

POLICY:

GRIEVANCE AND COMPLAINTS HANDLING [CK-POL-0003]

Authorised by:



20/10/2024

(Signature: Board Secretary)

(Date: Board approved)

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Introduction

commonkind expects Staff at all levels to be committed to fair, effective and efficient complaint handling. The following table outlines the nature of the commitment expected from Staff and the way that commitment should be implemented.

Who	Commitment	How
CEO or chair of the governing body	Promote a culture that values complaints and their effective resolution	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Report to commonkind's Board on commonkind's complaint handling. 2. Provide adequate support and direction to key Staff responsible for handling complaints. 3. Regularly review reports about complaint trends and issues arising from complaints. 4. Encourage all Staff to be alert to complaints and assist those responsible for handling complaints to resolve them promptly. 5. Encourage Staff to make recommendations for system improvements. 6. Support recommendations for service, Staff and complaint handling improvements arising from the analysis of complaint data.
Staff whose duties include complaint handling	Demonstrate exemplary complaint handling practices	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Treat all people with respect, including people who make complaints. 2. Assist people to make a complaint, if needed. 3. Comply with commonkind's policy and associated procedures. 4. Provide regular feedback to management and/or the governing body on issues arising from complaints. 5. Provide suggestions to management on ways to improve commonkind's complaints management system. 6. Implement changes arising from individual complaints and from the analysis of complaint data as directed by management.
All Staff	Understand and comply with commonkind's complaint handling practices	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Treat all people with respect, including people who make complaints. 2. Be aware of commonkind's complaint handling policies and procedures. 3. Assist people who wish to make complaints access commonkind's complaints process. 4. Be alert to complaints and assist Staff handling complaints resolve matters promptly.

Purpose

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

This policy provides guidance to commonkind's Staff and people who wish to make a complaint on the key principles and concepts of commonkind's complaint management system.

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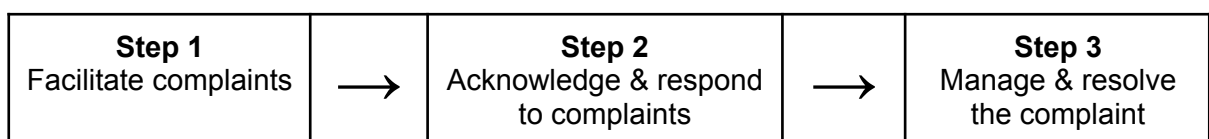
Policy

1 Overview

- 1.1. We apply this Policy to all Staff as defined below.
- 1.2. **“Complaint”** - An expression of dissatisfaction made to or about us, commonkind's services, Staff or the handling of a complaint where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required. As well as complaints being made directly to commonkind, some complaints (or at least negative comments) may be made on social media.
- 1.3. **“Complaint handling/management system”** - All policies, procedures, practices, Staff, hardware and software used by us in the management of complaints.
- 1.4. **“Dispute”** - An unresolved complaint escalated either within or outside of commonkind.
- 1.5. **“Feedback”** - Opinions, comments and expressions of interest or concern, made directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly, to or about us, about commonkind's services or complaint handling system where a response is not explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.
- 1.6. **“Grievance”** - A clear, formal written statement by an individual Staff member about another Staff member or a work-related problem.
- 1.7. **“Policy”** - A statement of instruction that sets out how we should fulfil commonkind's vision, mission and goals.
- 1.8. **“Procedure”** - A statement or instruction that sets out how commonkind's policies will be implemented and by whom.
- 1.9. **“Staff”** - all people who conduct work for commonkind in a paid or unpaid capacity in direct or non-direct child-related roles. This includes (but is not limited to) board members, executive leadership, Staff, volunteers, interns, trainees, contractors and consultants.

2 Guiding principles

An effective complaint handling system must be modelled on the principles of fairness, accessibility, responsiveness, efficiency and integration into organisational culture.



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2.1. Step 1: Facilitate complaints

2.1.1. People focus

We are committed to seeking and receiving feedback and complaints about commonkind's 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 commonkind's complaint handling process and how to access it
- listened to, treated with respect by Staff and actively involved in the complaint process where possible and appropriate, and
- provided with reasons for commonkind's decision/s and any options for redress or review.

2.1.2. 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.

2.1.3. Anonymous complaints

We accept anonymous complaints if there is a compelling reason to do so and will carry out a confidential investigation of the issues raised where there is enough information provided.

2.1.4. Accessibility

We will ensure that information about how and where complaints may be made to or about us is well publicised, on commonkind's website (<https://commonkind.org/get-in-touch/>). We will ensure that commonkind's systems to manage complaints are easily understood and accessible to everyone, particularly people who may require assistance.

If a person prefers or needs another person or organisation to assist or represent them in the making and/ or resolution of their complaint, we will communicate with them through their representative if this is their wish. Anyone may represent a person wishing to make a complaint with their consent (e.g. advocate, family member, legal or community representative, member of Parliament, another organisation).

2.1.5. No charge

Complaining to us is free.

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2.2. Step 2: Acknowledge & respond to complaints

2.2.1. Early resolution

Where possible, complaints will be resolved at first contact with us. When appropriate we may offer an explanation or apology to the person making the complaint.

