



PROCEDURES

7.0 - COMPLAINTS & FEEDBACK

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Definitions

Feedback is information and reactions to the service provided by Better Together which will be used as the basis for improvement. Feedback can be positive or negative. Negative feedback is not necessarily a complaint, but if the stakeholder’s dissatisfaction is strong, they may wish to lodge a formal complaint in writing.

A **Complaint** is an expression of dissatisfaction (formalised in writing) with any aspect of Better Together services made by a stakeholder, that is not typical of regular communication or feedback. A complaint may arise from negative feedback, but negative feedback is not necessarily a complaint.

A **Grievance** is a more serious form of complaint and may include concerns about unlawful behaviour, unfair treatment, or any action which breaches the legislation guiding service delivery including: The Qld Disability Services Act, The Anti-Discrimination Act, The Workplace Health and Safety Act, The Disability Discrimination Act, The Privacy Act, The Sex Discrimination Act.

Disputes are arguments or disagreements involving two people with differing opinions or needs. A dispute can happen between 2 service users, a service user and their family or carer, an employee and a service user or their family member, 2 employees or management and an employee.

7.0 (A) Inviting Feedback and Suggestions



Rationale

Any suggestions regarding the planning and operation of the service will be welcomed as Better Together aims to remain open to continuous improvement and is always exploring to new ways of collecting and encouraging feedback. To this end it invites regular feedback from its stakeholders to gauge what it is doing well and what it could do better.

Detailed Procedure

Feedback will be encouraged and invited in the following ways:

- Annual Service User Surveys, conducted by:
 - Delivering, mailing or emailing questionnaires to current service users and their families and carers together with a (stamped) addressed envelope for ease of return and added anonymity;
 - Recording the delivery/mail outs in the correspondence register;
 - Recording and reporting the survey results to the board for further action;
- Inviting Service User feedback on brokered service provision;
- Individual support plan reviews:
 - Formal;
 - Upon request; or
 - When an individual's needs change (see Policy 2.0- Monitoring an Individual's Support Needs);
- Formal and informal forums and meetings;
- Emails/phone calls/personal visits;
- Key staff actively listening for concerns or signs of dissatisfaction, particularly from service users or their families or carers, who are unable or may not wish to make a complaint.
- Employee feedback is invited annually as part of the quality audit procedures.
- Feedback Forms will be given annually in their annual support planning meeting and in an accessible location at the Better Together office.

7.0 (A2) Inviting Employee Feedback

Rationale

Better Together aims to remain open to positive change and development and therefore staff members are encouraged to provide comments or suggestions to improve services, processes and procedures.

Detailed Procedure

The Manager will:

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Email: contact@bettertogether.net.au



- include relevant staff when reviewing a service user's *Individual Support Plan* (see Policy 2.0 Individual Needs);
- invite staff input when reviewing workplace health and safety assessments (see Policy 11.0 Safety and Risk Management);
- invite staff input into policy and procedure development /review (see 10.0(S) Reviewing this Policy);
- expect staff members to comply with their reporting responsibilities (see 10.0(J) Monitoring Staff Performance);
- encourage employees to comment and/or make suggestions for service, process or procedural improvements by:
- completing the annual Staff Survey Questionnaire conducted by:
 - providing questionnaires to all staff, via survey monkey or google form for added anonymity
 - reporting outcome to the service manager for further action
 - tabling the results of the survey at the following management committee
- utilizing the Suggestions Box;
- attending staff meetings/forums;
- consider all employee comments and suggestions; and
- discuss these at the next staff meeting and/or leadership team meeting.

7.0 (B) Providing information on how to make a Complaint

All stakeholders will be provided with a copy of this Policy and the Organisational Handbook which includes detailed procedures on how to make a complaint.

Service Users will also receive an illustrated booklet in their welcome pack titled “*Are You Unhappy About Something at Better Together*” and “*how we can do things better brochure*” that will explain in simple English how they can make a complaint. (see Policy 1.0-Providing Service User Information).

Copies of this illustrated booklet and the Complaints Form will be in an accessible location at the Better Together office and on the website.

