



Child Safe **Policy**

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Policy owner:	People and Culture, Corporate Services
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Purpose

1. Children and young people have a right to be safe in organisations such as ours and in the community. Central Coast Council (Council) plays a role in the prevention of abuse and contributing to the safety and wellbeing of young people that use Council facilities and services.
2. This policy focuses on how we can build and maintain a child safe environment which is inclusive, transparent and promotes children's participation.

Policy summary

3. The Child Safe Policy outlines Council's commitment to the implementation of the 10 Child Safe Standards and the ongoing process improvement and review in order to keep children safe.
4. The Standards are as follows:
 - 1 Child safety is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.
 - 2 Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
 - 3 Families and communities are informed and involved.
 - 4 Equity is upheld and diverse needs are taken into account.
 - 5 People working with children are suitable and supported.
 - 6 Processes to respond to complaints (or other concerns) are child focused.
 - 7 Employees are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through ongoing education and training.
 - 8 Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse or other kinds of harm to occur.
 - 9 Implementation of the child safe standards is continuously reviewed and improved.
 - 10 Policies and procedures document how the organisation is child safe.

Scope

5. This Policy covers people employed by Council; this applies to all full-time, part-time, casual, temporary and fixed term Council employees (and includes agency employees, students on placement, volunteers, and Councillors); any person or organisation contracted to or acting on behalf of Council; and any person or organisation employed to work on Council premises or facilities and all activities of the Council.

Background

6. The Child Safe Policy is in response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The purpose of the policy is to guide employees (including contractors and

volunteers) on how to behave when interacting and engaging with children who use Council services.

7. The 10 Child Safe Standards have been developed in response to the Royal Commission findings and describe what makes organisations child safe. The standards were endorsed in 2019 and the scheme passed parliament in November 2021 and became mandatory for all Councils to implement.
8. Council caters for the needs of children and young people by providing parks, playgrounds, recreation facilities, early education and care services, libraries, cycle paths, skate facilities as well as programs, activities and events.
9. Council also provides a diverse array of services which may be used by children and young people including community programs and facilities, delivering community events, contracting services through external operators, and providing funding to support community organisations through its grants and sponsorship programs.

General

Council's Child Commitment Statement

10. Council is committed to providing safe environments that protect the physical, emotional, cultural and social wellbeing of children on the Central Coast.

Standards embedded in governance and leadership

11. A child safe organisation is committed to child safety and demonstrates this in how the organisation is managed. Under the Children's Guardian Act 2019 (Part 3A Child Safe Scheme, Division 2 Child Safe Standards; 8D Systems, policies and processes); the head of a child safe organisation must ensure the organisation implements the Child Safe Standards through systems, policies and processes.

Consultation with children and families

12. Consultation and engagement with children and families occurs in numerous settings across Council facilities and services. It occurs via surveys and communities of practice, covering a range of topics such as satisfaction, improvements, services and feedback annually on policy and procedures.

Children's empowerment and participation

13. Council supports the active participation of children and young people in the programs, activities, and services we offer to them and our community. This includes participation by young people

(12-24 years) in the Y4Y (youth for youth action team) to help drive youth-led initiatives and ideas on the Central Coast.

14. Council provides a range of ways to allow children to provide feedback or raise concerns. We listen to their views, respect what they say and involve them when we make decisions, especially about matters that will directly affect them.

Risk Management Strategies

15. Council acknowledges that significant risk events, should they occur, have the potential to adversely impact the achievement of its strategic, operational, financial, regulatory and other objectives, especially when it comes to the safety of children.
16. Risk management thought processes, principles and practices will support the achievement of objectives, helping Council deliver quality services, improving decision-making, establishing priorities, promoting safety, minimising the impact of loss, and ensuring regulatory compliance.
17. The Enterprise Risk Management Framework covers all personnel employed by Council, any person or organisation contracted to or acting on behalf of Council, any person or organisation employed to work on Council premises or facilities and all activities of Council.

Complaints management practices

18. Customer/parents/guardians issued complaints regarding employees received via customer service will be work flowed through to the Internal Ombudsman Office who will assess whether the complaint is to be managed by that office or is a complaint properly dealt with by the Director.
19. Complaints made by parents/guardians regarding Council run Education and Care Centres will be addressed in line with [Quality Area 7: Governance and Leadership– Complaints Handling procedure](#).
20. Complaints made in regard to child based allegations that refer to reportable conduct will be dealt with under the Councils obligations to the Office of Children’s Guardian [Reportable Conduct Scheme](#).
21. All other complaints will be managed in accordance with [Councils Code of Conduct](#).

Reportable conduct scheme

22. [The Office of the Children's Guardian's Reportable Conduct Scheme](#) is a state based scheme designed to monitor how relevant entities investigate and report on conduct ('reportable

allegations' and 'reportable convictions') made against their employees as well as volunteers and contractors who provide services to children.

23. Council is responsible for ensuring employees, volunteers and contractors are aware of their requirement to report allegations involving inappropriate conduct with a child.
24. All employees must report a reportable allegation (in relation to a child) as soon as they become aware of the allegation regardless of whether there is any evidence of the conduct occurring. This is the basis for notifying the Office of the Children's Guardian.
25. Reports are to be made using Council's safety app following the child protection [Reportable Conduct Scheme Procedure](#).

