



# Complaints Management and Resolution Procedure

---

<b>What Policy This Procedure Relates To</b>	Complaints Policy.
<b>What This Procedure Aims To Do</b>	This procedure describes the service delivery processes required to make a complaint to Wallara.
<b>Who This Procedure Applies To</b>	All people who use Wallara's services, have used Wallara's services or have applied to use Wallara's services.
<b>Who Is The Document Owner</b>	Quality Practice & Safeguards Senior Manager is responsible for the maintenance and review of this procedure.
<b>What Words In This Procedure Mean</b>	<p>A "complaint" is an expression of dissatisfaction that arises out of Wallara's provision of a disability service (or failure to provide a service) for which a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.</p> <p>A complaint may also be about how the complaint was handled, where the complaint is that Wallara has not properly investigated, or not taken proper action, upon receiving a complaint.</p> <p>"Client" means a person supported by Wallara, who have used Wallara's services in the past or have applied to use Wallara's services. This term is also used to refer to that person's family or advocate.</p> <p>"Responsible Wallara Person" is a Support Lead or Manager who has responsibility for ensuring that the complaint is managed in accordance with this procedure.</p> <p>"Wallara staff" refers to all persons engaged by or on behalf of Wallara, including employees, contractors, sub-contractors.</p>
<b>Responsibilities</b>	<p>All Wallara staff and clients are responsible for adhering to this policy.</p> <p>All Wallara staff are responsible for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Acknowledging complaints at site level when raised;</li><li>- Logging items on the Incident Reporting and Complaints Register; and</li><li>- Being accountable for actions assigned to them that are to be implemented after a complaint is made.</li></ul> <p>Support Leads and / or Managers are responsible for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Ensuring a response to complaints is provided; (see Step 5)</li><li>- Direct staff on the actions to be implemented regarding a complaint;</li><li>- Escalating complaints as required;</li><li>- Recording all follow up and actions to complaints, resolutions and decisions in the Incident Reporting and Complaints Register.</li></ul> <p>Quality Improvement Coordinator is responsible for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Providing guidance and support to stakeholders;</li><li>- Facilitating complaint resolution with the relevant others when required;</li><li>- Conducting data analysis for Board reporting;</li><li>- Maintaining the Incident Reporting and Complaints Register; and</li><li>- Submitting annual reporting requirements under relevant legislation.</li></ul>



## Procedure

Step	Detail	Timeframe
1. Information provision	<p>Wallara makes information about its approach to complaints available in a variety of formats, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wallara’s Complaints Policy Statement</li><li>• The Complaints Procedure for client in Easy Read</li><li>• The Easy Read Complaints Form.</li><li>• Information contained in Service Agreements</li><li>• Information contained in other documents given to clients (e.g., Wallara Important Information – New Client Handbook)</li></ul> <p>Wallara can also provide information to clients about the NDIS Quality &amp; Safeguarding Commissioner, which can provide advice and assistance to clients.</p> <p>Staff can provide this information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• On request;</li><li>• In response to a complaint;</li><li>• At the time services commence; and</li><li>• Annually for existing service users.</li></ul> <p>NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Commissioner <a href="https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au/">https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au/</a> Ph – 1800 035 544</p>	Ongoing
2. Timely response to a complaint	<p>A complaint may be made to any member of Wallara’s staff. That person is responsible for ensuring that the complaint is handled in accordance with this procedure.</p> <p>If a complaint involves safety concerns for clients, then the person to whom the complaint is made must take immediate action to address the issue and to see it is reported appropriately, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reporting of incidences of abuse and neglect under the Abuse and Neglect Policy and Guidance; and</li><li>• Completing an Incident Report if required (see Incident Management and Reporting Procedures).</li></ul> <p>The privacy and confidentiality of the client must be respected at all times during the complaints process. This means that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Information gathered during the complaint process is protected and only used to resolve the complaint or address broader issues arising from the complaint;</li><li>• Information is shared with staff on a need-to-know basis; and</li><li>• Ensuring the positive outcomes arising from complaints received and other shared learnings are communicated in a way that does not identify the person making the complaint.</li></ul> <p>While the complaints procedure is ongoing, Wallara’s service delivery must continue to the extent practicable in the context of the complaint.</p> <p>Adverse treatment of a person who has made a complaint will not be tolerated.</p>	Immediately following a complaint



