

Grievances and Complaints Policy

POLICY STATEMENT

Eastwood Heights OOSH (the Service) is required to have a documented procedure for dealing with grievances and complaints that all families who use the Service can access. The Service also has an obligation to inform the relevant regulatory authority of any complaints alleging:

‘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, or that the Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 has been contravened’.

The Service also understands that negative feedback or issues may threaten the communication between families and the Service, and that how these issues are responded to will determine the Service’s ongoing relationship with families. This policy endeavours to provide a framework by which parties can achieve a satisfactory resolution of concerns as they arise, which will also help to inform improvements to the Service as mentioned in the EHOOSH Family Handbook.

The Service thus welcomes each complaint as a way of improving the quality of care it offers. Everyone has the right to a positive and sympathetic response to their concerns. The Service will endeavour to resolve all disputes, issues or concerns in a prompt and positive manner, always recognising the importance of:

- procedural fairness and natural justice
- ethical conduct
- a service culture free from discrimination and harassment, and
- the opportunity for review and further investigation.

PROCEDURE

Families may make a complaint directly to an educator, the Nominated Supervisor, or any other staff member currently in charge. Families and children will also be surveyed regularly to provide the opportunity to identify areas of concern, or ways in which the Service can be improved, along with areas of strength. The Service will also provide other means for feedback such as a suggestions box, daily contact with educators, and invitations to social events.

In order to assist families who wish to escalate the matter further, the name, address and phone number of the regulatory authority is included in the EHOOSH Family Handbook and displayed on the front door of the Service. A current copy of the *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010* and associated Regulations is kept available at the Service for parents and guardians to access at any time.

All complaints or grievances will be dealt with promptly and confidentially in a manner that:

- values the opportunity to be heard
- promotes conflict resolution
- encourages the development of harmonious partnerships
- ensures that conflicts and grievances are mediated fairly, and
- is transparent and equitable.

Where possible, complaints will be dealt with on the spot by the responsible person in charge. If the complaint is about an issue that the educator considers to be outside their control, or the family does not wish to share with the educator, the educator and/or family can direct the issue to the Nominated Supervisor or EHOOSH Parent Management Committee to be resolved.

All conversations with parents/guardians pertaining to such grievances will take place in a quiet area away from children, other families and educators. Where a family wishes their grievance to remain confidential this will be honoured. However, families must be conscious of the fact that issues cannot always be resolved if they choose to remain anonymous.

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

STEPS TO MANAGING COMPLAINTS

1. The complaint will be welcomed and the complainant thanked for bringing it to the Service's attention.
2. The complaint will be documented and any legal requirements in relation to the complaint considered, such as the need to notify regulatory authorities.
3. The complainant will be asked to provide information regarding how the situation could be rectified to their satisfaction.
4. The person receiving the complaint will clarify issues by actively listening and questioning the complainant to ensure a full understanding of the circumstances.
5. 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.
6. If the issue is complex the complainant will be asked to put their concerns in writing.
7. Where mediation is required all parties will have the right to agree to the appointment of the mediator.
8. 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.
9. Any promises made to the complainant in regard to addressing the issue will be followed up and feedback provided to the complainant as soon as possible.
10. A few days after the incident the Service will contact the complainant to find out if they are happy with the way the problem has been resolved.
11. Each complaint will be evaluated to determine how the Service responded and whether further action is required.

FOLLOW-UP AND REVIEW

Each complaint will be viewed by the Service as an opportunity for improvement. After the complaint or grievance has been dealt with, it will then be further analysed to find out how or why the problem occurred with a view to determining whether the Service should implement any changes to policy or operational procedures to avoid similar problems in the future.

The Nominated Supervisor of the Service will subsequently follow up all issues with the relevant parties to ensure that complaints and grievances 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.

This policy will be reviewed and evaluated annually, or whenever an incident occurs, in order to ensure the processes are clear and non-discriminatory. Family input is sought each time the policy is reviewed.

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 while at the Service, will be reported to the regulatory authority as required under the *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*. These allegations will be taken most seriously and an immediate resolution will be sought.

Statutory authority

- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 (Regulation 75, 76, 80, 88, 93, 94, 99, 157)

Service policies

- Confidentiality and Privacy Policy