Medicare Mental Health Centre

Service User Feedback Policy: Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions

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Record of policy development:

Version number	Date of issue	Lead author/ reviewer	Consultative panel	Significant changes on previous version
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2024/9		Reese Chen	Think Management Team	Name change, minor updates to improve readability
2025/1	14/3/2025	Reese Chen	Think Management Team	Cycle review

Medicare Mental Health Centre's delivered by Think Mental Health acknowledge the Traditional custodians on the land on which we live and work, and of the many different nations across the wider regions from which we all come. In Canberra this is the Ngunnawal people. We pay our respects to the Elders past, present and emerging as the holders of the memories, the traditions, the culture and the spiritual wellbeing of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across the nation

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose and scope of the policy

Medicare Mental Health Centre (the Centre) formerly known as Head to Health, is committed to providing high quality, innovative mental health services which target the needs of consumers, carers and other service users. We know that to deliver on this commitment, it is vital that the opportunity is provided to service users to offer positive and if appropriate, negative feedback on the services they receive, and to be able to offer their suggestions for improvements.

We also acknowledge that service users have a right to an avenue for submitting a complaint, should they feel the service they have received is not of an acceptable quality, provided in a respectful manner or safe.

This policy is embedded within a broader framework supporting consumer and carer engagement at the Centre. The policy explains the types of service user feedback which is important to the Centre, who can provide this feedback, and how they will be supported to provide it. It also explains how the feedback will be used to inform continuous quality improvement at the Centre.

The framework has been developed in line with the National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards – in particular, the Partnering with Consumers Standard. The term 'service user' used in this policy is intended to broadly encompass consumers, carers, and community members who seek information, advice or treatment from the Centre. This policy applies to all TMH delivered centres and phone services.

1.2 Key objectives and underpinning principles

The objectives of this policy are to use service user feedback:

- to inform continuous quality improvement at individual and service level;
- to provide opportunity to address emerging service risks to safety and quality and;
- to ensure services understand and meet the needs of service users.

The key principles underpinning the approach to receiving and considering complaints and other forms of feedback at the Centre are:

- Commitment to providing safe, respectful, high-quality services
- Acknowledging value of service user feedback
- Ensuring confidentiality and if required, anonymity
- All service users should have information on how to provide feedback
- Both negative and positive feedback is constructive
- Openness to suggestions for how to meet needs

Overall, the Centre wants to promote a culture of open communication – so service users feel comfortable raising concerns and ideas with service providers, reducing the need for complaints.

2.0 Consumer and carer engagement context

2.1 Commitment to consumer-centred care

Providing opportunity for complaints, compliments and other feedback at the Centre is one element of a broader commitment to engaging with people with lived experience of mental illness. We recognise this is essential in order to deliver consumer-centred care which optimally addresses the needs of individuals and population groups within the community. This is illustrated in Figure 1.

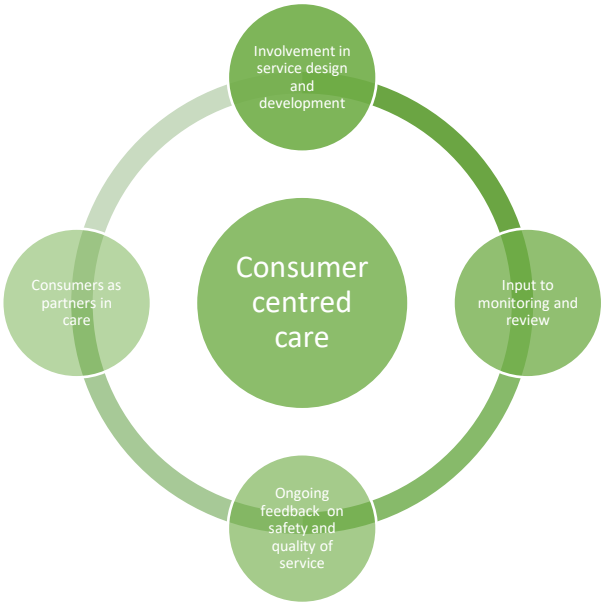

Figure 1 Medicare Mental Health Centre commitment to consumer centred care.

2.2 Consumer and Carer Engagement Framework

The Centre has developed an overarching framework which acknowledges the importance of consumer and carer participation across the continuous quality improvement cycle at a service level and commits to engaging consumers as partners in their care at an individual level. The framework has four key elements which address different types and levels of consumer and carer engagement.

This framework, and the key documents and resources which support it, is illustrated below in Figure 2.

