

## Complaints Management

### Customer Service

Last updated 7 December 2023

### Practice Policy

Ramsey Speech Pathology is aware that complaints may occur. Complaints are to be dealt with in a courteous, respectful, and understanding manner. Ramsey Speech Pathology acknowledges that client complaints are an important source of customer feedback and can be a driver for positive change and improvement of services. We also acknowledge that persons with disability may face multiple barriers to making a complaint about their supports or services. These include lack of experience asserting their rights as consumers, fear of retribution, negative experiences with complaints systems (including not being believed), and difficulty communicating what happened without support. Additionally, in the case of harm or risk of harm, people can face substantial barriers to making a complaint.

**Where any concerns or complaints relate to harm or risk of harm to a child or young person (including by another child or young person), we prioritise child safety above all else. The process outlined in our Child Safe Environments Policy, under Reporting and Responding to Suspicion of Harm, must be followed in the first instance.**

The Complaints Management policy will:

- Support clients to understand their rights and what they should expect of providers.
- Support clients to have the confidence to complain when they face issues.
- Enable other stakeholders to make complaints and ensure issues can be addressed when persons with disability are unable or unwilling to make a complaint.
- Support the resolution of complaints when possible and provide an escalation pathway where required.
- Enable the identification of systemic issues and drive improvements.
- Identify and report on any complaints or issues that are reportable (as per the Incident Management Policy).

Ramsey Speech Pathology clients are provided with the opportunity to provide compliments, complaints or suggestions. This opportunity to provide the listed feedback is encouraged through online (email) correspondence, or through direct vocal correspondence through face-to-face or telephone communication. Complaints are required to be addressed and responded to quickly (within reason), and that all complaints are addressed fairly and seriously.

When receiving complaints, there is a process in place to be followed in order to minimise further negative experiences:

- Identify and note the complaint in comprehensive, accurate notes.
- Ensure an open communication style is encouraged to be continued between the sole trader and client.
- Assure the client that the complaint will be taken seriously and thoroughly investigated.
- Decide and action appropriate remedy and notify the client verbally and in writing.
- Record all contact with the client including written responses in their record.
- Complaints received are recorded and kept in a documentation system.

## **Procedure**

### Introduction

Ramsey Speech Pathology provides clients with the opportunity to give compliments, complaints, and suggestions engaging in routine encouragement. The business owner utilises the process in place to address all complaints and feedback, take action, and provide continued information to the client when required.

The process in which the business owner provides the client the opportunity to give compliments, complaints, and suggestions is as follows:

1. The business owner's contact details (email address, phone number) are given to the client, and the business owner is required to make sure these contact details are consistently known to all clients.
2. The business owner will provide all clients at intake information regarding the Complaint Management policy and procedure. Workers remind clients of the opportunity to provide feedback on a regular basis. Information will also be provided within our Service Agreements, Terms of Service, client handbook, schedule of fees, and on our website.
3. Complaints may be received via phone, in writing, email, in person, or via an online form on our website by the client, client's advocate, or client's representative. Complaints may be anonymous.
4. When a complaint is received, any supports required to facilitate communication and participation by the participant (e.g. AAC options) will be identified and all reasonable steps taken to have these available.
5. All reasonable steps will be taken to ensure that:
  - a. A person who makes a complaint, or a person with a disability affected by an issue raised in a complaint, is not adversely affected as a result of the making of the complaint; and
  - b. Information provided in a complaint is kept confidential and only disclosed if required by law or if the disclosure is otherwise appropriate in the circumstance.
  - c. Client complaints will be managed in a polite, prompt, consistent, positive and constructive manner.
6. The Complaints and Incidents Record document will be completed by the business owner.
7. The business owner will ensure appropriate support and assistance is provided to any person who wishes to make, or has made, a complaint. The business owner may assist the client to complete the form, for example by writing the details on the complaint form as verbalised by the client/their representative.
8. Documentation or a record of the person's agreement with the report should be gained e.g., by signing the document, or video-recording verbal agreement, or videoing the persons non-verbal responses.
9. Once a client has given an indication of an issue/concern, there will be an immediate attempt to determine the exact nature of the concern/problem and where possible correct or resolve the issue.

10. If a concern/problem cannot be resolved immediately, and/or the client or their representative is not satisfied with the outcome, the business owner will provide the client with the *How to make a Complaint Brochure* (refer to Appendix D). This will provide the client with the process for making a complaint and options available to them.
11. If they would like to proceed, the person making the complaint will be provided with a *Complaint Form* (refer to Appendix A).
12. The business owner will:
  - a. Provide the person with an acknowledgment of the complaint (refer Appendix B *Acknowledge Receipt of Complaint*) within 5 business days of receiving the complaint.
  - b. Record the complaint on the *Complaints Register* (refer Appendix F).
  - c. Assess and investigate the complaint.
  - d. Ensure that procedural fairness is afforded to all involved in the complaint.
  - e. Complete the *Complaints Action Form* (refer Appendix C).
  - f. Endeavour to resolve the complaint in a fair, efficient, and timely manner.
  - g. Take appropriate action in relation to the issues raised in the complaint.
  - h. Report back to the client/their representative regarding the decision and the reason for the decision of the complaint ideally within 21 business days of receiving the complaint.
  - i. Provide appropriate support and assistance for the client/ their representative, to contact the Commissioner if they are not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint.
13. The business owner must ensure the person making the complaint is:
  - a. Appropriately involved in the resolution of the complaint; and
  - b. Kept informed of the progress of the complaint, including any action taken, the reasons for any decisions made, and options for review of the decision in relation to the complaint.
14. Once a decision/outcome has been concluded, the business owner is to phone the client and advise them of the findings and the reason for any decision being made. If the client is satisfied with the outcome, the business owner must record the details on the Complaint Action Form, complete a client letter (see Appendix E: *Outcome Letter*), take a photocopy and post the original to the client. A copy of the letter with the other supporting documents should be filed in the Practice's Complaints folder and the Complaints Register should be updated as complete (include date finalised).
15. If the complaint is not resolved to the client's satisfaction, the business owner will advise the client that they have the right to contact the Commissioner of the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission. They will provide the person making the complaint with the contact details of the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission.
16. The business owner will also complete a client letter (Appendix E: *Outcome Letter*), scan a copy and then post the original to the client. They must attach a copy of the letter with the other supporting documents and store this in the client's file. The client's letter will need to detail the reasons why he/she is not satisfied with the complaint resolution proposal and should set out his/her expectations and desired outcomes for the dispute to be satisfactorily resolved.
17. Record the client's dissatisfaction with the complaint outcome on the Complaints Action Form and Complaints Register. File a copy of all the relevant documentation in the Complaints folder.

## **Monitoring and Reporting**

1. All records of complaints must be kept for a minimum of 7 years from the day the record is made.
2. Complaints information is to be recorded on the Complaints Register to assist with measuring effectiveness in a number of areas. The information can be used to identify and address recurring issues to address, identify training requirements, highlight areas to improve upon, and report information relating to complaints to the Commission if requested.
3. The business owner will analyse complaints data regularly to identify any trends in the complaints received and then make changes to policies and procedures as required to reduce the possibility of repeat complaints.
4. The business owner will review the Complaints Management system regularly to ensure its effectiveness.