Policy

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Version	6.1
Responsible S-MT	Quality Management

one tree community services

Feedback and Complaints NQS Policy

Purpose

This policy documents the Organisation's approach in responding to feedback and complaints.

Policy statement

General

1. The *Organisation* will ensure access to policies. The definitions at the end of this policy must be read to support understanding. Where definitions are required, the word/s will be in *italics*.

2. *Feedback* and *complaints* are an asset to the *Organisation*, providing an opportunity to improve our products and services and to ensure the Organisation remains compliant with the legal, regulatory and principles associated with delivering services. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) reviews all *feedback* and *complaints* and may intervene at any time.

3. The *Organisation*;
    a. considers all *feedback* (positive and negative) as part of its quality management system and addresses it through a consistent, fair, and transparent process, ensuring every concern is handled with equal care, impartiality, and thorough review;
    b. investigates *complaints* in a fair, respectful and timely manner, in accordance with relevant laws and regulations;
    c. does not differentiate minor or major incidents but manages all *feedback* and *complaints* through the same process determining the appropriate resolution and communication to *stakeholders*;
    d. maintains confidentiality wherever possible and treats all parties involved in a *complaint* with respect; and
    e. does not disadvantage or penalise a *complainant* for making a *complaint*.

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4. The CEO commits to reviewing all feedback and complaints received via the customerservice@onetree.org.au email. Any *serious incidents* or *complaints* must be immediately brought to the attention of the CEO and Executive Directors (EDs).

Unavailability of a responsible position

5. When a position responsible for an action in this policy is not available, the responsibility will automatically go to their line manager.

Managing feedback

6. *Feedback* can be provided at any time; verbally, in writing, using the postcards and 'mailboxes' provided at services, on the One Tree and One Tree Defence Childcare Unit (DCU) websites or by email to customerservice@onetree.org.au. The QM-FOR-012 Feedback and Complaints Flyer will be displayed at services to inform staff and families of how to provide feedback and complaints. Refer to QM-PRO-007 Feedback and Complaints Procedure for more detail on managing feedback. The *Organisation* classifies *feedback* as information coming from *stakeholders* about the satisfaction or dissatisfaction they feel with a product or a service.

7. *Stakeholders* providing *feedback* are to be listened to respectfully.

8. The Organisation is committed to working in accordance with the *National Principles for Child Safe Organisations* when children disclose abuse, or feedback alleges, a child is exhibiting harmful sexual behaviours. The SER-POL-032 Mandatory Reporting NQS Policy and SER-POL-015 Children and Vulnerable People Safety and Wellbeing NQS Policy applies (including the relevant procedures).

9. Wherever possible, before submitting *negative feedback* to customer service the person with the concern is to attempt to address the matter with the staff member, service or *self- managed team*. If the matter is not resolved, or reoccurs, email feedback to customerservice@onetree.org.au. An optional form QM-FOR-011 Operational Issues Feedback Form is provided for convenience.

10. When there are three or more occasions of similar *negative feedback* in a service or *self- managed team* the CEO may request a *formal investigation,* which could lead to performance management. The matter will be treated as a complaint. The CEO can choose to become personally involved.

11. At the CEO's sole discretion, a formal investigation may take place when:
    a. repeat negative feedback is received about a self-managed team, service or staff member on three or more occasions; or

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b. the negative feedback is deemed concerning.

Complaints

12. Although 'common sense' applies, a *complaint* would be deemed to put the *Organisation* or its *stakeholders* at risk. A *complaint* generally must be in writing and deemed serious enough to warrant immediate action. Refer to the section of this policy 'Serious matters and matters reportable by law'.

13. When a general manager becomes aware of a serious matter that may compromise the safety and wellbeing of children, our clients or staff, or the reputation of the organisation they must immediately escalate the matter to the CEO through customerservice@onetree.org.au.

14. If a *complaint* is made of a less serious nature, whenever appropriate, *complainants* will be encouraged to resolve the matter (directly) with the *parties* involved before escalating to a *formal investigation*. In this instance *complainants* will also be given the option to provide *feedback* rather than lodge a formal *complaint*.

15. If a matter relevant to this policy is not able to be resolved to the satisfaction of the *complainant*, the *complainant* will be provided information on lodging a formal *complaint* to be investigated in line with this policy. Complainants will need to complete QM-REP-001 Complaint Details and Investigation Report. If for any reason the complainant cannot complete the form the Executive Assistant (EA) or person hearing the complaint will complete the form on their behalf. If necessary, the complainant will be interviewed, the interview recorded and transcribed.

