COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY AND PROCEDURES

OOSH AND VACATION CARE SPECIFIC

Policy Statement

Our Service is guided by our Parent organisation Hastings Neighbourhood Services in all policies and procedures . To this end this Complaints handling policy should be read as an attachment to the HNS Complaints Handling Policies and Procedures.

We recognise that children, families, educators, other staff and the community need to feel confident that any concerns or issues they may raise will be handled promptly and professionally. We will provide effective complaints management which meets our families'/carers' needs

Rationale:

The Education and Care Services National Regulations require approved providers to ensure their services have policies and procedures in place for dealing with complaints.

Our Dealing with complaints policy is child focused and means our children, educators, management, coordinators, other staff, families / carers, and the community can be confident that complaints and grievances are taken seriously and addressed effectively.

The Guide to the National Quality Framework describes how an effective system for dealing with complaints confirms to children, educators, staff, families, and the community that complaints and grievances are taken seriously and investigated promptly, fairly, and thoroughly. Effective complaints management is an efficient way to consider and act on feedback from families and inform quality improvement (Element 7.1.2: Management systems).

Complaints offer service leaders a valuable opportunity to improve the quality practices of their education and care. Each complaint can serve as a springboard for reflection on the service's processes, procedures and practices, allowing for meaningful change.

Key Principles:

- Children's safety, health and wellbeing is our key priority. In line with regulatory requirements, we notify the regulatory authority of any complaints alleging the occurrence of a serious incident or contravention of the Education and Care Services National Law.
- Our families are integral to our service. We welcome their input into all aspects of our service's operation, including any complaints they may have.
- We welcome complaints as an opportunity to enhance the quality of our education and care practices. We reflect on each complaint we receive, identifying any issues or areas of improvement for our service.
- Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focused. Meaning we

view resolution of each complaint through the lens of putting the child or children's wellbeing in the forefront of the solution.

- We ensure that we have a child safe procedure to hear the voices of the children in our care when they themselves have a complaint.

Definitions:

TERM	MEANING	SOURCE
ACECQA – Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority	The independent national authority that works with all regulatory authorities to administer the National Quality Framework, including the provision of guidance, resources, and services to support the sector to improve outcomes for children	**Acecqa.gov.au**
Complaint	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.	Australian and New Zealand Standard Guidelines for complaint management in Organisations – AS/ NZS 10002:2014
Complaints handling	Effective resolution of a problem before it becomes worse and providing a remedy	Commonwealth Ombudsman – Better practice complaint handling guide
Investigation	A formal and systematic inquiry to establish facts about a complaint by collecting, documenting, examining and evaluating evidence. An investigation is not an end. Throughout an investigation, the investigator should keep an open mind about the possible outcomes of the investigation, such as education, compliance action, or a decision not to pursue the matter	Guide to the NQF (Regulatory Authority Powers – Monitoring, compliance and enforcement)
Personal information	Information or an opinion about an identified	Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)

	individual, or an individual who is reasonably identifiable: a. whether the information or opinion is true or not; and b. whether the information or opinion is recorded in a material form or not.	

Related Regulations:

- Preparing for and dealing with complaints Act: 172, 174, 174A Regs: 143B, 168 173, 173A, 176 QA2 QA4 QA5 QA6: 6.1 QA7: 7.1.2, 7.2.1
- Resolving complaints Act: 174, 174A Regs: 143B, 168-172, 176 QA2 QA4 QA6: 6.1 QA7: 7.1.2, 7.2.1

References:

- ACECQA – Guide to the National Quality Framework
- ACECQA – Occasional Paper 5: Leadership and management in education and care services
- ACECQA – Opening a new service
- ACECQA – Using Complaints to support continuous improvement
- Australian Human Rights Commission – Child Safe Organisations
- Commonwealth Ombudsman – Better practice complaint handling guide
- NSW Ombudsman – Effective complaint handling guidelines

Related Centre and Agency Policies & Procedures

- OOSH Incident, Injury, trauma and illness P&P
- Providing a child Safe environment P&P
- Policy Review & Development Policy & Procedures
- Risk Assessment Procedures
- ACECQA National Quality IT System
- Privacy and Confidentiality

