

FEEDBACK & COMPLAINTS POLICY

BACKGROUND

WellStop is committed to providing professional and respectful services to all clients, family/whanau members, support persons, contractors and/or other stakeholders. We encourage and learn from feedback and treat all complaints fairly and in a timely manner.

PURPOSE

This policy outlines how WellStop handles feedback and complaints. It sets out the procedures WellStop will take to respond to, escalate, resolve and document complaints.

SCOPE

- This policy applies to feedback and complaints about our services, personnel, and breaches of privacy.
- Internal matters are first managed in accordance with the Employment Relationship Problems & Grievance Procedure or Sexual Harassment and Bullying Policy.
- Concerns about serious wrongdoing by management or governance are covered by WellStop's Whistle-blower Policy.
- Misconduct will be dealt with via WellStop's disciplinary process - See Code of Conduct.

DEFINITIONS

Clients

- Clients include children, youth or adults who receive WellStop services, as well as their family members, whanau, and support people.

Personnel

- WellStop personnel are anyone engaged by, or who provide services on behalf of, WellStop. Personnel include staff, contractors, volunteers, and trustees.

Feedback

- Feedback is telling WellStop informally about an experience with our personnel or service. It includes suggestions for improvement, or compliments, and can be made verbally or in writing.
- WellStop encourages clients to give us feedback as it helps to develop our people and service and enables issues to be resolved early on. Where feedback is of a serious nature, or is clearly intended as a complaint, WellStop will treat it as a complaint.

Complaints

- A complaint is a formal expression of dissatisfaction about WellStop's service, personnel, or a breach of privacy. WellStop treats complaints very seriously and takes steps to ensure complaints are appropriately handled.

RESPONSIBILITIES

At WellStop, managers are responsible for handling complaints that relate to their area of responsibility. The CEO handles complaints made about a manager, and the Board

Chairperson about the CEO. Where an investigation is undertaken by the CEO or Board Chairperson, they will fulfil the roles normally prescribed to the relevant manager under this policy. WellStop personnel are responsible for encouraging client feedback and cooperating with any enquiries made by WellStop into a complaint received.

REQUIREMENTS

Positive approach

- Feedback should be routinely sought from clients, their whānau/supports, and other stakeholders.
- Clients and their whānau must be informed about our feedback and complaints processes at an early stage of engagement. The information must cover their rights.
- The WellStop complaint process will be displayed in all waiting areas and on WellStop's website. Clients will also be advised on how to give feedback or make a complaint in our written brochures.
- Feedback and complaints data is used for learning and improvement purposes.

Client's Rights When Making a Complaint

When making a complaint, clients have the right to:

- Participate in the process.
- Access support and advocacy.
- Have a full right of response.
- A fair and impartial investigation and decision.
- Not be adversely treated for making a complaint.

Response principles

- Complainants' views are heard and considered.
- Complaints are taken seriously and responded to as soon as possible.
- Where possible, complaints or potential complaints are resolved constructively and proactively.
- Complainants are encouraged to have a support person to assist them with their complaint.
- Complainants are provided an opportunity to discuss their concerns with WellStop.
- Processes and timeframes are communicated, and final outcomes are presented in writing.

Impartiality

It is important for anyone investigating or mediating a complaint not to jump to conclusions but to hear both sides of the story. This means being fair to both parties involved in the complaint throughout the investigation. Anonymous complaints may be treated as feedback if they cannot be fairly investigated.

Personnel who are the subject of a complaint should:

- Have the right to due process and natural justice.
- Be given all information about the complaint, including a copy of any written complaint, summary of a verbal complaint, and the name of the person making the complaint (where appropriate).
- Be given an opportunity to present their side of the story.
- Be told of their right to have a support person.

Personnel who are the subject of a complaint must also cooperate fully, honestly, and in good faith with any investigation regarding the complaint.

Complaint's Register

- All Complaints are documented in WellStop's Complaints Register. To maintain the confidentiality of any staff members involved, only senior managers have access to the Complaints Register and have rights to view and upload information to it.
- The relevant manager enters the following information into the Complaints Register for each complaint:
 - Date the complaint was made;
 - Nature of the complaint;
 - Who dealt with the complaint;
 - All documentation in relation to the complaint (including all correspondence with the complainant and meeting minutes);
 - Outcome of the complaint and any actions taken as a result of the complaint.
- A summary of complaints registered is provided to the Board of Trustees as part of regular reporting.

