

# Complaints and Feedback Process of Woodbury Autism Education and Research Limited

## **POLICY STATEMENT**

Woodbury Autism Education and Research (Woodbury) values complaints and feedback from people with disability, families, carers, service providers, staff members and regulators to ensure people are treated fairly when they use our services.

Complaints and feedback are an important source of information and are used to improve our services wherever possible.

It is important that all staff, service users and families are aware of the process involved in making a complaint. All staff, service users and their families should be able to make a complaint without fear of reprisal. The provision of feedback will not impact on the service provision or your rights as a participant.

This policy supports Woodbury to apply the National Standards for Disability Services, in particular Standard 4: Feedback and Complaints.

## Scope

This policy applies to all staff, contractors, volunteers or business partners. This policy is owned by the Board.

This policy should be reviewed in conjunction with our Child protection policy which specifically outlines processes involved for allegations of reportable conduct and mandatory reporting.

## Principles

- Everyone has the right to complain.
- People making complaints should be supported to access complaints processes.
- Complaints processes should be sensitive to any cultural requirements.
- Robust complaints processes and systems are an important part of quality service management and help safeguard people with disability.
- Complaints identify risks to people with disability but also visitors and staff and support Woodbury to meet its occupational health and safety obligations.
- Complaints identify opportunities for Woodbury to continuously improve its services.

## Definitions

**Allegation** – a claim that an illegal act has occurred. Allegations are always investigated and sometimes an external authority undertakes the investigation such as the police.

**Concern** – a notification that a person is worried that something is not working, has gone wrong or is otherwise not as it should be.

**Complaint** – formal advice that an incident has occurred, something is not working the way it should, something is inappropriate or someone is at risk. A serious incident process is required for legal and contractual purposes when a complaint is about a serious incident.

## What to do if you have a complaint?

Where possible, the first point of contact should be the person directly involved in the incident or matter relating to the complaint.

The person making the complaint can contact a representative at Woodbury via email or telephone to outline the nature of the concern and request a time to discuss the matter further.



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If the individual making the complaint does not feel comfortable disclosing the complaint directly to the person involved an email or phone call can be made directly to the clinical director to discuss the matter. Alternatively, the individual making the complaint can write a letter detailing their concerns.

### **What is the complaint process?**

Families, carers, employees and stakeholders of Woodbury are encouraged to provide open and honest feedback to Woodbury in relation to the delivery of our service and educational supports. This feedback is used to improve our service provision and ensure the continued growth and development of our school and it's students.

Unless the expression of dissatisfaction is resolved at the outset, the complaint and its supporting information will be recorded. Documentation will include contact information of the person making the complaint and date received, a summary of the issue raise plus any additional information or supporting documentation.

Woodbury will acknowledge receipt of each compliant promptly, within 48 hours of receipt. When appropriate we may offer an explanation or apology.

Once a complaint is received the Clinical Director will seek to gather further information about the incident or concern. This process will ensure all relevant information relating to the incident is compiled so an informed opinion can be created.

Typically, the complaint will be responded to within Woodbury; parents and relevant others will be invited to a meeting to discuss the concern and collaboratively determine what changes can be made to minimise the risk of the incident recurring in the future.

There may be times when the nature of the complaint requires Woodbury to disclose information to other external agencies. This will be done in conjunction with appropriate safeguarding legislation. This includes the reporting of complaints relating to reportable conduct to the office of children's guardian (OCG) and reporting of complaints relating to risk of significant harm to the department of communities and justice (DCJ).

There may also be times when other relevant parties such as the police or NESAs may need to be informed.

There may be times when Woodbury is legally obligated to inform other relevant agencies of the complaint and/ or to participate in external investigations relating to these complaints. Woodbury will take guidance from the external agency to ensure appropriate investigation of the concern.

For further information on allegations of reportable conduct please refer to our child protection policy.

When determining how a complaint is managed, Woodbury will consider:

- How serious, complicated or urgent the issues are
- Whether the issue 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, and
- Whether resolution requires the involvement of other organisations.

For complaints handled internally Woodbury will contact the person making the complaint and advise them of the action taken, the reason for the decision, the remedy or resolution and any options for review. Following up from the meeting a written summary of discussions and agreed changes will be made and passed on to relevant parties. These summaries can be anonymous if necessary, to protect client confidentiality.

Families and carers can expect a follow up from Woodbury within 4 weeks of the complaint to discuss progress and changes made since the meeting.

### **What if I am not happy with the resolution of the complaint?**

All families and staff have the right to external support during the complaint process. Woodbury encourages and respects the rights of any participant, and their families, to use an advocate of their choice. The participant has the right to change their advocate at any time. We also recognise that effective advocacy needs to be independent and separated from direct service delivery.

Woodbury will support the individual making the complaint in finding and accessing an appropriate advocate should the situation arise in which the individual is not satisfied with Woodbury's response to the complaint.

