

## Early Learning

# Compliments, Complaints and Grievance Policy

### 1. Policy Statement/Purpose

Uniting is committed to:

- Maintaining an accessible, fair, and responsive feedback system
- Children’s safety, health and wellbeing is our key priority.
- In line with regulatory requirements, we notify the regulatory authority of any complaints alleging the occurrence of a serious incident or contravention of the Education and Care Services National Law
- Our families are integral to our service. We welcome their input into all aspects of our service’s operation, including any complaints they may have.
- We welcome complaints as an opportunity to enhance the quality of our education and care practices. We reflect on each complaint received, identifying any issues or areas of improvement for our service.
- Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focused.

### 2. Scope

This policy applies to the following groups working in Uniting Early Learning:

- Approved provider and persons with management or control
- Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge.
- ECT, Educators, FDC educators and all other staff
- Parents/guardians
- Contractors, volunteers, and students

### 3. Policy

- Compliments are expressions of praise, encouragement or gratitude about service, staff, management, and program. Compliments provide valuable feedback about the level of satisfaction with service delivery and are a valuable indicator of the effectiveness of a service.
- Compliments impart useful insights about the aspects of service that are most meaningful to children, families, and stakeholders, and provide an opportunity to recognise the efforts of staff, foster a culture of excellence and boost morale.
- Complaints or grievances may be received from anyone who comes in contact with the service including parents/guardians, volunteers, students, members of the local community and other agencies.
- In most cases, dealing with complaints and grievances will be the responsibility of the Approved Provider. All complaints and grievances, when lodged, need to be initially assessed to determine whether they are a general or a notifiable complaint.

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- When a complaint or grievance has been assessed as 'notifiable', the Approved Provider must notify Department of Education (DE) of the complaint or grievance. The Approved Provider will investigate the complaint or grievance and take any actions deemed necessary, in addition to responding to requests from and assisting with any investigation by DE.
- There may be occasions when the complainant reports the complaint or grievance directly to DE. If DE then notifies the Approved Provider about a complaint they have received, the Approved Provider will still have responsibility for investigating and dealing with the complaint or grievance as outlined in this policy, in addition to co-operating with any investigation by DE.
- DE will investigate all complaints and grievances it receives about a service, where it is alleged that the health, safety, or wellbeing of any child within the service may have been compromised, or that there may have been a contravention of legislation.

### 3.1 Definitions

A **complaint** is defined as an issue of a minor nature that can be resolved promptly or within 24 hours and does not require a detailed investigation. Complaints include an expression of concern, dissatisfaction, unmet expectation, or frustration by, parents or internal/external stakeholder, and any verbal or written complaint directly related to the service.

A **notifiable complaint** is a complaint that alleges:

- The safety, health or wellbeing of a child or children was or is being compromised while being educated and cared for by the approved education and care service; or
- The contravention of legislation has occurred.

Notifiable complaints must be investigated and reported to the Approved Provider. Some notifiable complaints will be reported to the regulatory authority by the Approved Provider in writing within 24 hours of the complaint.

A **grievance** is a formal statement (written or verbal) that cannot be addressed immediately and involves matters of a more serious nature, e.g. the service is in breach of a procedure/regulation or child protection issues.

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Term	Meaning
Complaint	Refers to an expression of concern, dissatisfaction, unmet expectation, or frustration by or on behalf of a consumer regarding any aspect of the quality or delivery of services, policies, procedures or conduct or any other element of the way we do our business, regardless of how it is made.
Suggestion	An expression of an idea for consideration for an alternative approach or improvement to a particular issue.
Consumer	Refers to current and former consumers of Uniting, their family, support persons and advocates.
Feedback	Information from consumers, consumer advocates family members, stakeholders and the community about any action, policy or person within Uniting and their experience of it which includes complaints, compliments, and suggestions.

## 3.2 Early Learning Resources

- RiskMan Feedback module - all Early Learning complaints must be entered into RiskMan.
- Early Learning Managers – Incidents and feedback user guide – [Click here](#)
- Early Learning User Guide for incidents and feedback – [Click here](#)
- Consumer Handbook - [Click here](#)
- Consumer Handbook (Easy Read version):  
[UD-080a-Easy Read Consumer Handbook Internal print.pdf](#)  
[UD-080b-Easy Read Consumer Handbook Web \[accessible\].pdf](#)

This policy is shared with the whole service community with opportunities to provide feedback/input.

