



1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose

This Policy and the Policies and Procedures and related documentation set out in section 1.5 below (**Related Documentation**) supports Aardvark Autism Services to apply the Feedback, Compliments and Complaints Management NDIS Practice Standard.

1.2 Policy Aims

Aardvark Autism Services is committed to ensuring that each Participant has knowledge of and access to the provider's complaints management and resolution system. Complaints and other feedback made by all parties are welcomed, acknowledged, respected and well-managed.

1.3 NDIS Quality Indicators

In this regard, Aardvark Autism Services aims to demonstrate each of the following quality indicators through the application of this Policy and the relevant systems, procedures, workflows, and other strategies referred to in this Policy and the Related Documentation:

- (a) A complaints management and resolution system is maintained that is relevant and proportionate to the scope and complexity of support delivered and the size and scale of the organisation. The system follows principles of procedural fairness and natural justice and complies with the requirements under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (Complaints Management and Resolution) Rules 2018.
- (b) Each Participant is provided with information on how to give feedback or make a complaint, including avenues external to the provider, and their right to access advocates. There is a supportive environment for any person who provides feedback and/or makes complaints.
- (c) Demonstrated continuous improvement in complaints and feedback management by regular review of complaint and feedback policies and procedures, seeking of Participant views on the accessibility of the complaints management and resolution system, and incorporation of feedback throughout the provider's organisation.
- (d) All Workers are aware of, trained in, and comply with the required procedures in relation to complaints handling.

1.4 Scope

- (a) This Policy applies to the provision of all services and supports at Aardvark Autism Services.
- (b) All permanent, fixed term and casual Staff, contractors and volunteers are required to take full responsibility for ensuring a full understanding of the commitments outlined in this Policy.
- (c) The relevant persons specified in the column corresponding to a procedure described in this Policy have the responsibility to implement the relevant systems, procedures, workflows, and other strategies referred to in the relevant procedure.

1.5 Related Documentation

The application of the above NDIS Practice Standard by Aardvark Autism Services is supported in part by and should be read alongside the Policies and Procedures and related documentation corresponding to this Policy in the Policy Register.

2. Definitions

In this Policy:

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Aardvark Autism Services means Aardvark Autism Services Pty Ltd ABN 89 665 926 367.

Client means a Client of Aardvark Autism Services (including an NDIS Participant).

Complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a support or service, including how a previous complaint was handled, for which a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.

Complaint Manager has the meaning given to that term in section 6.

Complaints Process has the meaning given to that term in section 7.

A complainant is an employee, Client, advocate, entity, member of the public or other person who expresses their dissatisfaction about Aardvark Autism Services to either the organisation itself or an external body.

External Complaint Manager means such a person as determined by the Principal and Key Management Personnel that would meet the criteria set out in the Aardvark Autism Services Criteria for Complaint Manager or Incident Manager document.

Feedback and Complaints Form means the Aardvark Autism Services Feedback and Complaints Form.

Feedback, Compliments and Complaints Summary means the document of that name which summarises the Aardvark Autism Services Feedback, Compliments and Complaints Process.

Key Management Personnel means Jayne Franklin and other key management personnel involved in Aardvark Autism Services from time to time.

Legislation Register means the register of legislation, regulations, rules, and guidelines maintained by Aardvark Autism Services.

NDIS Commissioner Complaints Website means <https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au/about/complaints>.

Policy Register means the register of policies of Aardvark Autism Services.

Principal means Jayne Franklin.

Related Documentation has the meaning given to that term in section 1.1.

Senior Staff Member means any senior member of Staff or Key Management Personnel at Aardvark Autism Services other than the Principal.

Worker means a permanent, fixed term or casual member of Staff, a contractor or volunteer employed or otherwise engaged by Aardvark Autism Services and includes the Principal and Key Management Personnel.

3. Policy Statement

Aardvark Autism Services aims to ensure:

- (a) a system to manage and resolve complaints is maintained that follows principles of procedural fairness and natural justice and complies with the requirements under the *National Disability Insurance Scheme (Complaints Management and Resolution) Rules 2018 (Complaints Management System)*;
- (b) Clients have knowledge of and access to the Complaints Management System;
- (c) Clients are provided with information on how to give feedback or make a complaint, including avenues external to the provider, and their right to access advocates;
- (d) complaints and other feedback made by all parties are welcomed, acknowledged, respected and well-managed;

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- (e) all Clients, and their families, carers, representatives and advocates are encouraged and supported to provide feedback, provide compliments or raise any concerns they have about Aardvark Autism Services' service or organisation including making complaints;
- (f) all feedback and complaints are handled promptly, fairly, efficiently and effectively through our complaints management system;
- (g) that we provide a satisfactory resolution to complaints within a reasonable timeframe;
- (h) appropriate actions are taken to improve our services where required and that we provide better outcomes to our stakeholders;
- (i) there is demonstrated continuous improvement in complaints and feedback management by regular review of complaint and feedback policies and procedures, seeking of Client/Participant views on the accessibility of the Complaints Management System, and incorporation of feedback throughout the provider's organisation; and
- (j) all Workers are aware of, trained in, and comply with the required procedures in relation to complaints handling.

