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External Feedback & Complaints Policy

Purpose

To ensure clear channels exist for feedback from outside the organisation to be received and acted on to improve the effectiveness and quality of Victim Support services and processes.

All processes and documents associated with this policy must align with the intent of this policy and best practice.

Scope

This policy applies to complaints received from persons outside of Victim Support, including:

- **Victims** – regarding services received and/or a volunteer or employee’s conduct or performance;
- **Members of the public and other stakeholders** – regarding services provided and/or a volunteer or employee’s conduct or performance; and
- **Any party** - regarding the Board or Board Member, in relation to any decision, action, or inaction, or regarding an employee’s conduct or performance.

NOTE:

The procedures outlined in this policy do not apply to complaints from members of Local Group Committees. These will be resolved in accordance with the organisation’s document “*How We Work Together.*”

Definition

External Feedback

Information received from someone external to Victim Support about how we have performed our work. External feedback can be positive or negative and can contribute to the improvement of Victim Support and its services.

External Complaint

Victim Support defines an external complaint as 'any expression of dissatisfaction (with Victim Support, and employees or a member of the Board) that relates to Victim Support and that requires a formal response'.

Policy (OC-2)

Victim Support is committed to providing the best possible service to victims and other users of its services. Victim Support recognises that complaints form an important part of feedback to the organisation and can contribute to the improvement of Victim Support and its services.

This policy provides a framework to ensure that:

- complaints are taken seriously and are resolved in a timely and responsive manner;
- complaints are dealt with in a sensitive, fair, expeditious and professional manner that does not breach the lawful rights of any individual;
- an impartial and consistent approach is followed ensuring parity and uniformity in complaint resolution;
- all individuals involved in a complaint are made aware of the procedures and steps that will be followed; and
- the privacy and confidentiality of all parties, where applicable, will be respected.

Procedure (OC-2.1)

External Feedback

Victim Support encourages feedback from those who have used our services or anyone who wishes to provide general comments, compliment, criticism, or express concern. Feedback can be provided verbally, written, by email, through our website or face to face. Any feedback should be passed onto the relevant manager for follow up. Any feedback given in person to an employee is to be entered into Victim Support's website (*Contact Us\ Feedback & Complaints\...message form here*).

Annual Survey Processes

Our stakeholders (such as the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Health) require information on our consumer satisfaction and outcome measure in their contractual accountabilities for Victim Support.

Victim Support will formally gather feedback from victims who have used our services. The purpose of these surveys is to ensure that Victim Support gives a voice and delivers services that are effective, high quality, responsive and make a difference to victims' lives and those affected by suicide.

These surveys include the Consumer Evaluation Survey and the Suicide Bereavement Service Survey and are managed by the National Quality Manager.

External Complaints

All complaints should be directed, if possible, to complaints@victimsupport.org.nz. The External Complaints Administrator will receive the complaint and follow the process as noted in the *OC-2.1.1 External Complaints Roles* & *OC-2.1.2 External Complaints Flowchart* documents.

Complaints should include, where possible:

- Viva Reference or Case Number (where applicable);
- contact details (so the complainant can be contacted);
- who the complaint is against;
- what action/behaviour the complaint is in relation to (full description);
- when the action/behaviour occurred and provide specific examples where possible;
- where the complained of action/behaviour took place; and

- any other information that is relevant to the complaint, including whether there may be witnesses who can verify the rationale for the complaint

A complaint should be detailed enough to enable the person alleged to have behaved inappropriately to be informed of the conduct, and to be able to respond to the complaint(s). In order to investigate and appropriately resolve the complaint, it may be necessary for Victim Support to contact the Complainant.

All complaints will be treated seriously and will be handled as a priority. Victim Support will endeavour to keep the Complainant updated and within required timeframes.

All complaints will be recorded in a Complaints Register which is maintained by the National Quality Manager. The Complaints Register will be reviewed regularly by the Senior Leadership Team for the purpose of identifying any areas for improvement.

Anonymous Complaints

A Complainant may remain anonymous when discussing their complaint. Anonymous complaints will be assessed in the same manner as other complaints, however, due to the nature of anonymous complaints, and in fairness to all parties, they can only be investigated to the extent it is reasonably possible.

The Prohibited Disclosures Act 2000 will provide anonymity in some specific circumstances for complaints regarding possible financial wrongdoing, serious ethical breaches, and/or conflict of interest.

Administering the complaint

The National Quality Manager is responsible for acknowledging the complaint with the complainant, registering the complaint, and keeping records of all documentation and outcomes as per the *OC-2.1.1 External Complaints Roles* & *OC-2.1.2 External Complaints Flowchart* documents.

Investigating the complaint and notifying the Complainant of the outcome

The relevant Senior Leadership Team member will appoint (or self-appoint) an External Complaints-Investigator to investigate and respond to the Complainant as per the *OC-2.1.1 External Complaints Roles* & *OC-2.1.2 External Complaints Flowchart* documents.

Reporting to Senior Management Team

The National Quality Manager will provide the Senior Management Team with a monthly summary report of external complaints received and the outcome of any investigation into the complaints.

The National Quality Manager will provide a quarterly summary report to the Chief Executive for reporting to the relevant government ministry.

Keeping the Ministries Informed

The Chief Executive will promptly notify the relevant ministry as per our contractual obligation, as soon as reasonably practical, and by way of an incident report, any complaints Victim Support receives that has or may:

- breach the privacy of a victim or other persons we are supporting;
- lead to an unmanaged conflict of interest;
- affect the reputation of Victim Support or the relevant ministry;

- impact on the suitability of Victim Support or Victim Support’s personnel to deliver a service or jeopardise membership of any professional body for Victim Support or its personnel; or
- lead to Victim Support becoming insolvent.

Relevant Documents

[OC-2.1.1] External Complaints Roles

[OC-2.1.2] External Complaints Flowchart