

Dealing with Complaints			
Policy Hierarchy link	QUALITY AREA 7: LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE MANAGEMENT Related Legislation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children (Education & Care Services) National Law Act 2010: Sections 174(2) • (b) Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 • Regulations 168(2)(o) and 176(2)(b) Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (NSW) • Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002 • Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) • Privacy Regulations 2006 (Cth) 		
Version	Authorised by	Effective Date	Revision Date
6	SCECS Management	March 2026	March 2028

1. BACKGROUND

Sydney Catholic Early Childhood Services (SCECS) is committed to providing a learning and working environment in which complaints are responded to promptly, professionally, and with minimum distress and maximum protection to all parties. As part of its commitment to creating a child focused, supportive and open organisational culture, SCECS is committed to ethical and responsible management, transparency in its decision-making processes, and fair complaints process. SCECS views family and child complaints as providing an opportunity to review and improve its policies and practices, and to gain insight into children's levels of satisfaction.

A child safe environment is one where children feel comfortable speaking up. Service leaders and educators should explain to children that they have the right to share their views and that they will be listened to and responded to quickly and respectfully. They should encourage children to voice their concerns and find ways for younger children and those with limited verbal skills to express their views. Families should also be encouraged to raise concerns.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

SCECS affirms that people have the right to question and influence decisions made and services provided. We take complaints seriously and manage them in a confidential, timely, transparent and meaningful way. We achieve this by:

- Having a complaint handling system that is child-centred
- Maintaining the confidentiality of all parties in line with policy and legislative requirements
- Clearly communicating the complaints process via various methods including on display at the service, in the Family Handbook, on the website, via newsletters etc.
- Acknowledging that the common goal is to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties
- Acting in good faith and in a calm, professional and courteous manner
- Showing respect and understanding of each other's point of view and value difference, rather than judge and blame
- Recognising that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced
- Complaints will be handled objectively and complainants will not suffer any reprisals from making a complaint.

3. HOW THE POLICY WILL BE IMPLEMENTED

3.1 GENERAL – how will it be done?

Written guidelines detailing complaint procedures are available in our services family handbook in the foyer for easy reference.

Families make a complaint directly to the child's educator, the Approved Provider or the Nominated Supervisor. Educators will discuss complaints procedures with children and encourage them to raise any issues they have. A Child Friendly Complaints Flowchart is available to assist children in expressing their complaints.

All confidential conversations with parents/carers will take place in a quiet place away from other children, parents, or staff. If families have a complaint or concern about the service, they are encouraged to talk to the SCECS Director/Coordinator, who will arrange a time to discuss the concern and come to a resolution to address the issue. If they are not satisfied with the response, they are encouraged to take it to SCECS Management using the email address scecs@syd.catholic.edu.au or phone 9568 8628.

3.2 Responsiveness

All complaints will be acknowledged and responded to as soon as practicable.

Complaints will be dealt with in a timely manner and complainants 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.

In instances where a complaint alleges a child is exhibiting problematic harmful sexualised behaviour, the procedure will include the use of the 'Identifying Levels of Concern – Flag System' and consultation with the SCECS Child Safety Officer and where required the Sydney Catholic Schools Child Safety Team. Reports will be made to the Department of Community and Justice, the Regulatory Authority and possibly also the police.

3.3 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 is about an issue that the educator considers to be outside their control, or the family does not feel they wish to share it with the educator, the complainant will be directed to the Director/Coordinator for their complaint to be resolved.

Where an educator believes, they will have to share a confidence with another person to resolve an issue, or of 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 the need prior to any further discussions on the matter.

- The complaint will be documented and any legal requirements in relation to the complaint considered, such as the need to notify regulatory authorities
- The complainant will be asked to provide information regarding how the situation could be rectified to their satisfaction.
- If possible, the problem will be resolved immediately. If this is not possible, the complainant will be advised that the issue will be given high priority and dealt with as soon as possible.
- If the issues are complex the complainant will be asked to put their concerns in writing.
- Where mediation is required all parties will have the right to agree to the appointment of the mediator.

