

Procedure

Consumer Complaints Management and Resolution Procedure

Please note this procedure is mandatory and staff are required to adhere to the content

Summary

The procedure articulates the steps that will be undertaken to manage and resolve complaints received by DECD across its sites, and the local and central levels of complaints management.

Publication Date	25 August 2015
Review Date	13 August 2018
Related legislation/applicable section of legislation	Information Privacy Principles Instruction – Sep 2013 <i>Children’s Protection Act 1993, s 58</i>
Related policies, procedures, guidelines, standards, frameworks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AS/NZS 10002:2014 – Guidelines for Complaint Management in Organizations - DECD Consumer Complaints Management and Resolution Policy - DECD Unreasonable Complainant Conduct Procedure
Replaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Education Complaints Policy: a guide to raising a concern or complaint - Education concerns and complaints procedure - Education concern or complaint brochure: a guide to raising a concern or complaint - Families SA Client Feedback Policy
Policy officer (position)	Manager DECD Complaints Unit
Policy officer (phone)	1800 677 435
Policy sponsor (position)	Assistant Director, Incident Management Division
Executive director responsible (position and office)	Deputy Chief Executive, Resources Office for Resources, Operations and Assurance
Applies to	All DECD staff and sites
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1. Title

- Consumer Complaints Management and Resolution Procedure.

2. Purpose

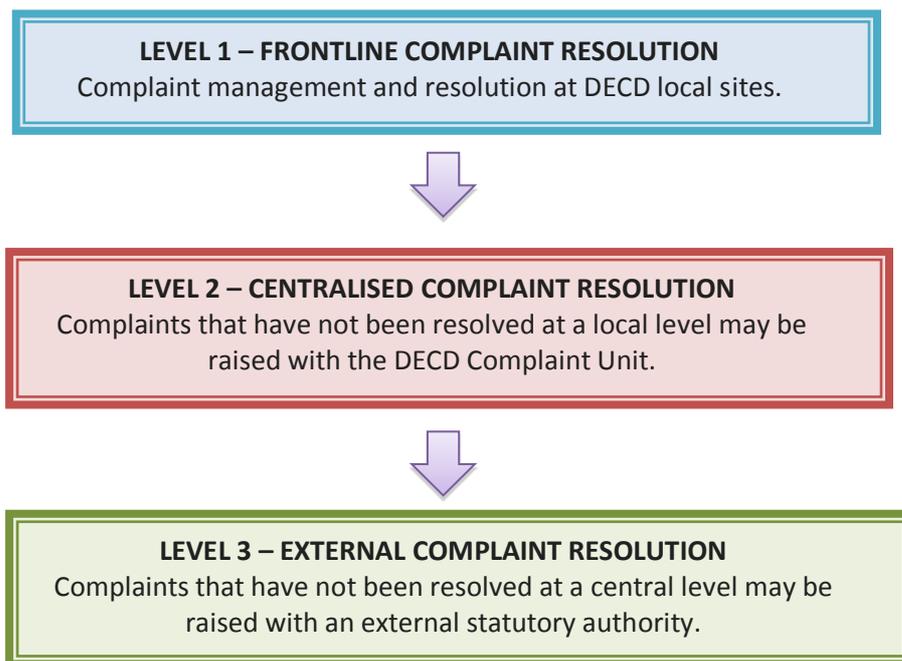
- The purpose of the Consumer Complaints Management and Resolution Procedure is to ensure that DECD manages complaints in a fair, efficient and effective manner. The procedure outlines the steps that must be taken to manage complaints, and complement the Consumer Complaints Management and Resolution Policy.

3. Scope

- The Complaints Management and Resolution Procedure apply to complaints about decisions and actions undertaken in the provision of education, early childhood services, family support, and care services by DECD.
- This procedure applies to all staff in DECD schools, preschools, early childhood, care and family support services.
- The procedure applies to complaints that are within the scope of the DECD Consumer Complaints Management and Resolution Policy.
- The procedure provides a basis for policies that may be developed at DECD sites to meet local needs and reflect local systems. Where no local procedure is developed, the Frontline Resolution procedure in this document will prevail. Where a local procedure is developed, any inconsistencies in the local policies will be invalid to the extent to any inconsistency with this procedure.

4. Procedure Detail

- DECD endorses a Three Level Model of Complaint Handling recognised as best practice in the Australian / New Zealand Standard (Guidelines for complaint management in organisations) AS/NSZ 10002:2014.