4. Who can make a complaint?

- (a) Any of Aardvark Autism Services' Clients, families, carers, advocates, statutory bodies, government agencies, stakeholders, Workers or any other person may make a complaint to or about Aardvark Autism Services, its practitioners, employees, contractors, volunteers and other Workers.
- (b) A complaint may be made on an anonymous basis. You can make an anonymous complaint:
 - (1) by calling the number in section 5.1(e) below and stating that you wish to make an anonymous complaint (so we don't ask you to identify yourself); or
 - (2) in writing by filling out a Feedback and Complaints Form (but not including your name or other details that may identify you) and posting it to the address specified in section 5.1(d) below.

5. Process for making complaints

5.1 How to make a complaint

A person wishing to make a complaint may do so:

- (a) in person to the Director or a Worker;
- (b) by email to jfranklin@aardvarkautismservices.com.au;
- (c) by post to: P.O. Box 6121, Cromer, VIC 3193; or
- (d) verbally by telephone to 0427 677 352.

The Director will be responsible for receiving any email and postal correspondence and managing the receipt and resolution of complaints in accordance with section 6.

For all verbal and written complaints received in a form other than the Feedback and Complaints Form, the recipient of the complaint will request the complainant to provide their complaint in the form of the Feedback and Complaints Form

5.2 How to make a complaint to the NDIS Commission

A complaint can be made to the NDIS Commission by:

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- (a) Phoning: 1800 035 544 (free call from landlines) or TTY 133 677. Interpreters can be arranged.
- (b) National Relay Service and ask for 1800 035 544.
- (c) Visiting <https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au/about/complaints> and completing a complaint contact form.

The NDIS Commission can take complaints about:

- (a) services or supports that were not provided in a safe and respectful way
- (b) services and supports that were not delivered to an appropriate standard

You can make a complaint to the NDIS Commission on an anonymous basis.

5.3 Support and assistance in relation to making complaints

All Workers shall be responsible for ensuring appropriate support and assistance is provided to any person in connection with this Complaints Management System including any person who wishes to make, or has made, a complaint by:

- (a) providing accessible information to complainants (including the Feedback, Compliments and Complaints Summary and this Complaints Management System) in relation to how to make a complaint;
- (b) providing a safe environment for a complainant to make a complaint or provide negative feedback without fear of adverse consequences, retribution or loss of service as a result of making a complaint;
- (c) treating all complainants with respect, recognising that the complaint is important to the complainant;
- (d) maintaining the confidentiality of parties involved in the complaint in accordance with section 8 below;
- (e) facilitating the participation of an advocate or other representative or support person in connection with the discussion and resolution of a complaint, if required;
- (f) providing Clients, families, carers and advocates with access to this Complaints Management System and the Feedback, Compliments and Complaints Summary;
- (g) complying with this Complaints Management System and the Feedback, Compliments and Complaints Summary;
- (h) advising complainants and potential complainants in relation to how a complaint or issue may be raised with the NDIS Commission and giving appropriate support and assistance to people affected by an issue raised in a complaint to contact the NDIS Commission;
- (i) appropriately responding to complaints, acknowledging, assessing and resolving the matter in a fair, efficient and timely manner with as little formality as a proper consideration of the complaint allows;
- (j) taking action in relation to issues raised in complaints;
- (k) if a serious risk is identified, taking corrective action;
- (l) keeping parties to the complaint appropriately involved and informed of the progress of the complaint;
- (m) ensuring that feedback and complaints data (both positive and negative) are considered in training and in planning service and support delivery;
- (n) ensuring the complaints process is procedurally fair and follows the principles of natural justice as set out in the *NDIS (Procedural Fairness) Guidelines 2018*; and

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- (o) reviewing and evaluating the accessibility and effectiveness of the Complaints Management System and continually improving its processes.

5.4 Protection for Worker disclosures

Workers are supported by the Principal and Key Management Personnel to report incidents and complaints. There are no negative consequences for Workers in doing so. All Workers are advised that they can make a complaint on behalf of a person, parent/guardian or child to Aardvark Autism Services or to the NDIS Commission. All Workers are required to comply with this Complaints Management System and be aware of their roles and responsibilities in receiving, supporting, managing and resolving incidents and complaints.

6. Persons who will manage the receipt and resolution of complaints

If the complaint is about:

- (a) a person other than the Principal, the complaint will normally be managed and dealt with by the Principal unless the Principal determines that an External Complaint Manager should manage and deal with the complaint; and
- (b) the Principal, the complaint will normally be managed and dealt with by another Senior Staff Member at Aardvark Autism Services, however, if no such person exists or if it is otherwise inappropriate given the nature of the complaint for the Senior Staff Manager to manage the complaint, an External Complaint Manager will manage and deal with the complaint,

(Complaint Manager).

- (c) More than one person may act as Complaint Manager for organisational reasons or to avoid conflicts of interest or the appearance of bias.
- (d) More than one person may act as Complaint Manager for complaints involving multiple persons if required in order to avoid conflicts of interest or the appearance of bias.
- (e) If the complainant is not satisfied with the investigation and proposed resolution of their complaint in accordance with section 7, they can seek a further review of the complaint by an External Complaint Manager (that has not previously acted as Complaint Manager in relation to the complaint). When undertaking their review of the complaint, the External Complaint Manager must follow the same process in resolving the complaint as the Complaint Manager and as otherwise set out in section 7.

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