

Purpose and Scope

Cahoots views feedback and complaints as a way to help improve our services and create greater participant satisfaction and outcomes.

Our complaints and feedback management process ensures that any concerns with Cahoots supports, practices, decisions and policies are valued and listened to respectfully, taken seriously and dealt with promptly and in ways that are culturally appropriate.

This policy and procedure outlines how people can make complaints and provide feedback about any aspect of Cahoots, and the process that we will take to address and/or respond to the complaint without prejudice.

Concerns raised by staff and volunteers are generally addressed under our Employee and Volunteer Grievance Procedure. However from time-to-time, staff and volunteers may raise concerns or feedback that is best dealt with under this policy.

This policy and procedure was previously referenced as the Grievance, Complaints and Disputes Policy and Procedures. Where this may be still referenced in policies, procedures and forms, this will have the same application as this Complaints and Feedback Policy and Procedure.

This policy applies to all participants, staff, volunteers, and stakeholders.

The Community Engagement Manager is responsible for implementation of this policy.

POLICY STATEMENT

Cahoots is committed to managing complaints and feedback in an accountable, transparent, timely and meaningful way, and in the most direct way possible.

Cahoots supports and encourages the rights of our participants, their families/carers and stakeholders to lodge and pursue any complaint in relation to any aspect of Cahoots and its operations.

We are committed to the following complaint's management principles:

1. Assisting people to make a complaint in whatever way is meaningful for them and in a language or communication method that is appropriate to the participant.
2. Complaints can be lodged without fear of retribution.
3. Full protection of confidentiality and privacy of complainants.
4. Complaints are assessed fairly, objectively and professionally.
5. We are committed to openness and accountability.
6. Complaints are resolved in a timely manner.
7. We ensure the application of procedural fairness for all involved.
8. We encourage the development of harmonious partnerships.
9. Integrate complaints and feedback into our continuous quality improvement process.

Allegations of abuse and neglect must be reported to the CEO immediately. Such allegations must be responded to as soon as possible, but no later than three working days and must include strategies for protecting the person from further abuse.

Any complaint or feedback regarding the CEO must be reported to the Board Chairperson.

Complaint and feedback management

Cahoots complaints and feedback reporting process is part of implementing quality continuous improvement and Cahoots Quality Management System.

Cahoots will maintain all complaint information in accordance with our privacy, confidentiality and consent policies.

Cahoots will address complaints and feedback through an internal complaint management process.

All persons involved in the complaint management process have the right to an advocate of their choosing to be involved at any stage of the complaint's process. Cahoots can provide a list of advocates that can assist participants and their support network during their time with Cahoots, including to assist in the resolution of a dispute or complaint with us.

All persons involved with Cahoots in the complaint management process have the right to access external avenues for complaint resolution should internal processes be ineffective.

Complaint management stages include:

1. Complaint registration. (Complaints and Feedback Register)
2. Acknowledgment of receipt of the complaint.
3. Complaint assessment.
4. Investigation of complaint.
5. Complaint response.
6. Communicating the decision.
7. Complaint closed.

Investigation of complaints will not be conducted by a person about whom a complaint has been made. Conflicts of interest shall be identified and acknowledged prior to a matter being referred for investigation.

Cahoots may refer to, or seek guidance from external agencies, such as the NDIS Commission or the relevant State or Commonwealth Ombudsman.

Complaints and Feedback Register

Cahoots will maintain a register of complaints and feedback, which will be maintained by the Community Engagement Manager to ensure privacy and confidentiality of matters.

The register will be reviewed at monthly Manager's meeting.

Where the Community Engagement Manager or Manager's deem, matters will be added to the Quality and Risk Action Plan to support Cahoots Quality Management System.

Records will be kept of any complaints raised, action taken, outcomes reached, method of resolution and feedback from the complainant.

Complaints to, and inquiries by, the NDIS Commissioner

A person can make a complaint to the Commissioner about any issue connected with supports or services provided by Cahoots. Complaints can be made orally, in writing or by any other appropriate means, and can be made anonymously. A complaint can be withdrawn at any time.

