

CHILD PROTECTION

POLICY GUIDELINE

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Summary

We must provide a comprehensive and integrated framework to protect and keep children and young people safe from all forms of harm, abuse and neglect.

This guideline details the policy framework implemented to build and maintain a child-safe organisation. This guideline is to be read in conjunction with the related policy documents. The policy area for Confirming Consumer Rights includes procedures and other supporting documents related to child protection.

1 Who should read this document?

All employees, volunteers and carers.

2 What is our aim?

To protect the personal safety of children and young people that either receive or have received services from Life Without Barriers.

3 Child Protection Policy Guideline

The framework to build and maintain a child-safe organisation provides guidance in relation to:

- Governance
- Management systems
- Human resources
- Knowledge management
- Risk assessment and management
- Legal and regulatory compliance
- Safety and quality integration
- Assessment and planning
- Focusing on positive outcomes
- Ensuring cultural safety and appropriateness
- Confirming consumer rights.

4 Governance

4.1 Organisational Values

We operate a governance system to support responsible, accountable and transparent business activities. Our values underpin our work across service sectors where children and young people are protected from harm and supported to thrive, including:

- Relationships come first
- We are Imaginative in our thinking and practice

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- We are Courageous in our convictions and actions
- We are Respectful and Caring in our dealings
- We are Responsive to needs.

4.2 Whistle-Blower Protection

We are committed to protecting whistleblowers and encouraging a culture where employees, volunteers and clients feel safe to report any improper conduct. This guideline supports and encourages disclosures about improper conduct and provides for appropriate investigation of disclosures.

5 Management Systems

5.1 Organisational Documents

We provide employees, volunteers and carers with the organisational policies, procedures and related support documents to ensure they have the tools and guidance to effectively and safely perform their roles. These documents help to provide the practical knowledge and resources to embed our child protection activity into everyday practices, actions and decision making.

6 Human Resources

6.1 Recruitment and Selection

We recruit and select staff who are screened as suitable for identified positions and who demonstrate a commitment to promoting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Screening and recruitment processes include position descriptions, probity checks, reference checks, interviews, and probationary periods.

6.2 Induction

All new employees receive an induction to our organisation. The induction includes information about the child protection policy as well as other related policy guidelines or documents.

Carers receive industry standard, entry level induction training prior to commencing. Carers are provided with information about our organisation, out-of-home care and the needs of children and young people.

6.3 Code of Conduct

All employees and carers are given a copy of our code of conduct. It sets out the standards of expected behaviour for management, employees and carers. Employees and carers must sign to confirm they agree to abide by the code of conduct.

6.4 Supervision

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All employees who have contact with children and young people receive regular supervision that includes a focus on developing their awareness of and responses to child safety matters. In group care situations such as residential care we use a group supervision model based on the concept of reflective practice where staff are supported to reflect on how they interact with young people in their care. In complex cases each carer will have a Supporter of Carers assigned to them for support and advice, as well as clinical support where this is identified as necessary.

6.5 Training

All employees receive training relevant to their role in the organisation. Employees who work directly with children and young people receive training in child protection, reporting harm, responding to disclosures and complaints awareness.

Carers have access to a comprehensive carer learning pathway. This includes core and specialist training covering topics such as Preventing, Identifying, Responding to and Reporting Harm, Responding to Disclosures and Child Protection Legislation.

6.6 Performance Development

We implement performance development practices including performance planning, regular formal and informal feedback, supervision, professional development support, and at least one performance appraisal each year. These practices provide mechanisms to reinforce employees' responsibilities in relation to the protection and care of children and young people in their day to day activities and to immediately identify and address any concerns.

7 Knowledge Management

7.1 Privacy and confidentiality

Under Commonwealth and State legislation we must act to protect any personal and sensitive information we collect about service participants, carers, employees and volunteers. We comply with privacy legislation and recognise that the management and maintenance of private personal information is important to providing quality services and supports, and for meeting our obligations as a good employer.

Further, we recognise that good record keeping is the foundation of accountability and we strive to maintain high standards in the collection, recording, storage and disposal of information.

7.2 Cyber Safety Resources

We have a suite of resources to inform children, young people and carers about protecting themselves and their personal information when using the internet and social media.

7.3 ICT Acceptable Use Policy

Our policy clearly outlines both appropriate and inappropriate use of our communication systems. It is unacceptable for employees to use our communication systems to send, receive, store or display material that is, or may be construed to be, pornographic, or to engage in online grooming.

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8 Risk Assessment and Management

We maintain a risk assessment and management framework in accordance with AS/NZS ISO 31000 - Risk Management, in order to:

- Support good corporate governance
- Identify, assess and manage risks in all business areas
- Improve accountability and resource allocation
- Protect the safety and wellbeing of children, young people, other clients, employees and stakeholders.

The activities we conduct within this framework aim to eliminate the risk of child harm, neglect and abuse through employment screening and prevention, abuse identification and reporting, and response measures.

9 Legal and Regulatory Compliance

Legal and regulatory compliance is a key element of our risk management framework in particular for the range of child protection legislation. We rely on both internal and external monitoring of critical controls to assess whether we meet or legislative requirements, which include:

- Standards of service for licensing and accreditation
- Contractual service delivery requirements
- Legal and regulatory obligations.

