CatholicCare
DIOCESE OF BROKEN BAY

Children's Services

Feedback & Complaints

Policy

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What do we believe?

At CatholicCare Diocese of Broken Bay, we are committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and hold this at the centre of our decision making and practice. We believe in the principle of paramountcy of the safety of children. This means that the safety, wellbeing, and best interests of the child are the primary consideration in all decisions, actions, and practices. Where there is a conflict between the interests of a child and those of adults or the organisation, the child's safety and wellbeing will always come first

We believe children, young people and families have the right to be heard, respected and supported to express their views, provide feedback and raise concerns in a safe and inclusive environment. We are committed to fostering open, honest and respectful communication and recognise feedback and complaints as valuable opportunities for reflection, learning and continuous improvement.

CatholicCare acknowledges the paramountcy of children, meaning the safety, wellbeing and best interests of children are our highest priority in all decisions, actions and responses. We are committed to ensuring children and young people feel safe, empowered and supported to participate in matters that affect them.

What are we going to do?

We are committed to providing a safe, respectful and supportive environment where families, children and young people feel encouraged to provide feedback, raise concerns and make complaints. We will ensure all feedback and complaints are managed fairly, respectfully and in a timely manner, while maintaining privacy and confidentiality where appropriate. Feedback and complaints will be used to support continuous improvement and strengthen relationships within the service community.

We will maintain a complaint-handling system that is child-focused, ensuring that the safety, well-being, and rights of children are prioritised in all complaint processes and outcomes.

How will it be done?

Communicating feedback

Ongoing feedback about the service is welcomed and sought from families, children and young people. This includes feedback about any aspect of the curriculum, program, and administration of the service. This will be sought from families in the following ways:

- By having daily conversations about the curriculum, program, menu and service.
- Carrying out formal surveys seeking feedback on aspects of the curriculum and program.
- Asking for input into policies and procedures.
- Holding formal meetings where information is shared and feedback sought.

All relevant feedback should be recorded on the complaint, complaints and feedback register.

See the *Children's Services – Family Participation and Collaboration Policy* for more information.

Making a complaint

If families, children or young people have any general complaints or general concerns about any aspects of the service, they are encouraged to follow procedures outlined below (please also see *CatholicCare's Complaints Brochure*):

- Families may make a complaint directly to the child's educator, the Nominated Supervisor, The Practice Manager, The General Manager of Children Service's or the Approved Provider
- Families may make a complaint to the Regulatory Authority if their complaint is not or cannot be resolved by the service, or families can make a complaint directly to the Regulatory Authority if it relates to a child's health, safety, or wellbeing, or if the service is contravening the law.
- The name and telephone number of the person at the service to whom complaints can be made must be clearly visible at the service (Regulation 168(2)(o) and Regulation 173(2)(b)).
- The Regulatory Authority contact details must also be displayed.
    - *NSW Early Learning Commission*
      Phone: 1800 619 113 (toll-free)
      Email: information@earlylearningcommission.nsw.gov.au
- Educators will discuss complaint procedures with children and encourage them to raise any issues they have
- The approved provider and nominated supervisor will ensure privacy and confidentiality procedures are maintained.

Responsiveness

All complaints will be acknowledged and responded to as soon as practicable. Complaints will be dealt with promptly, and complainants (including children) will be kept informed about the progress of their complaint and anticipated timeframes. Allegations of suspected harm or risk of harm to a child or possible victims of crime will be actioned immediately by urgent referral or reporting to the relevant agency.

Refer to ACECQA for relevant timeframes: *www.acecqa.gov.au/resources/applications/notification-types-and-timeframes*

Managing a complaint of sexualised behaviour

Providers and educators play an important role in making informed professional judgements regarding sexualised behaviour involving children. Not all sexual behaviour involving children poses a risk to children's safety as some behaviours may be age-appropriate and developmentally expected. Staff will review the behaviour against the "Exhibiting Sexualised Behaviours Flag system" (see Appendix 1 of the *Guiding Children's Behaviour Policy*) to determine the level of concern and identify appropriate actions.