7.0 (C) How to make a complaint

Rationale

Better Together is committed to continuous improvement and will view complaints as an opportunity to improve. Complaints may be made by:

- Support Partners
- The participant
- The public
- An advocate
- A family member



- Carers
- Anonymously

Detailed Procedure

If a stakeholder has a complaint, they are asked to give some thought to a possible solution and then:

- Talk to the person concerned, if they feel comfortable to do so;
- or, Talk to the Manager or a key staff person;
- or, Write a letter/email to the Manager with details of the complaint;
- or, Fill out a Complaints Form and submit it to the Manager;
- or, Engage an advocate to speak for them if they are not comfortable to make a complaint on their own (*see Policy 1.0- Engaging an Advocate to Speak on behalf of a Service User*).
- Contact the NDIS commission at any point Phone number 1800 035 544

7.0 (D) Handling Complaints

Rationale

Better Together recognises that an employee's responses and actions when handling complaints influence the image Better Together projects to the people who use the service and the wider community.

Better Together will:

- make it easy for a person to raise a complaint
- listen to that person's complaint
- consider how the person would like us to remedy the complaint
- make sure the person lodging the complaint is satisfied with how their complaint was handled

Detailed Procedure

If the complainant chooses to talk to an employee, they are instructed to deal with the complaint in the following manner:

- firstly they are to clarify with the complainant whether the concern they have just raised is feedback and they would like the worker hearing the issue to inform the management or if they would like to make a formal complaint?
- Then thank the person for raising their complaint with them;
- treat the person with genuine empathy, courtesy, patience, honesty and fairness;
- treat the complaint in accordance with Policy 4.0 Privacy, Dignity and Confidentiality;



- advise the person how the complaint will be handled and, if they are unable to resolve the complaint on the spot, tell the person what will happen next and when. Be honest and realistic;
- respond to the complaint quickly;
- gather all relevant information;
- keep clear and accurate records;
- plan meetings and stay calm;
- seek advice and assistance if unsure how to proceed;
- within twenty-four (24) hours of receiving the complaint, inform the Manager of the details of the complaint by completing a Complaint Form including, if applicable, details of the resolution;
- if unresolved, the service manager will follow up on the complaint.

When an unresolved complaint has been lodged with the Manager, they will act immediately to address the complaint:

- Contact the person making the complaint within two (2) business days to:
 - discuss a resolution or explain how the complaint will be managed
 - provide a timeframe regarding an expected resolution
 - identify the staff member dealing with the complaint
 - arrange a meeting if required
- Attempt to resolve the complaint within two (2) weeks;
- If unable to do so, contact all parties to discuss a possible resolution or advise on the progress;
- Keep all parties informed in writing of progress of the complaint;
- Within four (4) weeks from receiving the complaint - send a letter to all parties, explaining Better Together's final position, or giving reasons for the delay in resolving the complaint and an indication of when a conclusion will be reached. This letter will also direct the complainant to other people/agencies who may be able to assist;
- Provide information on the appeals process if required (see 7.0(D) Appeals);
- Within one (1) month after a resolution has been reached, follow up to ensure everything has been resolved to the person's satisfaction.

Record keeping/Administration

- A Complaint Form will be completed detailing the complaint and actions taken;
- Details will be filed in the Complaints Register which will:
 - Reported to the Board at the next meeting
 - be reviewed during the organisation's internal auditing process
 - guide policy and procedure reviews and quality improvement planning

(See also Policy 10.0- Managing Staff Disputes and Grievances)

7.0 (E) Appeals

Rationale



Better Together may make decisions that are unfair or ill-informed or complainants may not agree with a decision. The Stakeholder should have the opportunity for that decision to be reviewed by others than those who made the decision, in order that the circumstances for the decision can be reconsidered, and any unfair or poor decision-making can be rectified.

Detailed Procedure

If a stakeholder is not satisfied with the decision made about their complaint, Better Together asks them to act promptly and talk to the Manager. If a stakeholder feels uncomfortable about appealing the decision on their own, Better Together encourages them to use an advocate (see 1.0- Engaging an Advocate to Speak on behalf of a Service User).

Within two (2) working days of receiving the contact, the Manager will:

- treat the appeal as an incident (see Policy 11.0- Incident Reporting);
- forward the documentation to the chairperson of the management committee.

If the appeal calls for a change in a service decision, the Manager will:

- contact the person/advocate directly;
- review the service decision; and
- inform the person/advocate in writing of the decision within ten (10) working days of receiving the appeal from the person/advocate.

