

Synergy West Plan Management

Complaints Management Policy

1. Introduction

Synergy West Plan Management takes all complaints seriously and is committed to promoting a positive attitude and workplace culture towards complaints, recognising that complaints and feedback about our services can provide invaluable information about how we can improve the quality of our services.

Synergy West Plan Management acknowledges that people with disability have the same rights as other members of society to pursue any grievances and that empowering people with disability to voice their concerns is likely to make them feel valued and respected.

Synergy West Plan Management will manage complaints in a manner that ensures procedural fairness and emphasises quick and fair resolution of complaints.

2. Purpose

This policy is intended to ensure that we handle complaints fairly, efficiently and effectively.

This policy provides guidance to our staff and people who wish to make a complaint on the key principles and concepts of our complaint management system.

3. Scope

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

4. Definition

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction made to or about Synergy West Plan Management in relation to our services, staff or the handling of a complaint where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.

5. Organisational commitment

Synergy West Plan Management values all feedback and complaints because we are committed to ongoing improvement and increasing the quality of supports that we provide participants.

We are committed to protecting complainants from any repercussions, reprisals or victimisation in relation to their submission of a complaint. Any staff member found to have engaged in such behaviour, including, but not limited to, victimisation, withdrawal of services (or threats to), or reprisal, will be subject to disciplinary action.

The following table outlines the nature of the commitment expected from staff and the way that commitment should be implemented.

Who	Responsibility	How
Managing Director	Promote a culture that values complaints and their effective resolution.	<p>Treat all people with courtesy and compassion, including people who make complaints.</p> <p>Provide adequate support and direction to key staff responsible for handling complaints.</p> <p>Regularly review reports about complaint trends and issues arising from complaints.</p> <p>Encourage all staff to be alert to complaints and assist those responsible for handling complaints to resolve them promptly.</p> <p>Encourage staff to make recommendations for system improvements.</p> <p>Support recommendations for service, staff and complaint handling improvements arising from the analysis of complaint data.</p> <p>Acknowledge, investigate and finalise complaints in a timely manner.</p> <p>Foster a workplace culture that protects complainants from any repercussions, reprisals or victimisation in relation to the submission of a complaint.</p>
All staff	Understand and comply with our complaint handling practices.	<p>Treat all people with courtesy and compassion, including people who make complaints.</p> <p>Be aware of our complaint handling policies and procedures.</p> <p>Assist people who wish to make complaints access our complaints process.</p> <p>Be alert to complaints and assist staff handling complaints resolve matters promptly.</p> <p>Commitment to protecting complainants from any repercussions, reprisals or victimisation in relation to the submission of a complaint.</p>

6. Facilitating complaints

Synergy West Plan Management is committed to seeking and receiving feedback and complaints about our services, systems, practices, procedures, products and complaint handling.

Any concerns raised in feedback or complaints will be dealt with within a reasonable time frame, which may depend on the severity and/or complexity of the issues raised in the complaint.

Synergy West Plan Management will ensure that complainants and any person with a disability affected by the issues raised in a complaint, are:

- appropriately involved in the resolution of the complaint; and
- kept informed of the progress of the complaint, including any action taken, the reasons for decisions made and options to have decisions reviewed.

Any person may make a complaint, either in person, verbally, by telephone or in writing by post or by email.

Synergy West Plan Management will accept anonymous complaints and will carry out a confidential investigation of the issues raised where there is enough information provided. Anonymous complaints can be posted to Synergy West Plan Management or can be submitted via our website.

Complaints will be properly documented and handled in a fair, objective and confidential manner and Synergy West Plan Management will work proactively to ensure complainants and people with disability who may be impacted by the issues raised in a complaint will not suffer any reprisals or be adversely affected for having made a complaint.

Synergy West Plan Management will ensure that information about how and where complaints may be made to or about us is publicised on our website. We will ensure that our Complaint Handling Policy and Complaint Management System is accessible to everyone, particularly people who may require assistance with making complaints.