Step	Detail	Timeframe
<p>3. Client against Client issues: Frontline complaints resolution</p>	<p>Frontline complaints resolution is not appropriate for complaints involving:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wallara’s service delivery (including communication of expectations of what services Wallara will or will not provide); or</li> <li>• The conduct of Wallara’s staff (see step 5).</li> </ul> <p>For complaints which involve a client complaining about the conduct of another client, Wallara staff closest to the issue should first attempt to resolve it when and where it occurs, directly with the client. This can be done within the scope of the staff member’s authority and delegation.</p> <p>The Wallara staff member that receives the complaint must report it to their direct line manager i.e., Support Lead, Operations Manager. The complaint is also required to be logged on the Incident Reporting and Complaints Register. Where advice or guidance is required outside of their direct line manager, additional reporting can be made to the Quality team.</p> <p>Staff should seek to think of all alternative possibilities – focusing not on what cannot be done but:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The client’s desired outcome; and</li> <li>• What options and possibilities are open to resolve the issue.</li> </ul> <p>Information about the manner in which the complaint was resolved should be recorded in the Incident Reporting &amp; Complaints Register.</p> <p>If a complaint of this nature cannot be resolved, staff should refer their complaint to the Support Lead / Manager to attempt to resolve the issue at this stage.</p>	<p>As soon as possible after the issue is raised.</p> <p>The Complaint Resolution information is to be recorded in the Incident Reporting &amp; Complaints Register within 5 Business Days after resolution of the complaint.</p>
<p>4. Making a complaint</p>	<p>This step applies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To all complaints involving Wallara’s service delivery or staff which is not appropriate for resolution under step 3; or</li> <li>• Where complaints relating to client-to-client conduct are not resolved under step 3.</li> </ul> <p>The client may lodge a complaint:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By placing their complaint in the Complaints box a Wallara site;</li> <li>• In writing (by post to <b>PO Box 363, Dandenong</b>, on the website <a href="http://www.wallara.com.au">www.wallara.com.au</a> or by email to <a href="mailto:feedback@wallara.com.au">feedback@wallara.com.au</a>);</li> <li>• Verbally (in person or over the phone); and</li> <li>• In any other means suitable to the client’s circumstances. This includes anonymously on Wallara’s website, or by contacting the anonymous feedback line on <b>(03) 8769 4321</b>.</li> </ul> <p>Wallara staff can provide the Easy Read Complaints Form for a client to complete, however this is not mandatory, and the client may lodge the complaint in any way that they choose. It is important for Wallara staff not to insist on “formal” or “written” complaints so as not to place barriers for the client to make a complaint.</p> <p>If the Complaints Form is not used, then Wallara staff must use their best efforts to obtain the following information:</p>	<p>Clients may make the complaint at any time in any format.</p>



