

POLICY

Code name	Child-safe Policy
Responsible manager(s)	Manager, Organisation Development
Contact officer(s)	Manager, Organisation Development
Directorate	General Manager Directorate
Approval date	15 July 2020
Community Strategic Plan Objective	Objective 9
Delivery Program	9.3.2
Operational Plan	9.3.2.4

Purpose

This policy:

- ✓ is integral to Eurobodalla Shire Council creating and promoting a safe and positive environment for children.
- ✓ adopts the Royal Commission's ten Child Safe Standards as the framework for Council's procedures and decision making regarding interactions and involvement with children.

Statement

Eurobodalla Shire Council believes children have the right to feel safe and be safe.

We are committed to providing a child safe and child friendly environment where children with whom we have contact are protected, valued and have positive experiences.

To achieve this, Council will:

- act with the best interests of the child as a primary consideration.
- use the ten Child Safe Standards as our benchmark.

This policy relates to:

- ✓ all employees of Council, and
- ✓ to outside people engaged by Council to provide services to children, including in the capacity of
 - contractor
 - sub-contractor
 - family day carer and adult household member
 - Indirect service provider
 - a volunteer
 - work experience participant
 - student

Responsible Officer: Manager, Organisation Development					
Reference:		Consultative Cttee Report No:	15 July 2020	Effective Date:	
Min No:		Review Date:	15 July 2023	Page No:	1

Definitions:

Child: For the purposes of this policy, “child” refers to any person under the age of 18 years.

Child-related work: Refers to work in a specific, child-related role or face to face contact with children in a child-related sector.

Children’s workers: Refers to those working in child-related work.

Royal Commission: Refers to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

Policy details

1.	<p>Child Safe Standard 1. Child safety is embedded in Council’s leadership, governance and culture</p> <p>Council publicly commits to child safety.</p> <p>Child safety is a shared responsibility at all levels of the organisation.</p> <p>The welfare of children in our care will always be our first priority. The best interests of the child will be the primary concern in making decisions that may affect them.</p> <p>It is important to us that child safety is promoted as part of our culture and we will communicate it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Across the organisation via information/awareness sessions and the staff consultative committee. • As a regular part of team meetings for child-related services. • To new staff as part of their induction process. <p>This policy will be available on Council’s website.</p> <p>This policy and related procedure documents will be made available to Council staff via the staff consultative committee and on Council’s intranet.</p>
2.	<p>Child Safe Standard 2. Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously</p> <p>We want children in our programs to actively participate in the decisions that affect their lives. We therefore encourage and support their contribution to the Eurobodalla Shire Council programs they are part of.</p> <p>Our staff engage with children across a variety of contexts (in the home, in centre based care, at playgroups and schools, on excursions, during transport, in the community and at events).</p> <p>Across these contexts, children are respected as capable, competent, curious and creative learners and we offer them opportunities to explore, experiment and investigate in a safe and nurturing environment.</p>

Responsible Officer: Manager, Organisation Development					
Reference:		Consultative Cttee Report No:	15 July 2020	Effective Date:	
Min No:		Review Date:	15 July 2023	Page No:	2
Document Set ID: 4521906 Policy not presented for Council endorsement.					
Version: 3, Version Date: 23/06/2021					

2.	<p>Child Safe Standard 2 (continued) Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously</p> <p>Children are encouraged to express their ideas/views which are valued, respected and listened to by peers and adults. Council’s Youth Committee, with representatives from local schools, is a valuable part of our children’s participation in decision making.</p> <p>Staff develop trusting relationships with children and are reliable and dependable. They provide children with the information they require so they can play a role in decision making. Open and honest communication is supported as staff listen to children’s ideas and assist them to share their knowledge and understanding and be active decision makers in the programs.</p> <p>The importance of friendships is recognised and support from peers is encouraged, helping children feel safe and be less isolated.</p>
3.	<p>Child Safe Standard 3 Families and communities are informed and involved</p> <p>Council acknowledges and appreciates that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • children exist within a family unit • families have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of their child • parents/caregivers exercise trust when they place their children in our care <p>Council will therefore take a family centred approach to children’s services by proactively collaborating with families to coordinate decision making and service delivery for children accessing those services.</p> <p>Staff are aware of the importance of engaging with families to develop positive and trusting relationships. They will work with families:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • seeking the involvement and consent of parents/caregivers in the development of services, and • supporting children to participate and take an interest in the program/service being offered. <p>Staff ensure that parents/caregivers have information about the program/service their child is part of. This includes staffing arrangements, the physical environment, laws and key policies and procedures around child safety and mandatory reporting and how to provide feedback.</p>

