



National Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy

Lifestyle Solutions

Purpose

The National Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy demonstrates our commitment to the rights of children and young people to feel and experience safety when participating in Lifestyle Solutions services. It also outlines our responsibilities and the actions we will take to put this Policy into practice to keep children and young people safe from harm and to promote safe and nurturing environments for them to grow and develop and implement our zero tolerance towards violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of children and young people.

This Policy supports our international obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Child Safe Standards recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and is aligned with the Australian Human Rights Commission National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and relevant state/territory Child Safe Standards.

Audience

This Policy applies to all of Lifestyle Solutions people and volunteers (eg Foster Carers, Camp leaders) and Contractors (eg trades, agency workers). It applies without fail in all physical and on-line environments wherever children and young people are participating in our organisation's activities, programs, services and/or facilities.

Guiding Values

At Lifestyle Solutions, we are committed to the following values to guide our actions and decision making to keep children and young people safe. Our people can refer to these values to ensure that their responsibilities to children and young people are upheld.

- Safeguarding children and young people is a shared responsibility, it is reliant on all individuals within our organisation keeping children and young people safe in our care.
- Any form of violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation of children and young people will not be tolerated and immediate action will be taken upon report of any suspected violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. The best interest of the child will be the primary consideration in all actions and decisions concerning the safety or wellbeing of a child or young person.
- We are accountable to the children and young people we work with by fostering high ethical standards in a culture of openness and transparency.
- We empower children by informing them of their rights and responsibilities and support them to have a 'voice' about any matters of importance to them, including if something goes wrong. We work to actively collaborate and support the participation of children and young people in decision making regarding their goals and needs or other matters affecting them.



Responsibility

Safeguarding children and young people is a shared responsibility at Lifestyle Solutions from Service Delivery teams through to Governance and Culture, to:

- protect children and young people from all forms of abuse and neglect by our people
- be alert to incidents of child abuse and neglect occurring outside of Lifestyle Solutions services that may have an impact on the children and young people to whom we provide a service
- create and maintain a child safe culture that is understood, endorsed, and put into action by all the individuals who work for, volunteer, support or access our programs and services.

We expect all our people to safeguard children and young people from harm by:

- adopting appropriate safeguarding practice and behaviour set within our policy and procedural guidelines, when carrying out their roles
- reporting any abuse and neglect as detailed in the Responding to Abuse, Neglect and Harm Procedure which states the Service Excellence team, or the incident Response team must be notified. It is mandatory for all our people to report to the relevant external authority and/or police. Mandatory reports must report to the relevant Child Safety Department or police. Reporting must occur regardless of whether that alleged abuse is perpetrated by our people, or by those outside our organisation including those from the child's family, extended family, their family's extended network or strangers.

We expect our people to promote equity and respect diversity by:

- anticipating and being attuned to children and young people's diverse circumstances and responding effectively to those with additional vulnerabilities

- giving all children and young people access to information about their rights, support, and complaints processes in a child friendly, developmentally focused, and culturally relevant format
- adapting our practice to the diverse needs of children and young people living in either statutory or voluntary Out Of Home Care, those with a disability, and those who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex or queer (LGBTIQ+).

Safeguarding Governance

Lifestyle Solutions' Governance and Culture group of teams approves and endorses the National Safeguarding Children and Young Person Policy. Our Safeguarding Governance team is made up of members from the Governance and Culture team, Quality and Safety Committee, Practice Assurance and Quality specialist teams and Service Excellence teams. This structure supports our people and children and young people to report safeguarding concerns and facilitate effective strengths and risk-based and informed decisions that ensure accountability to children and young people.

Our governance structure includes the Safeguarding Children and Young People Steering Group. This group defines the roles and responsibilities associated with providing oversight, management and implementation of our commitment to safeguarding children and young people.

The responsibility of each functional group for the development and compliance of Lifestyle Solutions' Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy is listed in Appendix 3.



