

# POLICY NO 18: DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS GRIEVANCES AND FEEDBACK

**Key Policy Contact Person:** Manager, Our Village Family Childcare

**POLICY STATEMENT:**

Our Village Family Childcare (OVFC) is committed to a fair and equitable process when dealing with complaints, grievances, or feedback to attain a successful outcome for all stakeholders. Having an effective complaint and grievance policy and procedure helps prompt resolution of issues and provides opportunity to reflect and improve on current practices and service provision.

The service is open and responsive to feedback from all stakeholders as this process provides valuable information on stakeholder satisfaction and provides an opportunity to improve upon all aspects of service. The Service aims to respond to all feedback at the earliest opportunity in a way that respects and values the person and will endeavor to incorporate suggestions for improvement in the service development and quality improvement plan.

Our approach to feedback supports people’s rights under the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities, the Child Safe Standards, the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the Disability Act 2006

**CRITICAL INFORMATION:**

***Investigation of a Complaint or Grievance***

- All conversations and information gathered is recorded electronically and stored securely.
- The investigation is undertaken in accordance with the service’s Policy Np 08: Governance & Management of FDC Service Including Confidentiality of Records.
- Information is collected from all stakeholders and shared with other relevant stakeholders.
- Information collected is used to address issues arising from the complaint.
- To assist in the investigation process, the service may request the complaint be formalised in writing via email, attention Co-ordinator to
- Where possible, the service will complete the investigation within 7 days

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**PURPOSE:**

To provide a clear and efficient procedure for resolution of complaints or grievances ensuring they are dealt with and resolved efficiently, using a fair and equitable process. Feedback received by the service will provide a guide for strategic and operational planning in the short, medium, and long term, supporting continuous quality improvement.

**SCOPE/RESPONSIBILITIES:**

This document applies to all Educators, Children, Families, Coordination Unit Staff, Volunteers and Students of the OVFC.

**STATEMENT OF DIVERSITY**

Sunbury and Cobaw Community Health is committed to improving the health of our community and being accessible to all, including people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, those from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background, people with a disability, Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQA+) people and other socially vulnerable groups and supporting their communities across the lifespan from birth to older age.

**DEFINITIONS:**

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| <b>Complaint</b>     | 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.  |
| <b>Conflict</b>      | Is a serious disagreement or argument, typically a protracted one  |
| <b>Investigation</b> | 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   |
| <b>Grievance</b>     | A grievance is any real, or perceived problem, any significant question, dispute, difficulty, claim, complaint, or concern raised by one or more employees in relation to work or work environment. A grievance may be between the complainants and the employer, between employees, may involve a union, or may relate to decisions or actions taken or not taken, systems, processes, or the physical environment. |
| <b>Feedback</b>      | Includes compliments, concerns, complaints, or suggestions received from clients, stakeholders, external bodies, or community members. Staff can enter feedback on   |

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|              | behalf of the consumer, but it does not include personal feedback from staff.  |
| <b>Zonka</b> | Feedback management system<br>- shortcut on every staff member’s computer desktop.<br>- link on external SCCH website<br>- iPads in SCCH reception areas |

**PROCEDURES:**

**Complaints and Grievances**

All complaints or grievances raised by stakeholders must be addressed in a timely and equitable manner (children, parents, guardian, Educators, staff, volunteers, students, and members of the public). Before any complaints or grievances become formal where possible the service will aim to identify, prevent, and address potential concerns. As a service we encourage all stakeholders to raise any concerns or discuss any issues directly with the Educator or the coordination unit as one of the first steps of resolution.

The following provides the protocols and behaviour expected of all parties involved in the resolution of a grievance:

- Acting in good faith – sincerity, honesty and genuinely
- Cooperation
- Prompt action
- Minimising disruption to work, other employee and programs.

When making a complaint or grievance all details required are located and displayed within the Family Day Care residence and at the Family Day Care Services main office at all times allowing any individual the right to make a complaint or grievance about the service to the regulatory authority, and anonymously if preferred.

***Investigation of a Complaint or Grievance***

- All conversations and information gathered is recorded electronically and stored securely.
- The investigation is undertaken in accordance with the service’s Policy Np 08: Governance & Management of FDC Service Including Confidentiality of Records.
- Information is collected from all stakeholders and shared with other relevant stakeholders.
- Information collected is used to address issues arising from the complaint or grievance.
- To assist in the investigation process, the service may request the complaint or grievance be formalised in writing via email, attention Co-ordinator to
- Where possible, the service will complete the investigation within 7 days.

If parents, Educators, or staff are unhappy with the service, the following procedures should be implemented. **In all instances, if there is a breach of the Education and Care Services Law Act 2010, (current version July 1, 2023), The Department of Education will be notified through the NQAITS within 24hours.**

***Parent/Guardian Complaint or Grievance with and Educator***

- Discuss the issue with the Educator at an appropriate time (preferably child free).