4.1. Frontline Resolution Procedure

It is recognised that DECD is a large Department, comprising 29 000 staff across more than 1000 sites, supporting more than 190 000 children across South Australia. For this reason, the procedure for frontline resolution of complaints specifies the functions that must be undertaken in managing and resolving complaints. The mechanisms by which those functions can be achieved may be determined by the site in accordance with their governance structures.

The complaint must be acknowledged promptly

- Complaints are acknowledged within two working days of their receipt. Generally, acknowledgement of the complaint may be in the same mode as the complaint was received (eg. complaints received verbally may be acknowledged verbally). Where complaints are serious or complex, written acknowledgement should occur.
- The acknowledgement should outline:
 - The nature of the complaint received
 - The complaint process that will be undertaken (including approximate time frames)
 - The name and details of a contact person for the complaint
 - When the complainant is likely to be next contacted
- Where a complaint can be quickly resolved, it may be possible to provide the acknowledgement and resolution of a complaint in the same interaction (verbally or in writing).
- Where responses are provided in writing to vulnerable complainants, consideration should be given to calling the complainant and going through the contents of the written response to ensure that it is understood.

The complaint must be assessed and prioritised according to the issues raised

- Early assessment of the complaint is essential for effective complaint handling. Assessment of the complaint should consider:
 - Whether the complaint falls within the scope of the complaint policy, or whether some or all of the complaint needs to be redirected elsewhere.
 - Whether the complaint raises concerns that need to be addressed immediately to ensure the safety and protection of individuals
 - Whether there are factors that should raise the priority of the complaint eg. the issues raised in the complaint are serious or there are time frames or limits associated with the complaint that cannot be altered.
- The substance of a complaint dictates the priority it receives, not the complainant's demands or behaviour.

The complainant must be redirected to alternative means of addressing their concerns if the complaint does not fall within the scope of DECD's Complaints Management and Resolution Policy.

- Where a complaint does not fall within the scope of DECD Consumer Complaints Management and Resolution Policy, the complainant will be advised:
 - that their complaint is out of the scope of the policy
 - the reason why the complaint is out of scope
 - the details of where or how the complainant is able to raise their issue through the appropriate avenue / authority.
- Where a matter is quickly identified as being out of scope, it may be possible to provide the redirection at the same interaction as receiving and acknowledging the complaint. Where the issue is complex, the complaint should be advised in writing within a week of receipt of the complaint.
- Where a complaint relates to a professional who is subject to a registration authority, or an organisation that is subject to a regulatory authority, complainants should be advised of the relevant registration / regulatory authority so that they can pursue that avenue of resolution.
- Where there is a statutory or policy obligation upon the DECD employee receiving the complaint, they will ensure that the matter is reported to the proper authorities in accordance with that obligation.

If the complaint requires further investigation or enquiries, the complainant must be advised in a clear and informative way how their complaint was investigated / followed up, and the outcomes.

- Site managers will investigate / follow up complaints in accordance with the principles of procedural fairness and open disclosure, and the "Individual rights and mutual responsibilities of the parties to complaint" (Appendix A).

- Site Managers will ensure that complaints are investigated in a planned, logical and consistent manner. This includes determining:
 - What are the substantive issues of concern?
 - What are the relevant requirements about these issues (legal, policy or procedural requirements)?
 - Where are the available sources of information about these issues (parties directly involved, witnesses, documentation, in some situations CCTV footage) and how can these been obtained?
- Once this information has been obtained, the staff member managing the complaint will consider:
 - what are the facts that can be determined?
 - what issues remain in dispute?
 - what conclusion can be drawn based on the application of the legislation / policy/ procedures to the facts?
 - what options are available to resolve the issue?
- This information will be provided to the complainant to the maximum extent possible, within the requirements of legislative and other requirements regarding privacy and confidentiality.
- Where a matter can be quickly resolved, it may be possible to provide the outcomes of the investigation at the same interaction as receiving and acknowledging the complaint.
- The outcomes of a complaint process should be provided within a month of receiving the complaint, and no more than six weeks for complex and contentious issues. If a matter is complex and contentious, or there has been some unexpected delay, the complainant should be kept updated as to the progress of their complaint, the reasons for the delay, and the likely timeframe for resolution. As a guide, these updates should be provided every two weeks.
- Where the outcomes of the complaint are detailed, or where the issue is complex and contentious, it is appropriate to provide the outcomes to the complaint in writing (either singularly, or in addition to verbal feedback). Where a complainant requests a response in writing, it should be provided in this form.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response, central resolution of the complaint or external review options must be offered