The service recognises that children exhibiting sexual behaviours require guidance and support. Children will not be labelled or stigmatised, and responses will focus on education, safety, and wellbeing for all children involved.

Informed judgements regarding sexualised behaviour help to ensure the health, safety and well-being of children by:

- Supporting healthy sexual development (age-appropriate sexualised behaviour)

- Protecting children from harm or abuse (developmentally inappropriate behaviours, including harmful sexual behaviours).

Harmful sexual behaviours are behaviours that are developmentally inappropriate, coercive, persistent, or involve a power imbalance, and may cause harm to the child or others. Where behaviours assessed through the flag system and raise an elevated or high level of concern, staff should access the *NSW Mandatory Reporter Guide Decision Tree*.

Note that in some cases, sexualised behaviour involving children may fall within reporting requirements under other laws.

For more information about children exhibiting sexualised behaviours, visit:

- *https://www.true.org.au/blog/traffic-lights*
- *https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/parvan/hsb/Pages/support.aspx*

Where a family raises a concern or complaint about perceived harmful sexualised behaviours between children, they will be supported by staff through discussions and, where appropriate, provided with information about escalating the complaint to the Office of the Children's Guardian if the matter is not satisfactorily resolved.

A complaint of sexualised behaviour must be reported too:

- Nominated Supervisor
- Practice Manager
- General Manager, Children Service's
- Safeguarding Officer

Managing a complaint

Where possible, complaints will be dealt with immediately by the child's educator, as this is usually the person with the closest relationship with the family. If the complaint concerns an issue the educator considers outside their control, or the family does not wish to share it with the educator, the complainant will be directed to the appropriate person to resolve the complaint.

Where an educator believes they need to share confidential information with another person in order to resolve an issue, or if the nature of a complaint requires that a third party be informed to meet legislative requirements, they will inform the family before any further discussions take place.

The service will ensure that complaints are managed using a clear internal process that includes immediate assessment, escalation where required, documentation, investigation, and resolution in line with legislative obligations.

- The complaint will be documented in the *Complaints and Feedback Register*, and any legal requirements relating to the complaint will be considered, including the need to notify regulatory authorities.
- The complaint will be raised with the Practice Manager and Safeguarding Officer.
- Where possible, the issue will be resolved immediately. If this is not possible, the complainant will be advised that the matter will be given high priority and addressed as soon as possible. A suitable time and place will be organised to discuss the issue further.

- If the complaint is complex or requires detailed consideration, the complainant may be invited to outline their concerns in writing. The service will provide appropriate support to assist them in this process, ensuring accessibility and fairness for all parties.
- Where mediation is required, all parties will have the opportunity to agree to the appointment of the mediator.

All complaints must be reported to:

- Nominated Supervisor
- Practice Manager
- General Manager, Children's Services
- Safeguarding Officer

Notifiable Complaints

Where complaints allege that the rights, interests, safety, health or wellbeing of a child was or have been compromised, or that the law has been breached, the Approved Provider must notify the Regulatory Authority within 24 hours of the complaint being made (Section 174(2)(b), Regulation 176(2)(b)).

This includes complaints involving allegations of harm or risk of harm, including allegations of sexual abuse or harmful sexual behaviours, that meet the definition of a notifiable incident or serious incident under the Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations.

Refer to the service's child protection procedures.

Approved providers are required to 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 the service.
- The National Law and/or National Regulations have been breached.