If a person prefers or needs another person or organisation to assist or represent them in the making and/or resolution of their complaint, we will communicate with them through their representative at their request.

If a person with disability affected by an issue raised by a complaint has a decision maker, advocate or substituted informal decision maker, Synergy West Plan Management will include and recognise these persons in the management and resolution of the complaint.

7. Complaints to the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission

Staff are to inform participants and any other person who wishes to make a complaint that they can make a complaint to the NDIS Commission about supports and services provided by Synergy West Plan Management. This includes people with disability, their families, friends, carers, advocates or guardians, workers or volunteers or any other person who wishes to make a complaint.

Staff are to offer support to any person in making a complaint to the NDIS Commission, which can be done in the following ways:

- phoning 1800 035 544 (free call from landlines) or TTY 133 677 (interpreters can be arranged)

- using the National Relay Service and asking for 1800 035 544
- completing a complaint contact form to the NDIS Commission on the Commission's website
(<https://forms.business.gov.au/smartforms/servlet/SmartForm.html?formCode=PRD00-OCF>)

8. Responding to complaints

Where possible, complaints will be resolved at first contact with the staff member who receives the complaint. In the first instance, staff are expected to acknowledge, assess and if possible, resolve the complaint. Staff will then need to document the complaint and submit relevant documentation to the complaints email address info@synergywest.com.au. This will then be reviewed by either Managing Director.

Synergy West Plan Management will promptly acknowledge receipt of complaints and assess and prioritise complaints in accordance with the urgency and/or seriousness of the issues raised. If a matter concerns an immediate risk to safety or security, the response will be immediate and will be escalated by the Managing Director.

Any complaint that raises issues including allegations of criminal conduct, abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a participant is to be immediately reported to the Managing Director so that appropriate follow-up action can be taken, and relevant authorities notified.

Staff are also to refer to the Incident Reporting Policy in relation to our obligations to notify the NDIS Commission of any Reportable Incidents.

Any complaint that raises issues of staff misconduct must be notified to the Managing Director so that these issues can be addressed in accordance with relevant Human Resources Policies, Procedures and Legislation.

We will inform complainants and, if required, persons with disability affected by issues raised in the complaint of the following:

- the complaints process;
- the expected time frames for our actions;
- the progress of the complaint and reasons for any delay;
- how they will be involved in the process;
- the possible or likely outcome of their complaint; and
- how to complain to the NDIS Commission.

Upholding the principles of Natural Justice and Procedural Fairness, we will address each complaint with integrity and in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner.

9. Analysis and evaluation of complaints

Synergy West Plan Management will ensure that complaints are recorded in a systematic way so that information can be easily retrieved for reporting and analysis by management.

Synergy West Plan Management may also be required to provide statistical information about complaints to the NDIS Commission upon request.

The Managing Director will conduct periodic reviews of all complaints and run regular reports on:

- the number of complaints received;
- the outcome of complaints, including matters resolved at the frontline;
- issues arising from complaints; and
- systemic issues identified.

10. Monitoring of the complaint management system

Synergy West Plan Management will continually monitor our complaint management system to:

- ensure its effectiveness in responding to and resolving complaints; and
- identify and correct deficiencies in the operation of the system.

11. Continuous improvement

Synergy West Plan Management is committed to improving the way our organisation operates, including our management of the effectiveness and efficiency of our complaint management system. To this end, we will:

- evaluate the effectiveness of our complaint management system in identifying;
- investigating and resolving complaints;
- implement best practices in complaint handling;
- recognise and reward exemplary complaint handling by staff;
- ensure our staff are trained and able to understand how to receive, manage and resolve complaints;
- regularly review, at least annually, the complaint management system and complaint data; and
- implement appropriate system changes arising out of our analysis of complaints data and continual monitoring of the system.

12. Recordkeeping

Synergy West Plan Management will keep and maintain appropriate records of all complaints received, including:

- information about the complaint
- any action/s taken to remediate or resolve complaints; and
- the outcome of any action taken.

Records of the complaints must be kept for a period of 7 years.