



Complaints Management and Open Disclosure (D/2025/46773)

<p>Applies to</p> <p>Policy Category</p> <p>Delegation of Authority and Responsibilities</p>	<p>Division: Aged Care Business Unit: Care Services</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Clinical <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Non-Clinical</p> <p>Manager</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement this policy and ensure that all workers are informed of what is expected of them and are provided with access to this policy and related policies/procedures. Monitor, discuss and document the implementation of the policy. Address ongoing issues with policy implementation as they arise. <p>Workers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be familiar with this policy and related policies/procedures. Seek clarification from the manager or another nominated worker on any aspect of the policy, if required.
<p>Policy Purpose and Scope</p>	<p>The purpose of this policy is to explain St Vincent's Care's principles and approach for complaints management and open disclosure.</p> <p>This policy applies to all SVC and St Vincent's Virtual Health workers and managers.</p>
<p>Policy Summary</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An effective complaints management system is crucial to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of individuals. St Vincent's Care is committed to providing safe, quality and person-centred care and our complaints and feedback management system and processes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> prioritise the safety and wellbeing of individuals support individuals, workers and others to provide and manage feedback and complaints about services and care provided by SVC. We uphold individuals' human and legal rights — including the right to complain and the right to privacy, confidentiality, dignity and respect. We adopt a collaborative, fair, transparent, accessible, safe, culturally safe, timely and resolution-based culture of open disclosure when managing complaints and incidents. We provide culturally safe, trauma-aware, restorative and healing-informed processes for managing complaints and incidents. Risks are identified, assessed, analysed, reported, monitored and documented clearly, consistently and accurately. Complaints and incidents are escalated, reported, managed and documented in accordance with required reporting formats and timeframes. Trends in complaints are identified and analysed, and learnings are shared across the organisation to inform best practice and continuous improvement. Workers are aware of this policy and provided with training on SVC's complaints and feedback management processes. <p>The word 'individual' or 'person' used in this policy refers to older people, residents, clients, NDIS participants, and consumers receiving services, including those with special needs, who reside in the SVC Residential Aged Care Homes as well as those accessing community-based or virtual health services through SVVH. Where appropriate in the context of making complaints and providing feedback, the word 'individual' or</p>

	<p>'person' used in this procedure also means supporters of individuals receiving care, aged care workers and others.</p> <p>The word 'worker' includes employees (full-time, part-time and casual), contractors and volunteers.</p>
<p>Policy Details</p>	<p>Definitions</p> <p>Advocacy: Services provided by a nominated individual, family or professional entity, to actively support a person by speaking on their behalf and representing their best interests (even if that interest does not reflect the advocate's own beliefs, opinions, conclusions or recommendations). Note: The advocate does not make decisions on the person's behalf, they are speaking on their behalf. For example, if the person does not have the confidence to speak up and further their own cause themselves.</p> <p>Complaint: Expression of dissatisfaction with care or support where standards or expectations have not been met.</p> <p>Complaints Management System: The policies, procedures and associated forms and templates that support the identification, management, resolution and documentation of complaints during delivery of care services.</p> <p>Just Culture: A 'just' culture is a safety culture that fosters open reporting of adverse events, promotes learning from mistakes and continuous improvement, rather than a 'blame' culture focusing on the mistake made and who made it.</p> <p>Open Disclosure: This is a structured process used in healthcare to communicate with individuals/residents (and/or their families) when something has gone wrong in their care — especially if it resulted in harm or could potentially cause harm. It is based on honesty, empathy and respect, and it is a key part of building trust between healthcare providers and residents. For more information refer to the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care.</p> <p>Procedural Fairness ('Natural Justice'): A legal term for acting fairly in administrative decision-making.</p> <p>Reprisal: The act of retaliation – to 'pay back' someone who has actually or allegedly 'wronged' you.</p> <p>Retribution: The act of taking revenge – punishment inflicted motivated by personal vengeance.</p> <p>RiskMan: The incident management system used by St Vincent's Health Australia (SVHA) and SVC to capture and record all details of incident management and to assist in reporting.</p> <p>Principles and Approach of Effective and Compliant Complaints Management St Vincent's Care recognises the importance of maintaining an effective feedback and complaints management system to provide individuals with safe and quality care and to continually improve our care services and business operations. We maintain a complaints management system that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is proportionate to the size and scale of our organisation and the scope and complexity of services and supports provided • complies with relevant legislation, regulations, rules and standards — including the principles of procedural fairness ('natural justice') • is fair, consistent and transparent • upholds human rights — including the right to privacy, confidentiality, dignity and respect • promotes the individual's right to choice, control and self-determination • provides a clear, accessible, supportive, safe and culturally safe, including cultural and language-accessible modes and methods, for the individual to submit feedback and complaints • fosters a resolution-based culture of open disclosure without discrimination, reprisal or retribution. <p>Encouraging and Acknowledging Feedback, Compliments and Complaints</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St Vincent's Care welcomes all complaints, feedback, concerns and suggestions for improvement and views them as opportunities for continuous improvement, to ensure

