

Lady Gowrie Community Kindergartens

GRIEVANCE FOR FAMILIES POLICY

CONSIDERATIONS:

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARDS	6.1, 7.1, 7.2
NATIONAL LAW ACT & NATIONAL REGULATIONS	Law: Sections 172, 174 Regulations: 168, 171, 173, 176

POLICY STATEMENT:

To support a grievance settlement procedure to deal with any situation in which a parent/guardian requires formal action to be initiated in respect to an issue, concern, dispute or problem occurring in the Service.

To implement a grievance procedure which undertakes notification of the Regulatory Authority as per legislation requirements.

RELEVANT FORMS/MATERIAL:

- The Kindergarten Handbook
- Lady Gowrie (Qld) Record of Complaint Form
- Grievance Visual Summary of Key Contacts
- Notification of Complaints and Incidents (www.acecqa.gov.au)
- Kindergarten Service Prescribed Notice
- State and Territory Regulatory Authority Contact Details
- Governance Arrangements Under the National Quality Framework Diagram
- Lady Gowrie Community Kindergartens Privacy and Confidentiality Policy
- Kindergarten Service Governance Policy
- Kindergarten Service Quality Improvement Plan
- Kindergarten Service Family Survey or Feedback Forms
- Kindergarten Service Policies and procedures
- ECA Code of Ethics

SOURCES:

- ACECQA (2023) NQS Information Sheet: Quality Area 7, Using complaints to support continuous improvement.
- ACECQA and Queensland Government, Department of Education Early Childhood Education and Care, Dealing with complaints policy guidelines. (September 2023)
- State of Queensland (Department of Education), (2021). Guide for effective complaints management.
- Education and Care Services National Law (Queensland) Act
- Education and Care Services National Regulations (Accessed 2024)

Reviewed: September 2024

Date to be Reviewed : March 2026

IMPLEMENTATION	
BACKGROUND INFORMATION	<p>A complaint or grievance is a statement of dissatisfaction made by a parent or guardian about any aspect of their involvement with the Kindergarten as an organisation and/or the program they are attending, where some action is requested to remedy/improve the situation. The Kindergarten Service and Lady Gowrie (QLD) views all complaints, concerns or grievances as opportunities to review and improve policies and procedures.</p> <p>The Kindergarten Service will display information regarding the Nominated Supervisor, Approved Provider contact details and Regulatory Authority contact details, on the Service Prescribed Notice which is displayed near the main entry to the Service. This information will include the name and phone number of the person who can be contacted to receive a complaint.</p> <p>Information regarding the Grievance Process will also be shared with families through the Kindergarten Service Handbook.</p> <p><i>Under Section 174 of the Education and Care Services National Law Act, The Regulatory Authority is required to be notified of any complaints alleging—</i></p> <p class="list-item-l1"><i>(i) that a serious incident has occurred or is occurring while a child was or is being educated and cared for by the approved education and care service; or</i></p> <p class="list-item-l1"><i>(ii) that this Law has been contravened.</i></p> <p>The Regulatory Authority is informed through Notification of a Complaint on the NQA IT System.</p> <p>Respectful partnerships with families are a key focus of the Service at all times and families need to feel confident that any concerns or issues they may raise will be handled promptly and professionally. It is recognised that staff and the Executive Committee may find it challenging to receive complaints. It is important to remember that an effective complaints and grievance management procedure encourages those involved to empathise with other's perspectives and allow for the opportunity to improve practice and relationships. It is important to have a commitment from all staff to listen to and aim to resolve complaints and grievances in a positive way.</p> <p>At all times complaints or grievances must be undertaken with confidentiality and privacy. The complaint or grievance will only be discussed in detail with relevant staff and/or Executive Committee Members and external stakeholders such as the Regulatory Authority, Lady Gowrie (Qld) or Community Management Solutions (CMS). Where there are key actions, reminders of policies or expected practice, or key improvements to be implemented, this can be undertaken in a general way without providing specific information of the complaint / grievance to the service staff team.</p>
COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM	<p>Guide for effective complaints management (State of Queensland (Department of Education), (2021) shares the following complaints management system:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Acknowledge - Acknowledge all complaints quickly. This demonstrates to the complainant the matter is being taken seriously. 2. Assess and assign priority – Assess the complaint, identify whether the Regulatory Authority should be notified, and give it priority.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Plan and investigate – Plan what evidence you may need to collect and how you will collect it. Investigate the complaint. 4. Respond- Respond to the complainant explaining what was found and what was done. 5. Follow Up – Follow up any concerns with the complainant. 6. Reflect – Reflect on areas for improvement.
GRIEVANCE / COMPLAINT PROCEDURE WHAT YOU SHOULD DO	<p>In the event of a complaint or grievance, parents/guardians of children attending the Service are encouraged to raise their concerns with the Nominated Supervisor/s.</p> <p>The Nominated Supervisor/s will then make a time with the parent or guardian to discuss the matter and work through possible solutions or offer supportive material.</p> <p>When receiving a complaint or grievance staff should (ACECQA NQS Information Sheet (2023)):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempt to diffuse emotions by acknowledging what they are feeling, and state positively that you wish to seek a solution to the issue causing concern. • Ask questions to help identify or clarify their concerns. • Ask the complainant if they have any strategies or solutions that they feel could be put in place to resolve their issues. • Actively listen to the complainant. • If relevant, avoid responding immediately and defensively to the issues raised. Acknowledge the complaint is received and will be worked through. • If the complainant has approached staff at an inappropriate time or place, advise that a suitable time and place will need to be organised to discuss the issue. • After speaking with the Nominated Supervisor/s or Executive Committee, if the issue raised cannot be addressed due to child well-being, ethical, legal or business reasons, explain this to the complainant and provide clear reasons. <p>If the parent/guardian verbally raises a complaint/concern with a Nominated Supervisor/s, where some action is requested to remedy/improve the situation, the Nominated Supervisor/s will document the conversation and action taken and meet with the President or another Executive Committee Member.</p> <p>Documentation required includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The concern or complaint • The date and time the discussion took place • Whether the discussion was in person or over the phone • Any information provided to the parent/guardian • The outcome of the conversation <p>This information will be compiled on a Service Record of Complaint Form and key areas of concern to be identified in relation to policies, philosophies, regulations and standards contravened.</p>

