

Keeping Children Safe Policy and Procedure

Introduction

At Learning Links we want children and young people who participate in our programs to have a safe and happy experience.

This policy provides information about our Child Safe policies and practices and includes information on how Learning Links:

- Encourages and supports children's participation and manages their concerns
- Uses its Code of Conduct to set out the Child Safe Organisation standards of expected behaviour
- Recruits new staff
- Supervises staff, volunteers and students
- Provides orientation and training
- Identifies and manages risk
- Manages the reporting of complaints and concerns
- Manages and uses Child Safe information and records
- Implements, controls, and reviews this policy.

Policy

All children who are involved in any of Learning Links' activities, events or programs have a right to feel and be safe.

Learning Links commits itself to the creation and maintenance of a child safe culture to ensure the care, protection and safety of all children engaging with Learning Links.

We will do all in our power to safeguard children from all forms of abuse and will uphold legislation and processes including the requirement to report abuse.

Definitions

| Term | Definition |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Abuse | Abuse and neglect includes but is not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Physical abuse</i> • <i>Neglect</i> • <i>Sexual Abuse (*includes Grooming)</i> • <i>Psychological Harm</i> • <i>Child/ Young Person is a Danger to Self / and or Others</i> • <i>Relinquishing Care</i> • <i>Carer Concern (*includes Domestic Violence)</i> |
| Abuser | A person who mistreats and/or harms a child. |
| Allegation | A claim or assertion, without definite proof, that a wrongdoing (abuse of a child or grooming behaviour) has happened or is likely to happen. |
| Child | Anyone under the age of 18 |
| Child Protection Authority or Service | The statutory Child Protection service. |
| Child protection | The term used to describe the whole-of-community approach to the prevention of harm to children. |
| Child sex offender | Someone who sexually abuses children. |
| Duty of Care | A common-law concept that refers to the responsibilities of organisations to provide people with an adequate level of protection against harm and all reasonable foreseeable risk of injury. In the context of this policy, duty of care refers to the responsibility to provide children with an adequate level of care and protection against foreseeable harm and injury. |
| Mandatory reporter | A mandatory reporter in NSW is an individual required by under Section 27 of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 to report to the Child Protection Helpline when he/she has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child, or a class of children, is at Risk Of |

| Term | Definition |
|----------------------------------|--|
| | <p>Significant Harm from abuse or neglect, and those grounds arise during the course of or from the person's work.</p> <p>Mandatory reporters include those who as part of their work deliver health care, welfare, education, children's services, residential services or law enforcement to children or young persons.</p> <p>The NSW legislation also mandates any person who manages an employee or volunteer from the above services to report suspected risk of significant harm.</p> |
| Mandatory Reporter Guide (MRG) | <p>Mandatory reporters should use the Mandatory Reporter Guide (MRG) to help decide whether a child is suspected to be at Risk of Significant Harm (ROSH) and a report to the Child Protection Helpline on 132 111 should be made. The MRG is a Structured Decision Making (@SDM) tool intended to complement mandatory reporters' professional judgement and critical thinking.</p> <p>Where the MRG indicates that the level of risk does not warrant a report, it assists mandatory reporters to respond appropriately to children and young people and to identify relevant supports as required.</p> <p>If the MRG final decision is "Immediate Report to Child Protection Helpline", "Report to the Child Protection Helpline" or "Refer to Child Wellbeing Unit (CWU)", you will have the option of creating an eReport. An eReport cannot be generated if the MRG final decision is anything other than the three above.</p> <p>*NB. Learning Links staff do not have access to Child Wellbeing Units. https://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/mrg</p> |
| eReport. | <p>Learning Links is registered for eReporting which means that you (and anyone else in our organisation) will now be able to sign up to the Reporter Community with a @learninglinks.org.au email address.</p> |
| Child Protection Helpline: | <p>There are two ways mandatory reporters can make a child protection report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By eReport through the ChildStory Reporter website. • By calling the Child Protection Helpline on 132 111 or • In cases where imminent risk is identified: 133 627 |
| Mandatory reporting | <p>The legal obligation of certain professionals and community members to report when they believe, on reasonable grounds, that a child is in need of protection from Risk of Significant Harm.</p> |
| Mandatory Reporter Organisations | <p>Mandatory Reporter Organisations are registered with ChildStory Support at the Department of Family and Community Services to be able to submit eReports. See. www.facs.nsw.gov.au or www.childstory.net.au for more information.</p> |

Eligibility

This policy applies to all Learning Links' staff. The term staff also includes volunteers and students.

