

# **Barnardos Feedback and Complaints Policy**

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**Barnardos**  
Australia

# Barnardos Feedback and Complaints Policy

## Purpose & Commitment

Barnardos Australia (Barnardos) is committed to ensuring that all feedback and complaints are handled in a fair, transparent, and accessible manner. Barnardos is strongly committed to ensuring that no client or service is limited or impacted by providing feedback or complaints. Further, Barnardos understands that trusting professionals may be challenging for some of our clients based on their previous experiences.

We uphold the principles of a Child Safe Organisation, ensuring that children's voices are heard and their rights are protected.

This policy aims to:

- Provide an open, safe, and clear process for raising complaints.
- Ensure timely, impartial, and confidential complaint handling.
- Promote continuous improvement based on complaint feedback.
- Uphold the safety and best interests of children and young people in line with our Practice Framework and child-safe principles.

## Policy Statement

All feedback and complaints are taken seriously, and we uphold the highest standards of accountability and child-safety, guided by the following principles:



### Accessibility

- Ensure that complaint and feedback mechanisms are communicated, easy to find, understand, and use.
- Provide multiple channels for submitting feedback (e.g., online (website), in-person, phone, anonymous options).
- Accommodate diverse needs, including language accessibility and disability-friendly options.



### Responsiveness & Timeliness

- Acknowledge feedback and complaints quickly and set clear timeframes for resolution.
- Address issues in a timely manner to prevent escalation.



### Fairness & Transparency

- Clearly outline the feedback and complaints process, including expected timeframes, steps, and possible outcomes.
- Ensure impartiality by avoiding conflicts of interest in complaint handling.
- Provide complainants with regular updates on progress.



### Confidentiality & Privacy

- Protect the identity and information of complainants, ensuring compliance with privacy laws.
- Balance transparency with the need to maintain confidentiality where required.

# Barnardos Feedback and Complaints Policy

- Communicate outcomes clearly, explaining decisions and any further options available.
- Barnardos employees use active listening when working with complainants (or their representatives).
- Anonymous feedback and complaints are treated like any other complaint.



## Accountability & Governance

- Assign clear responsibilities for handling complaints and feedback.
- Ensure leadership oversight and regular reporting on trends and systemic issues.
- Embed feedback mechanisms into governance structures for continuous improvement.
- Employee complaints and feedback management professional development is provided to the relevant Barnardos employees.
- Complaints are investigated, documented and reviewable.



## Resolution Focus & Continuous Improvement

- Aim to resolve complaints in a way that is fair and constructive.
- Use complaints and feedback as learning opportunities to drive systemic change and prevent recurrence.
- Establish feedback loops so complainants know their concerns have led to meaningful action.



## Person-Centred & Trauma-Informed Approach

- Everyone has the right to complain and provide feedback about their Barnardos service experience.
- Treat complainants with dignity, respect, and empathy.
- Complainants are not adversely affected because of a complaint made by them or on their behalf.
- In sensitive cases (e.g., involving vulnerable individuals), adopt a trauma-informed approach to minimise harm.
- Offer appropriate support services or referrals where necessary.
- Barnardos will accept complaints from representatives of clients, including family members, friends and other people or organisations.



## Cultural Competency & Inclusion

- Recognise and respect diverse cultural perspectives on conflict resolution.
- Ensure culturally appropriate processes that consider Indigenous, migrant, and minority community needs.
- Involve Gurung Wellama representatives where relevant to strengthen trust.

# Barnardos Feedback and Complaints Policy



## Proactive Feedback Mechanisms

- Encourage a speak-up culture where feedback is welcomed, not feared.
- Regularly seek feedback through surveys, consultations, and engagement activities.
- Move beyond complaints management to actively co-design solutions with stakeholders.



## Legal & Regulatory Compliance

- Ensure alignment with relevant laws, industry standards, and human rights principles.
- Maintain proper documentation and audit trails for accountability.
- Be prepared for external review or escalation to independent bodies if required.

