



HERITAGE COLLEGE

ELEMENT 1 BOARD COMMITMENT

Complaint Policy & Procedure

Revision Table

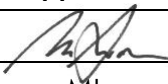
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1 INTRODUCTION

Heritage College desires to be open, approachable and listening to the students, parents and members of their community. A key component of a Child Safe environment is that children are engaged in their own education and that they are given a voice, which is listened to by the staff and Board. The College values feedback at all levels, as it desires to follow best practice in the education and development of the students. The Complaints Procedure outlines in practical terms how complaints and/or concerns are viewed by the College, and what steps will be taken to ensure they are heard, investigated and, where necessary, acted upon. A complaints review process will also be followed at both staff and Board level.

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to clearly outline to all parties involved what the College expectations and spiritual objectives are around complaints and their resolution and what responsibilities each party has in the process of both the making of and the resolving of complaints.

1.2 Responsibility

The College Board is responsible for the maintenance and updating of this document. The policy will be reviewed regularly.

1.3 References

This document was created with reference to the following documentation:

- The Holy Bible
- AISWA Complaints Procedures - 2016
- Child Protection Policy
- Guide to the Registration Standards and Other Requirements for Non-government Schools, 2018
- National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (Human Rights Commission)
- Commissioner for Children and Young People (WA) Guide
- Whistleblower Policy

2 POLICY OUTLINE

2.1 Our Aim

The resolution of complaints and/or concerns raised by members of the Heritage College community, including staff, parents and students, is vital to the well being and success of the College as a whole.

The College views all complaints seriously and will encourage all parties to apply Scriptural principles (see below) in resolving them. It is important to the College that responses to complaints and concerns are child focused, and that our implementation of the National Child Safe Organisation Principles is regularly reviewed and improved (where possible).

The College encourages all members of the College community to uphold and respect the values of the College, to work together for the common good, and to avoid conflict wherever it is possible to do so.

Nevertheless, at times conflicts and complaints do occur, and this document outlines the steps which will be taken to ensure that concerns are heard and dealt with appropriately and fairly.

2.2 Our Spiritual Objective

There are several scriptural principles which have a bearing on the expression of concerns and complaints.

- Romans 12:18 - "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.."
- Phil 4:5 - "Let your reasonableness be known to everyone."
- Phil 2:3 "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves."
- John 13:34 - "Love one another."
- 1 Peter 3: 8 – 9 - "have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, ..."
- Matthew 18:15 - "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone."

These principles, if wisely obeyed and put into practice, can avert conflict. They encourage us to;

- act humbly, considerably, and with love towards one another,
- reason the matters through with the other party when issues of difference occur, and
- find appropriate assistance to help resolve the matter.

In any dispute, both the offender and the offended party have a responsibility to work together towards the resolution of the dispute. Fair, open and confidential communication conducted within the procedural framework outlined in this policy will ensure that the expectations and responsibilities of all parties are respected and resolution achieved.

2.3 Procedural Fairness

The open publication of this policy will ensure that all are aware of the correct procedures in having complaints heard. This policy will also be published in the parent's handbook and on the College website.

All parties in a dispute will be given the opportunity for a fair hearing of their complaint. All complaints will be handled seriously, promptly and there will be feedback given to all parties about resolutions.

2.4 Confidentiality

Complaints brought to the attention of the College will be treated in confidence. The discussion of grievances or concerns with others not involved in the matter can cause a breakdown of procedural fairness, and a loss of confidence in the parties involved.

Members of staff who are the subject of a complaint will, however, have the right to know about complaints which may be damaging to their reputation. Other complaints may be impossible to investigate without the co-operation of third parties, which will be explained to the parties at the time of the dispute. Additionally, there are certain matters which may require the mandatory reporting of behaviour to authorities, such as where abuse or neglect is suspected (refer to Child Protection Policy).

Where complaints result in action by the Police, the Chairman, Principal or a senior staff member shall be responsible for taking action according to the directions of the Police.

