

POLICY STATEMENT

Story House Early Learning (Story House) is committed to managing complaints in a manner that supports children, families, educators, team members and other stakeholders to have confidence that any concerns or issues they raise will be handled promptly and professionally.

All complaints are handled in accordance with principles of procedural fairness and natural justice. We are committed to ensuring that everyone who raises a concern is treated with dignity and respect, and that confidentiality is upheld at every stage of the process, protecting the privacy of all individuals involved.

This policy and its subordinate procedure have been established to satisfy the requirements of the Education and Care Services National Regulations, National Quality Framework and National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, supporting both open communication and continual improvement. The policy also provides a framework for managing internal complaints and grievances, as well as external, non-service-related complaints, including those relating to organisational conduct, communications, public behaviour, or matters that may impact the reputation or integrity of Story House. We recognise that feedback, including complaints, plays an important role in strengthening the safety responsiveness and quality of our services and the broader organisational culture and accountability of Story House.

This policy is intended to provide a clear, accessible and supportive pathway for raising everyday concerns and complaints. It is not intended to replace or duplicate Story House's Whistleblower Policy, which applies only to serious reportable misconduct as defined under that policy.

POLICY SCOPE

This policy applies to all Story House children, families, team members and Service Managers and stakeholders, and to all complaints and concerns raised in relation to Story House services, internal organisational matters, or external organisational conduct.

This policy covers both informal concerns and formal complaints. Informal concerns are encouraged to be raised early and resolved at the service level wherever appropriate. Formal complaints arise where a concern cannot be resolved informally, is serious in nature, or involves child safety, regulatory or legal obligations.

COMMITMENTS

To ensure consistent and effective implementation of our complaints Handling Policy and Procedure, Story House makes the following commitments across all service settings and organisational contexts:

- Ensuring our complaints process is accessible, inclusive, culturally appropriate, and easily understood by children, families, team members and stakeholders.
- Managing complaints promptly, sensitively, and in line with privacy and legal requirements.
- Promoting a culture where feedback is welcomed and concerns can be raised safely by anyone without fear of negative consequences.
- Taking all complaints seriously, including those raised by children which can be verbally, non-verbally, or through their behaviour.
- Treating all complaints fairly, respectfully, and without discrimination, using procedural fairness and natural justice throughout.
- Providing support or advise on where support can be accessed as well as clear communication to those involved in a complaint.

- Ensure all complaints are managed in line with our legal obligations, including the timely escalation of serious concerns to external authorities.
- Ensure no person is disadvantaged, victimised or subjected to retaliation for raising a concern or complaint in good faith.
- Using complaints as valuable opportunities to reflect, identify risks, and improve service quality and safety across Story House.

POLICY APPLICATION

Story House applies this policy through the implementation of the Complaints Handling Procedure, ensuring all team members understand their responsibilities in promoting a safe, respectful, and responsive complaints handling process. This policy and the supporting procedure set the framework for how complaints are identified, responded to, documented, and used to drive continual improvement across our services and broader organisational activities.

CHILD SAFE STANDARDS

Story House applies the Child Safe Standards to all aspects of complaint management. Complaints processes are embedded within a broader culture of safety, inclusion, and respect for all children and stakeholders. Services are expected to actively listen to children, uphold their rights, respond to concerns in a child-centred way, and ensure that risks to children's safety and wellbeing are identified, addressed, and prevented.

LEGISLATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

This policy is underpinned by the Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 and the associated Education and Care Services National Regulations.

Story House also aligns with the National Quality Framework (NQF) and upholds the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. In addition, the policy reflects State-based child protection legislation and requirements under reportable conduct schemes.

These obligations apply to complaints arising from service delivery, internal organisational matters, and external conduct associated with Story House.

All serious complaints or incidents that indicate a breach of the National Law or present a risk to child safety must be reported to the Regulatory Authority within 24 hours by the Approved Provider

ACCESSIBILITY AND AWARENESS

Story House ensures the complaints process is clearly visible, inclusive, and accessible for all children, families, team members and stakeholders. Contact details of the person responsible for managing complaints are displayed in every service and provided at enrolment. Complaints can also be made directly to People & Culture via People@shel.edu.au.

Concerns or complaints may be raised anonymously. While anonymity may limit the ability to provide feedback or outcomes, all anonymous complaints will be taken seriously and assessed in accordance with this policy and procedure.

Families and children are introduced to the process during orientation and enrolment, and may access the complaints policy in alternative formats or with language or cultural support as required. Educators support children to express their concerns in age-appropriate ways, ensuring every voice is respected and heard.

INDUCTION AND ONGOING TRAINING

All Story House team members complete induction that includes our complaints management procedure, outlining roles and responsibilities and explains the principles of procedural fairness, confidentiality, respect, and natural justice.

This training ensures awareness of how to receive, document, assess and respond to complaints. Regular refresher training is provided to maintain knowledge of obligations, regulatory requirements, and good-practice responses including recognising when a matter may need escalation to external authorities. This includes training relevant to managing internal complaints and grievances, as well as external, non-service-related complaints where appropriate.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality is maintained throughout the complaints process, protecting the privacy of all parties involved. Where complaints involve allegations of serious misconduct, risk of harm, or reportable incidents, escalation to relevant external authorities is required in line with regulatory and legal obligations.

Confidentiality is to be maintained throughout the handling of any complaint. Under no circumstance is a child to be subjected to corporal punishment or unreasonable discipline in response to any matter.

Information will be shared only on a need-to-know basis, and consistent with the principles of procedural fairness for all parties involved.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The roles and responsibilities associated with complaints handling at Story House can be found in our Complaints Handling Procedure, as it is our procedure that defines how we implement complaints handling in accordance with this policy.

KEY TERMS

The key terms associated with Complaints Handling at Story House can be found in our Complaints Handling Procedure.

MAPPING OUR LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

The legislative requirements associated with Complaints Handling at Story House can be found in our Complaints Handling Procedure.

COMPLIANCE

Adhering to our policies is mandatory at Story House safety, breaches of this policy or our supporting procedure can result in serious consequences for the Service and individuals.

RELATED POLICIES AND RESOURCES

- Child Protection Policy
- Privacy and Confidentiality Policy
- Reporting to the Regulatory Authority Policy
- Code of Conduct Policy
- Family Code of Conduct Agreement
- Record Keeping and Retention Policy
- Governance Policy
- Enrolment and Orientation Policy
- Parent Handbook
- Student, Agency, Volunteer and Visitor Policy
- Anti-bullying, Harassment and Discrimination Policy
- Mentally Healthy Workplace Policy
- Underperformance Misconduct & Corrective Behaviour Policy
- Workplace Health and Safety Policy
- Whistle Blower Policy

REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed **annually** by the Policy Approver to ensure alignment with legislative requirements, the Child Safe Standards, and service practice needs. Revisions will occur in accordance with regulatory obligations, required updates, or as directed by Story House leadership.

The table below outlines the version history of this document, capturing all updates as major version updates.

Version	Document Changes	Authorised By	Owning Division	Publish Date
1.0	Policy and procedure established as separate documents.	Board	Operations	March 2026