



## Compliment and Complaint Handling

### Children's Services Policy No 1.4

**Date issued:** June 2007  
**Date effective:** June 2007  
**Date revised and updated:** April 2009; June 2010; January 2012; April 2015; November 2015, August 2018, October 2020, December 2022, June 2024; and May 2025

#### Aim

To ensure that families and community members are able to provide formal feedback including compliments and complaints regarding the service; and

To ensure that children, parents/carers and staff will be free to raise and have resolved any grievance that they may have regarding the service without fear of retribution.

To use feedback as a mechanism to support the continuous improvement of our services.

#### Background information

Council operated services will receive compliments and complaints as part of our ongoing service to the community. To ensure ongoing customer and staff satisfaction, it is vital that compliments and complaints are dealt with professionally.

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 received, identifying any issues or areas of improvement for our service.

Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focused.

#### Relevant legislation

- [Education and Care Services National Regulations](#)
- [Education and Care National Regulations Amendment Regulations 2025](#)
- [Children's Guardian Act 2019](#)
- [Children \(Education and Care Services National Law Application\) Act 2010](#)

#### Resources

- [SAFE series resources](#), NSW Office of the Children's Guardian
- Willoughby City Council's Grievance Procedure 9.03
- [Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority - National Quality Standard](#)
  - **Quality Area 7:**
    - Standard 7.1 - Element 7.2

## **How to provide feedback/make a complaint**

[Regulation 173 \(2b and e\)](#) sets out the prescribed information that must be displayed in our services and be clearly visible from the main entrance of the premises. This includes the service's contact details for complaints and the contact details of the regulatory authority. Our services have these posters on display near the entrance of our centres.

The poster [here](#) is displayed at our centres. In keeping with NSW Department of Education and regulatory requirements any feedback or concerns continues to be welcomed. Where the service may not be able to resolve a matter you may contact Early Childhood Education and Care on 1800 619 113.

Where a parent/guardian wishes to provide positive feedback, compliment or complaint regarding the Council, the education and care service, they will be redirected to submit their complaint using one of the following methods:

- **Website:** Online complaint form
- **Post:** Willoughby City Council, PO Box 57, Chatswood, NSW, 2057
- **Email:** [childserv@willoughby.nsw.gov.au](mailto:childserv@willoughby.nsw.gov.au)
- **Phone:** 02 9777 1000
- **In person:** Customer Service Centre, 31 Victor Street, Chatswood

Where there is a complaint or grievance made by a parent/carer in relation to a staff member's conduct or child protection issues, this complaint must be reported immediately to the Children & Youth Services Team Leader and Community Life Manager, who will then follow procedures as outlined in the Council's Child Protection Policy.

Where feasible, the complaint/grievance should initially be discussed with the person concerned (this includes the Nominated Supervisor). Every effort will be made to resolve the grievance at this level. The Nominated Supervisor should adopt a mediating problem-solving approach, with efforts made to encourage constructive communication between the parties involved.

Staff are to follow Council's [Complaint Management Procedures](#).

## **Compliments**

Where a parent/carer or community member wishes to provide positive feedback or compliments regarding the Council, the education and care service, they will be given a Children's Services Customer/Staff feedback form to complete.

Occasionally staff may be offered rewards or gifts of appreciation from parents/carers. Staff are to be made aware of the implication of accepting gifts. Council's Code of Conduct states that staff are not to accept an offer of money at any time.

During times of celebration, such as Christmas, parents/carers and children often offer gifts to staff. These gifts may be accepted by staff as long as they are of a token nature. Staff are to refer to Council's Code of Conduct or contact the Children & Youth Services Team Leader for guidance if they are unsure if they can accept a particular gift.

## **Complaints**

- Staff are to encourage guardians to make a complaint using one of the council channels.
- Staff are to record any complaint/grievance taken in person or over the phone, ensuring that all relevant information is obtained.

- Staff are to provide the parent/carer or community member with details of the anticipated time it may take to follow up the grievance.
- Any complaint that has been discussed between the Nominated Supervisor and the person(s) involved and is still unresolved is to be referred to the Children & Youth Services Team Leader or Community Life Manager.
- If after this process the complaint remains unresolved, the Community Life Manager, in consultation with the parties involved, will determine the next course of action. This may necessitate the involvement of senior management, agencies or mediators.
- At this point, the Community Life Manager will determine if the complaint is serious and, if so determined, will adopt Council's Grievance Policy.

Where the grievance/complaint relates to the operation of the service or a perceived breach of the Education and Care Services National Regulations or the Children (Education and Care Services National Law Application) Act 2010, a service is required to contact Department of Education and notify them of the complaint.

### **Complaints to the regulatory authority**

As the Regulatory Authority, the Early Childhood Education Directorate, NSW Department of Education are responsible for investigating complaints that have come directly to them about approved providers and services.