2.5 What constitutes a complaint?

A **concern** is the expression of a worry, something that has made a person troubled or anxious about an issue and is expressed at a 'first level' ie to a class teacher at the classroom door or by telephone or email directly to the relevant staff member. Depending on the nature of the concern, it can often be resolved at this 'first level' in a more informal manner. NB: It would be prudent nonetheless for the teacher or staff member concerned to make and file a brief note regarding the issue and interaction in case of future escalation.

A **complaint** is an expression, either verbally or in writing, of protest, objection, dissatisfaction with a real or perceived problem, accusation, or criticism and is usually dealt with in a formal manner .

A **dispute** would usually be viewed as an argument or disagreement and may be the result of a pursued unresolved complaint.

Concerns will be treated sensitively by discussion wherever possible, and only taken further if they become formal complaints.

It is preferred that a formal complaint to be in writing, but it can also be received verbally and submitted to either the Principal or a member of the College Board. A member of the board will assist in the framing of the complaint if requested.

The causes giving rise to complaints may be for:

- An omission of something which should have been done;
- An act of wrong-doing or an error committed
- An unfair, inconsiderate or rude action
- A board decision
- A policy decision

Complaints can be raised by students, parents or staff members.

Anonymous complaints to a staff member or board member may or may not be formally investigated, however the subject or concern raised in the complaint may be monitored to establish whether there is a basis in fact for such a complaint.

2.6 The Role of the Director General

The Director General of the Department of Education is responsible for ensuring that the school observes the registration standards, including the standard about its complaints handling system. Any student, parent or community member is entitled to contact the Director General with concerns about how the school has dealt with a complaint. Information is available on the Department of Education website. While the Director General may consider whether the school has breached the registration standards, they do not have power to intervene in a complaint or override the school's decision.

2.7 Register of Complaints

The College will maintain a confidential register of all complaints and details of the outcome and courses of action implemented to resolve the complaints.

It is important to maintain an effective register of complaints & log of concerns as:

- *it provides information should there be further dispute in the future;*
- *patterns may be identified that indicate a need for action;*
- *it provides information for reporting, by the Principal, to the School governing body as required.*

The register/log should contain the following information:

- *date when the issue was raised;*
- *name of complainant and relevant parties involved;*
- *brief statement of issue;*
- *member of staff handling the issue;*
- *brief statement of outcome including date of resolution/outcome;*

Notes on all complaints should be maintained. The notes should contain simple and clear records of all communication with the complainant. This includes friendly chats and telephone conversations, as misunderstandings easily arise. There should be a clear statement of what is concerning the complainant. The notes can be agreed with the complainant.

Notes should be recorded in the school administration system (Sentral) or privately, in the case of sensitive or confidential matters, and shared with the Principal or his delegate.

It is the responsibility of the Principal (or his delegate) to update the Complaints Register with relevant details from the notes.

Records concerning all complaints will be stored electronically and permanently archived in case future access is ever required.

2.8 Staff Training

The College will undertake professional development of its staff in methods and procedures for managing concerns and complaints. It is important for staff to understand how to respond to various concerns and complaints that are raised with them and the appropriate ways to listen to concerns and try to respond to concerns that are raised with them in a reasonable and fair manner.

Given the diverse nature of complaints, the College will provide training to ensure that all staff, including support staff, know how to carry out their responsibility to support and implement the school's policy. Training should cover:

- *the complaints' procedure;*
- *communication skills, such as listening, questioning and calming;*
- *handling complaints, negotiation and mediation skills;*
- *skills in observing, recording and reporting; and*
- *the benefits of handling complaints well and the consequences of handling them badly.*

3 MAKING A COMPLAINT

Complaints should be seen as opportunities for the College to receive feedback and for school improvement. Heritage College accepts complaints without judging the complainant and will make it as easy as possible for complaints to be made and heard.

The College has adopted and published a "child friendly complaints process" which informs the students as to how they can complain, who they can complain to, and the process which will follow when they complain. It will be made clear at all times that the complainant will not receive criticism or "backlash" as a result of their complaint. See the Whistleblower policy for details.