Medicare Mental Health Centre Consumer and Carer Engagement Framework		
Element	**How is this achieved?**	**MMHC Policy/Framework**
Consumers and carers as partners in care	Input into care planning Informed consent Promoting opportunities for self-care Peer support	Informed consent policy MMHC Model of Care
Input into service design and implementation	Consultation with people with lived experience in designing models of care Consumer advisory structures	MMHC Safety, Quality and Clinical Governance Framework
Input into Monitoring and review	Engagement of consumers as part of the continuous improvement cycle through regular surveys, focus groups and advisory structures.	MMHC Safety, Quality and Clinical Governance Framework
Ongoing feedback on the safety and quality of care	Opportunity for: • Complaints • Compliments • Suggestions	Current policy

Figure 2 – Medicare Mental Health Centre Consumer and Carer Engagement

3. Approach to supporting feedback

3.1 What type of feedback can be provided?

This policy recognises the importance of three different types of feedback:

- **Complaints** - if services are not experienced to be safe, respectful or of a high standard;
- **Compliments** - positive feedback acknowledging models of care or service providers who are appropriately meeting people's needs and providing quality service outcomes; and
- **Suggestions** - ongoing input and ideas for what could be done differently or additionally to improve the care experience and outcomes for service users.

All three are valuable to the Centre. However, the approach to supporting and responding to these different types of feedback varies.

3.2 Who can provide feedback?

This policy targets service users, including consumers, carers, family members and members of the community who may have interacted with and had direct experience of the service in some way.

Service providers or staff from other services and community groups may also provide feedback to the Centre, particularly on referral practices and information sharing. However, this would generally be handled through regular communication mechanisms supporting partnerships with these organisations.

3.3 How can feedback be provided?

All three types of feedback articulated above are valuable. However, we have established two different processes for feedback, separating the process for complaints, in recognition of the need for a sensitive and timely managed approach.

3.4 The complaints process at the Centre

The complaints process aims to be simple, confidential and transparent. The key steps are as follows:

- Information about how to make a complaint will be displayed at the physical premises of the Centre, but also made available in hard copy as needed.
- A form for lodging complaints will be made available in hard copy at the centre or may be downloaded from the Centre website.
- All complaints will go to the Service Manager for initial consideration. During this stage, past records of engagement will be reviewed.
- The Service Manager will be able to action any immediate response needed in the event that there is a risk to safety associated with the incident/issue.
- Complaints will then go to the appropriate Leadership Team members for further consideration and decision. This may include Team Leaders and/or Directors, depending on the nature of the complaint.
- If a staff member is identified or involved in the complaint, this individual will have an opportunity to provide a response to the complaint details to aid consideration. After communicating with relevant staff involved in the complaint the Leadership Team will decide an appropriate form of response to the individual complainant, and also any immediate changes which might be necessary to service delivery.
- A response may be delivered in writing or verbally depending on the complainant's preference.
- The following timeframe for responding to complaints will be followed:
    - An acknowledgement of the complaint within 5 days
    - A response to the complaint within 14 days

    - If additional time is needed to investigate the complaint due to its complexity or serious nature, this will be indicated to the individual at the 14-day mark.
- A complaints data base is established in which deidentified summary information is maintained relating to all complaints received at the Centre.
- The Centre will provide summary data on complaints received in annual reports and reports to funding organisations.

3.5 The process for providing compliments or suggestions.

A less formal process will facilitate input into the Centre on both positive feedback, and general suggestions about service improvements.

- Information about how to provide suggestions or compliments will also be displayed at the centre and provided with initial information to clients.
- A specific form will be available to provide opportunity for outlining the compliment or suggestion. The form will ask the service user whether they would be available to provide further information if requested.
- Compliments and suggestions will also go through the Service Manager to the appropriate members of the Leadership Team for information and/or consideration.
- Summary information regarding compliments/suggestions will also be maintained in a data base and utilised to inform regular reviews of service delivery.

In addition to providing opportunity for one-off feedback or suggestions, the Centre also has a user experience survey which seeks more systematically broad feedback from service users on a regular basis to inform the continuous improvement cycle.

4. How will the Centre use feedback?

Positive and negative feedback provided through the above processes will be valued and utilised at the Centre to better understand and meet the needs of service users.

At a systemic level, the summarised feedback will inform the formal cycle of continuous improvement and the development of new or different services. The Centre may also respond to some feedback by making immediate changes to the way services are delivered, if this is appropriate to support a service which better meets the needs of consumers and carers.

The service partners with consumers, families and support persons to incorporate any feedback and suggestions expressed, to inform staff training and education as part of our continuous improvement process. Suggestions made may go to the Consumer Advisory Group (CAG) or the Quality Improvement Committee for further consideration.

5. Outcomes

At the Centre we are committed to our consumers and aim to deliver solutions that best satisfy our consumer's needs. We always seek to understand the underlying

concerns and address system issues evident. It should be noted that the outcomes of feedback whether it is a complaint, compliment or suggestion are dependent on the nature of the feedback. As each piece of feedback is a unique perspective, changes to the organisation may not be feasible, reasonable or immediately relevant to service delivery. Any feedback that is not of immediate concern but still relevant and feasible will be kept for future quality improvement.