

1.0 Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy Statement



1. Purpose

Monash City Council (MCC) provides a range of services to support children and young people from birth to 25 years, which include:

- Maternal and Child Health
- Immunisation services
- Kindergarten planning and support
- Long day care and kindergarten
- Family Day Care
- Playground provision and maintenance
- Libraries
- Aquatic services including swimming lessons; gyms; sporting facilities; and
- Youth activities and support services

Council promotes equity and respects diversity by:

- Actively anticipating children's diverse circumstances and responding effectively to those with additional vulnerabilities
- By giving children access to information, support and complaints processes
- Through paying particular attention to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with a disability and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Council's commitment to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect, has been endorsed by the Chief Executive Officer and Executive Leadership Team.

It is the responsibility of all at Council, from the Executive to employees, contractors and volunteers to understand the important responsibility they have to:

- Protect children and young people from all forms of abuse, bullying and exploitation by our people
- Be alert to incidents of child abuse and neglect occurring outside the scope of our operations and 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 or access our programs and services

It is expected that everyone, regardless of their role or level of responsibility, will act to safeguard children from such harm by:

- Adopting the practices and behavior we have set as our standard when carrying out their roles
- Reporting any abuse or neglect of which they become aware to our management and/or to the external authorities responsible for child protection or to police, regardless of whether that abuse is being perpetrated by personnel within our organization, or by those outside our organization including those from child's family, extended family, their family's extended family or strangers.

2. Scope

The Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy Statement applies to all employees, contractors and volunteers (collectively referred to as *employees* in this document) involved with Monash Council.

3. Related documents

The following Council policies must be considered in relation to this document:

- Safeguarding Children and Young People: Personnel Practice and Behaviour Guidelines
- Responding to Child Abuse and Allegations Reporting Policy
- Recruitment and Screening Policy
- Code of Conduct for Employees
- Disciplinary Policy and Procedures
- Volunteer Code of Conduct.
- Child Safe Standards Reportable Conduct Reporting Process

4. Related legislation

In upholding this Statement, the following legislation must be considered by Monash employees:

- Child, Youth and Families Act 2005
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2014
- Fair Work Act 2009.

5. Definitions

Definitions are included in Appendix 1.

6. Responsibilities

The CEO and Executive Leadership Team are responsible for the development and endorsement of this Policy. The implementation of this Policy Statement is the responsibility of Council's entire management group. The role of each entity in relation to the development and effectiveness of the Policy is detailed below:

Entity	Role/ Responsibility
<p>Chief Executive Officer / Executive Leadership Team</p>	<p>Promote the commitment to this Policy Statement and its expectations.</p> <p>Support policy review on an annual cycle (as a minimum) or at a time governed by legislation, regulations, or organizational learnings that promote a change to the Statement and all relevant policy or procedural guidelines.</p> <p>Ensure compliance to the Policy Statement via an in-built review mechanism.</p> <p>Ensure adequate resources are allocated to allow for the development and effective implementation of this policy.</p> <p>Develop opportunities for regular discussion at all levels to support a culture of openness and continued improvement and accountability to child protection and welfare.</p> <p>Advocate and promote children’s rights, empowering and engaging children and young people in support of this statement</p>
<p>People and Culture & Safeguarding Children and Young People Coordinator and People Services Manager</p>	<p>Ensure all involved personnel understand their obligations in accordance with this Policy and any relevant policy and procedural documentation. This includes induction, a minimum of one compulsory training session, and regular discussion and guidance at supervision and team meetings.</p> <p>Ensure this Policy is implemented and adhered to amongst relevant member stakeholders.</p> <p>Ensure the development and implementation of required internal policy/work procedures and guidelines to support child protection practice in accordance with the expectations of this Policy.</p> <p>Ensure adequate resources are allocated to allow effective implementation of this Policy.</p> <p>Ensure Personnel are supported in initiating any form of action to protect a child from abuse, neglect, grooming or exploitation.</p> <p>Ensure appropriate supports, such as counselling and formal debriefing, are provided for any personnel involved in responding to a concern for the safety and wellbeing of a child or young person.</p> <p>Advocate and promote child rights, empowering and engaging children and Young people in support of this Policy.</p> <p>Proactively share resources and experience in the development of child safe initiatives as they are identified.</p> <p>Develop opportunities for regular discussion at all levels to support a culture of continuous improvement and accountability relating to child protection and welfare.</p> <p>Ensure our personnel are aware of the appropriate recruitment, screening and employment practices in relation</p>