Step	Detail	Timeframe
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The circumstances giving rise to the complaint;</li> <li>• A timeline of events;</li> <li>• Any previous actions taken to resolve the complaint; and</li> <li>• What the client expects in resolving the complaint - what they would like to see happen or how they see the complaint being resolved.</li> </ul> <p>Staff who receive a complaint must support the person making the complaint. This may include supporting a person to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand this procedure;</li> <li>• Document a complaint from their perspective; and</li> <li>• Find an advocate (or other support) of their choice, who has no foreseeable conflict of interest.</li> </ul> <p>Staff will ensure that, when handling complaints from clients with complex communication needs, someone is involved who has a good understanding of the client’s communication. The client should choose the person who supports them if possible.</p> <p>Staff will record all information related to the complaint in the Incident Reporting and Complaints register on the day of the complaint. Attachments of any other relevant information including a copy of the Easy Read Complaints form if it was completed by the client, location photos, interview notes or other documents should be attached to the Incident Reporting &amp; Complaints Register.</p>	
<p>5. Initial response Acknowledgment of the complaint</p>	<p>In the case of all complaints, at this stage the Wallara staff member has received the complaint and notified their line manager of the complaint to determine the appropriate course of action.</p> <p>If it is determined that the complaint relates to serious allegations which should be the subject of a formal investigation, then the Client Incident Investigations Policy and Procedure will apply instead of steps 6 and 7 of this procedure. The Quality Practice &amp; Safeguards Senior Manager must be notified of this immediately in person or by phone.</p> <p>For every complaint there will be a Support Lead, Coordinator or Manager who has responsibility for ensuring that the complaint is managed in accordance with this procedure (Responsible Wallara Person). The Responsible Wallara Person is to be determined by management. In some cases, it will be appropriate that the Quality Improvement Coordinator; People, Learning &amp; Safety Manager; Quality Practice &amp; Safeguards Senior Manager or the CEO is the Responsible Wallara Person.</p> <p>The Responsible Wallara Person must contact the client to acknowledge of their complaint. This acknowledgement must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A general summary of the complaint;</li> <li>• The time in which the client can expect an initial response to the complaint, (which must be as soon as possible);</li> <li>• An indication that a meeting, conference, written update or phone call at a suitable time will be arranged once Wallara have looked into the matter; and</li> </ul>	<p>Within two working days after the complaint is received under step 3.</p>



Step	Detail	Timeframe
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encouraging the client to contact the NDIS Q&amp;S Commissioner for support or assistance.</li> </ul>	
6. Internal review or Investigation	<p>The Responsible Wallara Person will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure there is regular communication with the client about the progress of their complaint, if required;</li> <li>Speak to people involved, including any witnesses;</li> <li>Adhere to the principles of natural justice in investigating the complaints, including making sure that:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People are heard</li> <li>Any conflict of interest is avoided; and</li> <li>People likely to be adversely affected by a decision or action are given reasonable opportunity to comment on the information or material;</li> </ul> </li> <li>Call or meet with the client, and the client’s family, guardian or advocate to discuss the complaint (face-to-face if possible); and</li> <li>Document the actions and decisions related to the complaint, including the completed complaint form, logging or attaching them in the file on the Incident Reporting &amp; Complaints Register.</li> </ul> <p>If the outcome of the complaint cannot be communicated within the timeframe specified in the acknowledgement of the complaint in step 5 (for example, because more time is needed to speak to people involved) then the Responsible Wallara Person must contact the client and communicate revised timeframes.</p>	As soon as possible following step 5.
7. Responding to a complaint	<p>The Responsible Wallara Person will advise the client of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The outcome of the complaint;</li> <li>The client’s right to escalate the complaint to the Quality team at Wallara providing contact information;</li> <li>The client’s right to take the complaint to the NDIS Quality &amp; Safeguarding Commissioner if they remain dissatisfied with the outcome; and</li> <li>Any changes to the way Wallara will deliver services in the future as a result of the complaint.</li> </ul> <p>This advice should be confirmed (preferably in writing) to the client, with a copy kept and attached to the complaint in the Incident Reporting &amp; Complaints Register for recording.</p> <p>The previous Victorian Disability Services Commissioner advises that complaints are more likely to be resolved, if the organisation’s response pays attention to the four key things that people commonly seek when they make a complaint – the ‘four As’:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Acknowledgement:</b> <i>Having stepped out of their comfort zone to make a complaint, people want to feel that you’ve understood their concern and how the situation has affected them.</i></li> <li><b>Answers:</b> <i>People want to know why something has or has not happened or why a decision was made.</i></li> <li><b>Actions:</b> <i>People want you to fix or at least take steps to address their concerns.</i></li> </ul>	By the required time for a response in the letter in step 5