Woodbury encourages participants to select and advocate whom they are comfortable with and whom are able to advocate for the participants individual needs. Below is a list of local services whom provide advocacy in the area's of Autism and Disability however the participant is welcome to select any advocate of their choice

- Association for Children with a Disability NSW
- Disability Advocacy Network Australia
- Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association
- Family and Community services (FACS) NSW
- Autism Spectrum Australia-ASPECT



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All participants, service users, families and staff have the right to contact the NDIS commission should they feel their complaint has not been adequately resolved.

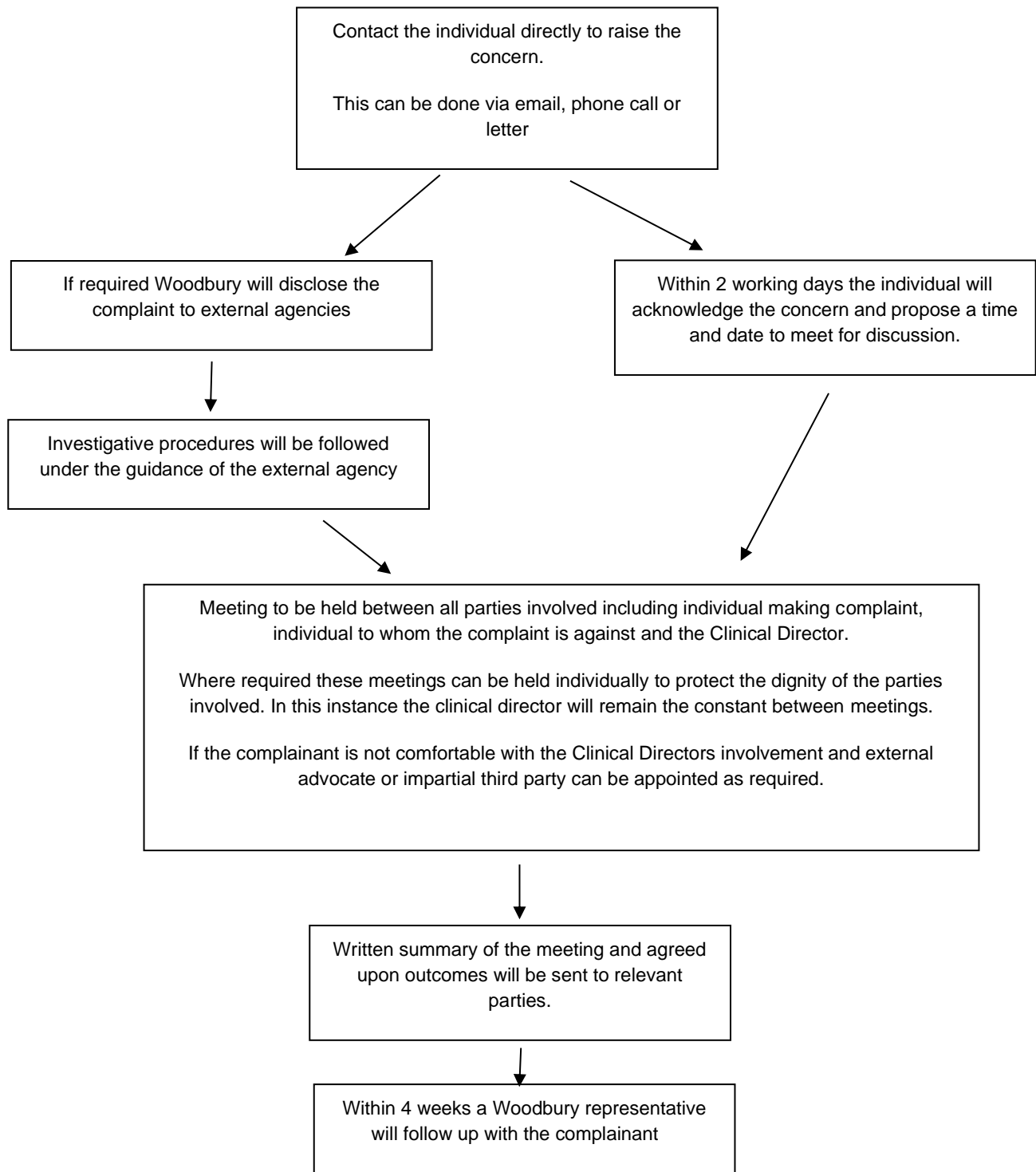
### **Related policy and procedures**

- Continuous improvement policy
- Code of conduct
- Safeguarding policy
- Child Protection

### **Related legislation and policy**

- Carers' Recognition Act 2004 (WA)
- Disability Services Act 1993 (WA)
- Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (WA)
- Occupation Health and Safety Act 1984 (WA)
- Children and young persons (care and protection) Act 1998 (NSW)
- Child protection (working with children) Act 2012 (NSW)
- Ombudsman Act 1974 (NSW)
- National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013: Principles.
- United Nations Convention on The Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- National Standards for Disability Services
- National Disability Insurance Scheme Quality and Safeguarding Framework
- Office of Childrens Guardian (OCJ)
- Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ)

### Complaints Process Flow chart- General Complaints



## Complaints Process Flow chart- Reportable Conduct and Mandatory Reporting