We receive complaints not only about the actions of our employees, but also the actions of our partner organisations. Where our services are contracted, we expect our partners (subcontracted service providers) to have an accessible and comprehensive complaint management system.

## Scope

This policy applies across all Barnardos programs (including partners) and applies to:

- Decisions made by Barnardos employees about Barnardos services;
- The conduct of employees, volunteers and carers;

The following concerns are **not** covered by this policy and are instead managed under separate Barnardos policies:

- **Employee Grievances** – Concerns raised by employees and volunteers about their work or work environment are addressed under the Workplace Concerns Policy.
- **Allegations of Misconduct** – Issues related to corruption, fraud, theft, harassment, unlawful discrimination, or any practices endangering the health or safety of employees, volunteers, the public, or the environment are handled under the Barnardos Whistleblower Policy.
- **Reportable Conduct Allegations** – Any concerns involving allegations of child abuse, neglect, sexual misconduct, or other forms of reportable conduct by employees, carers or volunteers are managed under the Barnardos Reportable Conduct Policy. This includes matters that must be notified to external oversight bodies.

Complaints about service quality that do not involve reportable conduct (e.g., communication issues, delays, dissatisfaction with support) are managed under this Feedback and Complaints Policy.

## How to make a complaint?

Ideally, concerns should first be discussed and resolved with your Barnardos worker. If you are not satisfied with the outcome, you can escalate your complaint through the following steps:

- 1) Talk to the Program Manager about your concerns.
- 2) If you are still not satisfied, you can escalate the issue to the Barnardos Centre or Senior Manager, depending on the program.
- 3) If your concerns remain unresolved, you can then contact the Barnardos General Manager for your area.

# Barnardos Feedback and Complaints Policy

4) If your complaint is not resolved at this stage, you may raise it with the Executive Leader (EL) for further review.

At any time, regardless of the complaints process described above, you may submit feedback or a formal complaint through the Barnardos website or via email to: [feedbackandcomplaints@barnardos.org.au](mailto:feedbackandcomplaints@barnardos.org.au).

## How feedback and complaints are managed when received through the Barnardos website

- Feedback and complaints raised through the Barnardos website are sent to a secured inbox managed by our Barnardos Practice Quality Executive and delegated employees.
- Feedback and complaints will be acknowledged, assessed and allocated to the appropriate portfolio and management team to resolve.
- Feedback and complaints are stored in a secure online platform and are used for continuous improvement initiatives.
- Practice Quality and the relevant portfolio work together to ensure that complaints are resolved and complainants receive a written response.
- Practice Quality may contact complainants in the future as part of quality assurance reviews of internal structures and learning opportunities.

## Review of a Decision

Barnardos acknowledges the right of clients and carers to provide feedback and lodge complaints. In some cases, clients or carers may seek a review of a decision that has been made by Barnardos during the complaints assessment and resolution process.

A decision review is a formal process that requires a written request and will be conducted by a employee who was not involved in making the original decision. However, decision reviews are only available for decisions made within Barnardos' authority. Decisions made by external bodies, such as Child Protection authorities (e.g., Child, Youth and Family ACT Government, Department of Communities and Justice), must follow their own decision review processes.

It is important to distinguish between a request for a decision review and a complaint about a decision.

- A decision review seeks to reconsider the original decision based on relevant policies, procedures, and any new information provided.
- A complaint about a decision relates to dissatisfaction with how a decision was made or its outcome and will be addressed through Barnardos' feedback and complaints procedure.

Some decisions may also be eligible for an external review by an independent body. External reviews can only be requested after an internal review has been completed.

# Barnardos Feedback and Complaints Policy

## Who can I go to outside of Barnardos?

You may also raise your feedback and complaint with an external oversight agency, if Barnardos has not resolved the issues to your satisfaction.

The external oversight agencies in the ACT and NSW are listed below.

