Early Learning
Compliments, Complaints and Grievance Policy

1. Policy Statement/Purpose

All decisions made by educators and Uniting Victoria & Tasmania are guided by a commitment to children's safety, rights, and best interests.

Uniting is committed to:

- Maintaining an accessible, fair, and responsive feedback system
- Ensuring processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focused
- Supporting children to understand they have the right to be safe
- Supporting children to recognise safe and unsafe situations or environments
- Supporting children to develop appropriate skills and vocabulary to keep them safe
- Supporting children to seek support from trusted adults for themselves or others
- Notifying the regulatory authority of any complaints alleging the occurrence of a serious incident or contravention of the Education and Care Services National Law
- Welcoming 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.

2. Scope

This policy applies to the following persons:

- 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 children and young people, parents/guardians, volunteers, students, members of the local community and other agencies.

The Uniting Early Learning 'I have a worry poster' can be displayed prominently for children to see. Educators can use the poster to discuss what a complaint or worry means for a child at our service and how they can seek help about anything that makes

them feel unsafe. When a child seeks support from a trusted educator, it is important that the child is reassured and listened to. Educators are to provide guidance and appropriate strategies and give the child information about the outcome of the complaint or worry they raised.
Some examples include:

- Getting hurt in any form
- Feeling unhappy, scared, worried or sick
- Conflict with other children or adults.

Everyday experiences provide learning opportunities for children to develop awareness of feelings and body language. If a child expresses feelings such as fear, sadness or worry, educators can help them explore the cause of the feelings and ways of reacting.

Through intentional teaching, educators support children to understand their rights over their own bodies, while learning to respect the boundaries of other children. They are guided to recognise what safe and appropriate touch looks like, and what is not acceptable.
Children are supported to learn about consent and to practise ways of expressing "no" or "stop" when something doesn't feel safe.
Children learn about what is fair and unfair, including all children and respecting differences.
Children learn that they never have to keep a secret that makes them feel unsafe and that it is okay to tell a trusted adult.

All complaints and grievances recorded in RiskMan, will be assessed to determine whether they are a general or a notifiable grievance/complaint. When a grievance/complaint has been assessed as 'notifiable', the Approved Provider/delegate must notify the Regulatory Authority of the grievance/complaint. The Approved Provider/delegate will investigate the grievance and take any actions deemed necessary, in addition to responding to requests from and assisting with any investigation by the Regulatory Authority.

There may be occasions when the complainant reports the grievance/complaint directly to the Regulatory Authority. If the Regulatory Authority, then notifies the Approved Provider about a grievance/complaint they have received, the Approved Provider/delegate has the responsibility for investigating and dealing with the grievance/complaint, in addition to co-operating with any investigation by the Regulatory Authority.

The Regulatory Authority will investigate all grievances/complaints 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.

4. Definitions

Term	Meaning
Complaint	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.
Grievance	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.
Compliment	An expression of gratitude, satisfaction, or exceeding of expectations by or on behalf of a consumer regarding 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, as well as supported employees engaged in social enterprises.
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.

5. Early Learning Resources

- RiskMan Feedback module - all Early Learning complaints must be entered into RiskMan.
- Early Learning Managers – Incidents and feedback user guide
- Early Learning User Guide for incidents and feedback
- Consumer Handbook
- Consumer Handbook (Easy Read version)

Review

This policy is to be reviewed by: June 2029

6. 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 *R171*	**R**	✓	✓		
Be familiar with and enact the legislative requirements, service policies and the procedures for dealing with complaints and grievances *R170*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Advise parents/guardians of the *Compliments and Complaints policy* and procedures upon enrolment *R171*	**R**	✓	✓		
Acknowledge compliments and thank complementor for their interest and feedback	✓	✓	✓		
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 *S172 & R173*	**R**	✓	✓		
Ensure the contact details of the Regulatory Authority are displayed prominently at the service *R173*	**R**	✓	✓		
Ensure educators, staff, volunteers, and students are well informed about their child protection responsibilities and reporting and privacy obligations *S162 & R84*	**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 *S16*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Ensure that the management of a complaint that alleges a child is exhibiting harmful sexual behaviours is child focused, culturally safe and compliant with privacy laws, reporting obligations and employment law	✓	✓	✓		

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					
Treat all complainants fairly and equitably	✓	✓	✓		✓
Notify the Regulatory Authority in writing within 24 hours of a notifiable complaint via the ACECQA NQAITS portal, and for CCCF/R restricted services, inform The Victorian Early Childhood Regulatory Authority *S174 & R176*	**R**	✓	✓		
Notify the regulatory authority in writing (via NQAITS) within 24 hours of any complaints about the physical or sexual abuse of a child while being educated or cared for by a service *S174 & R176*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Family Day Care Educators are required to notify the approved provider in writing of any complaints about the physical or sexual abuse of a child while being educated or cared for by the educator *S174*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
Identify, prevent, and address potential concerns before they become complaints/grievances	✓	✓	✓		✓
Comply with the *Uniting Privacy policy* and maintain confidentiality at all times *R181 &183*	✓	✓	✓		✓
Provide your families with a copy or a link to the *Consumer Handbook* (Welcome to Uniting Vic.Tas)	✓	✓	✓		
Provide and undertake training on how to register a compliment or complaint in RiskMan	✓	✓	✓		
Monitor and analyse complaints, concerns, and safety incidents to identify causes and systemic failures to inform continuous improvement *S167*	**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*S16, R168, R181 & R182*	**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 *S16 & R168*	**R**	✓	✓		
Ensure there are various ways for children to make complaints are made available based on their feedback about how they prefer to communicate *S16 & R168*	**R**	✓	✓		