16. Refer to QM-PRO-107 Feedback and Complaints Procedure for more information on managing complaints.

17. *Complainants* who believe their *complaint* has not been responded to fairly can request it is reviewed by the CEO and then the Board of Directors (Board). The Board will review the *complaint* and associated investigation and make the final decision.

Monitoring feedback and complaints

18. *Feedback* and *complaints* (that were unable to be resolved in the first instance as per this policy) will be emailed (or provided) to customerservice@onetree.org.au for recording into the Log along with all associated documentation to be filed in the central filing system.

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19. The EA will prepare a summary of the feedback and complaints on the Log and status to discuss with the CEO.

20. The CEO reviews the Log at least fortnightly (preferably weekly) to assess whether any further action is required and to determine whether complaints can be closed. Complaints are then recorded as either major or minor according to the definition in the Log.

The role of the Quality Management Team and the Board of Directors

21. The role of the Quality Management Team (QMT) and the Board of Directors (Board) is to monitor trends associated with feedback or complaints and to implement actions as deemed appropriate.

22. The QMT reviews customer surveys (including staff exit surveys) and a summary of the Log at least annually to identify trends to inform the risk management register when required.

23. The Board will be provided with a report identifying trends related to feedback and complaints in scheduled Board reports.

Communication

24. Information on providing feedback or making a complaint will be made available on the *Organisation's* websites, social media platforms and in printed form via newsletters, posters and postcards and will be displayed at all physical service locations.

25. Other mechanisms for providing feedback will include (at a minimum) an annual customer and staff survey.

26. Regional Managers (RMs) are required to collect postcards and any other *feedback* from services and forward to customerservice@onetree.org.au at least bi-annually.

Parent, staff (or customer) satisfaction surveys

27. *Feedback* from parent, staff (or customer) satisfaction surveys are to be collated and a summary emailed to customerservice@onetree.org.au. The summary is to be presented to the QMT and filed by the EA in the central filing system.

28. *Feedback* received by parents to support the curriculum is not deemed a part of this policy.

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Staff grievance

29. A *grievance* is any type of problem, concern or complaint related to an employee's work including interactions with other employees. Refer to HR-POL-016 Staff Dispute and Grievance NQS Policy.

30. Unresolved staff grievances are to be emailed to hr@onetree.org.au

Serious matters and matters reportable by law

31. Anyone becoming aware of a serious matter must immediately telephone the EA on 0455 551 118. Serious matters include:
    a. the safety, health or wellbeing of a child has been compromised;
    b. a law (regulation) has been breached;
    c. the Organisation's reputation is likely to be impacted; or
    d. unacceptable conduct or serious misconduct has occurred (see HR-POL-002 Performance Management Policy).

32. The EA will immediately report *serious matters* to the CEO on the day it is received. The CEO will direct the response. The CEO may assign an ED or respond. If the CEO is not available, the matter is to be referred directly to an ED.

33. *Serious matt*ers that are reportable by law (regulations) must be reported by the *Organisation* to the relevant state or territory regulatory authority within 24 hours by a general manager or above. Any person may report a concern or allegation of reportable misconduct to customerservice@onetree.org.au and/or under the relevant *Reportable Conduct Scheme* in the local State or Territory. An allegation of reportable misconduct against the CEO should be reported to BoardChairs@onetree.org.au.

34. Written responses to *complainants* or to funding bodies must be reviewed by the CEO or an ED before being sent. This includes those involving unacceptable conduct or serious misconduct.

One Tree Defence Childcare Unit (OTDCU)

35. *Feedback* and *complaints* relating to OTDCU will be managed in accordance with this policy and any additional requirements specified in the Defence Childcare Program Services (DCP) contract and statement of work section 9.5 Annex 3. This includes *feedback* and *complaints* that the Commonwealth Representative receives directly.

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36. The Commonwealth Representative will be notified of any *OTDCU notifiable matter* and or serious complaints within 24 hours by a general manager or above assigned the task by the ED. All other *feedback* will be presented at scheduled meetings in accordance with the DCP contract.

Reporting requirements

In accordance with QM-FOR-014 Organisational Chart and Reporting Requirements.

Legislation compliance

Refer to QM-SS-001 Regulations and Legislation Register.