	to individuals with specific roles in working, coaching or volunteering with children and families.
All direct contact staff, managers and coordinators	<p>Maintain a full understanding of the commitments and expectations of this Policy Statement, as well as all other policies relevant to safeguarding children and young people.</p> <p>Undertake any induction and training anticipated in this Policy, relevant to policy and procedures relevant to safeguarding children and young people.</p> <p>Seek guidance from a supervisor or manager if there is ever any lack of understanding in relation to the commitments and expectations as set out in this Policy Statement.</p> <p>Take action to protect children and young people from all forms of abuse, bullying and exploitation.</p> <p>Assist in creating and maintaining a child safe culture and a culture of inclusion and safety.</p>

7. Monash City Council's Commitment

Council endorses and supports the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 (ratified in Australia in 1990). The Convention recognizes that children under the age of 18 years old need special care and protection.

Monash is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people who access our activities, programs, services or facilities. Our policies and procedures seek to address risks to child safety. Our Safeguarding policies and procedures are accessible in forms that are easy to understand and are communicated to children, young people and their families, our personnel and the general public. We regularly review our policies, gain endorsement of changes and advise our personnel of changes.

We are committed to safeguarding children and young people

Through our Safeguarding Children Policy we document our clear commitment to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect. We communicate our commitment to all of our personnel and give them access to a copy of our commitment statement.

Our employees know the behaviour we expect

We ensure that each person involved in our delivery of services to children and young people understands their role and the behaviour we expect in relation to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect. We utilise clear position descriptions which clearly state relevant safeguarding requirements. We have a code of conduct, which is approved and endorsed from the highest levels of our organisation that outlines our expectations for behaviour towards children and young people. Our personnel are given a copy of and are required to indicate, in writing that they have read and are committed to the code of conduct.

We minimise the likelihood of recruiting a person who is unsuitable

We have appropriate measures in place to minimise the likelihood that we will recruit a person who is unsuitable to work / volunteer with children or young people. We have recruitment procedures that ensure:

- Our safeguarding commitment is communicated to potential applicants for positions
- Face-to-face interviews are held which includes safeguarding-related questions
- Two professional reference checks are undertaken
- Screening checks are undertaken, including identity, criminal record, working with children checks and qualification checks.

Induction and training is part of our commitment

We provide all new personnel with information during their induction about our commitment to Safeguarding including our Safeguarding Children Policy Statement, practice and behaviour code of conduct and child abuse reporting policy. We have a process for ensuring all of our personnel that have a direct role in working with children and young people complete Safeguarding Children training. We support ongoing education and training for our personnel to ensure safeguarding information is provided in an ongoing way.

We encourage the involvement of children, young people and their parents

We involve and communicate with children and young people, and their families in developing a safe, inclusive and supportive environment. We provide information to children and their carers (such as brochures, posters, handbooks, guidelines) about:

- Our commitment to safeguarding children and their rights
- The behaviour we expect of our personnel and of themselves
- Our policy about responding to child abuse

We have processes for encouraging two-way communication with children and families. We seek their feedback and have a process for responding. We respect diversity and seek to facilitate effective communication and involvement.