A vexatious or fabricated complaint where the intent is to get someone into trouble will be treated, after investigation, as a behaviour management matter.

3.1 Student complaints

Students will be encouraged to talk to their class teacher in order to resolve the myriad of little, day to day problems which occur in a class and in the course of normal human interactions. Where a student develops a concern which has not been resolved at the classroom level, or where they feel that the matter is wider than the classroom and involves other students, it is appropriate for them to make a higher level complaint.

This can be done in a number of ways:

1. In person, to a trusted confidant, whoever that may be. The confidant can pass the matter on to the Principal.
2. By email or written note, sent or given to a trusted person, who will pass the matter on to the Principal.
3. Via the locked letter box which is provided for this specific purpose. This will be checked and cleared regularly.
4. By any other means which the student is comfortable with eg via parents or friends. Anonymous complaints, whilst less desirable, will be accepted and investigated, but students will be taught that these complaints can be more difficult to investigate and to give feedback on the results of the investigation.
5. If the complaint is about the Principal, it can be addressed to the Chairman of the Board.
6. Information about making a complaint will be communicated to students by teachers, in the Student Handbook and will be displayed on posters around the College.

3.2 Parent, staff, volunteer or community complaints

1. Complaints by any of the above persons can be made by any of the normal communication processes, eg phone, written letter, email, or verbally.
2. All of the points in the section on student complaints also apply to adults.

3. Information about making complaints will be made available on the College web site and will be discussed in the College Newsletter from time to time. It will also feature in the Staff Handbook and the Parent Handbook which is supplied to parents when they enrol their children at the College.

4 COMPLAINT MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE

4.1 Classroom level

Parent or student concerns shall normally be directed to the classroom or specialist teacher in the first instance.

A gentle expression of concern, or a simple query, may grow into a dispute or confrontational matter if it is felt that the matter has been brushed aside. Issues that have the potential to become difficult may be diffused if they are handled well at the initial stage.

Upon being notified of the concern the teacher will investigate the matter in order to ascertain the facts surrounding the concern.

The teacher will then meet with the concerned party in order to discuss in detail the facts surrounding the concern. Several meetings may be required and the concern may become a formal complaint.

A course of action to resolve the concern or complaint will be determined, and agreed upon during the meeting(s). The agreed action will be followed by each party.

The teacher may raise the matter with the College Principal at any time during this part of the process.

The teacher is responsible for documenting any such concern or complaint, the course of action agreed upon, and any observations once the course of action has been initiated. This can be done using personal notes but should also be recorded in Sentral.

If a course of action cannot be agreed upon, or if such a course of action fails after an agreed period of time, then the complainant or the teacher may take the matter to the College Principal.

4.2 Principal level

Procedures need to be flexible enough to handle both formal complaints and the informal raising of concerns, keeping in mind that sometimes serious issues may be raised in an informal and friendly way and apparently trivial issues in an adversarial manner. Complaints against members of staff, in particular, need to be handled sensitively.

If the matter cannot be resolved during "Classroom level" then the matter shall be raised with the College Principal. A complaint can be brought directly to the Principal if there is a complaint concerning a serious matter against a classroom or specialist teacher or any other serious accusation.

The Principal shall arrange a meeting with all the parties concerned in the dispute in order to hear the complaint. He/she will also conduct his/her own investigation into the matter.

Complaints will be documented by the Principal in a secure way, and should include a note in Sentral.

The Principal and any staff involved shall meet to review any courses of action already undertaken that might have failed. During this discussion a new course of action will be determined.

A further meeting between the Principal, staff, parents and or students concerned shall be arranged.

If a further meeting fails to resolve the matter, the chairman of the Board shall be advised, at which point the resolution of the dispute will pass to the Board.

At this stage the Principal will ask the complainant to formally lodge the complaint in writing with the College Board.

