# Communication with Families

**POLICY STATEMENT:**

Lake Mac Newy OOSH recognises that families are the child's first Educators. Relationship experiences and engagement in communities contribute to children's belonging, being, and becoming. Collaborative partnerships with families are critical to achieving quality outcomes for children. The safety, rights and best interests of children are the paramount consideration in all communication, consultation and decision-making undertaken by the Service.

**PROCEDURES:**

We acknowledge families' primary influence in their children's lives and understand that effective relationships between educators and families are fundamental to achieving quality outcomes for children. Community partnerships focusing on active communication, consultation, and collaboration also contribute to children's learning and well-being. Positive relationships with families help build collaborative partnerships, as we share a common objective and responsibility for reaching quality outcomes and goals for children. We will provide regular information about the OOSH Service and ongoing opportunities for families to contribute to our curriculum. All staff will communicate with families in a positive and supportive manner that encourages respectful and trusting relationships.

We are committed to establishing an open, friendly, and united atmosphere at the service that allows for a united relationship between families and staff.

**THE APPROVED PROVIDER/ NOMINATED SUPERVISOR/ MANAGEMENT WILL ENSURE:**

- Educators, staff, students and volunteers know of and adhere to this policy
- All families are welcomed and respected at our Service, unless restrictions are in place to protect the safety, well-being, or privacy of children, families, staff or visitors
- Information communicated with families is reliable and accurate, especially if it involves the health and safety of children, employees and visitors to the OOSH Service
- Families are informed about the processes for providing feedback and making complaints, including complaints regarding CCS (see Complaints and Grievance Handling Policy). Feedback is encouraged through surveys, conversations, family feedback forms and other consultation opportunities.
- Families are provided with a Family Handbook during the enrolment and orientation process and our Open Door Policy
- Educators provide information to families regarding the content and operation of the educational program about their child which is available for viewing at the education and care service
- Concerns relating to child safety, abuse, neglect or reportable conduct will be managed in accordance with the Child Protection Policy, Reportable Conduct procedures and legislative reporting requirements.
- Families have access to their child's developmental records describing their child's progress and identifying their strengths, skills and understandings
- Families are notified of any incident, injury, trauma, or illness that affects their child whilst under the care of the OOSH Service either immediately after the incident or when they collect their child, depending on the severity of the incident. Notification must be made within 24 hours of the occurrence.
- Respect, confidentiality and sensitivity are key elements of effective communication with families.
- Where families disagree with Service decisions, educators and management will communicate respectfully, explain the reasons for decisions, and where relevant, outline the Service's legal and regulatory obligations to protect the safety, wellbeing and rights of children. Where there is a conflict between the wishes of adults and the safety, rights or best interests of a child, the child's safety, rights and best interests will remain the paramount consideration.

- Processes are in place to communicate with families for whom literacy is an issue or for whom English is not a first language
- Fact sheets and brochures will be printed in languages and available for families to access when required
- An interpreter service is available to ensure communication with parents and families is not hindered due to language barriers
- The OOOSH Service has an administrative space that is adequate for consulting with parents and for conducting private conversations and meetings. This may occur off-site at the head office, where deemed necessary
- Families are notified of changes to OOSH Service policies at least 14 days before making changes to a policy or procedure that may have a significant impact on:

  - the OOSH service's provision of education and care to any child enrolled in the service or
  - the family's ability to utilise the service
  - changes to the way fees are charged and collected

- Families are informed of avenues for external complaints and may contact the NSW Regulatory Authority if concerns cannot be resolved through the Service's complaints process
- The current Education and Care Services National Regulations are available for parents to access
- The enrolment and orientation process provides families with information about the statement of philosophy, policies, and practices of the OOSH Service.
- Communication with families is delivered in a manner that reflects cultural sensitivity and inclusivity, supporting a culturally safe environment
- Digital communication platforms, including OWNA, are used to support secure communication with families and protect the confidentiality of information
- Promote safe use of digital apps and email by encouraging awareness of online security when communicating with families

**EDUCATORS WILL:**

- Encourage children and families to express their views, raise concerns and participate in decisions affecting their wellbeing, safety and experiences at the Service . Ensure children are provided with age-appropriate opportunities to express their views and participate in decisions affecting them, and that their views are considered alongside their age, maturity and best interests
- Develop collaborative partnerships with families that involve respectful communication about all aspects of a child's learning
- Where appropriate, be available to communicate with families at arrival and collection about their child's experiences through informal discussions, whilst maintaining active supervision of children
- Share insights and perspectives about each child and young person (MTOP)
- Acknowledge the diversity of families and their aspirations for their children and young people (MTOP)
- Engage in shared decision-making to support each child and young person's well-being, learning and development (MTOP)
- Encourage families to be involved in the curriculum, providing feedback, visiting the OOSH Service, bringing in items from the home environment, and giving feedback on children's emerging interests
- Encourage ongoing open and direct two-way communication with families to develop trust and a collaborative relationship
- Create a welcoming and safe environment where children, young people, and families are respected regardless of background, ethnicity, languages spoken, religion, family makeup or gender (MTOP)
- Build partnerships with families and others to keep children and young people safe and families aware of e-safety information
- Encourage families to contribute to the continuous quality improvement progression within the OOSH Service through their involvement in the self-assessment and QIP review

- Provide families with a range of communication methods, which may include the use of OWNA, emails, verbal communication, newsletters, notices at the parent desk
- Use a communication document with families as required (for example, behaviour and inclusion support plans).