- If unresolved, inform the Educator that you will be taking the matter up with Co-ordination Unit staff.
- Under the **Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010, (current versions July 1, 2023)**, the coordinator will: Deal with the complaint or grievance as soon as practicable and as discreetly as possible
- *The Manager will also notify the Department of Education through the NQAITS 24 hours of receiving the complaint or grievance, if the complaint or grievance alleges:*
  - *The health, safety or wellbeing of any child being cared for or educated by the children’s service may have been compromised.*
  - *A contravention of the Act or the Regulations*
- If the Co-ordinator is unable to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of both parties, the matter will be referred to the Manager to attempt to resolve the issues within 7 working days.
- If still unresolved, the matter will be referred to the Head of Services who will seek to deal promptly and appropriately with the issue and may interview Parents/Guardians, Educator(s) and Coordination Unit staff and may seek advice from external organisations including Family Day Care Australia (FDCA) and/or legal advisers prior to offering suggested resolutions options.
- If after discussion with the Manager the issue remains unresolved (and the complaint or grievance alleges the health, safety or wellbeing of children was or is being compromised or a breach of the Education and Care Services National Law), the complainant can contact:

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| <p><b>Regulatory Authority</b><br/><b>Quality Assessment and rating Division –</b><br/><b>Northern Metropolitan</b><br/><b>Northwestern Region</b></p> | <p>Level 9, McNab Avenue<br/>Footscray, Vic, 3001<br/>Phone: 03 7005 1989<br/>Email: nmr.qar@education.vic.gov.au</p> |
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***Complaint or Grievance with Family Childcare Policies, Procedures***

- Issues regarding policies or procedures should first be raised with the Manager.
- If still unresolved, the matter will be referred to the Head of Services who will seek to deal promptly and appropriately with the issue and may interview Parents/Guardians, Educator(s) and Coordination Unit staff and may seek advice from external organisations including FDC Peak Organisations e.g., FDCA and/or legal advisers prior to offering suggested resolutions options.

***Complaint or Grievance with Coordination Unit Staff***

- If regarding Coordination Unit staff, discuss the complaint or grievance with them.
- If you are not satisfied as to the outcome, inform them of your intention to register a complaint or grievance with the Manager, or if regarding the Manager, the Sunbury, and Cobaw Community Health Head of Services.

***When Educators have a Complaint or Grievance***

- If regarding a Coordinator, first discuss the issue with them at an appropriate time.
- If unresolved, inform the coordinator that you will be taking the issue up with the Manager.
- If regarding the Manager or other staff, discuss the issue with the Head of Services at SCCH
- If the issue remains unresolved, the matter will be referred to the Chief Operating Officer who will seek to deal promptly and appropriately with the issue and may interview Parents/Guardians, Educator(s) and Coordination Unit staff and may seek advice from external

organisations including FDC Peak Organisations e.g., FDCA and/or legal advisers prior to offering suggested resolutions options.

For all complaints or grievances pertaining to allegations of abuse towards a child involving an Educator or staff member need to follow the Child Safe Standards and the Reportable Conduct Scheme Protocols, as per Policy 55 - Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.

At any point of these proceedings, Educators and Coordination Unit staff may seek assistance from a support person when responding to a complaint or grievance about them during negotiations and discussions between the parties.

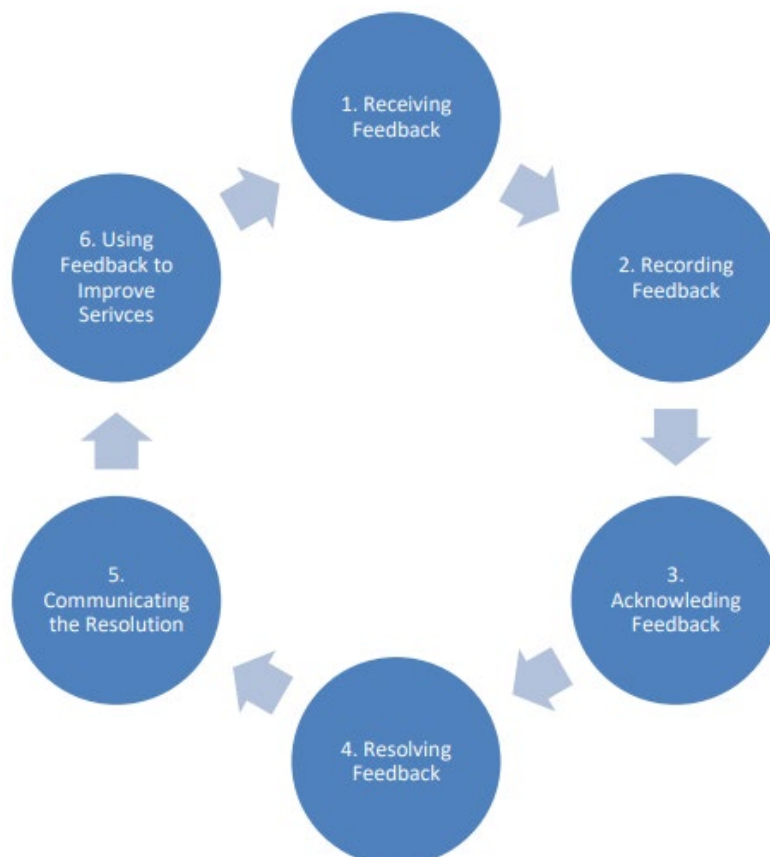
**When Coordination Unit staff have a complaint or grievance with other staff or SCCH staff or Management, follow SCCH Grievance and Issue Resolution Policy and Procedure.**