the highest standards of safety and quality are maintained.

- We ensure individuals and workers are aware of their rights to provide feedback and make a complaint without fear of judgment, prejudice, reprisal or retribution, both internally in our organisation and externally to a regulator and we support them to do this if requested.
- We support individuals to access an advocate, language services or any other aid or equipment they need to raise and resolve a complaint.
- We acknowledge the complaint verbally or in writing, expressing regret that standards or expectations have not been met, in a way that is culturally respectful, and using a language, mode or method the individual prefers or is most likely to understand.
- We welcome and appreciate compliments, both verbal and written, to indicate that SVC is meeting the individual's standards and expectations.

Person-centred Approach

- We identify the individual's needs and preferences and manage complaints based on individual dignity and choice.
- We conduct each discussion and interaction with the complainant with respect, sensitivity and confidentiality.
- We ensure our approach is unbiased, fair, transparent and non-judgmental.
- We partner with the individual and/or their substitute decision-maker/registered supporter(s)/advocate and actively involve them in discussions and actions for resolving the complaint.

Outcome-focused Approach

- We focus our complaint management on positive outcomes for individuals.
- We prioritise the health, safety and wellbeing of individuals, workers and others. This involves understanding and identifying the individual's needs, preferences and goals.

'Just' Culture

- SVC upholds the concept of a 'just' culture. This means we focus on what we can learn from an incident or complaint, rather than 'pointing the finger' or blaming someone for what they did or did not do. This positive approach means we focus on learning, quality and continuous improvement, based on mutual trust.

Risk Management Approach

- We adopt a risk management approach in consultation with key workers and managers, including investigation and review of the complaint and follow up action for serious complaints, or where complaints result in recommendations for change in policy or procedure.
- We minimise/eliminate identified risks and take prompt and appropriate action to ensure standards are being met and safety and quality in processes and practices are being upheld.

Response Actions

- We take required action(s) to prioritise individual safety and wellbeing and address the immediate risks and needs of individuals promptly and consistently.
- We partner with the individual and/or their substitute decision-maker/registered supporter(s)/advocate and other relevant stakeholders throughout the complaints process and encourage their involvement in improving our care services.
- **Investigation:** Incidents are investigated fairly, consistently and respectfully and in a timely manner, and/or all required support is provided to external agencies/regulators undertaking formal investigations after an incident.
- **Analysis:** Trends identified through incident reports are monitored, analysed and responded to, supporting consistency in responding to and managing incidents.

Open Disclosure

We adopt an open disclosure approach when things go wrong and/or standards are not being met. This is an essential part of building trust with individuals and providing safe, quality and person-centred care. As outlined by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (ACSQHC-2019), there are five key elements of open disclosure:

- An apology or expression of regret, which should include the words 'I am sorry' or 'we are sorry'.

- A factual explanation of what happened.
- An opportunity for the individual and the supporters of the individual to share and discuss their experience.
- A discussion of the potential consequences of the adverse event.
- An explanation of the steps being taken to manage the adverse event and prevent recurrence.

Refer to the Complaints Management and Open Disclosure Procedure for detail on how to implement open disclosure in practice.

