be used for this purpose (See Attachment 1). In cases where verbal complaints are made, then the staff member or Management Committee member who first becomes aware of the complaint should encourage the complainant to put it in writing, mark it as *Confidential* and send it to:

The MOCS Manager
MOCS
BOX 580
Hazelbrook NSW 2779

Should the complaint be about services provided by the MOCS Manager, the complaint should be put in writing marked *Confidential* and addressed to the Management Committee Executive.

If it appears that the complainant will have difficulty in putting the complaint in writing, they shall be offered assistance to find an appropriate advocate. For people who need assistance with writing their complaint in

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English or people from Non-English Speaking Background, the Translation and Interpreting Service (TIS) can be accessed. Refer Attachment 2 for more details.

- Step 3** All complaints will be acknowledged in writing by the MOCS Manager. The MOCS Manager will also ensure that the complainant has had access to and understood this Service User Feedback and Complaints Resolution Policy.
- Step 4** On receiving the complaint, the MOCS Manager (or delegated Management Committee member if MOCS Manager is directly involved in complaint) will discuss it with the relevant staff or Committee member, or other people involved with the complaint. If the complaint can be resolved through discussion between the MOCS Manager, relevant staff or Committee member and complainant, all agreements reached should be written down on the Complaints Record Form. If it does not appear that the complaint can be simply resolved the matter should then be referred to the Management Committee or relevant Project Committee, if applicable.
- Step 5** The relevant Committee may establish a Complaints Sub-Committee consisting of 2 Committee members and the MOCS Manager. This Sub-Committee will ensure all parties involved have read this policy and will then convene a meeting within fourteen days with the complainant and/or their representative and all other party's involved in the complaint. All meeting participants must agree to confidentiality (refer Code of Ethics and Conduct Policy*). A copy of the written complaint must be circulated to all parties at least twenty-four hours before the meeting.
- Step 6** The Complaints Sub-Committee will set the ground rules for discussion of the issue, work towards a mutually acceptable resolution of the complaint and encourage the development of agreements between participants with a time frame for their implementation and review, if appropriate. The Sub-Committee may decide to:
- Schedule more than one meeting to resolve the matter,
 - Appoint a mediator to assist in the resolution of the matter,
 - Refer the matter to the full Management Committee for resolution,
 - Seek legal advice if appropriate. The MOCS Management Committee will be consulted before any legal action is taken.
- Every attempt must be made to reach a satisfactory resolution to the complaint for all parties involved.
- Step 7** If the complaint involves proven concerns about a paid employee in the course of his/her duties, then the Performance Management and Disciplinary Action Policy * will be initiated.

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- Step 8** If no resolution to the satisfaction of all parties has been reached, the complainant will be provided with information on how to access external complaints mechanisms (Community Services Commission).
- Step 9** All meetings of the Complaints Sub-Committee must be recorded and these minutes must be tabled at the following Management Committee Meeting. The minutes must list the names of all present, the purpose of the meeting and the outcome. All proceedings of the meeting must be kept confidential unless agreed otherwise by those attending the meeting.
- Step 10** All documentation relating to the complaint (including the Complaints Record Form and minutes of any meetings) must be filed in a locked cabinet to ensure confidentiality is maintained.

Attachment 1: Complaints Record Form

Attachment 2: Telephone Translating and Interpreting Service Information

***Other relevant policies & documents**

- Code of Ethics and Conduct Organisations Policy No. 2
- Performance Management and Disciplinary Action Employment Policy No. 13
- Child Protection Operations Policy No. 4

Adopted by Committee of Management on:- _____ 2008 _____

Review Date:- _____ 13 May 2015 _____

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Attachment 1 Complaints Record Form

Date

Name of person making complaint

Address

Phone number Other contact numbers

Staff member handling complaint

About your concerns

Please attach any additional information you feel is relevant and/or don't have room to include on this form.

What is it that you are concerned about?

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Your signature.....

Please turn over...

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Finding a Resolution

The following is to be completed by staff member handling the complaint (or mediator) with the person making the complaint:

Possible solutions discussed:

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Agreed Action Plan

Action	by Whom	Date Completed
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Outcome / Resolution

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Are you happy/satisfied with the results of the complaint?

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.....

SIGNED **DATE**

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Attachment 2

Telephone Translating and Interpreting Service (T.I.S.) Information

- TIS can be reached 24 hours per day, 7 days per week by ringing 131 450.
- It is a free service.
- An interpreter can be pre-booked for a specific call at a certain time and you can specify whether you want a male or female interpreter and the exact dialect needed.

Translation Services / Interpreter To Attend A Community Group

- Community Relations Commission: Language Services ph 1300 651 500
www.crc.nsw.gov.au
- To book an interpreter for this purpose, contact the above number and request confirmation of booking and information regarding charge (usually it is free).

Multicultural Service Officer (MSO) Najah Kerbaj

email najah.kerbaj@centrelink.gov.au

- Contact phone number for this area : **(ph) (02) 47237 492**
(m) 0421 918307
- MSO's are employed by Centrelink and can attend local community CALD and general networks to give information and obtain feedback on Centrelink related issues and organise information seminars for specific language groups on Centrelink topics e.g. aged pensions, family payments.