Further advice can be obtained through:

- Family Day Care Australia, Legal Services, Phone: 1800 658 699

## Feedback

The feedback management process is simplified into six steps:



### ***Receiving Feedback***

When receiving feedback, the coordination unit will:

- Listen openly to the feedback and provide anonymity at the request of the individual.

- Ask the individual what outcome they are seeking.
- If the feedback is a complaint or grievance, the recipient will clearly outline to the complainant the feedback process and the expected timeframe for communication as per the above complaints or grievances procedure.
- If the feedback is a compliment, thank the recipient for letting us know and assure them the involved Educator, staff and managers will be notified.
- Be accountable and empathetic toward the affected individual.
- Assess the situation to identify anything which may pose an immediate threat or danger or require a specialised response.

Stakeholders are encouraged to submit feedback through multiple mechanisms designed to meet the needs of a range of individuals and reduce barriers:

- Child friendly brochure to enable children to provide feedback on the service safely.
- Via email directly to OVFC
- Sending a letter
- Telephoning or speaking with a member of the confirmation unit or Manager.
- Participating in feedback processes such as emails and surveys
- Zonka – Feedback Management System – allowing feedback to be given anonymously.

### ***Recording Feedback***

The Coordination Unit Staff member - the recipient of the feedback will immediately record all information that is relevant to the compliment or complaint, in its original and simplest form and upload to the digital file on Harmony (if it directly relates to a family, Educator of child of the service) OR using SCCH feedback management system Zonka for all external stakeholder feedback. Each staff member of the coordination unit has a shortcut on their computer desktop. Feedback requiring follow up action will then be delegated to the manager.

- Feedback requiring an urgent response should be alerted to the coordination unit Manager immediately.
- Feedback rated by a Coordinator or Manager as high risk for the potential of legal action or adverse publicity for SCCH must be immediately referred to the CEO.

If the feedback is a serious complaint about the behaviour or professional practice of a staff member, the relevant Manager will consult People and Culture before discussing the matter with the staff member.

### ***Acknowledging Feedback***

Conflicts of interest should be avoided by appointing a person unrelated to the matter to investigate and manage the complaint. This will be the Manager or if a serious complaint, a member of the Head of Services. A person may also request to remain anonymous in the lodgement of a complaint and therefore, contact may not be possible or expected. Unless the person has requested to remain anonymous, the employee managing the complaint will:

- Contact the complainant/person by phone to confirm that the complaint has been received. This is to build a relationship of trust and confidence with the person who raised the complaint.

- Will obtain further information about the complaint via this phone call.
- Provide estimate timeframes and realistic expectations if follow-up action is required.

### **Resolving Feedback**

In the resolution of complaints, the person managing the complaint will:

- Involve the complainant by keeping them informed of the progress of the complaint and discussing any disparities identified in the information held.
- Request additional information when required but apply a timeframe that limits when it is to be provided.
- Consider extensions in time only where necessary and always communicate any additional time requirements to the complainant with an explanation of the need.

### **Communicating the resolution**

In the communication of positive feedback and compliments, the person managing the feedback will ensure the relevant stakeholders are notified. Consideration may be given to share the feedback via In Team / Unit Meetings

Having a transparent and accessible feedback process is essential for improving the quality of services and for building programs which are responsive to the needs of consumers. Feedback data (including both compliments and complaints) will be:

- Used as part of review, planning and service development activities across the service and SCCH
- Referred to appropriate working groups or committees to inform improvements.
- Consolidated in a feedback report which will be developed monthly and discussed at team meetings.
- Reported to the Board.

### **REFERENCES:**

- [Education and Care Services National Regulations, \(current version July 1, 2023\) – Regulation 168](#)
- [Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 \(current version July 1, 2023\)](#)
- [Commission for Children and Young People](#)
- [Family Day Care Australia Legal Services](#)
- [Department of Education and Training](#)
- [Australian Human Rights Commission](#)

### **RELATED POLICIES & PROCEDURES/ WORK INSTRUCTIONS:**

- Staffing Arrangements - 37
- Child Safety and Wellbeing – 55
- Visitor to Family Day Care Residences and Care Venues – 47
- Educator Agreement Termination or Suspension – 39
- Code of Conduct - 40
- SCCH Client Empowerment Policy and Procedure
- SCCH Grievance and Issue Resolution Policy and Procedure
- SCCH Code of Conduct

- SCCH Feedback Policy and Procedure

**VERSION CONTROL AND LEGISLATION:**

| For office use only (to be completed by the Quality, Safety & Compliance unit) |  |                        |                         |
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