



## Complaints Management

### Rationale and Policy Considerations

Glenelg Community Child Care Centre (**GCCCC/the Centre**) recognises that families need to feel confident that any concerns or issues they raise will be addressed fairly, efficiently and effectively. GCCCC is committed to providing effective complaints management which meets our families' needs and guides continuous quality improvement within the Centre.

This Policy applies to all educators and staff receiving or managing complaints from families or the community. This Policy does not apply to complaints by educators or staff, which are dealt with under the Educators, Staff Complaints and Disputes policy.

### NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 6: COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS		
6.1	Supportive relationships with families	Respectful relationships with families are developed and maintained and families are supported in their parenting role.
6.1.2	Parent views are respected	The expertise, culture, values and beliefs of families are respected, and families share in decision-making about their child's learning and wellbeing.
6.2	Collaborative partnerships	Collaborative partnerships enhance children's inclusion, learning and wellbeing.

QUALITY AREA 7: GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIPS		
7.1.2	Management Systems	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality Service.
7.2.1	Continuous Improvement	There is an effective self-assessment and quality improvement process in place.

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL LAW AND REGULATIONS	
174(2)(b)	An approved provider must notify the regulatory authority of a complaint that alleges a serious incident has occurred or is occurring while a child is being educated and cared for by a service, or that the National Law and/or National Regulations have been contravened.
168	Education and care service must have policies and procedure
170	Policies and Procedures to be followed
171	Policies and Procedures to be kept available
172	Notification of change to policies or procedures
173	Prescribed information to be displayed
176	Time to notify certain information to Regulatory Authority

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Storage of records and other documents

## **Philosophy**

The Centre's approach to handling complaints in a way that upholds the rights of natural justice and supports partnerships and ongoing communication with families; children's rights and interests are paramount. The service views complaints as an important mechanism for continual quality improvement.

## **Children's needs**

Respectful and warm relationships between families and educators; ongoing harmonious positive environment at the service; avenue to raise their issues with the service.

## **Families' needs**

That their primary influence in their children's lives is respected and supported; ability to voice concerns in a positive and confidential manner; that their concerns are taken seriously and acted upon; opportunities to influence decisions about their child's experiences at the service; to be kept informed about any issues or incidents that affect their child within the service.

## **Educator/Staff needs**

Regular open two-way communication with families and other educators; time to speak with families about any concerns; confidence that complaints will be dealt with in a positive and open manner.

## **Management needs**

That families will approach management or the service educators/staff to raise problems or concerns; to manage concerns or complaints about the service promptly and effectively.

## **Policy statement**

This policy means that families and the community can be confident that complaints and complaints are taken seriously and addressed effectively.

## **Responsibilities**

The Approved Provider will:

- ensure that obligations under the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations are met.
- ensure the name and contact number of the person to whom complaints can be made is clearly displayed at the service.
- ensure that the regulatory authority is notified in writing within 24 hours of any complaints alleging that a serious incident has occurred at the service or that the Education and Care Services National Law has been breached.
- take reasonable steps to ensure that nominated supervisors, educators and staff follow this Policy.
- ensure that copies of the policy and procedures are readily accessible to nominated supervisors, coordinators, educators and staff, and available for inspection
- notify families at least 14 days before changing the policy or procedures if the changes will:
  - affect the fees charged or the way they are collected or
  - significantly impact the service's education and care of children or
  - significantly impact the family's ability to utilise the service
- regularly review the policy and procedures to ensure serious incidents and complaints are investigated promptly, fairly and thoroughly.
- ensure that complaints result in reviews of relevant policies, procedures and practices.

The Nominated Supervisor will:

- ensure that regulatory obligations are met in relation to dealing with complaints.
- implement procedures for dealing with complaints.
- inform families and the broader service community of this Policy.
- ensure the approved provider is aware of the complaint, if it is a notifiable complaint, or if a complaint cannot be resolved.
- ensure the complaint is documented.
- work co-operatively with the approved provider, educators, staff and/or the complainant during the investigation or resolution of a complaint.
- regularly review the policy and procedures to ensure serious incidents and complaints are investigated promptly, fairly and thoroughly.
- ensure that complaints result in reviews of relevant policies, procedures and practices.

Educators and staff will:

- understand and implement the policy.
- report all complaints received to the nominated supervisor promptly.
- support the nominated supervisor and approved provider in the investigation and/or resolution of complaints.

Families will:

- raise any issues or complaints in line with this policy.
- cooperate with the approved provider, nominated supervisor and staff dealing with complaints.

## **Specific practices and procedures:**

### *Inform families*

At the time of enrolment or initial contact at the Centre, families will be provided with a Centre Handbook, informing all families that:

- The Centre acknowledges that complaints and feedback are welcomed as a tool to help the Centre to provide a better service.
- Families have the right to provide feedback if they are unhappy about any part of the Centre's service.
- Families have the right to decide whether they want to instigate informal or formal complaint procedures and to move from informal to formal as they see fit.
- The nature of a complaint can be either:
  - organisation or program based: those complaints relating to how a service is accessed and delivered, by whom services are delivered and who has access to those decisions, or,
  - individual/personal: those complaints relating to interpersonal relationships between child, parents and staff or the individual experiences of a child and/or family within the program.

### *Immediate Response*

Educators/staff are empowered to handle straightforward matters at first instance, and it is often preferable that such matters are dealt with promptly at the initial point of contact. A complaint will be directed to the Director or Team Leader, where circumstances indicate that the complaint would be more appropriately handled at a higher level.

### *Informal Complaint Procedure*

An informal complaint procedure can be initiated by a complainant contacting the Director, Assistant Director or Team Leader and the following strategies will be followed:

- The Director, Assistant Director or Team Leader will initiate a meeting with the complainant to fully explore the concerns, to establish a mutual understanding of the complaint, and to identify appropriate options for resolution.
- The Director, Assistant Director or Team Leader will make a file note regarding the complaint and outcome.

## *Formal Complaint Procedure*

A formal complaint procedure is initiated by the complainant writing a letter to the nominated supervisor or approved provider outlining the nature of the complaint and a suggested outcome. Once a letter has been received, the following procedures are to be followed:

- The nominated supervisor or approved provider will acknowledge receipt of the complaint, in writing, within 5 working days of receipt of the letter.
- The nominated supervisor or approved provider will determine the appropriate course of action to resolve the complaint, which may include mediation or investigation of the complaint.

## *Monitoring & Follow Up of Complaints*

After a complaint has been made and steps have been taken to reach a resolution, it will be routinely monitored and followed up to ensure that the complainant is satisfied with the way in which the complaint was handled and is informed of any changes in procedures because of the complaint.

## *Training*

The Management Committee will ensure funds are set aside in the training budget for providing staff training in complaint handling and that this training is updated regularly.

## *No detriment to people making complaints*

All reasonable steps will be taken to ensure that people are not adversely affected because a complaint has been made by them or on their behalf.

## *External complaints*

This Policy does not prevent a person from making a complaint to a relevant regulatory authority at any time.

## **Links to other policies**

- Community Involvement
- Confidentiality and Privacy
- Educator, Staff Complaints and Disputes
- Enrolment and Orientation
- Equal Opportunity
- Establishing a Protective Environment
- Guiding Children's Behaviour
- Interactions with Children
- Partnerships and Communication with Families
- Recruitment of Educators, Staff and Volunteers

## **Further sources**

- Early Childhood Australia (ECA). 2016. The Code of Ethics.
- UNICEF. Fact sheet: A summary of the rights under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
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- **Approved by the management committee on:**

**Date:** September 2021

**Next review date:** September 2023