- Where complainants have indicated their dissatisfaction with an outcome of a frontline resolution process, they must be advised of their avenues to escalate the complaint through the DECD Complaints Unit for central resolution, or externally through Ombudsman SA or the Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner (Families SA matters only). Complainants may be advised that external review authorities may require that the complainant undertaken frontline and centralised resolutions processes first.
- Where the complaint is complex and contentious, it is appropriate to provide these avenues for escalation and review to the complainant in writing (either singularly, or in addition to verbal feedback).
- Frontline resolutions are not considered finalised unless they have been managed by the Site Manager, or the Site Manager has endorsed the process and outcomes undertaken by other staff at their site.

Complaints and the actions undertaken to manage them must be documented.

- Site Managers must ensure that complaints and the actions undertaken to manage and respond to complaints are documented at their site. The Site Manager is able to determine the means through which this documentation occurs, and must ensure:
 - that the documentation complies with the Cabinet Information Privacy Principles, the *State Records Act 1997*, the relevant General Disposal Schedules, and any other legal requirements for the collection, storage and use of information.
 - that the documentation is linked to the child / family who is the client of the site, and can be retrieved through accessing the child's / family's records.
 - that the documentation is linked to the site's complaints data and can be retrieved through accessing the site's complaints records.

Any systemic issues that arise as a result of a complaint should be considered and acted upon.

- Site Managers must ensure that any systemic issues that arise as a result of a complaint should be considered for a broader response across the site (eg. training and development for staff, changes to local policies). Site Managers should also ensure that their complaints data is considered on an annual basis by the Site Leadership (eg. Management team, Governing Council) to identify themes, trends and issues that may assist in business planning and service development.

4.2. Centralised Resolution Procedure

The complaint must be acknowledged promptly

- The DECD Complaints Unit will ensure that complaints are acknowledged within two working days of their receipt. Generally, acknowledgement of the complaint may be in the same mode as the complaint was received (eg. complaints received verbally may be acknowledged verbally). Where complaints are serious or complex, written acknowledgement should occur.
- The acknowledgement should outline:
 - The nature of the complaint received
 - The complaint process that will be undertaken (including approximately time frames)
 - The name and details of the contact person for the complaint
 - When the complainant is likely to be next contacted
- Where a complaint can be quickly resolved, it may be possible to provide the acknowledgement and resolution of a complaint in the same interaction (verbally or in writing).

The complaint must be assessed and prioritised according to the issues raised

- Early assessment of the complaint is essential for effective complaint handling. The DECD Complaints Unit will assess the complaint and will consider:
 - Whether the complaint falls within the scope of the complaint policy or whether some or all of the complaint needs to be redirected elsewhere.
 - Whether reasonable efforts have been made to resolve the complaint at a local level, and if not, to refer the matter to the Site Manager for frontline resolution.
 - Whether the complaint raises concerns that need to be addressed immediately to ensure the safety and protection of individuals
 - Whether there are factors that should raise the priority of the complaint eg. the issues raised in the complaint are serious or there are time frames or limits associated with the complaint that cannot be altered.
- The substance of a complaint dictates the priority it receives, not the complainant's behaviour.

Contact with the Office of the Chief Executive or Minister

- Where a complainant makes a concurrent complaint about the same issue to the Chief Executive or Minister as well as contacting the DECD Complaints Unit, the processes of the Office of the Chief Executive and Minister will take precedence. The complainant will be advised that the issue will be managed via their correspondence to that office.

The complainant must be redirected to alternative means of addressing their concerns if the complaint does not fall within the scope of DECD's Complaints Management and Resolution Policy, or if reasonable efforts have not been made to resolve with issue with the Site Manager.