## Review

This policy is to be reviewed by: 28/09/2026

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## 4. Responsibilities relating to the Compliments, Complaints and Grievances policy

Responsibilities	Approved provider and persons with management or control	Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge	ECT, Educators, FDC educators and all other staff	Parents/guardians	Agency staff, Contractors, volunteers, and students
R indicates legislation requirement, and should not be deleted					
Ensure this policy is available at the service at all times <i>R 171</i>	R	✓	✓		
Be familiar with and enact the legislative requirements, service policies and the procedures for dealing with complaints and grievances <i>R 170</i>	R	✓	✓		✓
Advise parents/guardians of the <i>Compliments and Complaints policy</i> and procedures upon enrolment <i>R 171</i>	R	✓	✓		
Acknowledge compliments and thank complemator for their interest and feedback	✓	✓	✓		
Ensure that compliments and complaints are monitored and used to continually improve the quality of the service <i>S 167</i>	R	✓	✓		
Ensure the name and telephone number of the person responsible at the service to whom complaints may be addressed are displayed prominently at the service <i>S 172 &amp; R 173</i>	R	✓	✓		
Ensure the contact details of the Regulatory Authority are displayed prominently at the service <i>R 173</i>	R	✓	✓		
Ensure educators, staff, volunteers, and students are well informed about their child protection responsibilities and reporting and privacy obligations <i>S 162 &amp; R 84</i>	R	✓	✓		✓
Be aware of and committed to the principles of communicating and sharing information with service employees, students, parents, contractors, and volunteers	✓	✓	✓		✓
Respond to all complaints and grievances in the most appropriate manner and at the earliest opportunity	✓	✓	✓		
Ensure educators, staff, volunteers, and students are well informed about the different ways children express concerns or distress and disclose harm, as well as processes for responding to disclosures from children <i>S16</i>	R	✓	✓		✓

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Treat all complainants fairly and equitably	✓	✓	✓		✓
Inform DE/ECU in writing within 24 hours of serious incident, or notifiable complaint via the ACECQA NQAITS portal, and for CCCF/R restricted services, inform Department of Education <i>S 174 &amp; R 176</i>	R	✓	✓		
Identify, prevent, and address potential concerns before they become complaints/grievances	✓	✓	✓		✓
Comply with the <i>Uniting Privacy policy</i> and maintain confidentiality at all times <i>R 181 &amp; 183</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓
Provide your families with a copy or a link to the <i>Consumer Handbook</i> (Welcome to Uniting Vic.Tas)	✓	✓	✓		
Provide training to staff on how to register a compliment or complaint in RiskMan	✓	✓			
Analyse complaints, concerns, and safety incidents to identify causes and systemic failures to inform continuous improvement <i>S 167</i>	R	✓	✓		
Ensure the complaints processes is child focused, understood broadly (including by children, their parents, staff, students, and volunteers), culturally safe and compliant with privacy laws, reporting obligations and employment law <i>S 16, R 168, 181 &amp; 182</i>	R	✓	✓		✓
Ensure that children have access to age-appropriate information, support and complaints processes in ways that are culturally safe, accessible, and easy to understand Uniting EL 'child worry/concern' poster <i>S 16 &amp; R 168</i>	R	✓	✓		
Ensure there are a various way for children to make complaints are made available based on their feedback about how they prefer to communicate <i>S 16 &amp; R 168</i>	R	✓	✓		
Ensure barriers for all children to complain are removed and reasonable adjustments are made to meet their needs <i>S 16 &amp; R 168</i>	R	✓	✓		
Ensure the complaint-handling system is easily understood by children, families, staff, and volunteers and are culturally safe <i>S 16</i>	R	✓	✓		
Seek input from children on the design, implementation, and ongoing improvement of the complaint-handling system		✓	✓		
Notify and inform the Approved Provider within 12 hours where practicable of any serious incident or notifiable complaint/grievance <i>S 174</i>	R	✓	✓		✓