Roles and Responsibilities

The following table outlines the roles and responsibilities associated with ensuring effective child safe policies and practices.

| Person | Responsible for: |
|--|---|
| All staff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having a current Working with Children Check (WWCC) if you are working or volunteering with children under 18 years. • Being aware of your duty of care responsibilities for responding to, reporting, and recording concerns and complaints. • Listening to children and dealing with concerns or complaints about behaviours towards a child immediately. • Fostering a safe, friendly and positive environment for children. • Participating in training and development and policy sessions as required by Learning Links and regulated external bodies. • Ensuring that confidentiality is maintained at all times. |
| Managers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing and/or ensuring adequate supervision of all direct reports to ensure compliance with this policy. • Following recruitment and selection policies and procedures. • Managing any issues that arise in relation to child safety, welfare or wellbeing of children, or employment screening. • Assisting staff and volunteers with risk assessments and the planning of projects and programs involving children. • Facilitating scheduled Keeping Children Safe Policy sessions. |
| Mandatory Reporters | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signup to the Reporter Community • Reporting concerns about the safety, welfare or wellbeing of children that constitute suspected risk of significant harm to Family and Community Services. https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au • Discussing with, or informing, your manager of these concerns. • Adhering to processes regarding lodging reports. • Documenting concerns and actions in client/child's file. • Providing support to, and monitoring the wellbeing of, children for whom a Mandatory Report has been lodged. |
| CEO | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overseeing the policy framework for providing a safe, friendly and positive environment for children involved in Learning Links activities • Responding to child protection allegations made against Learning Links staff. • Notifying the NSW Ombudsman and the Commissioner for Children and Young People of Reportable allegations and convictions. |
| Human Resources and Payroll | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registering as an employer for the Working With Children Check (WWCC) • Verifying every new staff member before hiring them. • Monitoring expiry of WWCC to ensure they are always current. • Monitor staff training requirements. • Removing any barred or unauthorised person from child-related work. • Ensuring staff training and induction processes ensure understanding of the requirements of a child safe environment. • Ensuring appropriate screening occurs during recruitment or when an existing staff member takes up a position deemed as child-related employment. |
| Nominated Supervisor and Approved Provider | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing and implementing best practice guidelines for interactions with children to ensure the wellbeing of children within an education and care setting. • Guiding professional development. • Following reporting requirements as required. • Liaising with the Community Child Care Co-operative as a valuable resource to ensure the service operates in line with national laws and regulations and best practice guidelines. • Attending ACECQA approved certified training. |
| Child Safety Officers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being the contact person to manage complaints and reporting, and overseeing the risk management processes to ensure situational prevention. Learning Links has two nominated Child Safety Officers. |

Children's participation

At Learning Links we support the active participation of children. We do this by:

- Listening to the views of children
 - Respecting what they say
 - Involving them when we make decisions that directly affect them
 - Creating an environment and supporting skill development to facilitate children's meaningful participation.
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Code of conduct

The Code of Conduct supports staff and volunteers to meet their obligations under this policy by setting clear boundaries of behaviour between adults and children. All staff and volunteers are required to sign an acknowledgement that they have read, understood and are prepared to abide by the Child Safe Policy and Code of Conduct.

Recruitment of new staff, volunteers and students

We will adopt and implement good practice standards in the recruitment and screening of staff and the engagement of volunteers who work with children. As a requirement of employment or volunteering with us our recruitment practice includes:

- Conducting referee checks
- Working with Children Checks
- National Criminal History Checks.

Our commitment to child safety is included in our:

- Employment advertisements,
 - Employment contracts.
-

Supervision of employees, volunteers and students

All new staff working or volunteering with children under 18 years:

- Participate in a structured induction program that includes a requirement to read the Keeping Children Safe Policy and Procedures and related policies, and the Code of Conduct.
- Complete the NSW Guardian eLearning module required for their role and responsibilities prior to commencing their employment.

We have a workforce performance and development system that supports staff to work to our required standards of performance and to identify their development and training needs.

We have regular staff information sessions where changes to policies are discussed.

Identification and management of risk

There is a Child Safe Enterprise Risk Register which forms part of the Learning Links Risk Management Framework. The Child Safe Enterprise Risk Register is reviewed and signed off once per year.

Risk assessments will be conducted on new initiatives including programs and projects if they are deemed to be outside our regular business processes and could pose an unidentified risk to children.

Dealing with complaints and concerns

We have a Feedback and Complaints Policy and Procedure and two nominated Child Safety Officers to manage complaints, including those made against staff working with children. We want staff and clients to be confident that we will deal with complaints honestly and fairly.

All complaints or concerns raised must be reported, documented and responded to.