The College can reduce the anxiety of a complainant by taking the matter seriously and dispelling uncertainty about how the complaint will be handled. This can be achieved by:

- *acknowledging complaints immediately or at most within five (5) days;*
- *confirming the nature of the complaint and what is concerning the complainant;*
- *providing an assurance that the school takes the matter seriously; and*
- *keeping the complainant informed on what is happening in relation to the concern or complaint and, if a more detailed response is needed, the date by which it will be received. The issue should be dealt with as quickly as possible.*

4.3 College Board level

Only the following matters will be brought to the Board for consideration: -

- Intractable and unresolved matters referred to in paragraph 4.2
- Grievances regarding College policy
- Serious allegations against the Principal

For these matters the Principal shall document for the Chairman of the Board how the issues were raised, the people who have been consulted, and the actions that have been taken so far.

The Chairman shall seek another member of the Board to provide assistance in the independent review of the situation.

The Chairman shall establish a dialogue with the party lodging the complaint to ascertain the foundation for the complaint. The complainant shall be invited to submit whatever evidence they require to be considered by the Chairman and another Board member.

The Chairman and the other Board member shall endeavour to establish, by further investigation, independent to any reports from either the Principal or staff member the facts behind the case.

If staff members are involved, the Chairman of the Board will address the complaint with them and seek a formal response. The staff member(s) will be invited to make oral or written submissions at any point.

The Chairman and other Board member shall make a written recommendation to the Board based on the summation of the events and their judgement on the actions of those involved.

The complainant shall be advised verbally and in writing of the Board's decision and encouraged to abide by the same. The Board's recommended resolution

may involve recommendation to the parties involved, including apologies, considered letters, and an assurance that the College is alert to possible problems in the areas of complaint if need be.

4.4 Complaints against the College Board

Anyone who has complaints and/or concerns regarding the Board or a member of the Board is encouraged to seek resolution through direct discussion with the person(s) concerned. The complaints and/or concerns can also be put in writing and presented as formal correspondence to the Chairman of the Board.

The Chairman shall acknowledge the receipt of the complaints in writing and also keep the complainant up to date with the progress of the process to deal with the complaints. The complaint should also be recorded in the College's complaint register.

The Chairman shall seek a skilled and suitably qualified person to provide assistance in the independent review of the situation.

The Chairman shall establish a dialogue with the party lodging the complaint to ascertain the foundation for the complaint. The complainant shall be invited to submit whatever evidence they require to be considered by the Chairman and suitably qualified person.

The Chairman and the suitably qualified person shall endeavour to establish, by further investigation, independent to any reports the facts behind the case.

The Chairman and suitably qualified person shall make a written recommendation to the Board based on the summation of the events and their judgement on the actions of those involved.

The complainant shall be advised verbally and in writing of the Board's decision and encouraged to abide by the same. The Board's recommended resolution may involve recommendation to the parties involved, including apologies, considered letters, and an assurance that the College is alert to possible problems in the areas of complaint if need be.

Should the matter not be resolved by this process or is considered to be of such sensitivity to warrant bypassing this process the Board would support the appointment of a mutually agreed independent arbiter, as noted in Section 5.

4.5 Timeliness of Response

All stages of the complaint resolution process should be carried out within the shortest practical time frame, understanding that any delay in responding may exacerbate any feelings of frustration or unhappiness by the complainant and make the situation more difficult to resolve.

4.6 Resolution

Satisfaction for a complainant may come from any of the following:

- *knowing that changes have been made and that matters will be different in future;*

- *knowing that the school is now alert to a possible problem;*
- *feeling that their concern has been considered seriously;*
- *an outcome which may be different from the one they sought, but which they perceive to be well-considered;*
- *a considered letter;*
- *an apology.*

If time is needed to investigate/consider the complaint then the complainant should be kept informed of its progress, in writing, giving the assurance that the issue has been understood and the matter is being dealt with.

