

## FAMILY, VISITORS AND CHILD GRIEVANCE AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

**Quality Areas:** NQS 7 - Governance and Leadership

**Policy Owner:** Safety and Compliance

Why this is  
important

### 1.0 Purpose and Introduction:

This policy establishes the organisation's approach to managing complaints, ensuring that the safety, rights, and best interests of children remain the paramount consideration in all matters. It promotes open, timely, and respectful communication with children, families, visitors, and community members, while providing clear guidance for addressing concerns in line with legislative requirements and best practice.

The policy applies to complaints made by families, children, community members, contractors, and visitors regarding the centre. Complaints made by team members about other team members' conduct are managed under the **Team Member Grievance Policy**. Allegations that may involve breaches of the National Law will trigger formal reporting processes. Complaints from team members who are also parents will be addressed under this policy when directly related to the care of their child.

### 2.0 Who does this policy apply to:

All Team Members, Families, Children, Board members, Contractors, Visitors and Members of the Community.

### 3.0 What is our Policy:

#### 3.1 An effective grievance and complaint management system

An effective grievance and complaint management system assures team members, families, children, and the community that all concerns are taken seriously and addressed promptly, fairly, and thoroughly. We endeavour to ensure that complaint management learnings and feedback reflect the expectations of families and the community where possible.

This policy is based on the belief that everyone has the right to raise a complaint or grievance and feel heard.

#### Principles of the Grievance and Complaints Process:

- a. All concerns and complaints, whether verbal or written, from families, community members, visitors, or children will be taken seriously and acted upon. Where a complaint relates to a historical matter or a former team member, we will make all reasonable efforts to obtain relevant information and determine any ongoing risk to children, and will ensure appropriate action is taken in line with current regulatory and reporting obligations
- b. The process will be managed with openness and transparency with timely and clear communication. Diverse and different views and beliefs will be respected
- c. Confidentiality and privacy principles will be upheld, respected and maintained
- d. Everyone will act honestly and fairly, respecting each other's rights and responsibilities
- e. All complaints and concerns will be handled equitably. Abusive language or physical violence will not be tolerated. Any individual engaging in such behaviour will be removed from the premises, and if necessary, the police will be contacted
- f. Ongoing complaints regarding children's or adults' behaviour will be managed in accordance with the *Relationships with Children Policy* and the Terms and Conditions documented on the *Enrolment Form*



### 3.2 Feedback methods

We take a proactive and solutions focussed approach to managing complaints and grievances, guided by shared expectations and a commitment to timely resolution. We value and welcome feedback.

The following opportunities are available to provide feedback:

- a. In-Centre: Contact details for lodging complaints is clearly displayed at the main entrance, as outlined in the *Information for Display in Main Entrance* document. This includes the centre's contact details and direct information for the state-based Regulatory Authority
- b. Verbal or Written Complaints: Complaints may be verbal or in writing and can be submitted at the centre or to support office.

If it is unclear whether a concern constitutes a complaint, clarification will be sought from the person whether they are raising a formal complaint. These matters should be documented on Be Safe to support the appropriate classification of complaints.

- c. Grievance Handling not a Complaint: If an issue is identified as a grievance rather than a formal complaint, it will be handled through the complaint process but will not be reported to the Regulatory Authority (except in cases involving child harm). If a grievance is not resolved professionally and in a timely manner, it may escalate into a complaint.

### 3.3 Valuing Children's Thoughts, Ideas and Perspectives

Children have the right to be heard and included in decision-making. When children are non-verbal, their concerns may be communicated by a family member or another adult. Educators will ensure all children are considered in decisions made on their behalf, recognising that responding to individual needs is a fundamental way of valuing their voices.

Concerns regarding children may arise through verbal and non-verbal communication, behavioural changes, or close observation. Where appropriate, children will be consulted in determining strategies and solutions for resolving grievances or complaints.

Any concerns raised by or on behalf of a child will be taken seriously and managed in line with this policy. Teams will support children to understand that they can share their concerns openly in a safe and supportive environment.

### 3.4 Managing a Complaint

Complaints will be addressed immediately and often initially managed by the child's educator, as they typically have the closest relationship with the family. The complaints process will prioritise the child's needs and interests, following the *Grievance and Complaint Process*.

If the issue is beyond the educator's control or if the family prefers to discuss it with someone else, the complaint will be directed to the Centre Manager/Responsible Person on duty. The process will be clearly explained to the complainant, including any necessary information-sharing with third parties to meet reporting requirements or support resolution.

All complaints will be documented in *BeSafe*, and any legal reporting requirements will be considered, including notifying the Regulatory Authority when necessary. The BeSafe report will include information about the complaint, the actions taken and evidence of discussions. Only Centre Managers and Responsible Persons are authorised to submit a BeSafe notification. However, the team member who discussed, responded or received the complaint can provide the initial details of what occurred.