- Where a complaint does not fall within the scope of DECD Consumer Complaints Management and Resolution Policy, or reasonable efforts have not been made to resolve the complaint through frontline resolution, the complainant will be advised:
 - that their complaint is out of the scope of the policy, and the reason why the complaint is out of scope or
 - that they need to attempt local resolution with the site manager
 - the details of where or how the complainant is able to raise their issue through the appropriate avenue / authority.
- Where a matter is quickly identified as being out of scope, it may be possible to provide the redirection at the same interaction as receiving and acknowledging the complaint. Where the issue is complex, the complainant will be advised by the DECD Complaints Unit in writing within a week of receipt of the complaint.
- Where a complaint relates to a professional who is subject to a registration authority, or an organisation that is subject to a regulatory authority, complainants should be advised of the relevant registration / regulatory authority so that they can pursue that avenue of resolution.
- Where there is a statutory or policy obligation upon the DECD employee receiving the complaint, they will ensure that the matter is reported to the proper authorities in accordance with that obligation.

If the complaint requires further investigation or enquiries, the complainant must be advised in a clear and informative way how their complaint was investigated / followed up, and the outcomes

- The Complaints Unit will investigate / follow up complaints in accordance with the principles of procedural fairness and open disclosure, and the “Individual rights and mutual responsibilities of the parties to a complaint” (Appendix A).
- The DECD Complaints Unit will ensure that complaints enquiries are undertaken in a planned, logical and consistent manner. This includes determining:
 - what are the substantive issues of concern?
 - what are the relevant requirements about these issues (legal, policy or procedural requirements)?
 - where are the available sources of information about these issues (parties directly involved, witnesses, documentation, in some situations CCTV footage) and how can these be obtained?
 - what steps have been undertaken by the Site Manager to resolve the complaint at the local level?
- Once this information has been obtained, the staff member managing the complaint will consider:
 - what are the facts that can be determined
 - what issues remain in dispute
 - what conclusion can be drawn based on the application of the legislation / policy/ procedures to the facts
 - what options are available to resolving the issue
- This information will be provided to the complaint to the maximum extent possible, within the requirements of legislative and other requirements regarding privacy and confidentiality.
- Where a matter can be quickly resolved, it may be possible to provide the outcomes of the investigation in the same interaction as receiving and acknowledging the complaint.
- The outcomes of a complaint process should be provided within a month of the Complaints Unit receiving the complaint, and no more than six weeks for complex and contentious issues. If a matter is complex and contentious, or there has been some unexpected delay, the complainant will be kept updated as to the progress of their complaint, the reasons for the delay, and the likely timeframe for resolution. As a guide, these updates should be provided every two weeks.
- Where the outcomes of the complaint are detailed, or where the issue is complex and contentious, the DECD Complaints Unit may provide the outcomes to the complainant in writing (either singularly, or in addition to verbal feedback). Where a complainant requests a response in writing, it should be provided in this form.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the response, formal internal review or external review must be offered.

- Where complainants have indicated their dissatisfaction with an outcome through the DECD Complaints Unit, the complainant must be advised of their avenues to escalate the complaint through:

- formal internal review overseen by the Chief Education Officer, or the Executive Director of the relevant area for non-school sites/services
- external review through Ombudsman SA or the Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner (Families SA matters only).
- Where the complaint is complex and contentious, it is appropriate to provide these avenues for escalation and review to the complaint in writing (either singularly, or in addition to verbal feedback).

Internal Formal Review

- Where a complainant makes a written application for a formal review, the Complaints Unit will provide a briefing to the Chief Education Officer (or Executive Director of the relevant area for non-school sites/services) assessing the merits of the complainant's application for formal review. Formal review will only be recommended where:
 - there has been procedural error demonstrated in the complaints resolution process
 - where the staff involved have acted outside of their authority
 - there the decisions that have been made have been unreasonable in the circumstances
- The Chief Education Officer / Executive Director may determine that there is no basis for further review of a complaint. In these circumstances, the Chief Education Officer / Executive Director will provide written reasons as to why further review has not been authorised.
- Where a formal review is authorised by the Chief Education Officer or Executive Director, the Resolutions Officer managing the review will be different from the person who initially managed the central response to the complainant.
- The Reviewing Officer will consider:
 - What are the substantive issues of concern?
 - What are the relevant requirements about these issues (legal, policy or procedural requirements)?
 - Where are the available sources of information about these issues (parties directly involved, witnesses, documentation, in some situations CCTV footage) and how can these be obtained. Further interviews can be conducted with the parties involved, and the Reviewing Officer may access Departmental records as required to follow logical lines of enquiry for the purposes of the review.
- Once this information has been obtained, the Reviewing Officer will consider:
 - what are the facts that can be determined?
 - what issues remain in dispute?
 - what conclusion can be drawn based on the application of the legislation / policy/ procedures to the facts?
 - what options are available to resolving the issue?
- This information will be documented in a review report that will be provided in draft to all the parties involved for their comment. Third party information in the report will be redacted in the version provided to the complainant to ensure compliance with the Information Privacy Principles, the *Children's Protection Act 1993* and any other legal requirements. Upon receipt and consideration of any feedback from the parties, the Reviewing Officer will provide the completed