Step	Detail	Timeframe
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Apology:</b> An apology can either be part or the whole of the outcome people seek when they make a complaint.</li> </ul> <p>The Responsible Wallara Person is to ensure that actions are implemented as soon as possible after a matter has been resolved.</p> <p>Where a remedy is provided to a person making a complaint, Wallara staff will take active steps to identify other clients similarly affected and to provide them with the remedy, even if they have not made a complaint.</p>	
8. External agencies	<p>Whilst Wallara’s complaint resolution can involve both frontline complaints resolution, and Internal investigation and review, Wallara cannot require that clients wishing to make a complaint follow these steps.</p> <p><b>It is the right of clients who are making a complaint to seek the most appropriate resolution to the issue.</b> Consequently, if for whatever reason the client feels they are not being heard or are not comfortable with the suggested process, they may choose to seek external review for example by the NDIS Q&amp;S Commissioner.</p>	At any time during the complaints process,
9. Maintaining records	<p>The Responsible Wallara Person will ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Copies of documents related to complaints are retained in the Incident Reporting &amp; Complaints Register;</li> <li>• Information about the resolution of the complaints is documented in the Client Management System.</li> <li>• The Quality team will coordinate external reporting of complaints. Information on complaints is included into Wallara’s complaints Quality dashboard which reports to the Quality Advisory Committee (QAC), Human Rights &amp; Safeguards Board Committee (HRSC) and the Board of Directors by the CEO report.</li> </ul> <p>Information recorded in the Complaint file will include at a minimum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Person’s details including: name, address, contact details if applicable</li> <li>• Issue and description of complaint including date complaint received and factors important to and for the service user including the outcome sought,</li> <li>• Source of complaint such as client, family, other services, NDIS Q&amp;S Commissioner, community member etc,</li> <li>• Action taken and outcome achieved,</li> <li>• Complaint category,</li> <li>• Date closed,</li> <li>• Recommendations for service improvement which will be logged on the Improvement Register.</li> </ul>	As soon as practicable following step 6
10. Reviewing complaints	<p>Wallara’s Leadership team will review aggregate complaints data and consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any trends in the data;</li> <li>• Any service improvements;</li> <li>• Any implications for Wallara’s planning or resource allocation; and</li> </ul>	Monthly



Step	Detail	Timeframe
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whether any complaints can be used in a de-identified way for staff training or development purposes (e.g. as case studies at a staff meeting)</li> </ul> <p>A summary of complaints handled, and resolutions of those complaint must be submitted to the Wallara Board on a monthly basis.</p>	

**Extra Points**

Some incidents may require a formal investigation under the Client Incident Investigations Policy and Procedure. A complaint may also relate to an incident which is reportable under the Incident Management and Reporting Policy & Procedure.

This procedure does not apply to Wallara’s staff that have a complaint or grievance. The *Staff Grievance Policy and Procedure* applies to these matters.

The NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Commission states that “Every NDIS Provider must have effective complaints management and resolution arrangements.”

**Related Documents**

- Abuse and Neglect Policy and Guidance
- Incident Management & Reporting Policy and Procedures
- Incident Report and Complaint Register
- Client Incident Investigations Policy and Procedure
- Conflict of Interest Policy, Process Map, Form and Registers.

**Legislation This Procedure Is Based On**

Disability Act 2006 (Vic)  
 NDIS Act 2013 (Cwth)  
 Charter of Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)

**Standards This Procedure Is Based On**

NDIS Core Practice Standards:  
 Standard 2. Governance and Operational Management  

- Feedback and Complaints Management

Date Created	Date Approved	Date Revised	Version control	Approved By	Amendment details
	02.02.2016		1	Initially by the Board. New Delegated Authority is the CEO.	New procedure to replace existing.
		9.8.2017	1.1	Quality Improvement Manager	Minor Version changes
		4.12.2019	2	Senior Leadership Team	Approved Procedure
		16.12.2019	3	The Board of Directors	Reviewed Procedure
		24.11.2020	4	GM People & Quality	Updated procedure. Update to roles and renamed Register.
		28.11.2020	4	Senior Leadership Team	Reviewed.
		3.3.2021	4.1	Senior Leadership Team	Include specific detail on anonymous complaints
		6.09.2021	4.2	GM People & Quality	Minor change. Updated roles.



13.02.2023	4.3	Quality Practice & Safeguards Senior Manager	Minor change. Updated roles.
------------	-----	--	------------------------------