	<p>Outcomes are also recorded, and the aim is to resolve the issue with the family at this level.</p> <p>This report is then filed on the family file.</p> <p>A Notification of Complaint is completed, when relevant, as noted previously in the policy notifying the Regulatory Authority.</p> <p>Throughout the grievance/complaint process it is important that the Nominated Supervisor or Executive Committee Member keeps the complainant informed of the progress of the complaint and follows up with the complainant after the complaint has been resolved.</p> <p>The Nominated Supervisor/s and Executive Committee will review if the philosophy, policies or procedures or the Quality Improvement Plan need to be amended following the complaint being resolved.</p> <p>For any complaint / grievance that raises concern regarding the wellbeing and safety of children, all staff should be supported to review and revisit their understanding of the key policies, procedures and support information as pertaining to the context of the complaint/grievance. The sharing of this information can be undertaken through a staff memo from the Nominated Supervisor/s or Executive Committee.</p>
<p>GRIEVANCE NOT YET RESOLVED (OR IS IN REGARDS TO THE NOMINATED SUPERVISORS/S) PROCEDURE WHAT YOU SHOULD DO</p>	<p>If a parent/guardian feels that their grievance has not been resolved satisfactorily at this level, the parent/guardian will be encouraged to place the complaint in writing and address the matter to the President who will respond to the complaint/concern and where required, advise the Executive Committee (Approved Provider) for noting and action.</p> <p>All complaints and grievances will be handled with respect for confidentiality, and procedural fairness will be observed in all aspects of handling a complaint.</p> <p>The Nominated Supervisor/Executive Committee will acknowledge receipt of the grievance and advise the parent/guardian of the timeframe in which a response will be provided.</p> <p>Where the Executive Committee receives a grievance, it may be necessary to discuss the concerns raised, through calling an Executive Committee Meeting or Flying Minute via email.</p> <p>The grievance must be addressed in a timely fashion. Whilst providing the opportunity for discussion and sourcing further information or guidance for the Executive Committee is important, in most circumstances it will not be appropriate to hold addressing the grievance until the next committee meeting (where the meeting is scheduled for a period of seven days or longer away).</p> <p>Where investigation of a complex complaint or complaint alleging that a serious incident has occurred or is occurring whilst a child is being educated and cared for by a service, or that the National Law and/or National Regulations have been contravened is required, the Executive Committee are able to follow the information shared in Step 3: Plan and investigate, Guide for effective complaints management (State of Queensland (Department of Education), (2021).</p>
<p>SERVICE SUPPORT</p>	<p>At any time during the grievance process, staff and Executive Committee Members are able to seek advice and support from Lady Gowrie Qld, as the Central Governing Body for the Service. In the instance that a family raises a grievance first with Lady Gowrie Qld as the Central Governing Body, Lady Gowrie Qld staff will document the correspondence and direct the family to undertake the grievance process with the Service.</p>

	<p>All Lady Gowrie Community Kindergarten Affiliated Services receive membership with Community Management Solutions (CMS), through their affiliation. CMS are an employer's union and Executive Committees can seek assistance regarding a range of areas including grievances.</p> <p>As the employer of staff at the Service, when required the Executive Committee as Approved Provider may also need to seek external assistance in supporting staff through the grievance process.</p> <p>The Executive Committee as Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor and service staff team, will at all times maintain confidentiality of any information shared during the grievance process. Staff will conduct themselves in a professional manner and have a positive work culture during the grievance process.</p> <p>Following the resolution of the grievance the Executive Committee or Nominated Supervisor will arrange for individual or service team training, if and when required. (This is in regards to supporting the professional growth of the individual or service team and/or in regards to supporting their wellbeing and ongoing engagement at the Service.)</p>
<p>EARLY CHILDHOOD REGULATORY AUTHORITY, EARLY CHILDHOOD DIVISION, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION</p>	<p>Kindergarten Services are assessed under the National Quality Framework and related Legislation. This legislation sets the minimum quality standards that Services must meet in order to legally operate. The Regulatory Authority is responsible for assessing Early Childhood Education and Care Services.</p> <p>A copy of the Act and Regulation are available from the Service for you to read or alternatively at www.acecqa.gov.au .</p> <p>If you wish to contact the Early Childhood Regulatory Authority for QLD (ECRA) which is Department of Education, you can do so at any time. Relative to the Service you are attending the contact details are available at the Service and on the Department website.</p> <p>Parents/guardians may also choose to view the information regarding Complaints as shared on the Early Childhood Education and Care, Department of Education website www.earlychildhood.qld.gov.au/contact-us .</p> <p>A diagram outlining Governance Arrangements in regards to the National Quality Framework is available at the Service for your reference.</p>