Parent Complaint Policy

The staff at Woodcroft Heights Children’s Centre are committed to ensuring the delivery of high quality education and care to all children in our community. Working in partnership with parents to resolve concerns and complaints that they may have about their child’s education and care is a key part of how we deliver on this commitment.

DEFINITIONS:
Parent: - other than parents, this term also includes a guardian and every person who has parental responsibility for the child including parental responsibility under the Commonwealth Family Law Act 1975 and any person with whom a child normally and regularly resides.
Concern: - an issue of interest (because of its importance and effect) which is raised informally in order to improve or change a situation.
Complaint: - an expression of grievance or resentment where the parent is seeking redress or justice.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

This policy is based on the following principles:
• The safety educational wellbeing of children is our first priority
• Children, parents, staff and volunteers have the right to be treated with respect and courtesy.
• Parents have the right to raise concerns and complaints about our Children's Centre and be supported to do so.
• Wherever possible, complaints should be resolved at the centre level.
• Complaints will be considered in a confidential, timely and impartial manner and in accordance with due process and principles of natural justice.
• The rights and responsibilities of all parties should be considered and balanced in finding a mutual acceptable outcome to complaints.
• Complaints are monitored and their management evaluated as to inform and drive centre improvement.

COMPLAINTS NOT COVERED BY THIS POLICY
This policy does not apply to matters where there are legislated requirements or existing policies and processes of appeal.
Examples include:
• Complaints that fit within the scope of the Education and Early Childhood Services Registration and Standards Board
• Staff disputes and grievances
• Mandatory reporting responsibilities
• Some health safety and welfare related issues.
Some complaints may never be resolved to a parent’s satisfaction. Vexatious or previously finalised complaints will not be pursued unless the parent is able to provide new information. This policy is not applicable where a parent has employed a third party (eg legal representation) in relation to their complaint. In these circumstances, the complaint must be referred to the department’s Legislation and Legal Services Unit for action. A parent is, however entitled to a support person such as a friend, colleague, or a person provided through an appropriate agency as long as the do not receive a fee for service.

IMPARTIALITY
Impartial investigations are vital to the credibility and success of the parent complaint process. A concern or complaint will be considered on its merits and without prejudice arising from and previous contact that a parent may have had with the children’s centre, regional office or central office.

CONFIDENTIALITY
Confidentiality will be adhered to throughout the complaint resolution process. This means that the complaint will only be discussed with those people directly involved in the resolution process.

COMPLAINT RESOLUTION
The first step in working through a complaint is to talk to one of our teaching staff or program coordinators (if an issue relates to one of our community programs (eg Playgroup), and then the Director if a parent is still are not happy. The centre will aim to resolve the concern or complaint within 15 working days. The second step if parents are not satisfied that their complaint has been resolved by the children’s centre – or the Director is the subject of your complaint – if for parents to contact our DECD Southern Adelaide regional office for help. The regional office will aim to resolve the complaint within 20 working days. The third step if a complaint has not been resolved at the centre or regional office level is for the Parent Complaint Unit within DECD to assess the complaint and decide what action is needed. The Head of Schools or Head of Child Development in DECD and the Chief Executive’s office will be advised by the Parent Complaint Unit of the outcome of the review and one of these senior leaders will make a final decision about the complaint and communicate the decision within 35 working days in most cases.

COMMUNICATION
Information about the centre processes for Raising a Concern or Complaint will be included in centre parent information handbooks. The DECD ‘Parent guide to raising a concern or complaint’ pamphlet will be included in all new parent information packs. The centre telephone number (08) 8381 8005 and DECD Southern Adelaide Regional Office telephone number (08) 8207 3700 will be published on the DECD pamphlet in all new parent packs.

MONITORING AND REVIEW
This policy and associated procedure will be reviewed after the first 12 months of operation and then every two years thereafter.

2nd April 2012