

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure Palmerston is open and responsive to consumer feedback and guided by a fair and equitable process to respond to consumer feedback including complaints.

Consumers have access to this policy on the Palmerston website or a hardcopy on request. Consumers will be supported to provide feedback.

DEFINITION

Consumer feedback is any information coming directly from consumers about the satisfaction or dissatisfaction they feel with the service.

A consumer complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, made by or on behalf of a consumer, regarding the service provided.

'Consumer' includes individuals, families and communities who receive a service, assistance or support from Palmerston Association.

POLICY STATEMENT

Palmerston is committed to encouraging and incorporating feedback from consumers as part of a larger quality improvement system. Openness to feedback and listening to consumers are essential hallmarks of a robust clinical governance framework. Palmerston is also committed to providing a fair and responsive process for addressing consumer complaints. This policy is about consumer feedback and not clinical incidents, which are dealt with in the Clinical Incident Management Policy .

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Management and staff are committed to providing a culture supporting and encouraging feedback and the reporting of complaints.

Management and staff consider feedback including complaints to be important for improving and addressing the needs and wants of the consumer, and for overall service delivery.

The procedure for handling consumer complaints will be fair and equitable for both the complainant and respondent and dealt with in a timely manner.

All consumers will be encouraged to provide feedback and made aware of their right to complain.

Complainants will:

- be treated with respect and dignity
- have their concerns treated as genuine and properly investigated
- have their feedback handled promptly
- be kept informed
- be advised of their right to an advocate of their choice. This may be a family member, friend, staff member, or an agency representative from another service.

The service manager is responsible for ensuring consumers feel comfortable to continue accessing the service after making a complaint. To ensure the consumer is comfortable continuing to access the service the manager/coordinator may arrange an alternative staff member to provide the service.

Non-identifying data on the consumer complaint will be collected for the purpose of service monitoring and improvement.

As far as possible, the complaint and the details of the complaint should be kept confidential amongst the individuals directly concerned with the resolution. However in order to resolve a complaint, information may need to be sought by third parties and in which case the complainant will be informed.

PROCEDURE

This procedure applies to feedback about any aspect of the service provided by Palmerston Association.

Complaints of a serious nature including alleged assault or abuse by a staff member will be passed immediately to the CEO.

- consumers are encouraged to provide feedback to any staff member or use the consumer feedback form (form 05)
- written feedback received including action taken will be recorded by the coordinator on a spreadsheet. This information will be provided to the CEO on a quarterly basis and referred to the Governance and Risk committee for review
- where the feedback is a suggestion or compliment and where contact details are provided, and as appropriate, the coordinator will acknowledge receipt of the feedback, thank the consumer and take other relevant action eg. staff commendation
- if the written feedback is a complaint, and if the complaint was resolved immediately, the client is to be informed and thanked
- if the concerns are not addressed to the satisfaction of the consumer, the coordinator will acknowledge the complaint in writing within five (5) working days of receiving it
- the coordinator will investigate the complaint within ten (10) working days (form 111- consumer complaint investigation form is available to assist in the investigation). If there are unforeseen circumstances the consumer will be advised of the delay
- the coordinator may facilitate a meeting between the consumer and the person (s) involved in the complaint
- the consumer will be advised in writing of the investigation's findings and outcome
- if the complaint involves a coordinator or a manager, then the complaint must be investigated by a more senior staff member
- if the consumer remains dissatisfied with the outcome at this stage, the complaint will be referred to the branch manager for further investigation. A formal, documented response to the consumer will be made within a further ten (10) working days of receiving the complaint

- if the consumer remains dissatisfied with the outcome at this stage, the complaint will be referred to the CEO who will assess the findings of the investigation and provide a written response within twenty (20) working days
- all efforts will be made to respect and maintain confidentiality during the complaint process. The aggrieved person is encouraged to be accompanied by an advocate throughout the process.

If the complaint is still not satisfactorily resolved after following the due process, the consumer will be advised that the complaint can be referred to external agencies.

Notwithstanding the above, a consumer is free to contact the CEO with a complaint and the CEO will if necessary, appoint an internal reviewer to assess the complaint and make recommendations for further action.

Feedback from the consumer on the complaint procedure may also be sought to inform any review of complaints procedures.

As general feedback, consumer complaints are to be analysed and considered in any service planning or review in order that incidents that have generated complaints are minimised in future.

DOCUMENT CONTROL

References and resources – internal and external:

Clinical Incident Management Policy
Consumer Rights and Responsibilities Policy
Delivery of Service Policy
Form 05 – Consumer Feedback
Form 111 – Consumer Complaint Investigation

Quality and accreditation standards:

PE: 3.2: Development, Utilisation and Review of a Consumer

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