

SFS Complaints Policy and Procedure

Purpose

The aim of this policy is to ensure that complaint handling responsibilities and pathways are clear and that procedures and approaches are fair, equitable and consistently managed and properly documented.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff (paid and volunteer), contractors and Board Members, receiving or managing complaints from agencies and the public made to or about us, regarding our products services and staff, or our complaint handling process.

Policy Statement

Shepparton Foodshare will view all complaints as opportunities for improvement and work to address matters raised and apply solutions identified throughout the organisation, to help reduce or stop the same problem or issues from occurring again.

Shepparton Foodshare will promote the rights of all persons involved to resolve any complaint through a chosen complaint resolution pathway, where no matter the path chosen, complaints can be addressed.

Shepparton Foodshare requires staff/volunteers/agencies and board members to be respectful and responsive in all their communications. When the complainant's behaviour or conduct raises health, safety, resource, or equity issues, this can significantly affect the complaint handling process.

Shepparton Foodshare will act proactively and decisively to manage any complainant conduct that has negative and unreasonable affects and will support staff to do the same in accordance with this policy. Additionally, Shepparton Foodshare may change the communication method used with the complainant to minimise any adverse impact.

Should the complaint become persistent or vexatious when the complaints procedure has been correctly implemented, with no material element of the complaint overlooked or inadequately addressed, Shepparton Foodshare will employ measures as outlined in the persistent complaints section of this policy.

Shepparton Foodshare will use information to respond to a complaint and to improve the services that relate to a complaint. All personal and sensitive information collected in the complaints process will be kept secure and managed in accordance with Shepparton Foodshare's Privacy Policy.

Definitions

Term	Definition
Complaint	An expression of dissatisfaction made to or about us, our services, staff or the handling of a complaint where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required. (AS/NZ 10002:2014) As well as complaints being made directly to Shepparton our organisation, remember that some complaints (or at least negative comments) made be made on social media.
Complaint handling and management system	All policies, procedures, practices, staff, hardware and software used by us in the management of complaints.
Dispute	An unresolved complaint escalated either within or outside of our organisation.
Feedback	Opinions, comments and expressions of interest or concern, made directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly, to or about us, about our services or complaint handling system where a response is not explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.
Grievance	A clear, formal written statement by an individual staff member about another staff member or a work-related problem.
Policy	A statement of instruction that sets out how we should fulfil our vision, mission and goals.
Procedure	A statement or instruction that sets out how our policies will be implemented and by whom.

Procedure

When responding to complaints, staff (paid and volunteer) act in accordance with complaint handling procedures as well as any other internal documents providing guidance on the management of complaints.

Staff should also consider any relevant legislation and/or regulations when responding to complaints and feedback.

The five key stages in our complaint management system are set out below

1. Receive

Unless the complaint has been resolved at the outset, the Manager will record the complaint and its supporting information.

The record of the complaint will document:

- Contact information of the person making a complaint and the date received
- Issues raised by the person making a complaint and the outcome/s they want
- Any other relevant information, and
- Any additional support the person making a complaint requires.

2. Acknowledge

The Manager will acknowledge receipt of each complaint promptly, and preferably within 5 working days. When appropriate the Manager may offer an explanation or apology.

Consideration will be given to the most appropriate medium (e.g. email, letter) for communicating with the person making a complaint.

3. Assess and investigate

3.1 Initial assessment

After acknowledging receipt of the complaint, the Manager will confirm whether the issue/s raised in the complaint is/are within the organisations control. The Manager will also consider the outcome/s sought by the person making a complaint and, where there is more than one issue raised, determine whether each issue needs to be separately addressed.

When determining how a complaint will be managed, the Manager will consider:

- How serious, complicated or urgent the complaint is
- Whether the complaint raises concerns about people's health and safety
- How the person making the complaint is being affected
- The risks involved if resolution of the complaint is delayed, and
- Whether a resolution requires the involvement of other organisations.

3.2 Investigating the complaint

After assessing the complaint, the Manager will consult with the Executive Officer to consider how to manage it. They may:

- Give the person making a complaint, information or an explanation
- Gather information about the issue, person or area that the complaint is about, or
- Investigate the claims made in the complaint.

The Manager will keep the person making the complaint up-to-date on our progress, particularly if there are any delays. The Manager will also communicate the outcome of the complaint using the most appropriate medium. Which actions we decide to take will be tailored to each case and take into account any statutory requirements.

4. Determine outcome and provide reasons for decision

Following consideration of the complaint and any investigation into the issues raised, will contact the person making the complaint and advise them:

- The outcome of the complaint and any action we took
- The reason/s for our decision
- The remedy or resolution/s that we have proposed or put in place, and
- Any options for review that may be available to the complainant, such as escalation of the complaint to the Executive Officer if the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome (the Executive Officer is the final arbitrator of the complaints process).

5. Close the complaint: document and analyse data

5.1 Document

The Manager or Executive Officer will keep records about:

- How we managed the complaint
- The outcome/s of the complaint (including whether it or any aspect of it was substantiated, any recommendations made to address problems identified and any decisions made on those recommendations), and
- Any outstanding actions to be followed up, including analysing any underlying or root causes

5.2 Analyse data

The Manager and EO will ensure that outcomes are properly implemented, monitored and reported.