Regulatory authorities may receive complaints from:

- a parent, authorised nominee or child
- a staff member or volunteer at an education and care service
- a nominated supervisor
- another person

Once a complaint has been received, the regulatory authority will undertake a risk assessment to determine the appropriate response.

Regulatory authorities have their own framework for managing complaints.

### **Anonymous complaints**

Whilst a complainant may choose to make an anonymous complaint about a service, it is often difficult for the Nominated Supervisor, Children & Youth Services Team Leader or Community Life Manager to raise the issue for resolution.

We encourage parents/carers and community members to provide their details to ensure that their concerns are acted upon in an effective and timely manner.

### **Complaints by children**

Staff are required to record any concerns or complaints that are made by children.

Where a child has a concern regarding the service, staff are required to discuss the concern with the child.

Where a child has a concern or grievance in relation to the conduct of a staff member, this complaint **must** be reported immediately to the Nominated Supervisor and depending on the seriousness of the concern or grievance the Children & Youth Services Team Leader and Community Life Manager. The Manager will then follow procedures as outlined in Council's Child Protection Policy.

Where appropriate, this concern is to be addressed by the Nominated Supervisor, the parents/carers, and if required, with the Children & Youth Services Team Leader and Community Life Manager.

The attached form is to be used to identify any patterns of concerns held by children. A new form is to be used for each concern to ensure confidentiality is maintained.

### **Management of complaints that alleges a child is exhibiting harmful sexual behaviours**

When a child in a service exhibits harmful sexual behaviours, a staff are to prioritise the safety and well-being of all involved children. This involves the immediate reporting to relevant agencies, like child protection services (Department of Communities and Justice) and potentially the police. The response should be child-focused, ensuring the child who has engaged in the behaviour is also supported and educated about appropriate boundaries.

#### **1. Immediate actions**

- **Ensure immediate safety**  
If there is an immediate risk of harm, contact emergency services (000) without delay.
- **Report to authorities**  
Notify the appropriate child protection agency and/or regulatory authority (e.g. Department of Education, Department of Communities and Justice, or police) as soon as possible, in line with mandatory reporting obligations.

#### **Document everything**

Maintain accurate and detailed records, including dates, times, a description of the behaviour, actions taken, and reports made.

#### **2. Assessment and investigation**

- **Assess the situation**  
Evaluate the nature, severity, and context of the behaviour, taking into account the child's age, developmental stage, and potential risks.
- **Consult with experts**  
Engage professionals with expertise in child protection and harmful sexual behaviours to guide the response and any intervention plans.
- **Communicate with families**  
Keep the parents or guardians of all children involved informed about the situation, while ensuring sensitivity and confidentiality.

#### **3. Ongoing support and intervention**

- **Support affected children**  
Provide the child/children impacted by the behaviour with appropriate support services, such as counselling or therapeutic intervention, to promote healing and safety.
- **Support and educate the child who exhibited the behaviour**  
Provide age-appropriate education and support aimed at helping the child understand healthy boundaries, consent, and respectful relationships.

- **Monitor and review**

Continue to monitor all children involved, review the effectiveness of interventions, and adjust support plans as necessary.

#### **4. Maintaining a child-safe environment**

- **Implement clear policies**

Ensure the service maintains clear and accessible policies and procedures for responding to allegations of harmful sexual behaviour, including reporting processes and support mechanisms.

- **Provide staff training**

Deliver regular training to staff on child protection, recognising indicators of harm, and responding appropriately to disclosures.

- **Promote a culture of safety**

Encourage open communication and foster a culture where children, families, and staff feel safe to raise concerns.

#### **5. Legal and ethical considerations**

- **Meet mandatory reporting obligations**

Ensure all staff understand and meet their mandatory reporting responsibilities under relevant legislation.

- **Maintain confidentiality**

Respect the privacy of all children and families involved, sharing information only with those who need to know as part of managing the incident.

- **Seek legal advice if required**

Where appropriate, seek legal advice to ensure compliance with relevant laws and regulations.

By taking a proactive, child-focused, and collaborative approach, children's services can effectively respond to complaints about harmful sexual behaviours, safeguard all children, and contribute to the prevention of future incidents.



## Children's Services

### Complaints from children

#### Recording form

Children should be encouraged to share their compliments/complaints and suggestions verbally with educators, in a written format such as the whiteboard, the suggestion book or on this form and give to an educator or the Nominated Supervisor (e.g. slipping under the office door in order to remain anonymous).

Child's name: (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Service the concern relates to: \_\_\_\_\_

Details of the child's concern:

---

---

---

---

---

---

How was the concern addressed:

---

---

---

---

Was this concern addressed with the parent/carers?

---

---

---

---

Was the concern addressed with the Children & Youth Services Team Leader or Community Life Manager?

---

---

---

---

#### Parent/carers feedback

Parents/carers are encouraged to provide their feedback in writing, via email to the centre email address or via this form and given to the Nominated Supervisor