For complex issues, complainants may be asked to provide a written statement to support a better understanding of the concerns. If mediation is required, all parties will have the right to agree on the appointment of an external independent mediator. The oversight of the mediation process will be overseen by our Legal Team.

### 3.5 Reportable Complaints

Some complaints must be formally reported (See *What Is a Reportable Complaint?*). These include allegations that:

- a. A child's safety, health, or wellbeing has been compromised – for example, being left unsupervised, exposed to hazards, injured, given unsafe food or medication, or showing distress due to neglect or poor behaviour management.
- b. The National Law or Regulations have been breached – for example, lacking required qualifications, unsafe premises, or failing to report a serious incident on time.
- c. A serious incident has occurred while a child was in care – for example, requiring urgent medical attention, attending hospital, going missing, being mistakenly left at the centre, or sustaining a serious injury or trauma.
- d. A complaint or allegation related to physical or sexual abuse has occurred – for example, any allegation or concern that a child has been, or may be, harmed by a staff member, volunteer, visitor, or another child.
- e. A child is at significant risk of abuse or is unsafe – for example, showing signs of neglect, exposure to family violence, unexplained injuries, concerning behaviour changes, or disclosing harm.
- f. Meets the *Reportable Conduct Scheme* definition. These complaints will be reported by the Compliance Team

Families may lodge complaints directly with the *Regulatory Authority*. Information about how to report directly is documented at the main entrance of the centre.

### 3.6 Harmful Sexual Behaviours

The complaint process must also be followed if a child exhibits harmful sexual behaviours, which are defined as calculated, developmentally inappropriate, targeted, and repeated sexualized play over time. These behaviours may pose harm to the child and/or others.

When such complaints arise:

- a. A *Child Support Plan* will be developed in collaboration with the family, outlining supervision and intervention strategies
- b. The centre will meet with the family to provide updates and offer resources for additional support
- c. If the plan does not effectively reduce incidents, the *Child Support Plan Escalation Process* will be followed

### 3.7 Follow-Up and Review

We view each complaint as an opportunity for improvement. As part of the resolution process, we will review complaints to assess whether policy or procedural changes are needed.

We will ensure that all complaints and grievances are resolved satisfactorily. Families will be contacted to confirm whether they are satisfied with the resolution, and educators will be consulted to assess outcomes from an operational perspective.

A complaint is considered resolved when:

- a. The issue has been fully addressed. The concern or grievance has been resolved satisfactorily or managed in accordance with the policy
- b. Communication has been undertaken, and the complainant has been informed of the actions taken or resolution and no further action is required by either party

- c. All documentation is complete and uploaded in the Be Safe Record
- d. No further follow up is required. There are no outstanding issues or requests that require additional actions

#### 4.0 Responsibilities:

##### 4.1 The Approved Provider will:

1. Establish a system to for complaint handling and reporting
2. Notify relevant agencies and regulatory authorities of a reportable complaint within legislated timeframes. All notifications to the Regulatory Authority related to child related complaints are the responsibility of the Compliance Team unless otherwise advised
3. Ensure that complaint enquiries are investigated so that issues are resolved, and actions implemented
4. Manage and respond to all media enquiries
5. Manage all complaints which are classified as critical by enacting a Critical Incident Team of relevant persons.
6. Maintain a register of all complaints reported including those related to child harm

It is recommended that the **Approved Provider:**

1. Advises parents/guardians and new employees of *the Families, Visitors and Child Grievances and Complaints Policy* and supporting procedures upon enrolment and commencement of their employment. This includes the various ways that families can provide feedback
2. Ensure that there are systems and processes in place to ensure that grievance and complaints are recorded and managed in a timely manner
3. Ensure that information about complaint trends is provided to the business and centres so continuous improvement can be embedded

##### 4.2 The Centre Manager / Nominated Supervisor will:

1. Ensure that all team members understand their role in managing any complaint and grievance, including whom to report these issues to at the centre. This will include that reportable complaints are recorded in *Be Safe* within four hours and that the record details the complaint, actions and communications taken
2. Ensure that this policy is available at the centre and a copy is provided to a parent or guardian upon request
3. Ensure that the name and telephone number of the person to whom complaints and grievances may be addressed are displayed prominently at the main entrance of the centre on the *Information for Display in the Main Entrance* document
4. Ensure all team members record complaints on *Be Safe* and those complaints deemed reportable are classified as moderate or above
5. When a complaint or grievance is received, it will be discussed as soon as practicable in a confidential setting to clarify the issue and desired outcomes. Complaints will be treated confidentially unless the complainant consents to information being shared. Communication expectations and timelines will then be agreed to ensure appropriate management and resolution
6. Ensure that if a complaint remains unresolved or whether the party is dissatisfied, that this issue is escalated to the next line manager for resolution without delay
7. Ensure that the *Child Harm **Management and Classification Table** and *Child Harm Management Process* are*