How we meet Safeguarding Standards for children and young people

We uphold the rights of children and young people to privacy, and safe physical and online environments. We acknowledge that children and young people thrive and develop when they feel safe. To make this happen we create environments that are healthy, high nurturing, trauma-informed and meet children's and young people's physical (personal, environmental, and nutritional), social, psychological, cultural, and spiritual safety.

We are also committed to promoting cultural safety by working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, their families and community.

Our commitment to each of the Safeguarding Standards are:

1. We are committed to safeguarding children and young people

Our commitment to safeguarding standards is communicated in this policy and listed in our Statement of Commitment (Appendix 1). How we will action our commitment is listed in the Safeguarding Action Plan (Appendix 2- an internal document only).

2. Our people know what behaviour we expect to safeguard children and young people

Our people and volunteers will be provided with a copy of this policy, Responding to Abuse, Neglect and Harm Procedure and the Code of Conduct that applies to them. They will be trained and supported to understand these requirements, so they can indicate in writing they have read and are committed. We utilise clear position descriptions that state safeguarding requirements.

3. We minimise the likelihood of recruiting a person who is unsuitable

We have appropriate systems and processes in place to minimise the likelihood that we will recruit a person who is unsuitable to work/volunteer with children or young people.

4. Induction, training, and communication

We provide all new personnel with information during their induction about our commitment to Safeguarding including our Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy, Code of Conduct and Responding to Abuse, Neglect and Harm Procedure. We have a process for ensuring all of our personnel complete Safeguarding Children training.

5. Involving children, young people and their families/caregivers

We involve and communicate with children and young people, and their families to develop a safe, culturally inclusive, and supportive, high nurturing and trauma-informed therapeutic environment. We have processes for encouraging two-way communication with children and families. We seek their feedback on their goals, things that matter to them, their worries, concerns and complaints. We have a culturally responsive, child-centred process for responding to their concerns. We respect diversity and seek to facilitate effective communication and participation.



6. Our people understand their responsibility for reporting child abuse

Our Responding to Abuse, Neglect and Harm Procedure is approved and endorsed by the Governance and Culture team and applies to all our people. The procedure states that our people must:

- immediately report abuse or neglect and any behaviours of concern by other team members
- provide feedback for the continuous improvement of policies, practices and/or systems
- meet any legislated mandatory reporting requirements
- follow a specified process when reporting abuse or neglect including who will receive reports
- be aware that failure to report is serious misconduct

7. We maintain and improve our policies and practices

We are committed to maintaining and improving our policies, procedures and practices to safeguard children and young people from neglect and abuse. We have assigned responsibility for maintaining and improving our policies and procedures to the Child and Family Practice Specialist.

We monitor our people and external providers who we engage to ensure appropriate practice and behaviour, and policies are followed. We communicate with our people to ensure that they understand our policies and procedures and that the policies and procedures are effective in their teams. We require our people to disclose convictions or charges affecting their suitability to work with children and young people and we review police record and WWCC checks periodically.

We undertake formal annual reviews (independent audits or self-assessments) of our service delivery to children and young people to identify and document potential risks. We have a procedure to undertake annual reviews, as part of our ongoing compliance with safeguarding requirements.

Communication

The Safeguarding Children and Young Person Policy must be communicated to children and young people, their families and caregivers and our people as identified in the Safeguarding Action Plan (Appendix 2).

Monitoring and review

The Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy will be reviewed at least every three years. Review will include consultation with our people, children and young people and their families. Some circumstances may trigger an early review, this includes but is not limited to legislative changes, organisational changes, incident outcomes and other decisions made by the Quality and Safeguarding Committee/ Board and/or Chief Executive Officer. We retain records to document each review undertaken. Records may include minutes of meetings and documentation of changes to policies and procedures that result from a review.

External audit and verification based on a sample, conducted by the Australian Childhood Foundation, shall occur at three yearly intervals.



