

CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS

PRINCIPLE

Greater Shepparton City Council Children's Services are committed to fairness and equity when dealing with concerns and complaints and will ensure the rights of families and staff members are protected to have concerns and complaints raised and resolved promptly and courteously.

GUIDELINES

Children's Services will ensure:

1. An environment of mutual trust and open communication is created where all concerns and complaints are taken seriously, investigated fairly and in a timely manner, with confidentiality maintained at all times.
2. The Approved Provider notifies the Regulatory Authority of a complaint that alleges a serious incident that has occurred or is occurring while a child is being educated and cared for by a service, or that the *Education and Care Services National Law* and/or the *Education and Care Services National Regulations* have been contravened (*Education and Care Services National Law* section 174(2)(b)).
3. The Approved Provider notifies the relevant Regulatory Authority in writing, within 24 hours of the complaint alleging that a serious incident that has occurred or is occurring while a child is being educated and cared for by a service where a child's health, safety or wellbeing has been compromised, or that the *Education and Care Services National Law* and/or the *Education and Care Services National Regulations* have been contravened (*Education and Care Services National Regulation* 176(2)(b)).
4. The service makes available the name and telephone number of the person to whom complaints may be addressed, clearly visible at the service (*Education and Care Services National Regulation* 173(2)(b)), (*Children's Services Regulations 2020* 161(2)(b)) (Occasional Care only). Refer to (*Appendix 3.1 – Greater Shepparton City Council Children's Services Procedure for Addressing Concerns and Complaints*).
5. The service displays the steps for dealing with a concern or complaint and the contact details for the Department of Education and Training (DET), if the matter is in regard to the *Education and Care Services National Regulations* or *National Law Act* (*Appendix 3.1 – Greater Shepparton City Council Children's Services Procedure for Addressing Concerns and Complaints*).
6. If the concern is specific to *Greater Shepparton City Council* organisation's leadership in regards to child safety the matter needs to be addressed as outlined in (*Appendix 3.1 – Greater Shepparton City Council Children's Services Procedure for Addressing Concerns and Complaints*), or refer to the *Greater Shepparton City Council Child Safe* policy and/or the *Corporate Procedure Reportable Conduct Scheme*.
7. For matters concerning adherence to the *Education and Care Services National Regulations*, regarding the operation of a children's service, parents may contact the Department of Education and Training. Refer to (*Appendix 3.1 – Greater Shepparton City Council Children's Services Procedure for Addressing Concerns and Complaints*).

8. Culturally safe environments are provided for children to feel safe to disclose concerns, where staff are required to listen calmly, patiently and supportively and empower children to express their emotions.
9. Complaints affecting children and young people, including matters relating to the management of a complaint that alleges a child is exhibiting harmful sexual behaviours, will be properly investigated, taken seriously and children's rights will be safeguarded throughout the investigation process. (*Education and Care Services National Regulation 168(o)(ii)*).
10. Provision of a complaint handling system at the service is child focused, where all complaints and child concerns disclosures raised are recorded and stored electronically and the compliant is kept informed of the progress of the complaint (*Education and Care Services National Regulation 168(o)(i)*).
If applicable, the following resource may be used to document complaints or child concern disclosures: (*Greater Shepparton City Council Children's Services Complaint or Child Concerns Disclosure Record*).
11. This *Concerns and Complaints* policy will be made available to all parents/guardians and staff members.
12. Greater Shepparton City Council staff members and educators complaints are dealt in accordance with *Greater Shepparton City Council Employees Code of Conduct*.

Related policies:

- Governance and Management of the Service
- Child Safe
- Greater Shepparton City Council – Employees Code of Conduct
- Greater Shepparton City Council Child Safe policy
- Greater Shepparton City Council Corporate Procedure Reportable Conduct Scheme.
- Interactions and Relationships with Children
- Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness
- Providing a Child Safe Environment

National Quality Standards - Areas 7.1.2, 7.2.1

Education and Care Services National Regulations - 168 (2)(o)(i)(ii),173(2)(b),176(2)(b)

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 – section 174(2)(b)

Children's Services Regulations 2020 – 161(b)(2)

Sources and Reference Tools

- ACECQA – Using complaints to support continuous improvement
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*
- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*
- *Children's Services Act 1996*
- *Children's Services Regulations 2020*
- Greater Shepparton City Council – People and Development Department
- Department of Education and Training (DET) -
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/regulation/Pages/complaints.aspx>
- Child Safe Standard 7 – Processes for complaints and concerns are child-focused
<https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards/the-11-child-safe-standards/standard-7/>
- National Office for Child Safety – Complaint Handling Guide
<https://www.childsafety.gov.au/system/files/2022-09/nocs-complaint-handling-reference-guide.pdf>

Reviewed: March 2023 Updated 09//2023- removing reference to Family Day Care due to cease of Family Day Care operations
Next review: March 2025 Updated 01/10/2023- due to amended Education and Care Services National Regulations