If a person makes a complaint, the Commissioner must decide what to do. The Commissioner may decide to:

- (a) take no action, or defer taking action, in some cases (for example, if the complaint was not made in good faith or there is not enough information to continue); or

- (b) help the complainant and other affected people to work with Cahoots to resolve the complaint; or
- (c) undertake a resolution process.

Staff training

Staff and volunteers will be made aware of the complaints and feedback procedure during onboarding, in staff meetings and through online training for service delivery staff.

PROCEDURES

Making a complaint or providing feedback

Each person can determine how their complaint or feedback will be made, and when and where the complaint will be made.

Complaints and feedback may be raised:

- via Cahoots online form – www.cahoots.org.au.
- By email – info@cahoots.org.au.
- By phone with a Cahoots staff member – 1300 103 880.
- In person with a Cahoots staff member.

All complaints and feedback will be logged in the Complaints and Feedback Register via Cahoots online form (Feedback and Complaints link) – www.cahoots.org.au.

Complaints to the NDIS Commission may be raised:

- Online – [NDIS Complaint Contact Form](#)
- By phone - 1800 035 544
- TTY on 133 677

Handling of complaints

Cahoots will handle all complaints with the highest standard of confidentiality. Complaints will only be discussed with those on a need-to-know basis and will not be a matter of discussion between any other individuals.

Where a complaint is made in person to a member of Cahoots staff, the staff member will lodge the complaint through the online form on their – www.cahoots.org.au.

All documentation will be retained in a secure place and in compliance with all internal privacy policies, and State and Federal legislation.

Where possible, complaints and feedback should be addressed by the people directly involved with the person's supervisor.

Where this may not be deemed appropriate, the Community Engagement Manager may handle the matter directly or refer it to the appropriate staff member to address and resolve.

Serious or unresolved complaints will be addressed by the CEO.

Where complaints require further investigation or formal review, Cahoots will allocate resources to proficiently manage the complaint.

Timeframes

Cahoots will undertake to inform staff or volunteers that are the subject of a complaint; the nature of the complaint and the process implemented to resolve the complaint.

If required, staff or the volunteer concerned will be provided seven days to submit a written response and/or seek further advice.

Complaints will be resolved within a practicable timeframe. Cahoots will aim to resolve complaints within thirty (30) working days of receipt. Persons who have lodged complaints will be regularly updated and advised of progress within agreed intervals (e.g. weekly). If it is perceived that a delay may be experienced, this delay will be clearly articulated in writing to the complainant.

Communication

Participants or Participant’s Representative will be explained the complaints and feedback procedure during the Service Intake Appointment. Provision of this information to participants or Participant’s Representative will be recorded in Cahoots customer relationship management system.

This policy will also be communicated in an appropriate way to:

- Participants and their support networks through Cahoots e-newsletter, website, easy to read flyers and accessible on request.
- Staff and volunteers through inductions, professional development and staff meetings.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years in consultation with participants and their support networks together with staff and volunteers.

This policy is not intended to be a static document and Cahoots commits to its ongoing development as part of continuous quality improvement, and as policy and legislation changes dictate.

References and Related Documents

- Cahoots Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk
- Cahoots Risk Management Policy and Plan
- Cahoots Quality Management Policy
- Cahoots Quality Management System Plan
- Cahoots Privacy Policy
- Cahoots Information Management Policy
- Cahoots Privacy and Confidentiality Procedure
- Cahoots Service Access and Exit Policy and Procedure
- Cahoots Access to Personal Information Consent Policy
- Cahoots Advocacy List

Versions

No.	Approval Date	Description of Amendment
1.0	30/10/2015	Policy created
2.0	25/07/2017	Reviewed
3.0	31/08/2018	Reviewed
4.0	09/08/2020	Reviewed
5.0	17/05/2023	Reviewed, formerly Grievances, Complaints and Feedback Policy and Procedures

Owner	Approver	Next Review
Community Engagement Manager	CEO	April 2025