

Complaints and Feedback

Policy Introduction

Kids@Weldon values the **feedback** of educators, staff, families and the wider community in helping to create a service that meets the regulation and the needs of the enrolled children and their families. We encourage open communication through opportunities to respond and provide feedback on the programs we offer.

A component of this feedback is the ability to put forward a **complaint** and have this managed appropriately with due consideration for accountability and quality improvement. We have a positive approach to handling complaints in a way that upholds the rights of natural justice and supports partnerships and ongoing communication with families, most importantly - children's rights and interests are paramount.

Our policy in action

We will:

- Provide opportunities for consultation, evaluation and review of the operation of our school age and early childhood services, and delivery of our education and care programs
- Maintain a process for making and managing complaints
- Communicate the option and process for making a complaint
- Handle complaints diligently and confidentially

Statutory legislation and considerations

- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth.)

Strategies for policy implementation

Feedback

- Communications will aim at all times to be open, honest and confidential
- Our programs will offer a variety of ways to communicate and provide feedback including:
 - Day books
 - Daily program
 - Suggestion and feedback box
 - Interactions
 - Formal feedback and comments
 - Surveys
 - Family meetings
- With permission our educators may write comments on behalf of families to help with evaluations of the program and encourage further family input

- Families and children will be surveyed regularly to provide them with an opportunity to identify areas of concern, or ways in which the service could be improved along with areas of strength
- Families are provided with the program's email address and telephone details at orientation. Families will be encouraged to converse with educators at drop off and pick up times and mail email or call during the day
- Feedback from families is encouraged and educators and staff will take this feedback into account in ongoing planning and quality improvement
- Families will be advised as to how their feedback has contributed to improvements in the program through notice board displays, emails and/or newsletters

Complaints

Everyone has the right to a positive and sympathetic response to their concerns. Solutions will be sought to resolve all complaints, issues or concerns in a prompt and positive manner that recognises the importance of:

- procedural fairness and natural justice
- ethical conduct
- review and further investigation
- the opportunity for quality improvement

Communication

- Our procedure for managing complaints will be made available to families through:
 - the enrolment and orientation process;
 - the parent handbook;
 - our website; and
 - displayed at each program
- Families will be provided with contact details for putting forward a complaint, including contact details of the regulatory authority
- Educators and staff will be provided with our procedure for managing complaints
- Educators and staff will be provided with training in complaints management
- The Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 and Education and Care Services National Regulations will be available at each of our program locations in either hard copy or electronically

Making a complaint

- Families may make a complaint directly to their child's educator, the coordinator/centre director/nominated supervisor/responsible person, the management team or the approved provider
- Educators/staff may wish to make a complaint about an aspect of our program delivery. He or she may make the complaint directly to the coordinator/centre director/nominated supervisor/responsible person, the management team or the approved provider – NOTE this is not a grievance procedure, matters of staff grievance should be dealt with under the grievance policy relating to staff

- As a starting point we encourage families to raise concerns with the program coordinator/centre director/nominated supervisor/responsible person who will document and work through the issue with the family or escalate the concern/complaint to management as appropriate
- Educators will discuss the complaints procedure with children and encourage them to raise any issues they have with the service. Children's complaints will be taken seriously and resolutions will be sought

Dealing with complaints

- All complaints will be dealt with in a confidential manner
- A response will be made within 24 hours to the person lodging the complaint advising the next steps to be taken with a view to reaching a resolution
- No complainant will be disadvantaged as a result of making a complaint
- The rights of the person against whom the complaint is lodged will be recognised and respected
- All confidential conversations/discussions with families will take place in a quiet area away from children, other families and educators/staff who are not involved
- Where a family/staff member wishes their complaint to remain confidential this will be honoured. However, families/staff members will be advised that issues cannot always be resolved if they choose to remain anonymous
- Where an educator/staff member believes information specific to the complaint needs to be disclosed to others in order to resolve an issue, or if the nature of a complaint requires that a third party has to be informed in order to meet legislative requirements, they will inform the family of this need prior to any further discussions on the matter

Steps to managing complaints

- The complaint will be welcomed and appreciated.
- The complainant will be asked to provide information regarding how the situation could be rectified to their satisfaction
- The person receiving the complaint will clarify issues by actively listening and questioning the complainant to further understand the issues
- The person receiving the complaint will document the complaint and place the complaint on the complaints register
- If the issues are complex the complainant will be asked to put their concerns in writing which will be documented on the complaints register
- If possible the problem will be resolved immediately. If this is not possible the complainant will be advised that the issue will be given a high priority/escalated and dealt with as soon as possible
- If the problem is about an issue that is outside the control of the service, the person receiving the complaint will explain this to the complainant and let them know who they should contact if they wish to take the matter further
- Any commitments made to the complainant in regard to addressing the issue will be followed up and the results given to the complainant as soon as possible

- Each complaint will be evaluated to determine how the we responded and whether further action is required

Escalation of complaints

- In situations where educators/staff feel the resolution of a complaint is beyond their control he or she will escalate the complaint following the steps listed below:-
- Where a complainant feels their complaint has not been resolved to their satisfaction, he or she may choose to follow the progressive steps listed below:-
 - Step One: raise complaint with coordinator/nominated supervisor/responsible person
 - Step Two: raise complaint with Operations Management team
 - Step Three: raise complaint with General Manager
- In situations where the complainant is not satisfied with the resolution as provided by the General Manager, the complainant may wish to contact the President of the Board in writing. The President can be contacted by email at kids@weldon.com.au

Follow-up and review

- Each complaint will be viewed as an opportunity for improvement
- After the complaint has been dealt with it will be analysed to find out how the problem occurred and determine if the service should implement any changes to policy or operational procedures to avoid similar problems in the future
- Management will follow through to determine that complaints have been successfully resolved to everyone's satisfaction. Families will be contacted to determine if they are satisfied with the way the issue was resolved, and educators/staff will be consulted about the outcome from an operational viewpoint
- The complaints register will be updated to reflect the resolution
- The complaints procedure is reviewed and evaluated annually, or whenever an incident occurs, to ensure the processes are clear and non-discriminatory. Family input is sought each time the policy is reviewed
- Families will be asked to complete an exit questionnaire when they leave the service to check there are no outstanding issues that have led to their leaving and to be given the opportunity to provide feedback that could lead to further improvements to the service
- Any complaints that allege the service has contravened the Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010, or compromised the health, safety or wellbeing of any child within the service, will be reported to the regulatory authority as required under the Act. These allegations will be taken most seriously and an immediate resolution will be sought.

Procedures

- Confidentiality Statement – Induction booklet
- Educator/staff Code of Ethics
- Exit Interview – conducted by Human resources upon exit
- Grievance procedures
- Orientation

Quality Area Seven: Governance and Leadership

Complaints and Feedback

Date for next review: February 2019



- Notification of Complaints and Incidents

Links to other policies

- The following policies may be linked to this policy:
- Community Involvement
- Confidentiality and Privacy
- Educator/Staff Grievances 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

National Quality Framework

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: 168 (2) (o), 173, 176

National Quality Standard for Early Childhood Education and Care and School Age Care

Q A 7 - Standard 7.1 Element 7.1.2

Sources

- PSC National Alliance – IPSP Online Library - policies
- Community Child Care NSW NQF in a Box – policies
- Mia Mia Child and Family Centre, Macquarie University

Policy Details

Review Date: February 2018

Date for next Review: February 2019