review to the Chief Education Officer or Executive Director for their consideration, and if appropriate, endorsement. If endorsed, the final review may be provided to all parties involved in the complaint (with redactions where legally required for confidentiality requirements).

- Formal reviews should be completed within four months of authorisation by the Chief Education Officer or Executive Director, and no more than six months after authorisation. Where unexpected delays occur, the reasons for these delays will be documented and communicated to the complainant.
- The final report of formal review will be provided to all parties to the complaint, recognising that third party information may be required to be redacted to ensure the Department's compliance with the Information Privacy Principles and other legislative confidentiality requirements.
- The Chief Education Officer or Executive Director may determine how they wish to use the report to respond to the complainant, or to implement local or systemic changes.

Complaints and the actions undertaken to manage them should be documented.

- The DECD Complaints Unit will ensure that complaints and the actions undertaken to manage and respond to them are documented through the Unit's databases. The DECD Complaints Manager will ensure that:
 - that the documentation complies with the Cabinet Information Privacy Principles, the *State Records Act 1997*, the relevant General Disposal Schedules, and any other legal requirements for the collection, storage and use of information.
 - the documentation is linked to the child / family who is the client of the site, and can be retrieved through accessing the child's / family's records
 - the documentation is linked to the site's complaints data and can be retrieved through accessing the site's complaints records

Any systemic issues that arise as a result of a complaint should be considered and acted upon.

- The DECD Complaints Manager will ensure the number, themes, and trends arising from complaints are reported to the DECD Executive on a regularly basis, so that any systemic issues may be considered and acted upon. This should occur on a quarterly basis and no less than annually, prior to 1 July each year.
- The DECD Complaints Manager will also ensure that complaints data is available for reporting through the DECD Annual Report, to ensure transparency and public accountability.

5. Roles and responsibilities

Role	Authority/Responsibility for
Chief Executive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring the establishment, maintenance and promotion of an effective complaints management system within DECD. • Ensuring that information about the policy is accessible to members of the public • Ensuring the appointment of a Complaints Manager with clearly defined responsibilities and authority • Ensuring there is a process in place for timely and appropriate notification to the Senior Executive of any significant complaints, or systemic issues identified through complaints. • Ensuring that there is a process for regular reporting on the complaint management system and data.
DECD Complaints Unit Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that information about the complaint management system is easily accessible by staff, clients and members of the public, especially vulnerable populations (including Aboriginal people, people from CALD background, people with disabilities). • Ensuring that complaints are responded to in a fair and consistent manner, in accordance with the policy and procedures. • Ensuring that appropriate records and documentation are kept of complaints received by the Complaints Unit. • Establishing a process of performance monitoring, evaluation and reporting of complaints data including the number and types of complaints received, sources of complaints, and time taken to respond to complaints. • Reporting to Senior Executive on the operation of the complaint management system, including significant complaints, systemic issues, service trends and recommendations for improvement. • Reporting to staff and other stakeholders about issues of concern identified through the complaint management system • Implementing and maintaining the complaint management system, including recruitment and training of staff, implementing infrastructure, provision of guiding documents, setting performance indicators.