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Upload the notifiable complaint in RiskMan feedback portal within 12 hours of receipt		✓	✓		
Discuss minor complaints directly with the party involved as a first step towards resolution. The parties are encouraged to discuss the matter professionally and openly work together to achieve a desired outcome	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Raise any unresolved issues or serious concerns directly with the Approved Provider, via the Responsible Person or by emailing <a href="mailto:approvedprovider@vt.uniting.org">approvedprovider@vt.uniting.org</a>				✓	✓
Maintain professionalism and integrity at all times	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Inform complainants of the <i>Complaints and Grievances policy R 171</i>	<b>R</b>	✓	✓		
Provide information as requested by the Approved Provider e.g. written reports relating to the grievance		✓	✓		
Work co-operatively with the Approved Provider and DE in any investigations related to grievances about the service, programs, or staff		✓	✓		✓
<b>Note:</b> Volunteers, contractors, and students, while at the service, are responsible for following this policy and its procedures					✓

## 5. Legislation/Regulations

[Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 \(Vic\)](#)

*Children’s Services Amendment Act 2019*

*Children’s Services Regulations 2020*

Department of Education and Training – Regional Office details are available under ‘Contact Us’ on the website: [www.education.vic.gov.au](http://www.education.vic.gov.au)

*Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010: Section 174(2)(b)*

*Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: Regulations 168(2)(o), 170-172, 173(2)(b), 181*

[Kindergarten Funding Guide](#) Department of Education and Training 2023 (Vic)

National Quality Standard, Quality Area 7: Leadership and Service Management

[National Quality Standard. Information Sheet Quality Area 7 Using Complaints to Support Continuous Improvement. Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority, Feb 2018](#)

Tasmanian Licensing Standards for Centre Based Child Care Class 5 2014. Standard 16 c) (iv)

Department of Education, Skills, and Employment - <https://www.dese.gov.au/early-childhood>

[Tasmania education department](#)

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## 6. Related Documents

### Uniting

[Diversity Statement](#)

[Child Safety Commitment Statement](#)

Child Safety Code of Conduct

Child Safety Policy

Code of Conduct

Feedback, (Compliments, Suggestions and Complaints) Procedure

Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Policy

Incident Reporting & Management Procedure

Privacy Policy

Reportable Conduct Scheme Procedure

Reporting Allegations of Child Abuse Procedure

Responding to Allegations of Harm or Abuse involving Consumers Procedure

[RiskMan \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

### Early Learning

Staffing Policy

Child Safe Environment and Wellbeing Policy

Incident Injury Trauma and Illness Policy

Interactions with Children policy

Other Forms and documents available at [Early Learning \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

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## Appendix 1 - Complaint and grievance procedure

### 1. Dealing with a complaint

**When a complaint is received, the person to whom the complaint is addressed will:**

- Inform the complainant of the *Complaints and Grievances Policy*
- Discuss the complaint directly with the complainant, ensuring a clear and accurate understanding of the issue/s of concern.
- Explain what the procedure will be to respond to, monitor, follow up on and investigate complaints, and associated steps to follow with timeframes.
- Action the complaint, engaging a translator, if necessary, to facilitate understanding and communication
- Ensure the Responsible person is aware of the complaint.
- Upload the complaint into RiskMan feedback portal [RiskMan \(sharepoint.com\)](https://sharepoint.com) together with the outcome
- Comply with the [Privacy Policy](#) regarding all meetings/discussions in relation to a complaint
- Communicate with the complainant at all stages of the process.
- Inform the Approved Provider if the complaint escalates and becomes a grievance a notifiable complaint or is unable to be resolved appropriately in a timely manner.

### 2. Dealing with a grievance/notifiable complaint

**When a grievance is lodged with the service:**

- The staff member receiving the complaint or grievance will record all relevant details regarding the grievance or complaint in RiskMan Feedback portal: [RiskMan](#)
- The staff member is to escalate complaint/grievance to line manager and ensure Senior Manager is notified.
- An investigator may to be appointed.
- An investigation may be conducted.
- If the grievance/complaint is notifiable, the Approved Provider will be responsible for notifying the Regulatory Authority. This must be in writing within 24 hours of receiving the grievance/complaint.
- If the complaint/grievance alleges that a Uniting staff member, educator or volunteer has harmed or abused a child, the Uniting Incident & Investigation team must be notified. The team will determine if the conduct is reportable under the Reportable Conduct Scheme. Refer [Reportable Conduct Scheme Procedure](#)