If the appeal calls for a change in policy, the Manager will:

- present the appeal to the board at the next meeting for their consideration and decision;
- inform the family/carer in writing of the board's decision within thirty (30) working days of receiving the appeal from the family;

If Better Together fails to address the appeal satisfactorily, a service user and their family/carer will be encouraged to contact the funding body.

- National Disability Insurance Agency by calling 1800 800 110, visiting one of their offices in person, or visiting www.ndis.gov.au for further information
 - <https://forms.business.gov.au/smartforms/servlet/SmartForm.html?formCode=PRD00-OCF>
- Department of Communities: 33 King St, Caboolture QLD 4510, Phone Number; (07) 5490 1000
- Department of Employment, Small Business and Training: PO Box 248 Kallangur Qld 4503, Phone: (07) 3203 9000

7.0 (F) Managing Grievances with Legal Implications

Rationale

Better Together has a duty of care to respond in accordance with current legislation and the law.

Detailed Procedure



If the service manager has confirmed that a legal implication exists, then the following procedures are to be adopted:

- inform the board;
- secure legal advice;
- if the implication is further confirmed, meet with a board representative to devise an appropriate course of action;
- if the situation under consideration involves a staff member accused of illegal acts or directing others to perform illegal acts, then the staff member/s must be immediately advised and procedures followed will be in accordance with the Better Together Policies and Procedures and the relevant award (see (i) and (ii) of Policy 9.0(B) Responding to Allegations of Abuse, Neglect, exploitation and Discrimination and Policy 10.0- Managing Sub-Standard Performance);
- the complainant must be advised of the actions being undertaken and supported throughout the investigation. (See Policy 8.7 Incident Management) for examples of reportable allegations and incidents as per NDIS incident management and reportable incident rules 2018.

7.0 (G) Handling Disputes

Rationale

At times, disputes may occur between stakeholders as outlined in the **definitions** section of this policy.

Detailed Procedure

If parties are unable to resolve a dispute, they would take it to the Manager who will attempt to help them resolve the dispute.

If the Manager is involved in the dispute, they would take the dispute to the Board.

To assist in solving an unresolved dispute, Better Together may encourage the use of a mediator who can be either a person or an organisation that can act as a third party to help resolve disputes or arguments between stakeholders.

A mediator can help people see the 'other side' of disagreements. In most situations, mediators can be just regular people who are neutral and are selected (and agreed upon) by both parties included in the dispute. This ensures fairness.

Unless the disagreement takes the form of a complaint, a Better Together key staff person will explain to the stakeholders involved in the dispute the benefits of involving a mediator:

- A mediator can instruct both parties on how to converse with each other without hostility and anger;



- They may assist with conflict resolution;
- They may make the situation more manageable and allow each party to see the other side a little more clearly;

If mediation is not able to resolve the problem, resolution may require the involvement of Better Together's Board of Management or the program funding body.

7.0 (H) Documentation

- All complaints will be recorded in a Complaints Register.
- Information in the register will include:
 - Information about the complaint.
 - Identified issues.
 - Actions are undertaken to resolve the complaint.
 - The outcome of the complaint.
- Upload the documents, including Compliments, Complaint/Feedback forms into the computer system.
- Keep a copy of the information given to complainant in the file.
- Keep all complaint documents for seven (7) years from the day of record.
- Collect statistical and other information to:
 - Review issues raised.
 - Identify and address systematic issues.
 - Report information to the Commissioner if requested by the NDIS Commissioner.
 - The Policy review will occur if there are legislative changes or regularly (at least annually).

Related Better Together Policies and Procedures

Policy 1.0 Service Access

Policy 2.0 Individual Needs, Values and Planning

Policy 4.0 Privacy, Dignity and Confidentiality

Policy 8.0 Service Management: Governance

Policy 9.0 Protection from Abuse, Neglect, Exploitation and Discrimination

Policy 10.0 Human Resources Management

Documents related to this Policy

BTG001 Organisational Handbook

BTCI002 Service User Survey

BTA006 Complaint Form

BTSU023 Are You Unhappy About Something at Better Together

Feedback Form

Complaint Form

How we can do things Better Brochure