In the event that any actual or potential non-compliance is identified we seek to immediately address through appropriate corrective action.

10 Safety and Quality Integration

10.1 Client Death Review Process

In the event that a client dies while receiving a service from us, as a minimum we conduct an internal independent review of the standard of care provided by us and the quality of life the person while in our care. This process helps to identify any risks in our service provision and promotes a continuous quality improvement approach to our practice.

10.2 Complex Case Reviews

Where children and young people have complex needs such as high clinical or medical needs we conduct complex case reviews to facilitate coordination of their care. Through this process, risk of harm is able to be identified and strategies to ensure protection and care of our most vulnerable children and young people are implemented and monitored.

10.3 Incident Reporting and Management

All incidents are reported, tracked and managed. Incident data is logged and analysed to identify trends and inform practice improvement.

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All incidents that indicate potential abuse in care or that the standards of care may not have been met are escalated according to State or Territory child protection procedures. Incident reporting procedures provide timeframes for responses and detail responsibilities for actions and follow up.

10.4 Workplace Health and Safety

We must provide a safe working environment and safe systems of work. In our residential care services we aim to provide an environment in which young people feel physically, emotionally and culturally safe. The underpinning objective of the protection and safety of children and young people is reflected in our staffing model; house rules; group supervision; and house meetings.

Employees receive training in Therapeutic Crisis Intervention and are supported by practice manuals covering household induction, bedroom privacy and participation by young people in their case planning process.

11 Assessment and planning

11.1 Carer Screening and Assessment

Carer screening and assessment includes probity checks, reference checks and an assessment of carer home safety. Staff and contractors engaged to undertake carer assessment and authorisation tasks have the requisite expertise, knowledge and skills to undertake these tasks.

We utilise industry standard carer assessment tools. Decisions regarding carer authorisation are made by an identified senior manager following consideration by a Carer Assessment Panel.

11.2 Carer Review

Our carers are authorised for a period of time that may vary depending on State or Territory requirements, as well as their assessed capacity to provide care. At the end of each authorisation period carers are reviewed to assess their ongoing capacity to provide safe and competent care.

12 Focusing on positive outcomes

12.1 Reportable Conduct or Standard of Care Concerns

We respond to reportable conduct or standard of care concerns in a way that supports the protection, safety and wellbeing of children and young people who access our services.

12.2 Management of Restricted/Prohibited Practices

We recognise that some children and young people require help to manage their behaviour and hence we provide behaviour support through positive behaviour support planning. We have processes in place to ensure the appropriate use of practices that involve some intrusion on a person's rights or freedom. Practices that are illegal or severely restrict the

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rights of children and young people (Prohibited Practices) are not permitted within our programs.

13 Ensuring Cultural Safety and Appropriateness

We recognise the importance of maintaining family, community and cultural connections and we view this as vital to the well-being of clients from Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. Where we arrange or provide care for individuals from Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or CALD backgrounds (including children and young people) who cannot reside with their immediate or extended family, we aim to appropriately place them in the following order of preference:

- With immediate or extended family, or
- Within the child or young person's respective Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or CALD community, or then
- With another person compatible with the respective Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or CALD community.

Wherever possible, a similar hierarchy is applied to the selection of carers and support workers.

In addition, where possible we assist clients from Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or CALD backgrounds to access and maintain knowledge of their language, customs and traditions.

14 Confirming Consumer Rights

14.1 Complaints and Feedback

We recognise the important role that formal complaints processes play in creating a safe environment. The key to this process is to make children and young people aware of and have access to internal and external complaints mechanisms that are age and developmentally appropriate, and managed effectively.

14.2 Grievances

Our grievance process provides a transparent and credible process to all parties involved; builds trust; and identifies emerging issues and trends that may impact the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

14.3 Advocacy and Representation

Children and young people who access our services have a right to participate in decisions which effect their lives and a right to advocacy. We provide children, young people and their families with information about their rights, including the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Our service models, which support children and young people with various levels of need, facilitate the development of trusting relationships with care team members who visit children and young people regularly. Our intensive foster care model identifies an advocate for the child or young person separate to the support for the carer.

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Engagement with children and young people primarily occurs at the individual case level. However, we also make strategic connections with to assist planning and collaboration processes and to promote child centred programs and service development.

15 Communication

This policy guideline is provided to all employees, volunteers and carers during induction processes. Our Code of Conduct outlines our values and expectations, reinforces compliance and monitoring occurs through a range of mechanisms including supervision.

16 Review of this Policy

This policy will be reviewed every three years or as required and in accordance with legislative and regulatory requirements.

17 Audit / Evaluation

1. All policies, policy guidelines and documents related to mandatory processes named in this policy guideline position child safety and protection as our first priority.
2. Successful accreditation achieved in relation to child protection.

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APPROVED BY	Mary McKinnon The signatory (lead Executive) is accountable to implement, maintain and monitor appropriate systems to achieve the objectives of this document.		
BUSINESS PORTFOLIO	Client Services (Operations)		
CONTACT FOR QUERIES	Belinda Mayfield		
RELATED TOPIC/S	Code of Conduct; Cyber Safety; Family Support and Out of Home Care; Positive Behaviour Support; Teenagers; Voluntary Out of Home Care; Young People Leaving care		