Following an appropriate investigation, the College should offer a response, for example to correct the problem and prevent it happening in the future. However, the College is not obliged to give complainants explicit information on what action has been taken, but rather provide an assurance that action has been taken. This is especially important when the matter involves a staff member. Outlining the resolution, to the degree considered appropriate by the college and in the interests of satisfying the complainant, should help prevent misinformation being circulated in the school community.

5 FAILURE TO ACHIEVE RESOLUTION

If a complaint becomes intractable at this point, then the matter may be taken up with reference to a mutually agreed independent arbiter.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the College's handling of their complaint then they are at liberty to lodge a complaint with the Director General of Education in Western Australia.

5.1 Association Members Dispute

If any members of the Association, ie. Heritage College Perth (Inc), have a dispute with the College Board then they should follow the procedures detailed in the Constitution concerning Disputes and Mediation.

6 COLLECTING FEEDBACK

The College will regularly (at least annually) give both students, teachers and parents an opportunity to provide feedback to the College on a wide range of matters. Staff, parent and student surveys will be invited in the first school term of each year, to give an opportunity for any members of the school community to raise matters that may be of concern to them. The College will carefully consider these surveys to see if there are matters that can be addressed with a view to making changes.

It is important to realize that this is a community College and we wish to allow all of the community members to have a voice and feel empowered in the conduct of the College.

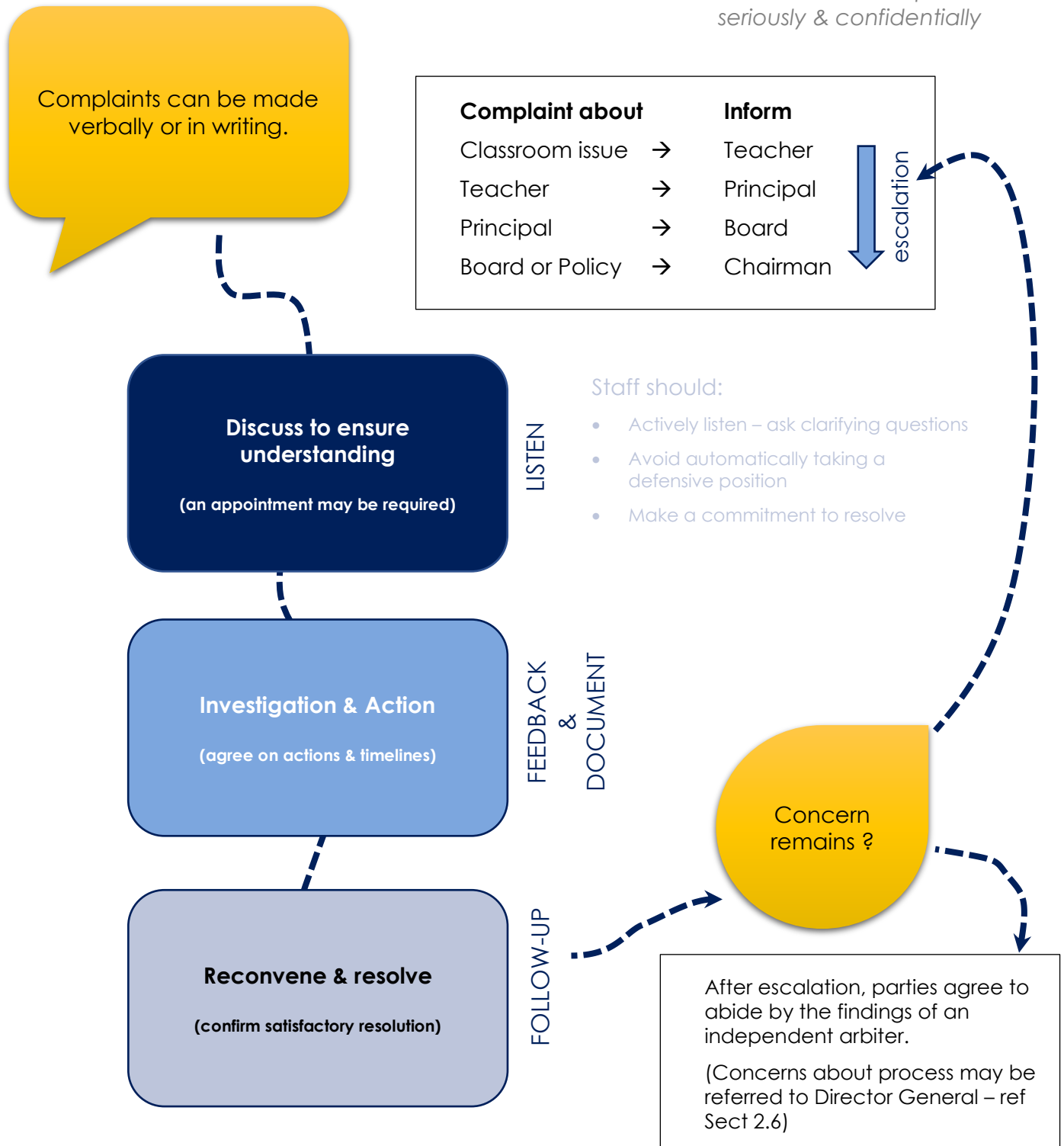
Once a year there will be a parents' meeting run by parents, for the explicit purpose of allowing all parents to have the opportunity to voice any concerns and see if there is general agreement amongst other parents to support the changing of any matters within the college. The College will firstly call for any matters that anyone wishes to raise at this meeting. The College will then publish an agenda for the meeting to allow other parents to be informed about what will be discussed at the meeting.