Appendix 1 Lifestyle Solutions' Commitment to the Safety and Wellbeing of Children and Young People

We are committed to:

- i. Children and young people's right to privacy, safety, right to be heard and to participate
- ii. A zero tolerance of ANY violence, abuse, neglect and/or exploitation
- iii. Provide physically, emotionally, culturally safe, and high nurturing environments for vulnerable children and young people who cannot live with their families (eg Out Of Home Care) and/or those living with a disability
- iv. Listen to all worries, complaints and feedback received from children and young people and immediately action these concerns, ensure responses are culturally responsive, child-centred and developmentally focused
- v. Train and support our people to a) identify early risk and danger of violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation to keep children and young people safe; and b) respond to children and young people's complaints informed by best practice guidelines
- vi. Immediately respond, document and escalate, all disclosures, observations and allegations about safety concerns as per our policies and legislated mandatory responsibilities and work collaboratively with relevant Lifestyle Solutions' teams and the relevant Child Safety Department
- vii. Ensure any safety concern regarding violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation is notified, on the day the concern is identified and before the shift/workday ends, to the relevant Child Safety Department
- viii. Immediately action investigation(s) and other safeguarding requirements to ensure safety and best practice
- ix. Ensure all our people who work, have contact with children and young people or their information undergo national police checks and hold valid Working With Children Checks. International police checks will also be undertaken with new starters, where required.



Appendix 3 Team Responsibilities

Service Excellence, Customer Service Delivery, volunteers and contractors

- Advocate and promote rights of children and young people and engaging them to make informed choices.
- Maintain a full understanding of the commitments and expectations of this Policy, as well as all other policies and procedures relevant to safeguarding children and young people.
- Implementing this policy and ensure compliance.
- Undertake any induction and training about this Policy and safeguarding children and young people.
- Seek guidance from a Leader or Specialist if there is a lack of understanding or non-compliance to the commitments and expectations set out in this Policy.
- Adopt appropriate safeguarding practice and behaviour and take protective action to keep children and young people safe from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation.
- Report any abuse committed by our people within Lifestyle Solutions.
- Assist in creating and maintaining a child safe culture of openness, inclusion and safety.
- Be committed to continued improvement and accountability to children and young people by engaging in regular review and discussion of organisational policies and practices and providing feedback to support improvement.

Business Support and Assurance

- Ensure that all our people are aware of the safeguarding requirements for recruitment and screening.
- Review and update this Policy and allocate resources required for consultation with relevant stakeholder.
- Support the coordination of the Safeguarding Children and Young People framework and its implementation.
- Evaluate and analyse complaints, concerns and safety incidents relating to this Policy.
- Provide training and advice in the application of this Policy.



Governance and Culture

- Advocate and promote the rights of children and young people and empower and engage them in support of this Policy.
- Promote the commitment to this Policy and its expectations both internally and publicly.
- Ensure all our people understand their obligations in accordance with this Policy and any relevant policy and procedural documentation.
- Ensure compliance to the Policy via an inbuilt mechanism for ongoing monitoring and review.
- Ensure this Policy is implemented and adhered to by our people.
- Ensure the development and implementation of required internal policy/procedures and guidelines are in place to support safeguarding children and young people practices.
- Ensure adequate resources are allocated to allow effective implementation, communication and continuous improvement of this Policy.
- Ensure we support our people with any decision to initiate action to protect a child from abuse and neglect.
- Ensure appropriate supports, such as counselling and formal debriefing, are provided for any of our people involved in responding to a concern for the safety and wellbeing of a child or young person.
- Proactively share resources and experience in the development of child safe initiatives as identified.
- Develop opportunities for regular discussion and review at all levels of Lifestyle Solutions to support a culture of continuous improvement surrounding safeguarding children and young people within the therapeutic model of choice and keeping our people accountable to children and young people.
- Support policy review on a [three year] cycle as a minimum or at a time governed by legislation, regulations or organisational learnings that promote a change to the Policy and all relevant policy or procedural guidelines.