used where a complaint is raised about a team members conduct with a child

It is recommended that the **Centre Manager / Nominated Supervisor:**

1. Ensures that the *What is a Reportable Complaint?* and the *Notifications Table* are used to support decision making about what constitutes a reportable complaint
2. Ensure that the *Grievance and Complaints Process* is accessible at the centre and used to support the management of complaints and grievances
3. Ensure that there is a system to regularly check and respond to on-line feedback systems Ensure that complaints are reviewed to assess themes so that improvements can be made, and outcomes improved

**4.3 Team members** will:

1. Ensure that open, transparent and on-going communication occurs regularly that includes information about their child's day, changes to programming and incidents and illnesses
2. Ensure that grievances and complaints are managed in accordance with this policy and the *Grievance and Complaints Process*
3. Report any grievances and complaints to the Centre Manager or Responsible Person (RP) as soon as possible
4. Take all feedback seriously and report these to your Lead Educator/Line Manager.
5. Ensure that complaints are recorded on *Be Safe*
6. Ensure that all children's concerns and complaints are taken seriously and acted upon. Children's complaints related to a breach of the National Law, will be managed in a timely manner and their families will be involved in resolution processes
7. Respond to children's verbal and non-verbal cues so that programming meets their individual needs
8. Where concerns or issues have been raised about a child's specific behaviour ensure that a *Child Support Plan* is in place, if applicable

It is recommended that **Team members** will:

1. Support the Centre Manager/NS or Responsible Person with ideas, suggestions, and information to support the management of complaints and grievances
2. Ensure children are actively involved in decisions that affect them by incorporating their needs, thoughts, and ideas into weekly indoor and outdoor planning, and continue to embed strategies that promote meaningful participation in discussions, so their input informs planning outcomes

**4.4 Families and Community** will:

1. Raise any concerns relating to the management or operation of the centre with the team as soon as practicable to ensure they can be addressed promptly.
2. Co-operate with requests to provide relevant information when requested in relation to complaints and grievances

## 5.0 Definitions

**Complaint** is an expression of dissatisfaction made to or about an organisation, related to its products, services, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.

**A Grievance** can be described as a feeling of resentment or injustice at having been unfairly treated.

## 6.0 State Specific Requirements

National	Australian Capital Territory	New South Wales
ACECQA Phone: 1300 422 327.	Children’s Education and Care Assurance, Early Childhood Policy and Regulation, Education Directorate <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:ceca@act.gov.au">ceca@act.gov.au</a> <b>Phone:</b> (02) 6207 1114	Early Childhood Education, NSW Department of Education <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:ececd@det.nsw.edu.au">ececd@det.nsw.edu.au</a> <b>Phone:</b> 1800 619 113 (toll free)
Queensland	South Australia	Victoria
Regulation, Assessment and Service Quality, Early Childhood and Community Engagement, Dept. of Education and Training <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:ecec@qed.qld.gov.au">ecec@qed.qld.gov.au</a> <b>Phone:</b> Early Childhood information service: 13 QGOV (13 7468)	Education Standards Board. <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:ESB.EarlyChildhoodServices@sa.gov.au">ESB.EarlyChildhoodServices@sa.gov.au</a> <b>Phone:</b> 1800 882 413 (toll free)	Department of Education and Training. <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:licensed.childrens.services@education.vic.gov.au">licensed.childrens.services@education.vic.gov.au</a> <b>Phone:</b> 1300 307 415

### 7.0 Tools and Resources

<b>The most important documents I need are:</b> Procedure and Process doc What is a Reportable Complaint Complaint and Grievance Process Be Safe Team Member Grievance Policy	<b>Other supporting documents will include:</b> Child Support Plan Child Support Plan Escalation Process Child Harm Management and Classification Table Regulatory Reporting Notifications Table Information for Display in the Main Entrance Fact-find / Investigations Tool Kit
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### 8.0 Links to the National Law and Regulations

Section 165 Offence to in adequately supervise children.  
 Section 167 Offence relating to protection children form harm and hazards. Section 174 Offence to fail to notify certain information to the Regulatory Authority.  
 Regulation 174 – 176 Notifying certain information to the Regulatory Authority  
 Regulation 168 Education and care services must have policies and procedures.

### 9.0 References

#### Legislation

*Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 (Vic)*  
*Education and Care Services National Regulations (2018)*

#### Guideline / Government Publication

Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA), *Guide to the National Quality Framework (2018)*



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