Our employees, contractors and volunteers understand their responsibility for reporting child abuse

Our policy for responding to child abuse is approved and endorsed from the highest levels of our organisation. The policy states that:

- Employees must immediately report abuse or neglect and any concerns with policies, practices or the behaviour of personnel.
- Employees must meet any legislated mandatory reporting requirements
- Employees must follow a specified process when reporting abuse or neglect including who will receive reports
- Failure to report is serious misconduct.

Our employees are given a copy of and have access to the policy and understand the implications of the policy for their role. We document any allegation, disclosure or concern regarding child abuse and monitor responses to all allegations, disclosures or concerns.

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 a 'Safeguarding Children Program Coordinator'

We monitor our employees and external providers to ensure appropriate practice and behaviour, and policies are followed. We communicate with our employees to ensure that they understand our policies and that the policies are effective in the work place. We require our employees 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 have reviewed our service delivery to identify and document potential risks to children or young people. We undertake formal reviews, at least annually, to identify and document potential risks to children or young people associated our service delivery. We have a procedure to undertake annual reviews, as part of our ongoing compliance with safeguarding requirements.

8. Records and documentation

We retain records of changes to this document

(See 10. Monitoring and Review).

9. Communication

Monash City Council commits to ensuring our Safeguarding Children and Young People Statement is communicated to:

Service users

- On our website at www.monash.vic.gov.au/safeguarding-children-and-young-people
- In age-accessible formats for children and young people
- As part of enrolment forms and program information provided to parents and families.

All 'involved' employees

- During recruitment and induction processes (for prospective and new employees)
- On agendas for team meetings
- When there are any updates or changes to this document.

10. Monitoring and Review

This document will be reviewed at least every three years, after consultation. Some circumstances may trigger an early review, including (but not limited to) legislative changes, organisational changes, incident outcomes and other matters deemed appropriate by the CEO or Executive Leadership Team.

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.

Reference	Date	Date Last	Date of Next	ST
				Endorsed by:
				Approved by:

11. Supporting Resources

- Safeguarding Children and Young People: Personnel Practice and Behaviour Guidelines
- Responding to Child Abuse Reports and Allegations Policy
- Recruitment and Screening Policy
- Safeguarding Children and Young People: Induction and Training Requirements
- Working with Children Checks
- Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy Statement Review Process.

Appendix 1: Definitions

Term	Definition
Aboriginal child	A person under the age of 18 who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent • Identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, and • Is accepted as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander by an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community.
Children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds	A child or young person who identifies as having particular cultural or linguistic affiliations by virtue of their place of birth, ancestry or ethnic origin, religion, preferred language or language spoken at home or because of their parents' identification on a similar basis. ¹
Children with a disability	A disability can be any physical, sensory, neurological disability, acquired brain injury or intellectual disability or developmental delay that affects a child's ability to undertake everyday activities. A disability can occur at any time in life. Children can be born with a disability or acquire a disability suddenly through an injury or illness.

¹ Victorian Government, *Cultural Responsiveness: Guidelines for Victorian Health Services* (2009) http://www.health.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/381068/cultural_responsiveness.pdf

