

Feedback, (Compliments, Suggestions and Complaints) Procedure

1. Purpose

Uniting is committed to providing high quality and safe services and recognises that feedback provides important information to help us improve our services.

Consumer Feedback is the mechanism that allows consumers to make comments about their experience of a service, their interactions with Uniting employees, or other Uniting functions they interact with.

Consumer Feedback includes **compliments, suggestions, and complaints** and are collected via a range of channels including RISKMAN (internal reporting), social media, on-line, digital, or paper forms, surveys, face to face service interactions, phone calls and emails.

Uniting receives feedback from consumers, their carers, advocates or other authorised representatives. This procedure describes how Uniting responds and manages feedback.

2. Scope

This procedure applies to all employees (including contractors and volunteers) involved in service delivery to consumers (everyone who uses Uniting services).

This procedure does not apply to employees or volunteers who wish to make a complaint about Uniting or its employees. Employees should refer to the **Workplace Issues Resolution (Grievance Management) Protocol**.

Feedback methods that are specifically designed for children and young people follow Uniting’s **Child Safety Policy**. For further information refer to Uniting’s **Children and Young People Feedback and Complaints Guideline**.

Uniting’s **Excellence Framework** outlines how consumer feedback is linked to continuous improvement activities on Uniting’s central Quality **Improvement Action Register**.

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3. Procedure

3.1. Principles

Uniting supports any person who wishes to provide feedback, including by providing information and helping to report matters to external complaints and advocacy services.

We use a trauma-informed approach to create safety and promote healing through the feedback-handling process. For more information, refer to the Trauma-Informed Model of Care.

Uniting also ensures that a person is not negatively affected in any way for providing feedback or having made a complaint and supports people making a complaint to be involved in resolving the complaint.

Uniting will:

- Provide accessible information.
- Remain open and encouraging of all feedback without judgement.
- Recognise that it may be more difficult for some individuals to raise concerns (including those who may have experienced trauma or crime)
- Treat people who give feedback with courtesy, dignity, and respect in a trauma informed way.
- Respond in a respectful and transparent way.
- Listen to consumers choices and preferences.
- Resolve complaints as quickly as possible.
- Inform consumers of the outcome of feedback where appropriate (and in line with consumer request).

3.2. Feedback or complaints raised by children and young people

Uniting actively seeks feedback from the children and young people accessing our services to facilitate empowerment and participation, and to improve services and consumer experience.

Children and young people can make a complaint or raise a worry at any time they feel unsafe or upset. We take all complaints seriously and commit to responding to these appropriately, and with the best interests of children and young people as the priority.

For more information on how children and young people can give feedback or make a complaint visit the [Uniting website](#) and our [Giving young people a voice \(sharepoint.com\)](#) page (intranet)

3.3. Information on how to provide feedback

Uniting representatives will:

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- give consumers, and if appropriate carers, advocates, or other authorised representatives information (in an accessible format) on how to provide feedback (see below 4 **Related documents**),
- inform consumers about their right to provide feedback at any time and the different ways this can be done (see below 3.6 and how to access interpreter support if needed,
- explain confidentiality and anonymity and consent to share information (see 3.4 and 3.5 below),
- give consumers information and help report matters to external complaints and advocacy services (see 3.13 below).

3.4. Confidentiality and anonymity

When a complaint is received, the person making the complaint must be told:

- information may be disclosed to investigate a complaint,
- absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Anonymous written complaints may reveal the identity of the person making the complaint or it may become obvious from the complaint details,
- what will happen with the information Uniting receives, including that it will be recorded and stored?.

3.5. Consent to share information

Information must not be shared unless required by the law. Uniting must request a consumer’s consent to share information if:

- a complaint relates to the services received by the consumer *and*
- the person making the complaint is not the consumer or the person legally authorised to act on behalf of the consumer, or
- the complaint investigation requires information outside Uniting.

Consent to share information may be recorded on the **Consent to Collect and Share Information Form**.

3.6. If a consumer wants to provide feedback

Feedback may be received in writing (e.g., letter, survey, email, by submitting the feedback form on the [Uniting](#) website, and social media) or verbally (e.g. by phone, during a meeting or appointment, or focus group).

A consumer or representative may:

- Speak to the service contact at Uniting. If they are not comfortable speaking to the service contact, they can ask to speak to a Program Manager or the Quality team. The Quality team can be contacted by email consumerfeedback@unitingvictas.org.au or by calling (03) 9192 8100.
- Complete a [feedback form](#) and hand it in at a local Uniting site or post it to:

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Quality team

Uniting Vic.Tas
130 Lonsdale Street Melbourne Vic 3000

- Email: consumerfeedback@unitingvictas.org.au
- Complete an online [feedback form](#) which can be done anonymously at [Feedback, compliments and complaints | Uniting Vic.Tas \(unitingvictas.org.au\)](#)
- Complete exit and other surveys or reviews.
- Take part in consumer focus groups.