### ACT external oversight agencies

Human Rights Commission (HRC) (for services for children and young people and people with a disability)

Phone: 02 6205 2222

Email: [human.rights@act.gov.au](mailto:human.rights@act.gov.au) Web: [www.hrc.act.gov.au](http://www.hrc.act.gov.au)

Public Advocate of the ACT (PA) (children and young people)

Phone: 02 6205 2222

Email: [PublicAdvocateReferral@act.gov.au](mailto:PublicAdvocateReferral@act.gov.au) Web: <https://hrc.act.gov.au/public-advocate/>

### NSW external oversight agencies

NSW Ombudsman (for matters related to children and young people)

Phone: 02 9286 1000

Toll free: 1800 451 524

Email: [nswombo@ombo.nsw.gov.au](mailto:nswombo@ombo.nsw.gov.au) Web: [www.ombo.nsw.gov.au](http://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au)

NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission (for NDIS services)

Phone: 1800 035 544 (free call from landlines)

Web: [www.ndiscommission.gov.au/](http://www.ndiscommission.gov.au/) NDIS Form: [Complaint Contact Form](#)

## Definitions

### Client

Any individual, child, young person, or family who receives services, support, or care from Barnardos. This includes those engaged in out-of-home care, early intervention, family support, and other programs provided by the organisation.

### Carer

An individual, including foster or kinship carers, who provides care and support to a child or young person placed with them through Barnardos programs. Carers may be volunteers or contracted under formal care agreements.

### Compliment

Positive feedback from a client, representative, or external stakeholder about an employee, service, or organisation. Compliments reflect satisfaction or recognition of actions that exceed expectations and

### Employee

A person engaged by Barnardos under an employment contract, including full-time, part-time, and casual employee. Employees have specific responsibilities and obligations under Barnardos policies and workplace regulations. Employees in this policy also includes contractors acting on Barnardos behalf.

### Feedback

Any information, opinions, or suggestions provided by clients, carers, employees, or other stakeholders about Barnardos' services, practices, or operations. Feedback can be positive or constructive and is used to improve service quality, inform decision-making, and enhance the overall experience for those engaged with Barnardos.

### Complaint

An expression of dissatisfaction about a service provided by Barnardos that requires a response. Complaints may relate to delays, lack of response, unresolved matters, decisions, inaction, breaches, or any negative impact

# Barnardos Feedback and Complaints Policy

contribute to team morale, collaboration, and continuous improvement.

experienced. Complaints help identify areas for improvement and ensure accountability.

## Related Information

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the relevant procedures, specially the Barnardos Feedback and Complaints Procedure.

This policy has been written in consultation with Barnardos General Management and Executive Leadership.

## Our child-safe organisation commitment

Barnardos Australia (Barnardos) prioritises the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people who access our services and interact with our employees, carers, students, volunteers and partners.

As a child-safe organisation, we recognise the importance of amplifying children's voices and supporting their active participation in decisions that affect them.

Our commitment to creating, maintaining and enhancing child-safe environments is reflected in our policies, procedures and practices, where the safety and wellbeing of children are paramount.

We are devoted to recruiting the most suitable individuals to work with and volunteer with our organisation and ensure they are equipped to understand and meet their responsibilities in safeguarding children.

Barnardos has robust systems in place to safeguard children and young people from harm, fostering a culture of vigilance and care.

Barnardos recognises that a child-safe organisation must be a listening organisation. We are committed to ensuring that all feedback and complaints—particularly those raised by children and young people—are welcomed, taken seriously and responded to with care, respect, and urgency.

We provide safe, accessible and child-friendly avenues for raising concerns and actively promote a culture where children feel empowered to speak up without fear. Our feedback and complaints processes align with our safeguarding responsibilities, ensuring all concerns are handled transparently, fairly and in a trauma-informed manner.

By embedding child-safe principles into our feedback and complaints systems, we strengthen trust, accountability and continuous improvement—ensuring that every child feels heard, valued, and protected.

# Barnardos Feedback and Complaints Policy

## Version control and change history

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<b>Contact for Queries:</b>	Practice Quality		

Version Number	Approval Date	Approved by	Amendment
2.06	September 2021	Unknown	Unknown
3	June 2025	Melissa Bell	Rescope and design to align with Barnardos Practice Framework and regulatory requirements. Accompanying procedures and client facing accessibility features.