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### 3. Investigating the grievance and gathering relevant information

**When investigating the grievance and gathering relevant information, the Investigator will:**

- Meet with individual witnesses and give right of reply to the person against whom the allegations are made in relation to any accusation or information relating to an alleged incident.
- Offer the complainant the opportunity of meeting to discuss the complaint and provide additional information where relevant.
- Provide access to a translator or support person if required.
- Inform the complainant of the procedures for dealing with the grievance.
- If the complainant takes up the opportunity to attend a meeting.
  - Document the time, date, and detail of meetings/discussions, and follow this up with a letter to the complainant outlining the information discussed.
- Be available to meet with Regulatory Authority staff, if required, and provide additional information as requested
- Review relevant information and documents.
- Obtain any other relevant information or documentation that will assist in resolving the grievance.

### 4. Investigator responsibilities and procedures

**In the event of a grievance being lodged, the investigator will:**

- Deal with the grievance in a timely manner.
- Disclose any conflict of interest.
- Consider the nature and the details of the grievance.
- Identify which Uniting and/or Early Learning policies (if any) the grievance involves.
- If the grievance is a notifiable complaint inform the complainant of the requirements to notify the Regulatory Authority of the grievance and explain the role that they may take in investigating the complaint
- Where appropriate, inform and request advice from the relevant Uniting People & Culture representative.
- Maintain appropriate records of the information and data collected, including minutes of meetings, incident reports and copies of relevant documentation relating to the grievance.
- Respect the confidential nature of information relating to the grievance. The Approved Provider and the investigator must handle any grievance in a discreet and professional manner.
- Store all written information relating to grievances securely and in compliance with the Uniting [Privacy Policy](#).

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## 5. Conducting Investigations Involving Children and Young People

- Complaints affecting children are properly investigated and their rights are safeguarded throughout the investigation process.
- A specific plan is developed for involving a child in the investigation and adjusted as necessary throughout the investigation. Plan makes clear how child safety and wellbeing will be prioritised.
- Where possible, one person should be identified to be responsible for liaising with the child or young person throughout the entire process. This person may or may not be the investigator, but it should be someone appropriate and trusted by the child.
- Regardless of whether or not an external investigator is appointed, the service will be involved in key aspects of the investigation process, such as making final determinations, risk management, communicating with stakeholders and supporting the child or young person.
- Always consider obtaining a version of events from the affected child. Also consider whether there is the potential for an interview to have any adverse impact. The child's parents, carer or guardian should be consulted unless there are good reasons not to do so.
- Conduct a pre-interview assessment to gather information about the child's support needs.
- Prepare a plan for interviewing the child and identify their support needs, including any support with communication.
- Build and maintain rapport with children during the interview; encourage them to provide an explanation of what happened in their words.

## 6. Following the investigation

### Once the investigation of the grievance is complete:

- Attempts will be made to resolve the grievance by mutual agreement of the parties involved.
- The investigator will meet to discuss information gathered and determine further action, including generating recommendations to be presented to the Approved Provider
- Any recommendations or actions are in accordance with relevant legislation and funding requirements including, but not limited to:
  - *Child Care Act 2001 (Tas)*
  - *Children's Services Amendment Act 2019 (Vic)*
  - *Children's Services Regulations 2020 (Vic)*
  - *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*
  - *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*
  - *Kindergarten Funding Guide (Vic)*

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- State and Federal funding agreements
- *Tasmanian Licensing Standards for Centre Based Child Care Class 5 (October 2014)*
- Reported outcomes, that include relevant information gained in the investigation and any consultations, are presented to the Approved Provider
- Follow up to ensure the parties involved are satisfied with the outcome and monitor progress on any actions taken by the Approved Provider.