Involved Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All employees, contractors and volunteers with direct contact with children or young people, their supervisors and managers • All managers with responsibility for delivering services to children or young people • Anyone involved in dealing with reports or allegations of child abuse or with access to children’s or young people’s records • The CEO, Directors and Managers.
Bullying	<p>Bullying involves the inappropriate use of power by one or more persons over another less powerful person or group and is generally an act that is repeated over time. Bullying has been described by researchers as taking many forms which are often inter-related and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal (name calling, put downs, threats) • Physical (hitting, punching, kicking, scratching, tripping, spitting) • Social (ignoring, excluding, ostracising, alienating) • Psychological (spreading rumours, stalking, dirty looks, hiding or damaging possessions).
Child or young person	<p>A person under the age of 18 years.</p>
Safeguarding Children and Young People: Personnel Practice and Behaviour Guidelines	<p>Aims to identify and prevent behaviour that may be harmful to children and young people in our programs and community. The Safeguarding Children and Young People; Personnel Practice and Behaviour Guidelines outline what is, and what is not, acceptable behaviour or practice when working with or engaging with children and young people.</p>
Direct role in providing activities, programs and services to children and young people	<p>A direct role is considered one that has contact with children and young people that is not incidental, but normally part of providing a service, program or activity for children and young people. This direct delivery may require regular physical contact and forms of ongoing communication. It may also include oral, written or electronic communication as well as face-to-face and physical contact.</p>
Emotional or psychological abuse	<p>Emotional or psychological abuse occurs when a child does not receive the love, affection or attention they need for healthy emotional, psychological and social development. Such abuse may involve repeated rejection or threats to a child. Constant criticism, teasing, ignoring, threatening, yelling, scapegoating, ridicule and rejection or continual coldness are all examples of emotional abuse. These behaviors continue to an extent that results in significant damage to the child’s physical, intellectual or emotional wellbeing and development.</p>
Family Violence	<p>Family violence occurs when children are forced to live with violence between adults in their home. It is harmful to children. It can include witnessing violence or the consequences of violence. Family violence is defined as violence between members of a family or extended family (or those fulfilling the role of family) in a child or young person’s life. Exposure to family violence places children and young people at increased risk of physical injury and harm and has a significant impact on their wellbeing and development.</p>

Grooming	<p>Grooming is a term used to describe what happens when a perpetrator of abuse builds a relationship with a child with a view to abusing them at some stage. There is no set pattern in relation to the grooming of children.</p> <p>For some perpetrators, there will be a lengthy period of time before the abuse begins. The child may be given special attention and, what starts as an apparently normal display of affection, such as cuddling, can develop into sexual touching or masturbation and then into more serious sexual behaviour.</p> <p>Other perpetrators may draw a child in and abuse them relatively quickly. Some abusers do not groom children but abuse them without forming a relationship at all. Grooming can take place in any setting where a relationship is formed, such as leisure, music, sports and religious activities, or in internet chatrooms, in social media or by other technological channels.</p>
Harm	<p>Harm to a child, is any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. It is immaterial how the harm is caused. Harm can be caused by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect • Sexual abuse or exploitation • A single act, omission or circumstance • A series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances.
Neglect	<p>Neglect is the persistent failure or deliberate denial to provide the child with the basic necessities of life. Such neglect includes the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, adequate supervision, clean water, medical attention or supervision to the extent that the child's health and development is, or is likely to be, significantly harmed.</p> <p>Categories of neglect include physical neglect, medical neglect, abandonment or desertion, emotional neglect and educational neglect. The issue of neglect must be considered within the context of resources reasonably available.</p>
Physical abuse	<p>Physical abuse occurs when a person subjects a child to non-accidental physically aggressive acts. The abuser may inflict an injury intentionally or inadvertently as a result of physical punishment or the aggressive treatment of a child.</p> <p>Physically abusive behavior includes (but is not limited to) shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, biting, burning, excessive and physically harmful over training, and kicking. It also includes giving children harmful substances such as drugs, alcohol or poison. Certain types of punishment, whilst not causing injury can also be considered physical abuse if they place a child at risk of being hurt.</p>
Sexual abuse	<p>Sexual abuse occurs when an adult or a person of authority (eg. older) involves a child in any sexual activity. Perpetrators of sexual abuse take advantage of their power, authority or position over the child or young person for their own benefit. It can include making sexual comments to a child, engaging children to participate in sexual conversations over the internet or on social media, kissing, touching a child's genitals or breasts, oral sex or intercourse with a child. Encouraging a child to view pornographic magazines, websites and videos and engaging children to participate in sexual conversations is also considered sexual abuse.</p>

Sexual exploitation

Sexual exploitation occurs when children are forced into sexual activities that are then recorded in some way and/or used to produce pornography. Such pornography can be in the form of actual photos or videos or published on the internet. Exploitation can also involve children who are forced into prostitution.