Privacy considerations

We respect the privacy rights of children, their parents and our staff. We have safeguards regarding the collection, use and disclosure of personal information.

These protective security measures include:

- Only collecting personal information that is necessary for us to provide our service.
- Storing personal information securely
- Personal information only being accessed by authorised persons
- Only advising those people who need to be aware of a child protection matter.

There are safeguards for mandatory reporters under the law and a reporter's identity must be kept confidential unless the person who made the report has given consent for their identity to be disclosed. We are not required to inform the parents/guardians that a report has been made.

Refer to the Privacy Policy for information relating to privacy and information exchange with other professionals, agencies and services.

Do not exchange information without authority to do so or without your manager's approval.

Legislation and resources informing this policy

There is various Australian child protection legislation. A full list can be seen at the Australian Governments Child Family Community Australia website.

<https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/australian-child-protection-legislation>

There are various agencies and contacts in Australia and NSW that work to protect children and young people from abuse and neglect. These include:

- NSW Government Department of Family and Community Services
<https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/>
- Child Protection Helpline (Established to report suspected child abuse or neglect) Phone: 132 111 (24 hours/7 days)
- Keep Them Safe:
www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au
- The Office of the Children's Guardian
<http://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/>
- NSW Ombudsman
www.ombo.nsw.gov.au
- Community Child Care Co-operative
<http://ccccnsw.org.au/>

Procedure for applying for a working with children check

Follow the steps below to obtain your working with children check:

| Step | Action |
|------|---|
| 1 | Complete an online form at www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/check . You will receive an application number. |
| 2 | Take your application number and proof of your identity to a Services NSW Service Centre and pay the fee for your five-year clearance. |
| 3 | Give your Working With Children Check number to Payroll. |

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Procedure for renewing your working with children check

For more information about the Working with Children Check renewal, go to www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/renew

Follow the steps below to renew your working with children check:

| Step | Action |
|------|---|
| 1 | Make sure the Office of the Children's Guardian has your current email address; |
| 2 | When you receive your email from the Office of the Children's Guardian, follow the link to the online renewal form; |
| 3 | After completing the online renewal form, you will receive another email with a reference number |
| 4 | Take the reference number to a Service NSW centre or motor registry and pay the renewal fee (if a fee is required); |
| 5 | You will receive another email from the Office of the Children's Guardian confirming the new expiry date of your WWC number. Forward this email to payroll@learninglinks.org.au so that our records can be updated. |

Procedure for signing up to the Reporter Community

Learning Links is registered for eReporting, you must sign up to the Reporter Community to be able to access this service.

| Step | Action |
|------|--|
| 1 | Visit https://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/ , |
| 2 | Click on the login button in the top right-hand corner of the login screen |
| 3 | Press the "Not a member" link just below the "Log in" button |
| 4 | Enter your first name, last name and email into the corresponding fields and then click the 'Sign up' button. |
| 5 | You will be sent an email which will allow you to complete the signup process. |
| 6 | Follow the email link and enter your details as requested. Under " Work Details " choose an Educational institution/organisation or Service Provider. |
| Note | If you get an error, please email childstory.support@facss.nsw.gov.au with a screenshot and description of the error. |

Procedure for reporting suspected abuse via an eReport in the Reporter Community

Follow the steps below steps to create and complete an eReport.

| Step | Action |
|------|--|
| 1 | Notify your manager or the Child Safety Officer. |
| 2 | Login and start the MRG <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Log into the Reporter Community via the login button in the top right. Select the 'Start MRG' item from the tab menu, to commence the MRG. |
| 3 | Complete the MRG <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the MRG final decision is "Immediate Report to Child Protection Helpline", "Report to the Child Protection Helpline" or "Refer to Child Wellbeing Unit (CWU)", you will have the option of creating an eReport. An eReport cannot be generated if the MRG final decision is anything other the three above. |
| 4 | Create the eReport If you choose to create an eReport, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Click on the green 'Create eReport' button located in the top right-hand corner of the page. Note: You will have 48 hours to complete and submit the eReport, after which the eReport will expire and you will need to run the MRG again to create a new eReport. |