Cooperation, Collaboration and Communication — A Partnership Approach

- A culture of trust, mutual respect, cooperation, collaboration and communication supports SVHA's Mission, Vision and Values.
- Communication with the individual or their substitute decision-maker and registered supporter(s)/advocate is conducted with compassion, sensitivity, courtesy and respect.
- We partner with the individual and/or the individual's substitute decision-maker/registered supporter(s)/advocate to identify ways to resolve complaints to their satisfaction, where possible.

Documentation

- We ensure information and records are accurate and up to date and that the individual has provided us with all required written consents.
- We have processes in place to ensure information is secure to ensure privacy, confidentiality and dignity and that it is only accessible to the individual and, with the individual's consent, other relevant stakeholders authorised to access it.

Worker Training and Supervision

- We maintain a skilled and trained workforce that is aware of individuals' right to complain and understands the SVC complaints management process.
- Workers and responsible persons are trained at the commencement of their employment, when there are system changes and annually.
- There are processes in place to adequately monitor and supervise workers.

Accessible Policies and Procedures

- This policy, and the related Complaints Management and Open Disclosure Procedure, and all other related policies and procedures, are accessible to workers, clearly documented and consistently applied.

Monitoring and Review Processes

- We maintain an effective complaints/risk/continuous improvement register (RiskMan) with details, actions and outcomes of complaints and suggested improvements.
- We conduct regular audits to monitor and review our complaints management and open disclosure processes and make any required adjustments.

Shared Learnings, Continuous improvement and Quality Management

- We strive to learn from complaints, mistakes, process gaps and incidents and continually improve our systems, processes and practices.
- We review and analyse feedback and complaints raised to identify systemic issues and take follow up action(s) as required (changes to policy and procedures, worker rostering, supervision and training, technology and communications).
- We share information on outcomes and lessons learned from complaints and incidents and implement learnings across our organisation and seek to continuously improve our processes and deliver on our values of compassion, integrity, justice and excellence.

Roles and Responsibilities

St Vincent's Care maintains processes to ensure accountabilities, delegations of authority and reporting lines are clearly identified, documented and communicated across the organisation.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

- Ensure that appropriate policies, processes and practices are maintained to provide safe and person-centred care of the highest standard.
- Enact organisational changes to improve safety or clinical care as required.
- Collaborate with the National Director of Operations if a formal external complaint is escalated by them.
- Escalate formal external complaints to the governing body representatives as required.

National Director of Operations

- Ensure effective complaints and feedback management processes are in place and that complaint information is communicated back into continuous improvement systems.
- Articulate principles of open disclosure and a 'just' culture and ensure they are communicated across the organisation.
- Approve formal external complaints if escalated by the State Manager/Service Delivery Governance team.
- Escalate formal external complaints to the CEO, notify the insurer and advise the SVHA legal team as required.

National Director Healthy Ageing and Service Delivery Governance roles

- Maintain and monitor the implementation of the complaints management framework.
- Monitor and analyse incidents and complaints.
- Direct formal external complaints received from the Operations team (Residential Care Services Manager and State Manager).
- Service Delivery Governance roles — escalate formal external complaints to the National Director Healthy Ageing when required.

State Manager

- Review complaints escalated by the Residential Care Services Manager and manage appropriately.
- Escalate serious external complaints to the National Director of Operations for final approval.
- Notify and seek SME from National Director Healthy Ageing and/or Service Delivery Governance roles as required.
- Enter reportable incidents into the SIRS portal within the required timeframe. (**Note:** this may also be done by the State Quality and Compliance Manager or the State Clinical Mentor and Manager).