2.2.2. 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. Further, if the matter is deemed to be related to child safety/wellbeing this will be addressed in line with commonkind's Child Risk Management Strategy (CK-STR-0001).

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 commonkind's actions
- the progress of the complaint and reasons for any delay
- their likely involvement in the process, and
- 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 commonkind's time frames for responding to their complaint and the reason for commonkind's delay.

2.2.3. Objectivity and fairness

We will address each complaint with integrity and in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner.

We will ensure that the person handling a complaint is different from any Staff member whose conduct or service is being complained about.

Conflicts of interest, whether actual or perceived, will be managed responsibly. In particular, internal reviews of how a complaint was managed will be conducted by a person other than the original decision maker.

2.2.4. Responding flexibly

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commonkind's 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.

2.2.5. Confidentiality

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

Personal information that identifies individuals will only be disclosed or used by us as permitted under the relevant privacy laws, secrecy provisions and any relevant confidentiality obligations.

2.3. Step 3: Manage & resolve the complaint

2.3.1. Complaints involving multiple agencies

Where a complaint involves multiple organisations, we will work with the other organisation/s where possible, to ensure that communication with the person making a complaint and/or their representative is clear and coordinated.

Subject to privacy and confidentiality considerations, communication and information sharing between the parties will also be organised to facilitate a timely response to the complaint.

Where a complaint involves multiple areas within commonkind, responsibility for communicating with the person making the complaint and/or their representative will also be coordinated.

Where commonkind's services are contracted out, we expect contracted service providers to have an accessible and comprehensive complaint management system. We take complaints not only about the actions of commonkind's Staff but also the actions of commonkind's service providers.

2.3.2. Empowerment of Staff

All Staff managing complaints are empowered to implement commonkind's complaint management system as relevant to their role and responsibilities.

Staff are encouraged to provide feedback on the effectiveness and efficiency of all aspects of commonkind's complaint management system.

2.3.3. Managing unreasonable conduct by people making complaints

We are committed to being accessible and responsive to all people who approach us with feedback or complaints. At the same time commonkind's success depends on:

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- commonkind's ability to do commonkind's work and perform commonkind's functions in the most effective and efficient way possible
- the health, safety and security of commonkind's Staff, and
- commonkind's ability to allocate commonkind's resources fairly across all the complaints we receive.

When people behave unreasonably in their dealings with us, their conduct can significantly affect the progress and efficiency of commonkind's work. As a result, we will take proactive and decisive action to manage any conduct that negatively and unreasonably affects us and will support commonkind's Staff to do the same in accordance with this policy.

2.3.4. Alternative avenues for dealing with complaints

We will inform people who make complaints to or about us about any internal or external review options available to them (including any relevant Ombudsman or oversight regulatory bodies).

2.3.5. The three levels of complaint handling

Level		commonkind's aim
1	Frontline complaint handling and early resolution of complaints	<p>We aim to resolve complaints at the first level, the frontline. Wherever possible Staff will be adequately equipped to respond to complaints, including being given appropriate authority, training and supervision.</p> <p>Where this is not possible, we may decide to escalate the complaint to a more senior officer within commonkind.</p>
2	Internal review of complaints and/or complaint handling (may include further investigation of issues raised and use of Alternative Dispute Resolution options).	<p>This second level of complaint handling will provide for the following internal mechanisms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assessment and possible investigation of the complaint and decision/s already made, and/or • facilitated resolution (where a person not connected with the complaint reviews the matter and attempts to find an outcome acceptable to the relevant parties).
3	External review of complaints and/or complaint handling by organisations	<p>Where a person making a complaint is dissatisfied with the outcome of commonkind's review of their complaint, they may seek an external review of commonkind's decision (by the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission for example).</p>

3 Accountability and learning

3.1. Analysis and evaluation of complaints

- 3.1.1. We will ensure that complaints are recorded in a systematic way so that information can be easily retrieved for reporting and analysis by management and the governing body of Directors.
- 3.1.2. We will run regular reports on:
 - the number of complaints received
 - the outcome of complaints, including matters resolved at the frontline
 - issues arising from complaints
 - systemic issues identified, and
 - the number of requests we receive for internal and/or external review of commonkind's complaint handling.
- 3.1.3. Regular analysis of these reports will be undertaken to monitor trends, measure the quality of commonkind's customer service and make improvements.
- 3.1.4. Reports and analyses will be provided to commonkind's CEO, senior management and to commonkind's governing body for review, at least annually.

3.2. Monitoring of the complaint management system

- 3.2.1. We will continually monitor commonkind's complaint management system to:
 - ensure its effectiveness in responding to and resolving complaints
 - identify and correct deficiencies in the operation of the system, and
 - monitoring may include the use of audits, complaint satisfaction surveys and online listening tools and alerts.

3.3. Continuous improvement

- 3.3.1. We are committed to improving the way commonkind operates, including commonkind's management of the effectiveness and efficiency of commonkind's 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 complaint management system and complaint data, and
 - implement appropriate system changes arising out of commonkind's analysis of complaints data and continual monitoring of the system.

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4 Policy Revision History

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