

Complaints Policy

Purpose

Complaints are an important part of the Local Guardians’ continuous improvement process, helping the organisation to identify the root cause of unmet client expectations and prevent similar incidents from recurring.

The complaints process is designed to resolve concerns in an efficient and professional manner, aiming to positively influence the client’s experience and enhance Local Guardians reputation.

A strong complaint process is legislated as part of Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission (ACQSC) Open Disclosure Framework and the Aged Care Charter of Rights. While Local Guardians will use its best endeavours to resolve complaints internally, complainants are entitled to refer the matter to the ACQSC for independent review.

Policy Statement

- The Complaints Policy is available via the Local Guardians website and must be clearly communicated by all team members to clients, services providers and other relevant parties.
- Complaints can be received verbally, by email or in writing and can be informal or formal. Informal complaints are encouraged and will be handled directly by the recipient with written follow up and documentation saved to the client file. Where the complaint concerns a team member or where formality is requested, it will be escalated and recorded in the Local Guardians complaints register.
- The Open Disclosure Framework will be used to guide complaint resolution. Open Disclosure will be exercised in accordance with the framework. All correspondence will be stored and linked into the complaints register.

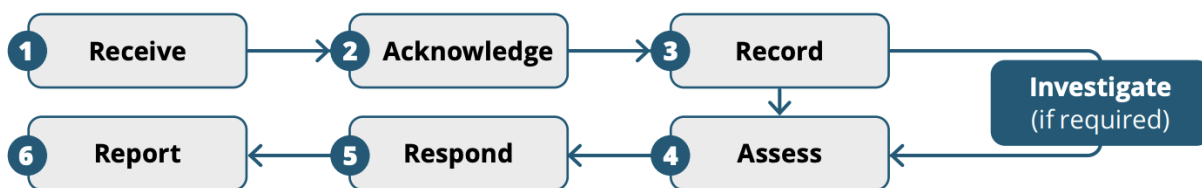
Definitions

Complaint	An expression of dissatisfaction with services, decisions, actions, or omissions that does not necessarily need to be formally labelled as a complaint to be managed as one. It may be expressed verbally or in writing, and regardless of scale, all complaints are taken seriously.
Incident	An event or circumstance that resulted in, or could have resulted in, harm to a person receiving care. Incidents may be linked to complaints and require investigation.
Severity Rating	A four-level matrix (Low, Medium, High, Extreme) used to assess the seriousness of an incident or complaint. Complaints rated Medium or above will trigger a formal Root Cause Analysis (RCA).

Root Cause Analysis (RCA)	A structured five-step process to investigate underlying causes of complaints or incidents, identify contributing factors, implement corrective actions, and evaluate outcomes.
Team Members	Include: Staff, Partners, Contractors, Service Provider Staff.
Open disclosure	Refers to the practice of communicating with a consumer when things go wrong, addressing any immediate needs or concerns and providing support, apologising, and explaining the steps the provider has taken to prevent recurrence.

Complaints and Feedback Process

Stages of complaints and feedback management system



Source: www.agedcarequality.gov.au/resource-library/complaints-handling-checklist

Informal complaints

Complainants are encouraged to raise the matter directly with the party involved. This reflects Local Guardians core company values of authenticity, open transparency and continuous improvement.

Alternatively, clients can contact their Care Adviser or appoint an advocate. Free, independent advocacy is available through the Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) at www.opan.org.au or on 1800 700 600.

Formal complaints

Formal complaints may be submitted via:

- **Online:** Complaints/ Feedback <https://localguardians.com/fags/how-do-i-make-a-complaint/>
- **By phone:** (03) 7067 0555 and ask for the Operations Manager or CEO

The Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission also accepts complaints at <https://www.agedcarequality.gov.au/> or phone 1800 951 822.

Local Guardians' complaints handling process

- **RECEIVE:** Local Guardians accepts complaints through a range of channels, including feedback and survey systems, verbally, in writing, by email, or via the complaints form accessible on the Local Guardians website.

- **ACKNOWLEDGE:** The complaint will be acknowledged within 24hrs (or the next business day), confirming receipt and outlining the next steps in the process. Where appropriate, Local Guardians will offer to discuss the concern with the complainant to better understand their concern and ensure their voice is heard.
- **RECORD:** All complaints will be recorded in the complaints register, ensuring complaint records and supporting documentation such as correspondence, care notes, or reports are accurate, complete, and securely maintained. Any associated incidents or risks will be linked within the organisation's incident management system.
- **ASSESS (and investigate if required):** Each complaint will be assessed to determine its nature, seriousness, and potential impact and the desired outcome clarified. Where required, further investigation may be undertaken, including a Root Cause Analysis (RCA). All relevant information will be gathered and reviewed to support a fair and proportionate resolution. In some cases, Local Guardians may refer the matter to an external party for investigation. This may include the police, the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission (ACQSC), or another independent investigator. An external investigation will be used when:
 - Criminal conduct is suspected, such as theft or assault
 - There is a real or perceived conflict of interest
 - Specialist expertise is required, such as legal, financial, or forensic
 - Required by law or regulation, for example, under the Serious Incident Response Scheme (SIRS)
- **RESPOND:** A response will typically be provided within 5 working days. Complex matters will be communicated with revised timeframes. The outcome will be clearly communicated to the complainant, including a summary of findings, actions taken, and any remedies or improvements implemented. Where more time is required, regular updates and revised timeframes will be provided. If the complainant is satisfied, the matter may be closed. If they remain unsatisfied despite reasonable efforts, they will be supported to pursue appropriate escalation pathways involving external dispute resolution, such as OPAN or the ACQSC. The Aged Care Advocacy Service accepts enquiries at www.opan.com.au or 1800 700 600.
- **REPORT:** Once resolved, the complaint will be formally closed in the complaints register and all relevant documentation finalised. Complaints will be reviewed to identify trends, inform service improvements, and support continuous quality improvement.

References

- P3 Open Disclosure Policy
- P6 Privacy Policy
- PR 12.2 Root Cause Analysis Procedure
- ACQSC Better practice guide to complaints handling in aged care services
- www.agedcarequality.gov.au/resource-library/complaints-handling-checklist

Version History

Version number	Summary of change	Approved by	Effective date
1	Creation of policy to outline the process for receiving, investigating, and addressing complaints, while also utilising the feedback received to enhance our services and operations.	Board	13-Aug-2024
2	General enhancements and improvements.	Board	30-Jul-2025