Role	Authority/Responsibility for
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing internal and external escalation mechanisms for unresolved disputes. • Providing advice, consultation and support to Site Managers to respond to complex and contentious complaints, and unreasonable complainant conduct.
Site Managers including Families SA Managers, Principals, Early Childhood Directors (or their delegate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that information about the complaint management system is easily accessible by staff, clients and members of the public, especially vulnerable populations (including Aboriginal people, people from CALD background, people with disabilities). • Ensure the complaint management system is implemented at their site, including any subordinate local policies and procedures • Ensuring that complaints are responded to in a fair and consistent manner, in accordance with the policy and procedures. • Ensuring that appropriate records and documentation are kept of complaints received by their site. • Working with the Complaints Unit manager and staff to resolve any disputes that have been escalated to the Complaints Unit. • Ensuring that complaint management data is kept and available for review by Senior Management and others.
DECD Senior Managers (Directors, Executive Directors)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring the promotion of an effective complaints management system within DECD. • Supporting Site Managers to respond effectively to complaints • Considering complaints data and systemic issues arising from complaints as a part of DECD's strategic planning. • The Chief Education Officer and Executive Directors have the authority to approve formal reviews that have been escalated to them, and oversee the review and its outcomes.
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that they are familiar with the DECD complaints management system, and their local site's procedures. • Ensuring that complaints raised with them are acknowledged and responded to in a fair and consistent manner, or referred to the appropriate party for a response, in

Role	Authority/Responsibility for
	<p>accordance with the policy and procedures.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enabling clients and community members to make complaints through the provision of information and advice.

6. Monitoring, evaluation and review

- This policy will be reviewed every three years (in accordance with the DECD Policy Framework) or earlier if required by legislative or organisational imperatives.
- Site Managers will provide ongoing monitoring of their site's/service's compliance with this policy.
- The DECD Complaints Unit Manager will provide ongoing monitoring of compliance with the policy across sites and assist sites to support compliance with the policy.
- The DECD Complaints Unit Manager will monitor and evaluate the adequacy of the policy in meeting legislative, Departmental and other requirements on an ongoing basis.

7. Definitions and abbreviations

Term	Meaning
Carer	Family members, guardians or friends who have an interest in, or are responsible for the care of a client
Client	Someone who receives, relies upon, is the subject of, or benefits from DECD education, early childhood, care and family support services. Interchangeable terms used are "consumer" and "customer".
Complainant	Person or their representative making a complaint
Complaint	Expression of dissatisfaction made to or about DECD related to its services, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicit required.
Complaint Management System	Encompasses all aspects of the policies, procedures, practices, staff, and infrastructure used by DECD to the management of complaints.
DECD	Department for Education and Child Development
Disputes	Unresolved complaints escalated within DECD or externally, or both.
Feedback	Opinions, comments and expressions of interest or concern, made directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly to or about DECD, its services, staff or its handling of a complaint.
HCSCC	Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner
Open Disclosure	The approach and principles used within the Complaint Management System to communicate with clients who have experienced harm. The main elements

Term	Meaning
	<p>of Open Disclosure are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An acknowledgement and factual explanation of what has occurred as it relates to the complainant - An expression of regret or apology for harm experienced - An opportunity for the client to recount their experience of the event - A discussion of the steps being taken to manage the event and its potential consequences, and to prevent recurrence.
Procedural fairness	<p>Procedural fairness requires a fair and proper process be used with making decisions that may adversely affect the interests of an individual. The rules of procedural fairness require:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a hearing appropriate to the circumstances - lack of bias - evidence and reasons to support a decision - inquiry into matters of dispute <p>Used interchangeably with “natural justice”.</p>
Vulnerable populations / vulnerable complainants	<p>It is recognised that some sections of the community may find it difficult to make complaints. This may be due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - language barriers (including not speaking, reading or writing English proficiently, oral traditions being stronger), - cultural barriers (lack of familiarity with making complaints, lack of experience or fear in dealing with government departments, cultural inhibitions about making complaints or discussion personal matters) - developmental barriers (eg. Children, adults with intellectual disabilities and delays) <p>Other issues such as some mental health conditions.</p>

8. Supporting documents

- DECD Consumer Complaints Management and Resolution Policy
- DECD Unreasonable Complainant Conduct Procedure
- Guide to raising a complaint in DECD brochure

9. References

- Directive Documents
 - Information Privacy Principles Instruction – September 2013
 - AS/NZS 10002:2014 Guidelines for Complaint Management in Organizations
 - DECD Strategic Plan 2014 – 2017

- Children, young people, families and the wider community will be included in our planning and decision making processes
- The South Australian public education and care system will be effective, efficient and transparent, with high public trust and credibility.
- Building a High Performing System – a business improvement plan for the Department for Education and Child Development
 - Change Priority 11: Education System Performance
- Families SA Service Plan (Safety and Quality of Services)

Appendix A – Individual Rights and Mutual Responsibilities of the Parties to a Complaint

In order for the Department for Education and Child Development to ensure that all complaints are dealt with fairly, efficiently and effectively and that occupational health and safety standards and duty of care obligations are adhered to, the following rights and responsibilities must be observed and respected by all of the parties to the complaints process.