Appendix 4 Definitions

| Term | Definition |
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| Child or young person | A person under the age of 18 years. |
| Code of Conduct | Lifestyle Solutions' Code of Conduct for its people aims to identify and prevent behaviour that may be harmful to children and young people who use our services. It outlines what is, and what is not acceptable behaviour or practice when working with or engaging with children and young people. |
| Cultural safety | Cultural safety is when a carer provides a child or young person, with a nurturing and safe home which respects their identification as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and allows the child to be comfortable being themselves, expressing their culture... their spiritual and belief system. The child or young person's kinship is also included. <small>Source: SNAICC, What is Cultural Safety? At http://www.supportingcarers.snaicc.org.au/connecting-to-culture/cultural-safety/ (viewed 11 January 2021).</small> |
| Diversity | Diversity is about difference in race, culture, language, religions, gender, sexual orientation and anything else that makes children and young people different from each other. |
| Violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation | Child abuse is commonly divided into: physical abuse, emotional and psychological abuse, sexual abuse, exposure to family violence, and neglect. Bullying is another type of abuse that includes online bullying. Please refer to the Responding to Abuse, Neglect and Harm Procedure to understand what each of these abuse types look like. |
| Harm | Harm to a child is any detrimental effect of a significant nature on a child or young person. Harm can be caused by: <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ physical, psychological, racial, emotional abuse or neglect■ sexual abuse or exploitation■ a single act, or inaction, error, or circumstance and■ a series or combination of acts, errors, or circumstances. |
| LGBTIQ+ | Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex as outlined in Rainbow Tick National Accreditation program for LGBTIQ+ inclusive practice throughout Australia. https://www.qip.com.au/standards/rainbow-tick-standards/ |
| National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (National Principles) | The National Principles are designed to build capacity and deliver child safety and wellbeing in organisations, families and communities and prevent future harm. The Principles have been endorsed by all Commonwealth, state, and territory governments. https://childsafe.humanrights.gov.au/national-principles |



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| Online environment | Anywhere online that allows digital communication, such as: social networks, text messages and messaging apps, email and private messaging, online chats, comments on live streaming sites and voice chat in games. |
| Our people | All who work for Lifestyle Solutions whether in a paid or unpaid capacity, including employees, casual employees, volunteers (eg Foster Carers/Kinship Carers and Camp To Belong workers, Board and committee members, and contractors. |
| Risk management | In the context of creating safe environments for children and young people, risk management consists of assessing and taking steps to minimise the risks of harm to children and young people because of the action of an employee, volunteer, contractor or another child or young person. Risk management includes development of collaborative, strength focused safety plans to control danger and/or reduce or minimise risk situations where children and young people may be abused. |
| The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (Royal Commission) | An independent inquiry established in 2013 by the Australian Government to examine and report upon responses by institutions to instances and allegations of child sexual abuse in educational institutions, religious groups, sporting organisations, state institutions and youth organisations. The findings provide recommendations to the Government on how to improve laws, policies, structures and practices to prevent such harm from re-occurring. https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/ |
| United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child | Is an international agreement setting out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of every child, regardless of their ability, race or religion. https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx |



Related legislation

[Children and Young Persons \(Care and Protection\) Act 1998 \(NSW\)](#)

[Care and Protection of Children Act 2007 \(NT\)](#)

[Care and Protection of Children \(Placement Arrangement\) \(NT\)](#)

[Child Protection Act 1999 \(Qld\)](#)

[Child Protection Regulation 2011 \(Qld\)](#)

[Child Safety and Wellbeing Act \(2005\) \(VIC\)](#)

[Child Wellbeing and Safety Regulations 2017 \(VIC\)](#)

[Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 \(VIC\)](#)

[Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 Act No. 96/2005 \(VIC\)](#)

[Commission for Children and Young People Act 2012 \(VIC\)](#)

[Charter of Human rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 \(VIC\)](#)

[Children and Young People \(Safety\) Act 2017 \(SA\)](#)

[Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment \(Oversight and Enforcement of Child Safe Standards\) Act 2016 No. 63 \(VIC\)](#)

[Children and Community Services Act 2004 \(WA\)](#)

[Victorian Compulsory Child Safe Standards 2016 \(VIC\)](#)

[Privacy Act \(1988\)](#)