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 barriers for all children to complain are removed and reasonable adjustments are made to meet their needs *S16 & R168*	**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 notifiable complaint/grievance *S174*	**R**	✓	✓		✓
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	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Communicate (preferably in writing) any concerns relating to the management or operation of the service as soon as is practicable				✓	✓
Raise any unresolved issues or serious concerns directly with the Approved Provider, via the Responsible Person or by emailing approvedprovider@vt.uniting.org				✓	✓
Maintain professionalism and integrity at all times	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Inform complainants of the *Complaints and Grievances policy R171*	**R**	✓	✓		
Provide information as requested by the Approved Provider e.g. written reports relating to the grievance		✓	✓		
Work co-operatively with the Approved Provider and the Regulatory Authority in any investigations related to grievances about the service, programs, or staff		✓	✓	✓	✓
Note: Volunteers, contractors, and students, while at the service, are responsible for following this policy and its procedures					

7. Legislation/Regulations

Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)

Children's Services Amendment Act 2019

Children's Services Regulations 2020

The Victorian Early Childhood Regulatory Authority and Training – Regional Office

details are available under 'Contact Us' on the website

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011

Kindergarten Funding Guide

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

Tasmanian Licensing Standards for Centre Based Child Care Class 5 2014

8. 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

Complaint and grievance procedure

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 Program Manager is aware of the complaint
- Upload the complaint into RiskMan feedback portal together with the outcome
- Comply with the UP-007-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 to a notifiable complaint or is unable to be resolved appropriately in a timely manner
- If the 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 complaint
- If the complaint alleges that a Uniting staff member, educator or volunteer has harmed or abused a child, the Uniting Safeguarding team must be notified. The team will determine if the conduct is reportable under the Reportable Conduct Scheme. Refer UPD-091-Reportable Conduct Scheme Procedure.pdf

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

Notifiable Complaint/Feedback, Compliments & Suggestions Flowchart

Definition of a Notifiable Complaints, Feedback, Compliments and Suggestions

RiskMan Complaint/Feedback is used for Notifiable Complaints, Feedback, Compliments and Suggestions

Uniting's definition of a Complaint, Compliment and Suggestion and Department definition of Notifiable Complaint.

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.

Compliment: an expression of gratitude, satisfaction, or exceeding of expectations by or on behalf of a consumer regarding 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.

DET Notifiable complaint: A complaint that alleges a breach of the Act or Regulation, or alleges that the health, safety or wellbeing of a child at the service may have been compromised. Any complaint of this nature must be reported by the Approved Provider to the secretary of DET within 24 hours of the complaint being made (Section 174(2) (b), Regulation 176(2) (b)).

Responsible Person or Educator

- When a complaint is received, the Responsible person or Educator will:
- Discuss the complaint/feedback, grievance directly with the complainant ensuring a clear and accurate understanding of the issue raised
- Contact the EL Program Manager/Senior Manager via phone
- If you are experiencing any ICT issues and are unable to upload the notifiable Incident into RiskMan, please contact **approvedprovider@vt.uniting.org** to discuss.

Program Manager or Senior Manager

- If the complaint/feedback, grievance has not been resolved, the EL Program Manager/Senior Manager to address the complaint and attempts to resolve it. This may include a meeting, phone call or email/ letter to complainant.
- If the complaint is still not resolved the Senior Manager assesses complaint/grievance, feedback and develops an investigation plan
- Senior Manager advises the Investigation Team and or P&C, HR, who will investigate the issue
- The outcome will be communicated to the complainant and outcome to be entered into RiskMan
- Ensure that all staff involved have been advised to maintain professional confidentiality, staff can contact Employee Assistance Program (EAP) if required.

Approved Provider

- Approved Provider will review the RiskMan alert received, ensuring all relevant information is completed correctly. (If additional information is required, the EL Program Manager will be advised i.e. photos, witness statement etc).
- Reports complaint/feedback, grievance to the Regulatory Authority by uploading into the NQATIS portal (for National services) or via email to (for Vic/Tas State services), and for CCCF Restricted Service, send a copy of the RiskMan report to Commonwealth Department.

Program Manager or Senior Manager

- Once all follow up actions have been completed, *close out* complaint/feedback, grievance in RiskMan.
- If the follow up action was to refer the matter to P&C, upload evidence in documents section of RiskMan and complaint/feedback, grievance *can be closed*.
- If the manager responsible receives additional information about the complaint/feedback, grievance, can be reopened to upload additional information.