| | |
|----|---|
| 5 | <p>Saving and Submitting</p> <p>Once you have completed the report, at the end of the page, you will have the option of clicking on the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Save for Later’ button – Will save an incomplete eReport to return to later. The saved report will be stored under the 'Mandatory Reporter- Draft Reports' heading in the 'Reports' tab of your reporter portal. It will remain here for completion for 48 hours after which it will automatically expire. You will be able to edit the draft report as well as submit the report to Child Protection Helpline or Child Wellbeing Unit (CWU) to be processed from this location. • ‘Submit’ button – This submits the report immediately to the Child Protection Helpline to be processed. If you would like to upload any additional attachments, you can do so after submitting your eReport. You will be alerted if “Your eReport was successfully submitted” and here you will be able to click on the ‘upload attachments’ hyperlink to attach any helpful documents. |
| 6 | <p>After submitting the eReport</p> <p>After submitting the eReport, you will be taken to the ‘ENGAGEMENT SUBMITTED’ page. From this page you can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attach supporting documents by clicking the ‘Attachments’ button. • ‘Engagement Comments’ serve as an opportunity to add ad-hoc information you may have forgotten, when you initially completed the report or now see as useful for the agency to be aware of. • To add an engagement comment place the information in the ‘Add more info.....’ text box located at the bottom of the screen or attach a document by clicking on the paper clip icon then pressing the green ‘ADD’ button below the text box. <p>Additional functions when viewing an eReport</p> <p>When viewing an eReport that you have already submitted, in the top right hand corner your eReprt will notice two buttons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Generate PDF’ button: Allows you to print or download your eReport. • More information on eReport status progression and what happens after you have submitted your eReport, please refer to Getting updates on your eReport. |
| 7 | Record details of the report in Salesforce |
| 8 | Save a PDF of the report to the Client/Child’s file. |
| 9 | Continue to interact with the child, provide support and monitor the identified risk. |
| 10 | Liaise and follow up with key stakeholders including the Department of Family and Community Services, other service providers, and the child and parents as required. |
| 11 | <p>Confirm with your manager that you have submitted a report.</p> <p>Confirm that the following information is sent to the Child Safety Officer dpeacock-smith@learninglinks.org.au</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The details of the concern regarding the child’s wellbeing; • The reporting documents; • The outcome of the report lodged |

Procedure for reporting suspected abuse via the help line

Follow the steps below to report suspected abuse of a child via the Child Protection Helpline. Note only use the helpline if you are unable to complete an eReport

| Step | Action |
|------|---|
| 1 | Notify your manager or the Child Safety Officer. |
| 2 | Use the Mandatory Reporter Guide (MRG) to assess the level of risk |
| 3 | <p>Report the suspected abuse to the Department of Family and Community Services. Call the Child Protection Helpline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cases of significant risk of harm: 132 111 • Cases where imminent risk is identified: 133 627. |
| 4 | Record details of the report including the written receipt of the report having been |

| | |
|---|--|
| | lodged in Salesforce, and if using the mandatory reporters guide, print out the analysis and place it in the child's file. |
| 5 | Continue to interact with the child, provide support and monitor the identified risk. |
| 6 | Liaise and follow up with key stakeholders including the Department of Family and Community Services, other service providers, and the child and parents as required. |
| 7 | <p>Confirm with your manager that you have submitted a report. Confirm that the following information is sent to the Child Safety Officer -dpeacock-smith@learninglinks.org.au</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The details of the concern regarding the child's wellbeing; • The reporting documents; • The outcome of the report lodged |

Training support for staff

Building a child-safe culture requires informed and supported individuals who understand their role in ensuring a safe environment for children. We provide initial and ongoing training for staff to ensure they understand the requirement of a child safe environment.

We utilise training developed by the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian. To access all the Child Safe Training run by the Children's Guardian Office refer to: <http://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/become-a-child-safe-organisation/child-safe-training>

Please refer to the Role Based Training Requirements for Staff and Volunteers in Appendix 1 to see the training modules required for your role.

| Role | Action |
|---|--|
| Staff who work in child related roles and are required to have a WWCC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian Child Safe eLearning modules required for their role: http://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/child-safe-elearning • Must attend a Keeping Children Safe Policy Training session. These sessions are run throughout the year (or as part of your induction). To find out the time and location of scheduled sessions access the LL Training and Events Calendar on the Staff Information Hub. • The Office of the Children's Guardian also offers a free 1-day Child Safe training sessions for staff who want to attend. This training is recommended for managers. http://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/ |
| Mandatory Reporters | Family and Community Services provide resources for mandatory reporters including a mandatory reporter guide. |
| CEO | The NSW Ombudsman offers a range of quality training workshops https://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au/training-workshops-and-events/training-and-events-calendar |
| HR/Payroll | <p>Complete the required eLearning modules including the Working With Children Check module. http://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/news--training-and-events/elearning HR Manager to attend child safe training workshops for creating safe environments for children and young people. https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/child-safe-training</p> |
| Nominated & Certified Supervisors | The Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) requires Nominated Supervisors and Certified Supervisors to attend approved training. |

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Procedure for completing the eLearning modules