## 7. The Approved Provider or delegate:

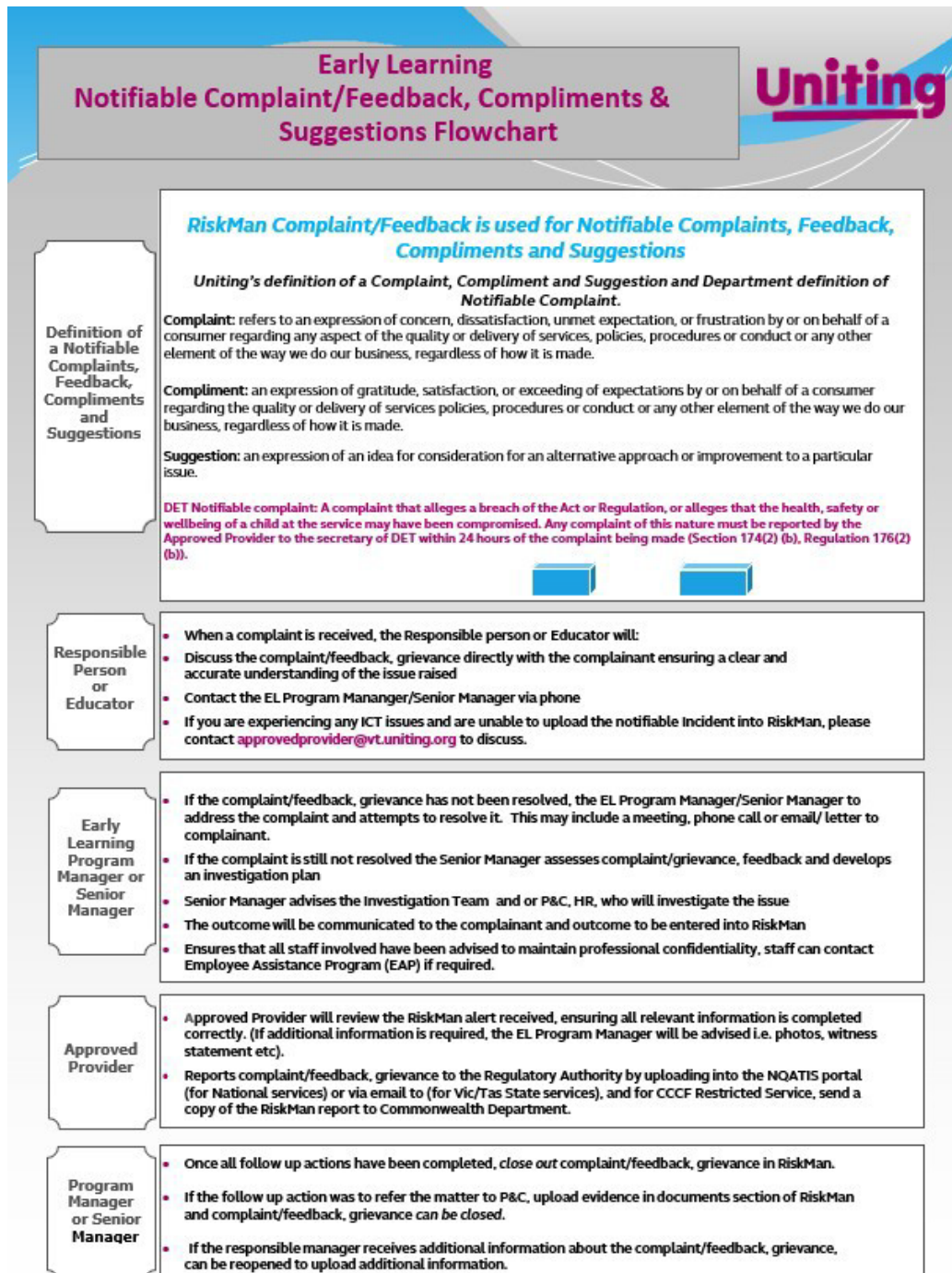
- Is informed of any involvement, and the outcomes of any investigation by the Regulatory Authority
- Reviews the report and any investigator recommendations and will be responsible for making decisions on the action to be taken (if any), including relevant review mechanisms.
- Advises the complainant and other relevant parties of any decisions made by the Approved Provider in relation to the grievance.
- Follows up to ensure the parties involved are satisfied with the outcome and monitor progress on any actions taken by the Approved Provider
- Conducts a review of allegation and response provided about the notification.

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## Notifiable complaint / Feedback Compliments & Suggestions flowchart

### A notifiable complaint is a complaint that alleges:

- The safety, health or wellbeing of a child or children was or is being compromised while being educated and cared for by the approved education and care service; or
- That the National/State Laws/Regulations have been contravened.



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