3.7. Uniting may also ask consumers for feedback

Uniting regularly seeks feedback from consumers through experience surveys, feedback sessions and focus groups.

The organisation wide Consumer Experience Pulse Survey (CEPS) is conducted every two years to collect information about ways to improve our services and the consumer experience.

Feedback may also be received by exit surveys, service reviews or evaluations.

Programs may also have local ways to collect feedback. All consumer partnership activities are in line with the **Consumer Partnerships Framework** and resources.

For more information on recording and monitoring improvement activities, refer to 3.15 **Continuous Quality Improvement**.

3.8. Recording feedback

RiskMan is used to record feedback that consumers initiate¹.

The data in RiskMan is used to report trends and issues across Uniting to the Consumer Experience and Service Improvement (CESI) committee and the Quality and Safety board sub-committee on feedback, and to improve service delivery.

The Uniting representative will:

- Record feedback in RiskMan
- Record the information in the consumer file if the feedback relates to a consumer.

¹ Chintaro is used in Housing Services to record feedback and complaints to enable monitoring and reporting to the Housing Registrar.

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If the feedback involves an allegation of abuse or neglect, then it may be an 'incident'. Refer to the **Incident Reporting & Management procedure**.

3.9. Responding to feedback

Uniting representatives will:

- Acknowledge the receipt of feedback as soon as possible or within **3 business days**.
- Refer compliments or suggestions to the responsible line manager as soon as possible.
- In the case of a complaint, attempt to immediately resolve.
- Identify the way the person making the complaint wants a response. Generally, written complaints should be responded to in writing, and verbal complaints by phone or face to face.
- If a complaint cannot be resolved or the person wishes to escalate the complaint, refer the complaint to the responsible line manager as soon as possible.
- Consider the need to refer to the Quality Team for advice.
- Let the person making the complaint know within **10 business days** how the complaint is being investigated or resolved.

3.10. Review/investigation of a complaint

Some complaints are resolved quickly, sometimes within a day or two, via a couple of phone calls. More complex issues may involve meetings, evidence gathering and negotiations over several months. The degree of review/ or investigation depends on the nature and seriousness of the complaint.

We will keep all parties informed of a complaint's progress and its expected resolution time.

Review or investigations may be:

- an examination and resolution of the matter by the responsible manager, or
- referral to the Uniting Quality or
- referral to the Investigations Teams, or to other agencies.

The responsible manager must decide, with advice and support from the Quality team if necessary, the most appropriate form of investigation to manage the complaint.

The responsible manager must:

- Provide the person making the complaint with information about the process (see 3.3 above)
- Investigate the complaint to understand the matter and determine the appropriate action(s):

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- Identify and clarify the issue(s) for resolution, including the key concerns raised, and any other issues that are identified by employees.
- Identify the relevant parties to the complaint, i.e., key people involved in the complaint. They may not always be who the complaint is about but may be key people in the service under investigation.
- Seek the advice of the Quality team, if appropriate.
- Update follow-up actions and progress in RiskMan.

3.11. Complaint resolution and final response

Complaints must be resolved as quickly as possible and within **28 calendar days**. When resolution cannot be made within this timeframe, regular communication must be made with the person making the complaint about the expected resolution date. Resolutions may include an apology, a change to service delivery, or other action. Final responses should be communicated to the complainant in the way agreed in section 3.10 **Review/investigation of a complaint**.

The responsible manager must update RiskMan with details of the response, follow up and corrective actions, and close the complaint.

3.12. Declining to deal with a complaint

Uniting may, in limited circumstances, decide to decline to deal with a complaint that is:

- vexatious or frivolous
- outside jurisdiction, or
- the subject matter of the complaint (or part) has been or is under investigation by some other competent person or body or has been or is the subject of legal proceedings.

The responsible manager will:

- Seek advice from the General Manager to assess the complaint to ensure that the information the person making the complaint is attempting to give is understood.
- Record all declined complaints
- Advise complainants of the reason for the decision and their options

3.13. Appealing a decision or making complaints to external complaints and advocacy services

Appeals of Uniting decisions or complaints can be made either to Uniting or directly to external complaints and advocacy services.

A consumer may appeal a decision Uniting has made by contacting Uniting (see 3.6 onwards) or they may contact the relevant external complaints service or regulator (see [Independent advocacy and complaints services](#))

Uniting will give consumers information and help to report matters to external complaints and advocacy services. **Refer to** Table 1: Complaints reporting.