3.4 Notifiable Complaint

Complaints alleging that the safety, health or wellbeing of a child was or is being compromised, or that the law has been breached must be reported by the Approved Provider to the Regulatory Authority within 24 hours of the

complaint being made (Section 174(2)(b), Regulation 176(2) (b)). Written reports must include:

- details of the event or incident
- the name of the person who initially made the complaint
- if appropriate, the name of the child concerned and the condition of the child, including a medical or incident report (where relevant)
- any other relevant information.

3.5 Direct Complaints

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

- the 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.
- relevant legislation has been contravened.

Contact details are available in the family handbook and displayed in the foyer of the service.

Childcare Tip-off line email: TipoffLine@dese.gov.au or Phone 1800664231.

- The Child Care tip-off line and other departmental channels are monitored for information about potential breaches. Anyone who is aware of practices that could be incorrect or illegal is encouraged to contact the tip-off line on 1800 664 231. Information can be given anonymously. Alternatively, information can be given in writing to the department through tipoffline@dese.gov.au Tip-offs may be passed on to other government agencies.

3.6 Follow-up and Review

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

- Analyse the complaint to determine if any policy or procedural changes need to be implemented.
- The Approved Provider 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.

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Role	Authority/ Responsible for
Approved Provider - SCECS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensure a child-centred approach to complaint handling ● When a complaint or grievance has been assessed as 'notifiable', the Approved Provider must notify Regulatory Authority within 24 hours. ● In instances where the complainant reports directly to the Regulatory Authority, the Approved Provider will still have responsibility for investigating and dealing with 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/grievances. ● Ensuring that the name and telephone number of the person to whom complaints and grievances may be addressed are displayed prominently at the main entrance of the service. ● Ensuring that the address and telephone number of the Regulatory Authority displayed prominently at the main entrance of the service. ● Advising parents/guardians of the Dealing with Complaints policy and procedures upon enrolment. ● Ensuring that this policy is available for inspection at the service at all times. ● Providing a Complaints Register.
Nominated Supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 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 Dealing with Complaints policy and recording all complaints in the complaints register. ● Notifying the approved provider if the complaint escalates or is unable to be resolved appropriately in a timely manner. ● Providing information as requested by the approved provider e.g. Written reports relating to the grievance. ● Complying with the service's privacy and confidentiality policy and maintaining confidentiality at all times. ● Working cooperatively with the approved provider, in any investigations related to a complaint made.

Role	Authority/ Responsible for
All educators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensure that grievances and complaints are dealt with in accordance with this policy and in a positive manner. ● Report any grievances and complaints to the Nominated Supervisor and maintain all relevant documentation. ● As requested, support the Nominated Supervisor and Approved Provider in the above roles.
Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Raising a complaint directly with the person involved, in an attempt to resolve the matter without recourse to the 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 directly with the approved provider, via the nominated supervisor or staff. ● Maintaining complete confidentiality at all times. ● Co-operating with requests to provide relevant information when requested in relation to complaints and grievances.

5. RESOURCES/REFERENCES

- ACECQA www.acecqa.gov.au
- NSW Ombudsman (2004) 'Effective Complaint Handling'. NSW Ombudsman 2nd Edition 2010
- NSW Ombudsman (2009) "Complaint Handling Kit"

6. MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW

This policy will be monitored to ensure compliance with legislative requirements and unless deemed necessary through the identification of gaps, the service will review this policy every three years.

In accordance with R. 172 of the *Education and Care Services National Regulations*, the service will ensure that families of children enrolled in the service are notified at least 14 days before making any change to a policy or procedure that may have significant impact on the provision of education and care to any child enrolled at the service; a family's ability to utilise the service; the fees charged or the way in which fees are collected.

The authorisation and amendment history for this document must be listed in the following table:

Version	Authorised by	Approval date	Sections modified
1	SCECS Management	JAN18	Policy created
2	SCECS Management	JAN20	Scheduled review
3	SCECS Management	MAR22	Scheduled review
4	SCECS Management	SEP23	Policy review to include National Principles for Child Safe Organisations
5	COO	MAR26	A child safe environment is one where children feel comfortable speaking up. Processes for responding to complaints of problematic harmful sexualised behaviour added.