A serious incident can include:

- Any incident where there is reasonable belief that physical and/or sexual abuse of a child has occurred or is occurring while the child is being educated and cared for by the service.
- Any allegation that sexual or physical abuse of a child has occurred or is occurring while the child is being educated and cared for by the service.
- The death of a child while that child is being educated and cared for at the service or following an incident while that child was being cared for by the service.
- A serious injury or trauma while the child is being educated and cared for, which:
    - Required urgent medical attention from a registered medical practitioner; or
    - Required, or should have required, hospital attendance.
- Any incident involving serious illness while the child is being educated and care for by the service, or should have attended hospital (e.g. severe asthma attack, seizure or anaphylaxis).
- Any situation where a child goes missing or cannot be accounted for.
- Any situation where an unauthorised person removes or attempts to remove a child from the service premises.

- Any circumstance where a child is mistakenly locked in or locked out of the service premises or any part of the premises.
- Any emergency that results in attendance by emergency services.

  NOTE: This does not include incidents where emergency services attend as a precaution only.

A serious injury, illness or trauma includes but is not limited to:

- Amputation
- Anaphylactic reaction requiring hospitalisation
- Asthma requiring hospitalisation
- Broken bone/Fractures
- Bronchiolitis
- Burns
- Diarrhoea requiring hospitalisation
- Epileptic seizures
- Head injuries
- Measles
- Meningococcal infection
- Sexual assault
- Witnessing violence or a frightening event

Child-focused complaint-handling

Our service maintains a complaint-handling system that upholds the rights, interest, safety, and wellbeing of children and young people. This system is founded on the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and child safety reforms, and ensures that all children have safe, supported and accessible ways to express concerns, complaints, or disclosures.

All Staff will respond calmly, listen without judgement, acknowledge the child's feelings and document the matter appropriately.

1. **Embedding Children's Rights**
   - Children are supported to understand their rights, including their right to be and feel safe, to express their views, and to be treated with fairness and respect.
   - The service actively promotes a culture where children are encouraged to raise concerns without fear of reprisal or blame.
   - Educators and staff model respectful listening, value children's perspectives, and involve them – where appropriate and put children's rights and interests first in decisions that affect their daily experiences within the service.
2. **Access and Visibility**
   - Information about the complaints process is displayed in clear, age-appropriate, and culturally inclusive formats (for example, visual posters, pictorial symbols, or simplified statements).

- Child-friendly prompts such as “I feel…” posters or feedback boxes are available in accessible areas to help children identify and communicate concerns such as the *Office of the Children’s Guardians Child Safe Reporting Poster*.
- Educators regularly remind children that they can speak to any trusted adult at the service if they are worried, uncomfortable, or unsure about something.
- Educators will ensure complaint processes are imbedded into their practices and programs.

3. Multiple Avenues to Raise a Complaint

- Children may raise a concern in any form that feels comfortable – verbally, in writing, through drawing or play, or using communication tools (such as a feedback tablet or message box if applicable).
- All educators are responsible for responding appropriately when a child raises a concern, ensuring it is taken seriously, documented accurately, and referred to the Nominated Supervisor immediately.
- The service maintains multiple, accessible reporting pathways to ensure that children’s voices can be heard and responded to promptly.

4. Support, Equity and Inclusion

- Educators are trained to recognise the various ways in which children express dissatisfaction, distress, or discomfort, including through non-verbal cues and behavioural changes.
- Reasonable adjustments are made to remove barriers to participation, such as providing interpreters, visual supports, or calm environments for communication.
- Engagement with Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, and culturally or linguistically diverse children and families is undertaken in a culturally safe, inclusive and respectful manner that recognises individual identity and background.

5. Documentation and Feedback

- All complaints or concerns raised by children are documented in the compliments, complaints and feedback register using the child’s own words wherever possible.
- Children are informed, in developmentally appropriate terms, about the actions taken and any outcomes or decisions that relate to their concern.
- The Approved Provider and Nominated Supervisor review complaint trends to identify systemic issues and incorporate findings into ongoing quality improvement and governance processes.