The College Board will carefully consider any matters that are raised at such meetings. Decisions made by the meeting will not be binding on the board but there will be an investigation to ascertain whether the matters have a wider level of support in the college community.

The College Board will also review complaints, OHS incidents and other matters of importance to the College community and provide public feedback to the community via Board newsletters, which will provide summary information about how the College is managing complaints and OHS matters.

APPENDIX A. COMPLAINT PROCEDURE FLOWCHART

HCP treats all complaints seriously & confidentially



HCP is committed to providing a child-safe environment which safeguards all students



Tips for making a complaint

1

How are you feeling?

- sad
- worried
- scared
- unsafe



2

Tell someone you trust

- Class Teacher
- Duty Teacher
- Principal



3

How do I feel now?



I'm good to go



Go back to step 2



HERITAGE COLLEGE





Top tips for making a complaint

1 Get support

Talk to a parent, carer, friend or someone you trust and ask them to help you. They can even be with you when you complain. You can also use an interpreter if you need to.

2 Find out how

Sometimes it is tricky to know how to make a complaint. It is usually best to talk to the organisation you are dealing with first.

- a. Talk to someone in the organisation you feel comfortable with or check out the website to find out about their complaints system.
- b. Find out who is the person responsible for complaints. This will save you from having to tell lots of people your full story.
- c. What are the different ways you can make a complaint (face-to-face, by phone, in writing - letter, email, any others)?

If you are not safe or do not want to talk to someone in the organisation there are other agencies that can help you. Check out our website ccyp.wa.gov.au

3 Plan what you want to say

Write down what you are not happy about and how this has affected you. Also decide what you think should be done.

This will help you when you have to talk about it. You may need to tell a couple of people in the process, so it will also help you remember what you've said before.



4 Be calm and ask questions

When you make your complaint, try to be calm and polite even if you feel upset. Staff of the organisation should also treat you with respect.

Ask as many questions as you like. You may want to know:

- How they will keep your complaint private?
- What will happen next?
- Who will get back to you and your support person?
- When will they get back to you?
- If you're not happy about the result of your complaint what is the next step - who will review your complaint then?



5 Keep notes

Write down who you speak or write to, the dates, anything they promise they will do and the date they say they will get back to you. This will help you keep track of things. You can also write down how you feel about the complaint process, this may be useful later.

6 Keep at it

Don't be afraid to complain further if you are still not safe or feel the matter has not been resolved fairly.



From the Commissioner for Children and Young People WA

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