

Running Good Groups

Complaints



Booklet

7



What is a Complaint?

A complaint is when you tell someone about a problem or a concern you have with something or someone.

At different times people can get upset with something that is happening in the group. The reasons you might be upset about something happening in your group include:

- You are been treated unfairly or badly by another member or members of the group.
- You think that you or someone else has been treated unfairly at your group meeting or by your committee
- Something is happening in the group you are not happy about
- You have been treated unfairly by the people supporting your group such as your support worker, or volunteers

All groups should have a way that people can make a complaint if they think they are being treated badly or unfairly in the group. This is called a having a Complaints Procedure.





Why Have a Complaints Procedure?

It is a good idea for all groups to have a way for their members to make a complaint because:

- It makes sure all members get a fair go in the group.
- It protects the rights of the group members and the people working with or supporting the group.
- It is a good way to fix problems before they get too big.
- It helps groups to run well and to treat members with respect.
- Members of the group know that their complaint will be listened to.
- If problems do not get fixed, they might get really big and cause tension in the group.





Do We Need a Complaints Procedure?

Every group needs to have a way to make a complaint and every member of the group should know how to complain. Your group might not need to write a complaints procedure if:

- Your group is supported by a service that has a complaints procedure you can use.
- You already have a complaints procedure.

It is a good idea to ask the people supporting your group if there is already a complaints procedure your group can use or if they think your group needs to write your own complaints procedure.





What should be in your Complaints Procedure?

If you are going to write a complaints procedure some of the things that should be in it include:



- What is a complaint – write down in plain English what a complaint is.
- Your rights when you make a complaint – explain that members have the right to:
 - Make a complaint
 - Have their complaint treated seriously.
 - Not be punished or get in trouble for making a complaint.
 - Have their complaint kept private or confidential.



- Who can make a complaint e.g. members of the group
- Who you can make a complaint against e.g. other members of the group, the committee, the people working to support the group etc.



How to make a complaint – this includes the steps

- people follow when making a complaint.
- Whose job it is to sort out the complaint e.g. a complaints officer who is as a member of the group, the president or chairperson of the group, a volunteer, the person working to support the group.





What Steps should be in your Complaints Procedure?

Your Complaints Procedure should include the steps people follow to make a complaint. Here is an example of the steps that one Self Advocacy group uses:



Step 1: Talk to the person who has upset you, if you are able to.

Step 2: If you do not want to do this or if this doesn't work talk to the committee or to the person supporting the group. It might be a good idea to take a friend with you. You can ask that the notes of this meeting be written.



Step 3: If this still doesn't work, you can fill in the complaints form.

Step 4: Give the form to the person whose job it is to help your complaint.



Step 5: The complaints person works with you to decide the steps that can be done to fix your complaint.

This might include:

- Talking to the person who upset you
- Organising the people involved to meet and talk together
- Changing the way things are done
- Talking at a group meeting to work out a way to solve the problem
- Learning who else you can make a complaint to if the complaint is not fixed





What Steps should be in your Complaints Procedure? *cont.*

Step 6: The person who made the complaint is told what happened with the complaint and how it has been fixed, or the person is given advice about who else they can complain to if their problem is not fixed.

Once you have made your complaints procedure make sure every member gets a copy.

Good Luck!!!!!!!!!!!!



Examples of complaints forms and procedures are included in this toolkit.



SARU

Self Advocacy Resource Unit

Resourcing Self Advocacy groups across Victoria
for people with intellectual disability, acquired brain injury and complex communication requirements

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