6. Responding to Allegations of Harmful Sexual Behaviours

- Any complaint that alleges harmful sexual behaviour by a child is managed with sensitivity, urgency, and adherence to trauma-informed practice.
- Document all observations, disclosures, and actions taken in an objective manner
- Immediate steps are taken to ensure the safety, supervision and well-being of all children involved.
- This must be reported to the General Manager and the Safeguarding team.
- Mandatory notifications and referrals are made to the relevant child protection authority or police, consistent with legislative obligations.
- The service collaborates with families, external agencies, and the Regulatory Authority to ensure the matter is handled lawfully, respectfully, and with a focus on minimising further harm.
- Develop and implement a risk management and support plan for all children involved
- Engage external agencies or specialist support services where appropriate. The service recognises that children displaying harmful sexual behaviours require support and guidance. Children will not be labelled or stigmatised, and all responses will prioritise their wellbeing, development, and safety, alongside the safety of other children.

7. **Building Confidence and Organisational Capacity**
    - All staff engage in regular professional learning on child-safe complaint handling, managing disclosures, and responding to trauma.
    - The service regularly consults with children and families on the accessibility and effectiveness of the complaint-handling system and uses their feedback to strengthen practice.
    - Leadership ensures that reflective practice, supervision, and training maintain staff confidence and consistency in responding to children's voices and concerns.

Complaints dealing with allegations against staff

CatholicCare Diocese of Broken Bay is committed to responding promptly and appropriately to any complaints, allegations, or incidents involving employees, volunteers, students, contractors, or other persons engaged in the service. Any allegation relating to the care or safety of children or vulnerable adults must be reported immediately to the Supervisor and Safeguarding Officer. Where required, a *Safeguarding Notification Form* and *Safeguarding Risk Assessment Form* will be completed. The service recognises its obligation to support both the alleged victim and the person subject to the allegation, while ensuring all matters are managed confidentially, fairly, and in line with legislative requirements, professional standards, and safeguarding practices.

Refer to the *Reportable Conduct and Incidents Practice Guidelines* for further guidance.

Complaints dealing with possible child protection matters

Complaints involving possible child protection matters, including allegations of reportable conduct, will be responded to promptly, sensitively, and in line with *CatholicCare's Reportable Conduct and Incidents Practice Guidelines*. All concerns relating to the safety, wellbeing, or protection of a child will be taken seriously, reported to the appropriate persons and authorities where required, and managed in a confidential and procedurally fair manner to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all children involved.

Refer to the *Reportable Conduct and Incidents Practice Guidelines* for further guidance.

Direct complaints

Families can make a complaint directly to the Regulatory Authority where the complaint alleges that:

- The rights, interests, safety, health or wellbeing of a child or children was or is being compromised while that child or children is or are being educated and cared for by the approved education and care service.
- The relevant legislation has been contravened.
- Contact details are available in the family handbook and displayed in the service.
    - *NSW Early Learning Commission*
      Phone: 1800 619 113 (toll-free)
      Email: information@earlylearningcommission.nsw.gov.au

Follow-Up and Review

Each complaint will be viewed as an opportunity for improvement. After the complaint or grievance has been dealt with:

- The service will analyse the complaint to determine if any policy or procedural changes need to be implemented.
- CatholicCare will follow through to determine that complaints and grievances have been successfully resolved to everyone's satisfaction. Families will be contacted to determine if they were satisfied with the way the issue was resolved, and educators' will be consulted about the outcome from an operational viewpoint.

Who is responsible?