**FAMILIES WILL:**

- Adhere to the Service's Parent Code of Conduct, including when attending the Service as a visitor, to support a safe, respectful and child-focused environment for all children, families and staff in or out of the service.
- Sign their child into the service and let an Educator know they have arrived.
- Families are responsible for downloading and actively using the OWNA Parent App as the service's primary communication platform. Families must ensure notifications are enabled so important messages and updates are received promptly. Families are expected to regularly review and acknowledge communications, notices and announcements published by the service.
- Families must mark child absences through the OWNA Parent App as soon as practicable and, where possible, at least 2 hours prior to the commencement of the booked session. Any medication administered to a child prior to attending the service must be communicated to the service, including the medication, dosage, and time of administration.
- Families are responsible for accessing and reviewing service policies, procedures, newsletters, notices and other important documents made available through the OWNA Parent App. Families must keep enrolment information current and promptly update any changes to emergency contacts, authorised nominees, medical information, allergies, court orders, custody arrangements, contact details or any other relevant enrolment information.
- Families are expected to respond to requests for information, permissions, consents and authorisations within the required timeframes and review incident reports, medication records and other records requiring parent acknowledgement or electronic signature as soon as practicable.
- Bookings, casual bookings and booking changes should be managed in accordance with the service's booking procedures. For urgent matters, including late collections, emergency changes to collection arrangements or urgent medical information, families must contact the service directly and not rely solely on the OWNA messaging function.
- Failure to regularly monitor and utilise the OWNA Parent App may result in families missing important operational updates, policy changes, incident notifications or requests for information. Families are responsible for ensuring they remain informed of communications issued by the service through the OWNA platform.
- Read all communication from the service, including OWNA posts, emails, posters, notices, noticeboards, statements, etc
- Communicating with staff about any information that may affect their child, including family events such as moving to a new house, family arrival from overseas, a family bereavement, or the death of a pet.
- Communicate routine changes to children with additional needs so that they are prepared when they come to the service, and something is different.
- Provide accurate information during the enrolment process about their child, including related medical and health information
- Notify educators when any information changes- (Medical Management Plans, Court orders-parental orders, authorised nominee)
- Model appropriate behaviour and suitable conduct when interacting with children and staff
- Discuss with an educator, nominated supervisor or approved provider any concerns or grievances and follow the *Complaints and Grievance Handling Policy*

- Acknowledging sensitive issues should not be discussed in front of children or other staff
- Abusive, intimidating, threatening or aggressive behaviour towards children, educators, volunteers or other families will not be tolerated. Where such behaviour occurs, the Service may take appropriate action in accordance with the Parent Code of Conduct.
- Participate in informal and formal interactions with educators to discuss their child's learning goals
- Be encouraged to contribute to the learning program and share their culture, language and beliefs with others in the OOSH Service
- Be invited to contribute to the quality improvement process within the OOSH Service
- Be invited to assist with working bees or fundraising initiatives held at the OOSH service
- Be invited to events held periodically to help families network and develop friendships in the local community
- Be invited to review and have access to the OOSH Service policies and routines via our OWNA platform
- Treat all children at the Service equally and respectfully
- Report any suspicious behaviour to the nominated supervisor or approved provider and encourage and actively support a safe and supportive Service environment
- Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every person, regardless of their abilities, gender, religion or cultural background
- Refrain from bullying, harassing or discriminating against any child or adult at the Service
- Respect the decisions of educators and staff members and teach children (if adults) to do likewise
- Tell an educator (if a child) or the approved provider or the nominated supervisor if witness to any instances of bullying, harassment or discrimination at the service
- Cooperate and follow service routines and procedures
- Listen to educators' instructions and follow them

**FAMILIES WILL NOT:**

- Use abusive, derogatory or offensive language, or denigrate, belittle or demean educators, staff or management
- Use abusive, intimidating, threatening or aggressive behaviour towards children, educators, volunteers or other families will not be tolerated. Where such behaviour occurs, the Service may take appropriate action in accordance with the Parent Code of Conduct
- Drink alcohol or use illicit substances while on the Service's premises or come to the Service under their influence
- Smoke or vape on the Service's premises, including in the car park
- Remove a child from the premises without signing out and advising a staff member

**CONSIDERATIONS:**

| Education and Care Services National Regulations | National Quality Standard | Other Service policies/documentation | Other |
|---|---|---|---|
| R 75, 86, 87, 111, 157, 160, 161, 162, 168, 170, 171, 172, 181<br>National Law 9A | Quality Area's:<br>6.1, 6.1.1, 6.1.2, 6.1.3, 6.2, 6.2.1, 6.2.2,6.2.3<br><br>Child Safe Standards 1- 10 | - Providing a Child Safe Environment Policy<br>- Complaints and Grievances Handling Policy<br>- Incident Injury Trauma and Illness Policy<br>- Interactions with Children Policy<br>- Open Door Policy<br>- Confidentiality Policy | My Time, Our Place - Version 2<br>Centre newsletters<br>National Quality Standards<br>OWNA Software Program<br>Family Handbook<br>Family Code of Conduct Guidelines<br>Family Participation |

**ENDORSEMENT BY THE SERVICE:**

Approval date: July 2026

Date for review: July 2027