Related policies, procedures forms and checklists

HR-POL-002 Performance Management Policy

HR-POL-016 Staff Dispute and Grievance NQS Policy

QM-FOR-012 Feedback and Complaints Flyer

QM-FOR-030 Feedback and Complaints Form (Log)

QM-PRO-007 Feedback and Complaints Procedure

QM-REP-001 Complaint Details and Investigation Report

SER-POL-015 Children and Vulnerable People Safety and Wellbeing NQS Policy

SER-POL-032 Mandatory Reporting NQS Policy

Definitions

National Principles for Child Safe Organisations: Set out a nationally consistent approach to creating organisational cultures and practices that promote the safety and wellbeing of children in Australia. The National Principles are based on and closely linked to the Child Safe Standards. Although not yet mandatory, the principals have been recommended by the Royal Commission and endorsed by all Premiers and Chief Ministers.

Commonwealth Representative: refers to the authorised delegate that is responsible for the administering the DCP contract on behalf of the Commonwealth.

Complainant: anyone making a *complaint* or providing negative *feedback*. *Complaints*: Can be informal and formal.

Feedback: Information coming directly from Stakeholders about the satisfaction or dissatisfaction they feel with a product or a service. The person providing the feedback

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is not wanting to make a *complaint* but wanting the Organisation to be aware of areas requiring improvement or acknowledging good practice.
Complaint: Must be in writing and deemed serious enough to warrant immediate action. Although 'common sense' applies, a *complaint* would be deemed to put the Organisation or its Stakeholders at risk (i.e. non-compliance to policy, regulations or legislation or a matter that is significantly impacting on the service or its stakeholders).

Minor, day to day matters: is *feedback* that can be responded to and resolved immediately by the person receiving the *feedback* to the immediate satisfaction of the Stakeholder. It does not reoccur.
Organisation: One Tree Community Services Inc.
OTDCU major matter: refers to any incident that has or is likely to place the service in breach of any regulation or law as defined by the Early Education and Care Regulations and National Law. OTDCU minor matter (or serious matter): refers to any incident that is not classified as above. OTDCU notifiable matter (or serious matter): refers to the death or serious injury or illness of a person, or an incident that exposes a person to a risk or serious injury or illness.

QIP: Quality Improvement Plan

Stakeholders: Any person or group of people having an involvement with the Organisation to include customers, parents, carers, staff, volunteers, business partners, duty holders, funding or sponsoring bodies, government or the general community.

Reportable Conduct Scheme: regulatory framework requiring organisations that work with children to identify, investigate, and report allegations of child abuse or misconduct by staff or other personnel to an independent oversight body.

This scheme is operated independently in each State and Jurisdiction including ACT, NSW, VIC and WA. A person may report, in:

ACT: to the ACT Ombudsman by email to ACT@ombudsman.gov.au;
NSW: to the Office of the Children's Guardian by using the online notification form available at https://ocg.nsw.gov.au/organisations/reportable-conduct-scheme;

VIC: to the Social Services Regulator on 1300 310 778 or Contact@ssr.vic.gov.au
WA: to the WA Ombudsman by phoning 08 9220 7471 or email ReportableConduct@ombudsman.wa.gov.au.

Self-Managed Teams: represent business areas within the Organisation. These include finance, fees and enrolments, corporate services (IT and admin), marketing and communications, human resources, services and quality management.

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Version History

Version (ISOC only)	Submitted by (SMT)	Change Date (SMT)	Approver (QMT)	Approval Date (QMT)	Description (SMT/QMT/ISOC)
1.0	Karri Hillier				First release version
2.0	Karri Hillier	24/06/2019	QMT/ Karri Hillier	26/06/2019	New template
3.0	Lyn Levy/ Karri Hillier	21/04/2020	Pathfinders/ Karri Hillier	23/04/2020	Removed organisational health check. Complaints will be formally investigated (although all are encouraged to address it at their level); negative feedback will be addressed by line manager unless directed by CEO. Surveys will be gathered and reported and EDs will report on outcomes of investigations. Updates to related documents.
4.0	Claire McManus	4/08/2023	Karri Hillier	8/8/2023	Implementation removed and QM-PRO-007 created
5.0	Irina Cattalini	24/04/2024	Karri Hillier	24/04/2024	Updated to include reportable conduct scheme requirements.
6.0	Claire McManus	30/04/25	Karri Hillier	12/05/2025	Inclusion of clause 8 based on regulatory authority recommendation for referencing child safe practices.
6.1	QMT	05/02/26	Karri Hillier	26/02/26	Expanded clauses clarifying all feedback is dealt with equally and through the same process and included reference to the log recording major or minor classifications. QM-FOR-011 made obsolete. Updated Vic CCYP contact to Social Services Regulator. Included clause on GM responsibility to notify serious matters.

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