Responsible Officer: Manager, Organisation Development					
Reference:		Consultative Cttee Report No:	15 July 2020	Effective Date:	
Min No:		Review Date:	15 July 2023	Page No:	3

3. cont	<p>Families and communities are informed and involved (cont)</p> <p>Information is provided in person and via our webpage, in parent information booklets (including who to contact if they would like to provide feedback, have a concern or would like to make a complaint), through newsletters, consent forms, on-site resources (for example, NAPCAN information at OOSH centres), emails and phone calls.</p> <p>Parents are encouraged to contribute to service reviews by providing their feedback.</p> <p>Specifically for NDIS, plans/services are developed with the child and family, and Council will seek consent to share information with the child's lead agency (where applicable), schools, transport providers, NDIS Support Coordinator and other agencies as identified in the child's support plan.</p>
4.	<p>Child Safe Standard 4</p> <p>Equity is upheld and diverse needs are taken into account</p> <p>No child should be treated unfairly and this policy applies to all children regardless of ethnicity, culture, religion, sexuality and abilities.</p> <p>Information about individual children's interests, strengths, vulnerabilities, learning and wellbeing are documented and used to promote participation in programs, activities, excursions and events.</p> <p>Staff communicate in a manner that takes into account children's developmental stage, background and prior knowledge.</p> <p>Environments are designed to be child friendly, creating a sense of belonging where all children can develop self-confidence, feel valued and are connected to others.</p>
5.	<p>Child Safe Standard 5</p> <p>People working with children are suitable and supported</p> <p>Council seeks to attract and retain the best employees and volunteers and ensures there are appropriately skilled and caring adults delivering children's programs/ services.</p> <p>a) We recruit appropriately</p> <p>Council's responsibilities relating to child protection include selection of suitable staff for child-related work. We will take all reasonable steps to ensure we engage only appropriate people to work with children. We will maintain rigorous and consistent recruitment, screening and selection processes.</p>

Responsible Officer: Manager, Organisation Development					
Reference:		Consultative Cttee Report No:	15 July 2020	Effective Date:	
Min No:		Review Date:	15 July 2023	Page No:	4
Document Set ID: 4521906 Policy not presented for Council endorsement.					
Version: 3, Version Date: 23/06/2021					

**5.
cont**

People working with children are suitable and supported (cont)

Council has identified child-related roles (Appendix A) in accordance with *Part 2, section 6 of the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012* and *Child Protection (Working with Children) Regulation 2013*. The Head of Agency/Principal Officer is Council’s General Manager and is included in this screening requirement. (Council does not have a Board and therefore Board member roles are not included.)

Advertising and recruitment documentation for child-related roles clearly notifies applicants that verified clearance as a result of a Working with Children Check (WWCC) is required.

Interviews for all Council roles are based on merit, ie only applicants with appropriate skills and qualifications for the role will attend interview.

Selection processes include interviews, reference checking and verified results from Working with Children Checks. These checks are completed as part of the selection process and prior to any offer of employment with Council. Employment will not be offered to unsuitable applicants.

Recommendations for appointment to a role will only be made following two reference checks. Referees must be recent, relevant and from appropriate people. Referees from co-workers and friends/family are not considered valid.