Roles	Responsibilities
Approved Provider	• Notifying the Regulatory Authority within 24 hours when a complaint or grievance has been assessed as 'notifiable'. • In instances where the complainant reports directly to the Regulatory Authority, the Approved Provider will still be responsible for investigating and managing the complaint or grievance as outlined in this policy, in addition to cooperating with any investigation conducted by the Regulatory Authority. • Identifying, preventing and addressing potential concerns before they become formal complaints or grievances. • Ensuring that the name and telephone number of the person to whom complaints and grievances may be addressed are prominently displayed at the main entrance of the service. • Ensuring that the address and telephone number of the Regulatory Authority are prominently displayed at the main entrance of the service. • Advising parents/guardians and any other members of the service community of the complaints and grievances policy and procedures upon enrolment. • Ensuring that this policy is available for inspection at the service at all times. • Ensuring that the service maintains a child-focused complaint-handling system consistent with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and child safety reforms. • Maintaining a Complaints and Feedback Register.
Practice Manager	• Notifying the Regulatory Authority within 24 hours when a complaint or grievance has been assessed as 'notifiable'. • In instances where the complainant reports directly to the Regulatory Authority, the Approved Provider will still be responsible for investigating and managing the complaint or grievance as outlined in this policy, in addition to co-operating with any investigation by the Regulatory Authority. • Identifying, preventing and addressing potential concerns before they become formal complaints or grievances. • Ensuring that the name and telephone number of the person to whom complaints and grievances may be addressed are prominently displayed at the main entrance of the service. • Ensuring that the address and telephone number of the Regulatory Authority are prominently displayed at the main entrance of the service.

Roles	Responsibilities
	• Advising parents/guardians and any other members of the service community of the complaints and grievances policy and procedures upon enrolment. • Ensuring that this policy is available for inspection at the service at all times. • Ensuring that the service maintains a child-focused complaint-handling system consistent with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and child safety reforms. • Maintaining a Compliments and Feedback Register.
Nominated Supervisor	• Responding to and resolving issues as they arise, where practicable. • Discussing minor complaints directly with the party involved as a first step towards resolution. • Informing complainants of the service's complaints and grievances policy and recording all complaints and grievances in the *Complaints and Feedback Register*. • Notifying the approved provider if a complaint escalates or is cannot be resolved appropriately in a timely manner. • Providing information to the Approved Provider e.g. written reports relating to the grievance. • Complying with the service's *Confidentiality and Privacy Policy* and maintaining confidentiality at all times. • Monitor the implementation of the child-focused complaint system and ensuring that children's voices are heard and recorded • Escalating any complaint involving allegations of harmful sexual behaviour immediately to the Approved Provider and relevant authorities • Working cooperatively with the Approved Provider in any investigations relating to a complaint.
Educators / Students / Volunteers	• Ensuring that grievances and complaints are dealt with in accordance with this policy. • Listening to and aiming to resolve complaints and grievances in a positive manner. • Reporting any grievances and complaints to the Nominated Supervisor and maintaining all relevant documentation. • Supporting children to express concerns in ways that suit their developmental level (e.g. verbal, non-verbal, or creative expression) • Recognising signs that a child may be attempting to raise a concern and acting in accordance with this policy • Supporting the Nominated Supervisor and Approved Provider in the above roles as requested.
Parents / Guardians	• Raising a complaint directly with the person involved, where appropriate, in an attempt to resolve the matter before using the formal complaints and grievances procedures. • Communicating any concerns relating to the management or operation of the service as soon as is practicable. • Raising any unresolved issues or serious concerns with the Approved Provider, through the Nominated Supervisor or staff, or directly to the Regulatory Authority. • Maintaining confidentiality at all times. • Cooperating with requests to provide relevant information in relation to complaints and grievances.

National Quality Standards (NQS)

Quality Area 4: Staffing Arrangements		
4.1.1	Organisation of educators	The organisation of educators across the service supports children's learning and development.
4.1.2	Continuity of Staff	Every effort is made for children to experience continuity of educators at the service.
4.2	Professionalism	Management, educators and staff are collaborative, respectful and ethical.
4.2.1	Professional collaboration	Management, educators and staff work with mutual respect and collaboratively, and challenge and learn from each other, recognising each other's strengths and skills.
4.2.2	Professional standards	Professional standards guide practice, interactions and relationships.
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 that is child safe.
7.2.1	Continuous Improvement	There is an effective self-assessment and quality improvement process in place.

Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations	
S. 2A	Paramount consideration—safety, rights and best interests of children
S. 3A	Paramount consideration
S.166A	Offence to subject child to inappropriate conduct Offences relating to inappropriate conduct
S. 172	Offence to fail to display prescribed information
S.174	Offence to fail to notify certain information to Regulatory Authority
12	Meaning of serious incident
168(2)(o)	Education and care service must have policies and procedures… for dealing with complaints
170	Policies and procedures must be followed
171	Policies and procedures to be kept available
173(2)(b)	Requires an approved provider to make the name and telephone number of the person to whom complaints may be addressed clearly visible at the service
176	Time to notify certain information to Regulatory Authority
183	Storage of records and other documents

Related documents

CatholicCare policy and practice guidelines

- *Agency – Complaints and Feedback Policy*
- *Agency – Managing Complaints Practice Guidelines*
- *Agency – Reportable Conduct and Incidents Practice Guidelines*

Children's Services policies

- *Child Safe Environment Policy*
- *Confidentiality and Privacy Policy*
- *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy*
- *Family Participation and Collaboration Policy*
- *Guiding Children's Behaviour Policy*

Forms

- *Agency – Feedback and Complaints Brochure*
- *Agency – Safeguarding Notification Form*
- *Agency – Safeguarding Risk Assessment Form*
- *Children's Services – Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record*

Resources

External

- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*
- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*
- *NSW Early Learning Commission*
- *Office of the Children's Guardian*

Glossary

ACECQA – Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authorities

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.

Child Paramountcy

Child paramountcy refers to the obligation to ensure that the best interests, safety, and wellbeing of children are paramount above all other considerations. All decisions, practices, and actions must prioritise the protection and wellbeing of children, particularly where competing interests exist.

Complaint

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about a service, decision, action, or experience where a response, resolution, or further action is expected. Complaints may be made by children, families, educators, visitors, or community members and can relate to the care, safety, wellbeing, communication, or operation of the service.

Feedback

Information, comments, suggestions, or opinions shared about a service, program, experience, or practice. Feedback can be positive or constructive and is used to support reflection, continuous improvement, and the ongoing quality of the service.

Inappropriate conduct to a child

Any behaviour that a reasonable person would consider to be inappropriate in an education and care service, taking into account the child's age, development, safety, wellbeing and the context of the interaction.

Investigation

A formal and systematic inquiry to establish facts about the complaint by collecting, documenting, examining and evaluating evidence.

Mediator

A person who attempts to assist and support people involved in a conflict come to an agreement.

Notifiable complaint

A complaint that alleges a breach of the Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations, National Quality Standard or alleges that the health, safety or wellbeing of a child at the service may have been compromised. Any complaint of this nature must be reported by the approved provider or nominated supervisor to the regulatory authority within 24 hours of the complaint being made (S. 174(2)(b), Reg. 176(2)(b)).

OSHC

Out of School Hours Care

Practice Manager

A practice manager oversees and supports a cluster of services within a local area. They work with the Nominated supervisor to ensure services operate safely, meet legal and quality requirements, and follow organisational policies. They do not work directly with children on a day-to-day basis.

Risk assessment

A systematic process of evaluating the potential likelihood and consequences of risks that may be involved in a projected activity or undertaking.

Serious incident

An incident resulting in the death of a child, or an injury, trauma or illness for which the attention of a registered medical practitioner, emergency services or hospital is sought or should have been sought. This also includes an incident in which a child appears to be missing, cannot be accounted for, is removed from the centre in contravention of the regulations or is mistakenly locked in/out of the centre premises (Reg. 12). The regulatory authority must be notified within 24 hours of a serious incident occurring at the centre (Reg 176(2)(a)). A serious incident should be documented in an Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record as soon as possible and within 24 hours of the incident.

These records are required to be retained for the periods specified in Reg.183.

Sign off and review

This policy remains valid until it is either superseded by a new version or officially revoked.

CatholicCare values your input and welcomes feedback on this policy. Your suggestions help us improve and better support your work. Please send any feedback to policy.updates@catholiccaredbb.org.au.

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