

GREATER SHEPPARTON CITY COUNCIL

Policy Number 46.POL1

Child Safe Policy

Version 1.0

Adopted 19 September 2018

Last Reviewed 19 September 2018

Business Unit:	People and Development
Responsible Officer:	Manager People and Development
Approved By:	Chief Executive Officer
Next Review:	19 September 2020

PURPOSE

Greater Shepparton City Council is committed to promoting and protecting the interests and safety of children. We have zero tolerance for child abuse.

Everyone working at Greater Shepparton City Council is responsible for the care and protection of children and reporting information about child abuse.

OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this policy is

1. To facilitate the prevention of child abuse occurring within Greater Shepparton City Council, through the implementation of training programs, recruitment guidelines and providing a process for the disclosure of an incident or concern.
2. To ensure that all parties are aware of their responsibilities for identifying possible occasions for child abuse and for establishing controls and procedures for preventing such abuse and/or detecting such abuse when it occurs.
3. To provide guidance to staff/volunteers/contractors as to action that should be taken where they suspect any abuse within or outside of the organisation.
4. To provide a clear statement to staff/volunteers/contractors forbidding any such abuse.
5. To provide assurance that any and all suspected abuse will be reported and fully investigated.

SCOPE

Council is committed to creating a culture of child safety and recognises that protecting children and preventing and responding to child abuse is an organisation wide responsibility.

This policy applies to Councillors, employees including any person directly employed by Greater Shepparton City Council or employed through an agency or on a contract basis, Council's volunteers and work experience/work placement students, irrespective of their involvement in child related duties.

DEFINITIONS

Reference term	Definition
Council	Means Greater Shepparton City Council
Councillors	Means the individuals holding the office of a member of Greater Shepparton City Council
Aboriginal Child	A person under the age of 18 who 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
Child	A person under 18 years of age
Child Abuse	Any act committed against a child involving: physical violence, sexual offences, serious emotional or psychological abuse and

	serious neglect
Children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds	A child 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
Child related work	Work within one or more of the occupational fields defined in the Act where the contact with children is direct, unsupervised, and part of a person's duties, not incidental to their work
Child Safe Organisation	In the context of the child safe standards, a child safe organisation is one that meets the child safe standards by proactively taking measures to protect children from abuse
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. Some disabilities may be obvious while others are hidden
Cultural safety for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds	An environment which is spiritually, socially and emotionally safe, as well as physically safe for children; where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their cultural or linguistic identity, of who they are and what they need. Efforts need to be made to ensure the culturally and/or linguistically diverse children and their families receive information in a culturally sensitive, relevant and accessible manner
Cultural safety of Aboriginal children	Cultural safety encompasses the child being provided with a safe, nurturing and positive environment where they are comfortable with being themselves, expressing their culture, their spiritual and belief systems, and they are supported by the carer and family
Mandatory Reporters	Mandatory reporters (doctors, nurses, midwives, teachers (including early childhood teachers), principals and Police) must report to child protection if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse.

The Act	Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Act 2015
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POLICY

1. Background

On 17 April 2012, the Victorian Government initiated the Family and Community Development Committee's Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Organisations (Betrayal of Trust Inquiry). The report tabled to Parliament on 13 November 2013 made recommendations including compulsory minimum standards for creating child safe environments.

On 26 November 2015, the Victorian Parliament passed the Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Act 2015 to introduce the Child Safe Standards.

Greater Shepparton City Council is committed to embedding the Child Safe Standards within the organisation beginning with the development of this Policy which adheres to Standard 2 of the Child Safe Standards 'A Child Safe Policy or Statement of Commitment to Child Safety'.

2. Commitment to Child Safety

Greater Shepparton City Council has zero tolerance for child abuse. Everyone working at Council is responsible for the care and protection of the children within our care and reporting information about suspected child abuse.

All children, regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation, or family or social background, have equal rights to protection from abuse.

Child protection is a shared responsibility between Council, all employees, workers, contractors, associates, and members of the Greater Shepparton community.

3. Diversity

Greater Shepparton City Council serves a diverse community and recognises and respects diversity and acknowledges that a family's personal, cultural or religious beliefs can mean differences in child rearing practices. However Council also recognises that these differences do not reduce a child's right to be safe or our responsibility to protect children from harm.

Council is committed to promoting the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, and those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children living with a disability.

4. Legislative requirements

Greater Shepparton City Council takes its legal responsibilities seriously including:

- **Failure to disclose** – Reporting child sexual abuse is a community wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the Police.

- **Failure to Protect** – People of authority in our organisation will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.
- **Grooming** – Grooming offence targets communication, including online communication, with a child under the age of 16 or their parents with the intent of committing child sexual abuse. This offence targets predatory contact undertaken to prepare a child for sexual abuse at a later time with the groomer (aged 18 years old or over) or another adult.
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.

5. Risk Management

Council is responsible for effectively identifying and managing risk and for promoting a safe and healthy environment for employees, volunteers and the community.

In addition to general Occupational Health and Safety strategies, Council will review and further develop risk management policies to ensure they comply with the Child Safe Standards.

6. Reporting and responding to a Child Safety Concern

Council is committed to complying with all legal requirements regarding child safety concerns and works to ensure all children, families, employees and volunteers know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or are a victim, and if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

If an adult has a reasonable belief that an incident has occurred or receives an allegation of abuse, then they have a responsibility to report the incident or allegation. Factors contributing to a reasonable belief may be;

- A child states they, or someone they know, has been abused
- Behaviour consistent with that of an abuse victim is observed
- Someone else has raised a suspicion of abuse but is unwilling to report it; or
- Observing suspicious behaviour

7. Support

Where appropriate, following a child safety concern Council will assist alleged victims and their families to access counselling and support services and will provide support to affected staff through Council's Employee Assistance program.

8. Code of Conduct

Council has an established Code of Conduct, detailing expected behaviours of all employees, contractors and volunteers. This Code of Conduct includes strict adherence to Child Safe Standards. Councillors also have a Code of Conduct detailing expected behaviours.

9. Human Resources and Recruitment

Council employs a range of best practice screening measures and applies these standards in the screening and recruitment of employees, contractors and volunteers.

Council understands it has an ethical as well as legislative responsibility when recruiting staff and will ensure its employees and customers are not placed under reasonable risk. Thorough questioning, reference checks and pre-employment checks are carried out to ensure child safety.

10. Privacy

Council is committed to protecting an individual's right to privacy. All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or children, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. Safeguards and practices are in place to ensure any personal information is protected.

11. Breaches

Breaches of this Policy may lead to action in accordance with Council's Corporate Procedure Managing Workplace Performance and Behaviours, which may include termination of employment and/or referral to Victoria Police.

RELATED POLICIES AND DIRECTIVES

- *Employees Code of Conduct*
- *Councillors Code of Conduct*

RELATED LEGISLATION

- *The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*
- *Working With Children Act 2005*
- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Act 2015*

REVIEW

This Policy will be reviewed by the Manager People and Development every two years.



Peter Harriott
Chief Executive Officer

15.10.18

Date