RIGHTS

Complainants have the right:

- to make a complaint and to express their opinions in ways that are reasonable, lawful and respectful
- to a reasonable explanation of the organisation's complaints procedure, including details of the confidentiality and/or privacy rights or obligations that may apply
- to a fair and impartial assessment and, where appropriate, investigation of their complaint based on the merits of the case
- to a fair hearing
- to a timely response
- to be informed in at least general terms about the actions taken and outcome of their complaint
- to be given reasons that explain decisions affecting them
- to at least one right of review of the decision on the complaint
- to be treated with courtesy and respect
- to communicate valid concerns and views without fear of reprisal or other unreasonable response.

Staff have the right:

- to determine how a complaint will be dealt with
- to finalise matters on the basis of outcomes they consider to be satisfactory in the circumstances
- to expect honesty, cooperation and reasonable assistance from complainants
- to expect honesty, cooperation and reasonable assistance from organisations and people within jurisdiction who are the subject of a complaint
- to be treated with courtesy and respect
- to a safe and healthy working environment
- to modify, curtail or decline service (if appropriate) in response to unacceptable behaviour by a complainant.

Subjects of a complaint have the right:

- to a fair and impartial assessment and, where appropriate, investigation of the allegations made against them
- to be treated with courtesy and respect by DECD staff who are managing the complaint
- to be informed (at an appropriate time) about the substance of the allegations made against them that are being investigated
- to be informed about the substance of any proposed adverse comment or decision
- to be given a reasonable opportunity to put their case during the course of any investigation and before any final decision is made
- to be told the outcome of any investigation into allegations about their conduct, including the reasons for any decision or recommendation that may be detrimental to them
- to be protected from harassment by disgruntled complainants acting unreasonably.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Complainants are responsible for:

- treating DECD staff with courtesy and respect
- clearly identifying to the best of their ability the issues of complaint
- providing to the best of their ability all the relevant information available to them at the time of making the complaint
- being honest in all communications with DECD
- informing DECD of any other action they have taken in relation to their complaint
- cooperating with the staff who are assigned to assess/ investigate/resolve/determine or otherwise deal with their complaint.

If complainants do not meet their responsibilities, DECD may consider placing limitations or conditions on their ability to communicate with staff or access certain services.

DECD has a zero tolerance policy in relation to any abuse and threats directed towards our staff. Any conduct of this kind may result in a refusal to take any further action on a complaint or to have further dealings with the complainant. Any such conduct of a criminal nature will be reported to police and in certain cases legal action may also be considered.

Staff are responsible for:

- providing reasonable assistance to complainants who need help to make a complaint.
- dealing with all complaints, complainants and people or organisations the subject of complaint professionally, fairly and impartially
- Understanding how their responses and approaches may contribute to the conduct of complainants, and act in a way that supports de-escalation of UCC.

- giving complainants or their advocates a reasonable opportunity to explain their complaint, subject to the circumstances of the case and the conduct of the complainant
- giving people or organisations the subject of complaint a reasonable opportunity to put their case during the course of any enquiries and before any final decision is made
- informing the subject of investigation, at an appropriate time, about the substance of the allegations made against them and the substance of any proposed adverse comment or decision that they may need to answer or address
- keeping complainants informed of the actions taken and the outcome of their complaints
- giving complainants reasons that are clear and appropriate to their circumstances and adequately explaining the basis of any decisions that affect them
- treating complainants and any people the subject of complaint with courtesy and respect at all times and in all circumstances
- taking all reasonable and practical steps to ensure that complainants are not subjected to any detrimental action in reprisal for making their complaint
- giving adequate warning of the consequences of unacceptable behaviour.
- If the DECD or its staff fail to comply with these responsibilities, complainants may complain to Ombudsman SA and the Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner (Families SA complaints only).

Subjects of a complaint are responsible for:

- cooperating with the DECD staff who are assigned to handle the complaint, particularly where they are exercising a lawful power in relation to a person or body within their jurisdiction
- providing all relevant information in their possession to DECD or its authorised staff when required to do so by a properly authorised direction or notice
- being honest in all communications with DECD and its staff
- treating DECD staff with courtesy and respect at all times and in all circumstances