Making a complaint or giving feedback

- Feedback can be raised with a member of personnel or their manager verbally or in writing at any time and in any form.
- Complaints can be raised verbally or in writing with the relevant manager.
- We encourage complaints to be made in writing. The Adult Complaint Form or Youth Complaint Form may be used, though complainants can submit a written complaint in any form.
- Where a complaint is received verbally, a summary will be written up immediately so that information is not lost. A copy of the complaint should be read back to / shown to the Complainant for their sign off (where possible).
- The complainant should be given the option of accessing external agencies for support (e.g. the Health and Disability Commissioner, Disability Law Advocacy, Community Law, VOYCE for children and young people in care, Office of the Children's Commissioner.)
- The complainant should be made aware that if their complaint is about a member of personnel, that person will receive a copy of the complaint made.

Acknowledgement and recording

- Feedback received about a staff member should be passed on to that staff member. A record of the feedback should be maintained.
- Complaints must be entered into the Complaints Register and the CEO notified by the relevant manager.
- A written acknowledgement should be sent to the complainant by the manager responsible to confirm receipt of the complaint and advise the complainant of the next steps. This should be done as soon as possible but within no more than **three** working days of a complaint being received.
- If the client asks to have another person represent them in their complaint, communication must be with their representative.
- All correspondence with the complainant must be recorded in the Complaints Register.

Resolution of complaints

- WellStop will seek to resolve complaints and report back to the complainant, and (where applicable) the subject of the complaint, within **ten to fifteen** working days of a complaint being received.
- Extension of timeframes are sometimes necessary for due process to take place. Extensions of timeframes must be communicated to the complainant in advance of deadlines.
- Where possible, WellStop will seek a constructive resolution of complaints. This may involve discussion between the complainant and the manager responsible, or a discussion between the parties involved mediated by the relevant manager.
- Depending on the nature of the complaint, constructive resolution may take place instead of, or as well as, an investigation.

Investigating Complaints

The following steps are taken to investigate complaints:

- The manager investigating the complaint reviews the information provided by the complainant. They may contact the complainant, or others involved in the incident/s, to seek further information.
- The manager arranges a notification meeting to present the details of the complaint, and any supporting documents, to the member of personnel who is the subject of the complaint.
- The subject of the complaint will be provided with an opportunity to provide a formal response. This may be presented verbally and/or in writing at a response meeting. They may have a support person present at this meeting.
- If the facts are disputed, the manager may seek further information from the complainant, the subject, or others involved in the incident/s.
- The manager determines the outcome of the complaint based on fair and impartial consideration of the evidence provided.
- WellStop will consider the findings of the investigation and may consider disciplinary action. Any such process will comply with the relevant policy.

Finalisation of complaint

Once the complaint has been investigated and the matter has been resolved:

- An outcome meeting is arranged with the subject of the complaint to present the findings of the investigation, including any actions or outcomes. The subject may have a support person present at this meeting.
- The responsible manager will then ensure that a written response is sent to the complainant advising them of the outcome of the investigation and actions taken to address the issue (within the limits of WellStop's privacy obligations).
- The written response will advise the complainant of who to contact if they are not satisfied with the outcome of their complaint or the actions taken to resolve the issue. This may include, for example, the CEO or Chair of WellStop's Board, Professional Body, Office of the Privacy Commissioner, ACC, or other funders of the service.
- Feedback should be sought from the complainant and staff member about the resolution process either by letter or verbally.
- All documents, evidence, findings, and any actions or outcomes are updated in the Complaints Register.
- Where the complaint is likely, or has the potential, to result in a compensation claim or another legal recourse, WellStop must contact its insurer at the earliest opportunity to limit its liability.

Escalation

- Where the matter is unable to be resolved between the parties, or it is inappropriate for the complaint to be dealt with by the relevant manager, the complaint may be escalated to the next level of management or an appropriate external body.
- Complaints about management may be escalated to the CEO.
- Complaints about the CEO may be escalated to the Board Chairperson.
- Complaints regarding service provision funded by a third party (e.g. Corrections, ACC) may make a complaint directly to the funder.
- Complaints Involving a Breach of Professional Code of Ethics may be made to the appropriate professional body.
- Complaints about privacy may be referred to the Privacy Commissioner.