Follow the steps below to undertake the mandatory NWS Office of the Children's Guardian eLearning modules for your role:

| Step | Action |
|------|---|
| 1 | Check the Child Safe role based Training Matrix to confirm the modules you must complete (see appendix 1) |
| 2 | Login to the OOCG website: https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/elearning/elearning |
| 3 | Create your unique login details to access the modules. |
| 4 | Complete the modules, saving your progress as required. |
| 5 | Send the screen shot confirming your successful module completion to HR OR Send a copy of your Certificate confirming successful module completion to HR |

Procedure for booking your attendance at Keeping Children Safe & Code of Conduct Policy Training

Follow the steps below to confirm attendance at a Keeping Children Safe Policy session:

Note: Client Services Staff may attend this training as part of their Group Induction.

| Step | Action |
|------|---|
| 1 | Access your Outlook Inbox for your email invitation from jducrou@learninglinks.org.au |
| 2 | Send your RSVP to jducrou@learninglinks.org.au to confirm your attendance |
| 3 | Sign the Attendance Register when you attend the Keeping Children Safe Policy training session. |

Review

We will monitor the implementation of our child safe policies and procedures. We will review incidents, reports and complaints. We will introduce changes to procedures and this policy as required. This policy will be formally reviewed every two years.

Related policies and procedures

- Code of Conduct Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Feedback and Complaints Policy and Procedure
- Recruitment Policy and Procedure
- Responsible Person Policy and Procedure
- Family Participation and Communication Policy and Procedure
- Child Safe Enterprise Risk Register
- Delivery and Collection of Children Policy and Procedure
- Sign In & Out Procedure
- CSO Role Based Training Requirement Matrix for Staff and Volunteers

Document control

This table outlines the control details for this document.

| Element | Details |
|----------------|--|
| Document Name | Keeping Children Safe Policy and Procedure |
| Document Owner | Diane Peacock-Smith |
| Version Number | 2.0 |
| Effective Date | 18 July 2018 |
| Review Date | 18 July 2020 |
| Authorisation | Birgitte Maibom |

Instructions: Identify which group you belong to, then complete the appropriate training.

Group A – Childcare Workers, Educators, Education Specialists, HIPPIY Home Tutors, MyTime Facilitators, Occupational Therapists, Provisional Psychologists, Psychologists, Reading/Counting for Life Coordinators, Speech Pathologists, Teachers.

Group B – Customer Care Consultants and Customer Care Representatives

Group C – Human Resources

Group D – Coordinators, General Managers, Managers

Group E – Exempt – Accounts, Marketing, Fundraising, Corporate Partnerships and Housie staff

| Training Events and Modules | Group A | Group B | Group C | Group D | Group E |
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Classroom Training | | | | | |
| Keeping Children Safe Policy Training session (40 mins) | X | X | | X | |
| <i>Please email jducrou@learninglinks.org.au to organise your booking within 3 months of starting with LL. Note: Speech Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, Psychologists, and Education Specialists complete this session as part of their group induction and do not need to contact J Ducrou.</i> | | | | | |
| The Office of the Children's Guardian. Child Safe: My eLearning Modules | | | | | |
| Training Events and Modules | Group A | Group B | Group C | Group D | Group E |
| SAFESpace – Introduction (15 minutes) Provides initial overview + understanding of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse | X | X | X | X | |
| Risk Management (30 minutes) Provides overview of the requirement for organisations to have a comprehensive risk management plan + for risk assessments to be conducted across settings and programs conducted | X | | X | X | |
| Situational Prevention (30 minutes) Focuses on children and service-related considerations | X | | X | X | |
| Policies and Procedures (30 minutes) Overview of the necessity for comprehensive policies and procedures to support Child Safe initiatives and focus | X | | X | X | |
| Organisational Culture (30 minutes) Overview of how culture impacts a ChildSafe organisation + positive culture to support a Child Safe organization | X | | X | X | |
| Reporting allegations and incidents (30 minutes) Overview of how to report allegations of professional misconduct + lodge a report regarding a child deemed at Risk of Significant Harm | X | | X | X | |
| Recruitment Process (30 minutes) Overview of all aspects of recruitment | | | X | X | |
| The Working with Children Check (30 minutes) Overview of Who, What, When, Where and Why | | | X | X | |

How to access the eLearning modules:

Register at <http://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/child-safe-elearning>

How to obtain proof of module completion:

- When you have completed a module print a copy of your certificate or take a screen print of your verification
- and send a copy to HR at Learning Links.
- Your Progress within a module can be saved at any time. Your successful completion of each module will be evident on your My Progress page.
- For more information please refer to the LL Keeping Children Safe Policy and Procedures.