Procedures

Regulation Area	Required action	Procedure for implementation and related policy areas
Preparing for and dealing with complaints **Act:** 172, 174, 174A **Regs:** 143B, 168 173, 173A, 176 **QA2** **QA4** **QA5** **QA6:** 6.1 **QA7:** 7.1.2, 7.2.1	The name and contact details of the person responsible for handling complaints will be displayed at sign in/out are at front of building	Make part of current regulations Display Prescribed information checklist to ensure information available and up to date.
	The nominated complaints handler will ensure that all complaints relating to serious incidents that breach the Education and Care Services National Law will be reported to the regulatory body within 24 hrs. of complaint being received.	HNS will ensure that the complaints handler receives induction into the reporting regulations requirements and reporting portal access.
	The nominated complaint handler will stay in contact with the complainant via phone email or in person as nominated by the complainant as their preferred contact type. This contact should provide updates as to complaint progress, assessment, mitigation action, to provide assurance and comfort and to provide closure once outcome achieved.	HNS will ensure that the nominated complaints handler is provided with complaints handling training and managing conflict training
	Complaints handling brochure should be kept at the front of building in the sign in/out area. The brochure should contain complaint form and information about the process and who to complain to. This information along with the policy and procedures should be accessible through the website also. Adults and children are to be supported to make complaints in any form that suits their ability: i.e. electronically written via email, handwritten and delivered via post or brochure form and hand delivered, verbally via phone, in person with a trusted staff member or by appointment with the manager.	Service coordinator to ensure policy is listed on the WEB site and parents are informed via handbook and reminded via newsletter that this is where it can be found.
	Communication with complainant will be via the system they are most comfortable with as listed above and according to the following timelines: 1. Confirmation of receipt of complaint within 8	Documented in Complaints Handling Log kept by Service Manager and kept

	hrs. 2. Discussion with complainant about the complaint details, process from here and desired outcome for them to feel resolved within 16 hrs. 3. If there is a serious incident, then report to authority organisation and communication with parent that report lodged within 24 hrs.	confidential.
	As per HNS policy all educators are authorised to receive minor complaints from children as relates to other children and use skills to mediate and resolve issue between the children. Depending on behaviors involved, this may include following incident reporting and or escalating to team leader so that parents can be kept informed of child's experiences and the complaint made.	Manager to make sure this is made known each educator time of induction and training provided if required.
	Should an educator receive a complaint from a child about another child that relates to sexualized behaviors this is considered a serious incident and will need to be escalated to the centre coordinator via the team leader/ responsible person in charge on the shift that day for a risk assessment to be completed to ensure that all communications going forward are confidential and handled sensitive to the ongoing safety of all children involved. **Refer to the child protection policies and procedures as these will override the complaint handling procedures in this case**. Educators and all staff must limit transfer of information until briefed by coordinator on planned action. Under no circumstances should any parent be informed of the complaint or incident until a safety assessment for all children involved is completed and if necessary, child protection consulted. This must be carried out before the end of the care session and the educators should take immediate action to sensitively contain and or separate children from risk of further harm via distraction and or one to one play options.	All casual educators must have completed the OCG Child Safe Organisations 9 module online and OOSH Specific module training as part of their induction. All permanent educators must have a CHCPRT025 Identify & Report Children & Young People at Risk Certificate. A refresher course it to be done annually to stay up to date with any changes.
	If a complaint relates to a child or family and originates from another child or family, it is the responsibility of the nominated complaint handler to organise to: 1. Meet with representatives of each family with the children involved and have a discussion that is respectful of all and their individual communication needs giving fair and impartial hearing to all. 2. Discover the grievance parameters and	All staff to be trained in child protection, Working in a child safe organisation and receiving sa disclosure from a child.

	assess if meets serious incident criteria or if more relational /behavioral conflict that can be managed through dialogue and agreed resolution /compromise from both families. 3. Help all involved find a mutually acceptable solution. This may require some coaching on new behaviour management strategies to be used both at home and at the centre, or creative play structure that has the children spending time in different groups for a time. 4. It may be necessary depending on behaviors and risk to ongoing safety for decision to be made regarding continuing service, child protection reporting, referral to external support services. Before a decision of this magnitude is made please refer to child exclusion policy.	
	HNS Agency complaints handling Policy outlines the steps a complaint investigation will take. This can be found on the HNS Administration share point or on our website.	
Resolving complaints **Act:** 174, 174A **Regs:** 143B, 168-172, 176 **QA2** **QA4** **QA6:** 6.1 **QA7**: 7.1.2, 7.2.1	During the investigation information pertaining to the complaint and persons involved is to be kept on a need-to-know basis to preserve confidentiality and privacy. In the case of OOSH this means we keep the identity of the complainant confidential and known only to the complaint's handler the coordinator and/or the Manager.	• Incident, injury, trauma, and illness • Providing a child safe environment • Governance and management
	All parties interviewed will be kept confidential with each other if possible and all information exchanged in updates and outcomes must be deidentified where possible.	
	At conclusion of investigation. All parties are to be informed respectfully and confidentially. If any party is not happy with the outcome, they are to be supported to take the matter further and this can be internally to the Management committee or externally to the NSW Ombudsman and or the NSW Department of education.	

Reviewing and approving this policy		
Frequency	Person responsible	Approval
Annually	Manager	Management committee Executive

Policy review and version tracking			
Review	Date approved	Approved by	Next review date

1 2025	19-03-2025	L. Tierney - President	2026
2 2025	22-08-2025	Pheobe Thompson and Permanent Team	2026
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