Residential Care Services Manager/Clinical Manager

- Identify incidents and near-misses when they occur and ensure any immediate response actions are undertaken to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of individuals.
- Manage both the internal and external complaints process in the SVC home. Escalate to the State Manager for approval. The State Manager may escalate to the National Director of Operations for final approval of serious external complaints.
- Enter reportable incidents into the SIRS portal within the required timeframe. (**Note:** this may also be done by the State Quality and Compliance Manager, the State Manager or the State Clinical Mentor and Manager).
- Ensure the incident is entered into the SVC incident management system (RiskMan) with all relevant documentation attached.
- Ensure complaints data is discussed at least monthly at Quality Meetings and improvement actions are documented on the risk management/continuous improvement register (RiskMan).
- Use feedback and complaints data to identify trends and inform service improvements.
- Provide the governing body and workforce with updates on complaints, as required.
- Provide worker training and/or supervision as required to ensure the SVC home's complaints process is conducted in accordance with required outcomes and timeframes.
- Ensure all communications and information are provided to the individual using a language, mode or method they prefer/are most likely to understand.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure service delivery is culturally safe, trauma-aware and healing-informed. • Recognise that supporting individuals who have a complaint can be challenging, upsetting and exhausting for workers and affect their mental health. Provide workers affected with all requested or required support, including access to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). <p>Registered Nurse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform regular risk assessments and implement prevention and management strategies. • Review all clinical incidents, including near-misses, and conduct thorough investigations and analysis. • Understand the obligations for external reporting and undertake reporting as required. • Be an active member of the healthcare team including speaking up, supervising and educating others. • Clearly document and communicate clinical care in a timely and effective manner. <p>Workers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comply with policies, procedures and safety systems. • Complete all mandatory training. • Identify and report problems, risk and hazards to the line manager. • Ensure actions, interactions and discussions are consistent with SVC and SVHA's Mission, Vision and Values. • Take immediate response action(s), in accordance with the SVC Incident Management Policy and Procedure, and the Reportable Incident Management Procedure, to ensure individuals' safety and welfare following an incident. • Offer feedback or suggestions for improvement to line manager if requested or required. • Escalate any issues, concerns or challenges to the line manager.
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To be completed for All Policies

Key Word Search	Advocacy, Apology, Complaint, Complaints, Complaints Management, Complaints Management System, Compliment, External Complaint, Feedback, Incident, Internal Complaint, 'Just' Culture, Older Persons' Advocacy Network, OPAN, Open Disclosure, Reprisal, Retribution, Procedural Fairness, Natural Justice, Victimisation, Whistleblower
Reference Material	<p>Better Practice Guide to Complaints Handling in Aged Care Services, Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission</p> <p>Saying Sorry - A Guide to Apologising and Expressing Regret During Open Disclosure, Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care</p> <p>Open Disclosure, Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care</p> <p>Implementing and Practicing Open Disclosure - Guide for Health Service Managers, Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care</p> <p>Australian Open Disclosure Framework - Saying Sorry, Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care</p> <p>Statement of Rights, s 23 Aged Care Act 2024</p>
Associated Policy Documentation	<p>Complaints Management and Open Disclosure Procedure</p> <p>SVHA Whistleblower Policy</p> <p>SVHA Privacy Policy</p> <p>Incident Management Policy and Procedure</p> <p>Reportable Incident Management Procedure</p> <p>Culturally-Safe, Trauma-Aware and Healing-Informed Policy</p> <p>Open Disclosure Meeting Planning and Preparation template</p>

	SVHA Clinical Quality and Safety Guidelines 2019 Completing a Resident Client Incident in RiskMan Completing Feedback in RiskMan Completing Quality Improvement in RiskMan SVCS Clinical Governance Processes for Auditing RiskMan and Reporting Clinical Governance Framework				
Risk Rating	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> High (Review due yearly) <input type="checkbox"/> Medium (Review due 2 years) <input type="checkbox"/> Low (Review due 4 years)				
To be completed for Clinical Policies Only					
Relates to:					
Accreditation Standard	Strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards				
Australian Standard					
Act	Aged Care Act 2024 (Cth)				
Guideline					
Regulation	Aged Care Rules 2025 (Cth)				
Code of Practice					
Version Control					
Revision No.	Description of Changes	Author Role	Approved By (Committee/Position)	Approval Date	Review Due Date
1.0	New – separate policy with principles and approach. Process and procedural steps are in the Complaints Management and Open Disclosure Procedure	QCSSM team and SVHA Legal Counsel	National Director Healthy Ageing	04/11/2025	04/11/2026