Recruitment

26. Council aims to attract candidates with the most suitable and meritorious values, skills and experience aligned to the culture, vision and purpose of Council.
27. The [Talent Acquisition Policy](#) will ensure the candidate with the greatest merit is selected for or appointed to the role, based on the principles of whole-of-person-fit, and merit as described in the Act: nature of the duties of the position and, the abilities, qualifications, experience and standard of work performance.
28. In practice, the merit-based recruitment process will include a series of pre-employment screening checks including interviews, references and working with children checks as applicable along with any other suitable vetting approaches required.

Training and employee conduct

29. All new employees will be provided with a copy of the Child Safe Policy as part of their onboarding experience.
30. Child safe e-learning will be made available to all employees and will form part of the induction process for all new starters.
31. All Education and Care employees complete an annual review of Child Protection, Code of Conduct, Complaint Handling, Early Childhood Australia (ECA) Code of Conduct, and Reportable Conduct Scheme procedures.
32. All employees must act and conduct themselves in accordance with Council's Code of Conduct. Breaches of the Code (including improper conduct and behaviour) will be dealt with under and in accordance with Council's Procedures for the Administration for the Code of Conduct.

Equity and diverse needs and children with vulnerabilities taken into consideration

33. Council employees operate under the direction of the Equity, Diversity and Respect Policy. This policy lays the foundation for a work environment for employees and people (including children) that engage with the services of Council that fosters equity, diversity and respect and is free from unlawful discrimination, harassment and vilification as determined by legislation.
34. Council's Disability Action Plan is an important measure of Council's commitment to equality and inclusion off all people that engage with Council services and will guide Council with the following key principles:
- Council will uphold and respect the human rights of people with disabilities.
 - Council will demonstrate a genuine valuing of people with disabilities as customers and employees of the organisation; and
 - Council will respect that people with disabilities are the experts in their own lives and will consult and engage with them on matters that will impact their employment and environment.

Physical and Online environments.

35. Council takes every precaution to provide physical and online environments that are safe for children. This includes consulting with children when planning new spaces, engagement, and education programs around water and road safety and online safeguards in libraries.
36. Council is committed to ensuring appropriate security controls are in place to adequately protect its information, systems, network and communications. The acceptable use of Council's online environment is governed by the [Information and Technology Acceptable Use Policy](#).

Communication

37. Council will hold regular information sessions for employees, volunteers, and students on child safety.
38. The Child Safe Policy will be discussed during induction sessions for all new employees, volunteers and students.
39. Children and parents who engage in Council's Early Education and Care services will receive a copy of the Child Safe Policy, Code of Conduct and Dealing with Complaints process.

Review

Compliance, monitoring and review

40. This Policy should be reviewed at a minimum every four years.
41. Suspected breaches or misuse of this policy are to be reported to the Chief Executive Officer. Alleged breaches of this policy shall be dealt with by the processes outlined for breaches of the Code of Conduct, as detailed in the Code of Conduct and in the Procedures for the Administration of the Code of Conduct.

Records management

42. Employees must maintain all records relevant to administering this policy in a recognised Council record-keeping system.

Definitions

43. In this policy:

Child: Any person aged under the age of 18 years old.

Child Safe Standard(s): recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse provide a framework so organisations can create cultures and adopt strategies to keep children safe from harm.

Reportable Allegation: is an allegation that a relevant employee has engaged in conduct that may be 'reportable conduct'.

Reportable conduct - The legislation defines 'reportable conduct' as the following conduct whether or not any criminal proceedings in relation to the offence have been commenced or concluded:

- a sexual offence committed against, with, or in the presence of a child
- sexual misconduct with, towards, or in the presence of a child
- ill-treatment of a child
- neglect of a child
- an assault against a child
- behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child
- an offence under section 43B or 316A of the Crimes Act 1900.

Reportable Conduct Scheme: The NSW Reportable Conduct Scheme monitors how organisations investigate and report on allegations of certain conduct towards children.

Working with Children Check(s): The Working with Children Check (WWCC) is a requirement for anyone in paid or volunteer child-related work in NSW. Employers and organisations must verify the WWCC details of anyone they engage in child-related work. The Check lasts for 5 years and undergoes continuous monitoring, even if the Check holder moves jobs.

Young people: For the sake of this policy 'young people' refers to those 12-18 years of age, unless otherwise described.

Related resources

44. Legislation:

- a. [Local Government Act 1993 \(NSW\)](#)
- b. [Children's Guardian Act 2019](#)
- c. [Child Protection \(Working with children\) Act 2012](#)
- d. [Children and Young Persons \(Care and Protection\) Act 1998](#)
- e. [National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018](#)

45. Associated/Internal documents:

- f. [Code of Conduct](#)
- g. [Customer Feedback and Complaints policy](#)
- h. [Equity Diversity and Respect policy](#)
- i. [Information Technology Acceptable Use Policy](#)
- j. [Child Protection/ reportable conduct procedure](#)
- k. [Talent Acquisition policy](#)
- l. [Recruitment and selection guidelines](#)

46. External webpages:

- a. [Office of the Children's Guardian](#)
- b. [The NSW Child Safe Standards](#)

History of revisions

Policy amendment history and version details

Amendment history	Details
Original approval authority details	 <hr data-bbox="592 701 1107 705"/> <p data-bbox="608 719 1043 779">David Farmer Chief Executive Officer, Central Coast Council</p> <p data-bbox="592 846 743 880">26/08/2022</p> <p data-bbox="592 936 1374 1093">Policy created to address the 10 Child Safe Standards. The inception of the Child Safe Standards is a result of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.</p>
	<hr data-bbox="129 1099 1422 1104"/> <p data-bbox="592 1122 743 1149">D15296270</p>