

Consumer Complaints Policy



Policy number	CC0001	Version	1.0
Policy adopted	15/06/2004	Approved by Board on	11/06/2011
Responsible person	Chief Executive Officer	Scheduled review date	11/06/2022

1 Scope

All members of Playgroup SA have a right to have their concerns about service delivery and the conduct of Board, staff and Playgroup SA volunteers heard and addressed. They also have a right to receive information about progress and improvements in service delivery upon request.

The consumer complaints process is an avenue for encouraging Playgroup SA members and members of the public to express concerns and to offer views about different aspects of Playgroup SA service delivery. In this way the consumer complaints process contributes to quality improvement and risk management.

Employee grievances are deliberately not addressed by this policy.

2 Purpose

The primary purpose of this policy is to demonstrate transparency of application to addressing the concerns of members. No differentiation is made between perceived and actual consumer concerns, as the philosophy of complaints management is based upon the consumer perception of an event. Meeting risk management, quality improvement and organisational objectives is clearly a secondary purpose when these do not interfere with Playgroup SA's responsibility to the consumer.

3 Principles

Good complaints management practices revolve around the maintenance of the following key principles:

1. Complaints shall not be discouraged by staff.
2. Complaints are to be received and handled with dignity in a spirit of helpful cooperation.
3. Complainants are to be treated under principles of fairness.
4. Complaints should be resolved immediately at their point of origin, whenever possible.
5. Complaints will be properly considered and any remedial action taken as soon as practicable.
6. Staff rights are to be considered and maintained throughout the complaints process.

4 Quality Improvement and Risk Management

Consumer complaints are an important source of feedback about service provision and as such are tools for quality improvement initiatives. They also serve to identify potentially unsafe practices, and contribute to appropriate risk management activities. While complainants may name individuals, complaints should nonetheless be treated as systems improvement opportunities, rather than an example of individual poor performance. Persons who investigate complaints are encouraged to initiate system improvements, wherever possible, and to document these outcomes.

5 Categories of Complaint

There are several categories of complaint as shown below:

1. **Verbal (minor)** - verbal expression of dissatisfaction that is minor in nature and can be dealt with courteously and immediately to the complainant's satisfaction. If the complainant remains dissatisfied, the complaint becomes verbal (major).
2. **Verbal (major)** - verbal expressions of dissatisfaction that cannot be resolved immediately. These are usually perceived or actual departures from the standards of service expected by members or from accepted professional and ethical guidelines.

3. **Written** - any expression of a complainant's dissatisfaction made in writing to Playgroup SA. They may be in the form of correspondence, email, notes, suggestion forms or other written methods.
4. **Notifiable** - any expression of a complainant's dissatisfaction either verbally or in writing that involves allegations of assault and abuse. Statutory reporting requirements must be followed in these instances.

6 Eligibility to Lodge a Complaint

Complaints may be lodged by Playgroup SA members, or other concerned individuals or groups.

7 Staff Rights

Staff have certain rights, including the right to appropriate feedback and communication on work performance, fair and consistent treatment, and reasonable avenues of redress. Persons investigating complaints, in particular those where staff are cited, are to ensure that staff rights are respected throughout the process.

8 Procedural Guidelines

Complainants should be encouraged to voice their concerns or complaint at the point of service as soon as they feel dissatisfied. This allows staff to promptly resolve the matter with a complainant to their satisfaction. Where a solution is evident immediately, staff should endeavour to resolve the matter without delay.

8.1 Verbal (Minor) Complaints

Verbal complaints may be received in person or by telephone. All verbal or telephone complaints should be resolved at the source immediately or with a return phone call. Staff are encouraged to make a written record of minor complaints and their outcome.

8.2 Verbal (Major) Complaints

When verbal complaints are received by staff and cannot be resolved immediately, or if the complainant states that they wish to take the matter further, the staff member who received the complaint is required to inform the Executive Officer (EO). The EO is to resolve the complaint with the involvement of relevant staff, and respond verbally or in writing, as appropriate. The EO is required to inform the Board if there is any potential for litigation arising from the complaint, or if the complaint is directed against the EO. If the EO has difficulty resolving the matter, assistance should be sought from the Board.

8.3 Written Complaints

Complainants are encouraged and may be assisted by staff to make their complaints in writing. Appropriate assistance will be provided where required to people with specific cultural, language, or disability needs. Written complaints are to be investigated by the EO. The EO will ensure that staff named in complaints are informed and involved in the process. The EO is required to inform the Board immediately if there is any potential for litigation arising from the complaint, or if the complaint is directed against the EO. If the EO has difficulty resolving the matter, assistance should be sought from the Board.

8.4 Serious Notifiable Complaints

The Board should be informed of any complaints that involve allegations of assault or abuse. In addition, statutory reporting requirements must be adhered to.

9 Written Responses

In the case of Verbal (Major) and Written Complaints handled by the EO, every effort should be made to ensure that complainants receive a detailed written response within 14 days of receipt of the original complaint. Where complaints are referred to the Board, a written response must be completed within 14 days of the Board meeting at which the complaint was addressed.

If the complaint is not completed within 28 days, a letter detailing the progress to date is required to be sent. All written responses are to be signed by the EO or the President of the Board of

Management, whoever is the most appropriate. A copy of all verbal (major) and written complaints, their final response, and information about the outcome and improvements initiated, are to be kept in the register of complaints at the Playgroup SA office.

10 Referral of Complaints

If a complainant is not satisfied with the response, they should be referred to the Board. The Board may seek to discuss the matter further with the complainant to explore options for resolution, or refer the matter to other stakeholders, as appropriate.

11 Evaluation of Complainant Satisfaction

Finalised complaints will be evaluated to determine if the complainant is satisfied with both the outcome of their complaint, and the manner in which their complaint was handled.

12 Responsibilities

12.1 Executive Officer

- Maintain a register of complaints
- Forward documentation of complaints for investigation to the Board when appropriate
- Assist in the investigation and mediation of consumer complaints where required
- Advise the Board if there is a potential for litigation or if the complaint involves the EO him/herself.
- Assist in familiarising staff with the investigation, recording and resolution processes of consumer complaints
- Evaluate complainants' satisfaction, and provide feedback to staff involved in investigating and responding to a complaint
- Assist staff to implement system improvements and preventative strategies as a result of complaints received
- Ensure that complaints are investigated and resolved quickly and sensitively, with due consideration to consumer and staff needs
- Ensure that staff rights are protected through informing and involving them, where appropriate
- Ensure that documentation is completed in a timely manner

12.2 The Board

- Act upon reports and recommendations received from the EO to ensure that complaints contribute to an overall improvement in the quality of service
- Initiate improvements and preventive strategies in response to complaints and, in particular, to trends in complaint reporting
- Evaluate complainants' satisfaction, and provide feedback to staff involved in investigating and responding to a complaint
- Ensure that complaints are investigated and resolved quickly and sensitively, with due consideration to consumer and staff needs
- Ensure that staff rights are protected through informing and involving them, where appropriate
- Ensure that documentation is completed in a timely manner

13 Review and Evaluation

1. This policy shall be reviewed by the EO annually, and re-ratified by the Board bi-annually
2. Consumer Satisfaction Survey results will indicate complainant satisfaction and Playgroup SA adherence to the policy