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3.14. Managing complaints that meet the criteria of an incident

In some cases, feedback or a complaint raises matters that may be reported as an incident. Refer to **Incident Management and Reporting Procedure**.

The Head of Quality will determine the need for further reporting.

3.15. Feedback and continuous quality improvement

The Quality Improvement Team reports each service delivery division’s feedback and improvement actions each month to Leadership Teams to identify trends and actions for improvement.

Refer to the **Continuous Quality Improvement Procedure** for further information.

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Table 1: Complaints reporting

Program	Complaint about:	Uniting action	
		Internal reporting	External reporting
All programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matters reported to external complaints and advocacy services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Record in RiskMan Refer to 3.16 onwards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to 3.13 and Independent advocacy and complaints services
All programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All complaints related to children and young people (under the age of 18) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Record in RiskMan Refer to 3.2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children and Young people can contact someone outside of Uniting for help For more information see website or intranet Giving young people a voice (sharepoint.com)
All programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appeals of Uniting decisions or complaints 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Record in RiskMan Refer to 3.9 onwards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consumers can appeal to the relevant external body Uniting can refer consumers to the relevant external body Uniting may need to report to an external body as required Refer to Independent advocacy and complaints services
EVP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of service, communication, service accessibility complaints from consumers or referring agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review by local EVP agency Consult EVP National team, as required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Critical complaints are reported to DSS by the National EVP Team
All programs (victim services)	Victim of crime believes Uniting has not upheld a Charter of the <i>Principle Victims Charter Act 2006</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respond as 3.9 onwards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The complainant may seek a review from the Victims of Crime Commissioner of Uniting's response to a complaint Refer to Independent advocacy and complaints services
Housing Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Housing service, staff, or complaint handling when a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Record in tenancy management system Respond within 30 days 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report to Housing Registrar in annual reporting
Housing Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neighbour disputes and other complaints 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Record in the renter's file and manage as required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consumers can appeal to the relevant external body Uniting can refer consumers to the relevant external body Uniting may need to report to an external body as required. Refer to Independent advocacy and complaints services
Housing Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An applicant, renter (Vic), tenant (Tas), resident or affected person may appeal only those decisions related to the implementation of the Act (<i>Residential</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appellant must lodge the appeal in writing within 90 days after the decision took effect. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consumers can appeal to the relevant external body

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(decision appeals)	<i>Tenancies Act 1997 Victoria, Residential Tenancy Act 1997 Tasmania, and Retirement Villages Act 1986).</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On a case-by-case basis, Uniting may decide not to consider appeals which are received three months after the decision took effect. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uniting can refer consumers to the relevant external body Uniting may need to report to an external body as required. Refer to Independent advocacy and complaints services
Housing Services - Retirement Villages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disputes between residents Disputes about the management of the Retirement Village 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to Retirement Village Dispute Resolution Scheme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consumers can appeal to the relevant external body Uniting can refer consumers to the relevant external body Uniting may need to report to an external body as required Refer to Independent advocacy and complaints services

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4. Related Documents and Legislation/Regulations

Related Documents	Legislation
<p> Diversity Statement Child Safety Commitment Statement Child Safety Policy RiskMan user guide Consumer Handbook – Welcome to Uniting/NDIS Welcome Pack (or other Welcome Pack as used by the service) Children and Young People Feedback and Complaints Guideline Children and Young People Feedback and Complaints resources Consumer Handbook Easy Read Complaints Guide Easy Read Consent to Collect and Share Information Form Consumer Rights and Responsibilities Policy Consumer Partnerships Framework Continuous Quality Improvement Procedure Early Learning Complaints & Grievance Policy & Procedure Excellence Framework Complaints, Compliments & Feedback Form Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme Procedure Incident Reporting & Management Procedure Information Security Policy Privacy Policy Risk Management Framework Risk Management Policy Workplace Issues Resolution (Grievance Management) Protocol </p>	<p> NDIS Quality & Safeguarding Framework NDIS Practice Standards and Rules 2018 <i>Children’s Services Act Amendment 2019</i> <i>Children’s Services Regulation 2020</i> <i>Disability Services and Inclusion (Complaints and Incidents Management) Rules 2023 (Cth)</i> <i>Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010</i> <i>Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011</i> <i>National Quality Framework, Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority</i> <i>Health Complaints Act 2016 (Vic)</i> <i>Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (Vic)</i> <i>Residential Tenancy Act 1997 (Tas)</i> <i>Tasmanian Licensing Standards for Centre Based Child Care, 2014. Class 5 (0-12 years)</i> <i>Victims Charter Act 2006</i> <i>Victorian Complaints Handling Standards 2020</i> Complaints - Mental Health Complaints Commissioner – Victoria, Australia (mhcc.vic.gov.au) </p>

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