Council is registered as an employer with the Officer of Children’s Guardian and a Human Resources Officer conducts the verification of WWCC clearance prior to any appointment to a position. This is done as part of the pre-employment checking process and applicants must use the Working with Children Check website and process. (HR staff may not self-verify.) Employment will not be offered to applicants who do not consent to this process or do not gain clearance.

As part of an offer of employment and prior to arrival, the successful candidate will receive Council’s:

- *Child-safe Policy,*
- *Child-safe – Complaints Management procedure*
- *Children’s Workers Code of Conduct* which requires acknowledgement by signing the agreement section.

Responsible Officer: Manager, Organisation Development					
Reference:		Consultative Cttee Report No:	15 July 2020	Effective Date:	
Min No:		Review Date:	15 July 2023	Page No:	5

<p>5. cont</p>	<p>People working with children are suitable and supported (cont)</p> <p>Information is held confidentially in accordance with Council and other legislative requirements.</p> <p>(Council’s recruitment policy contains full details of merit-based recruitment processes at Eurobodalla.)</p> <p>b) We support those who work with children</p> <p>We support and respect not only the children in our programs but also the staff, contractors, volunteers and authorised people engaged by Council.</p> <p>We value their contribution and ensure they have a more senior officer assigned to support them and supervise their work.</p> <p>Council supports all its employees via induction/orientation, supervision, regular team meetings, participation in training and professional development, the reward/recognition program, work health safety systems and the employee assistance program.</p> <p>Children’s workers are aware of their child safety responsibilities including reporting obligations. They are required to comply with a code of conduct that sets clear behavioural standards towards children.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Child Safe Standard 6</p> <p>Processes to respond to complaints of child sexual abuse are child focused</p> <p>Council will not tolerate incidents of child abuse, will take seriously any concern, complaint or allegation related to child-safety from any individual, will respond promptly and thoroughly and meet reporting, privacy and employment law obligations.</p> <p>Council’s <i>Child-safe Complaints Management Procedure</i> prescribes Council’s approach to dealing with complaints, allegations and disclosures in a consistent and child-focussed way. It outlines what constitutes harm to a child, roles and responsibilities, approaches to dealing with different types of complaints and obligations to act and report.</p> <p>The child safety contact for managing complaints is the Manager, Organisation Development.</p> <p>The Head of Agency is Council’s General Manager.</p>

Responsible Officer: Manager, Organisation Development					
Reference:		Consultative Cttee Report No:	15 July 2020	Effective Date:	
Min No:		Review Date:	15 July 2023	Page No:	6

6. cont	<p>Processes to respond to complaints of child sexual abuse are child focused (cont)</p> <p>Children’s Services teach children to recognise abuse and neglect and what they can do if they feel unsafe. Children will know their rights, how to make a complaint, that they will be listened to and that their concerns will be taken seriously. We will act to ensure the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children.</p> <p>Staff use recognised teaching methods to discuss child safety and abuse in sensitive, non-threatening ways. Children learn about safe friendships and relationships and are reminded that our services are safe places where they can and should report anything that is not safe.</p> <p>Children are also educated on their rights, responsibilities, choices and individual perspectives in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. There are visual reminders of the rights of the child and the code of ethics for staff.</p> <p>Families are also made aware of how to access the complaints procedures available to them as part of service delivery.</p> <p>Children’s workers are attuned to signs of harm and facilitate child-friendly ways for children to communicate and raise their concerns. They are aware of and understand the complaint handling system.</p>
7.	<p>Child Safe Standard 7</p> <p>Staff are equipped with knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training</p> <p>Council will provide on-going child-safe training for those who work with children. Training will cover child protection, the nature and indicators of child maltreatment and Council’s child safe policy and procedures. Staff will be supported to develop their practical skills in protecting children and responding to disclosures.</p> <p>Our values (we are collaborative, respectful, show team spirit, professional and open and trusting) describe how we do things and will be promoted and apply to all staff.</p> <p>Staff and volunteers will agree to the code of conduct that sets clear behavioural standards towards children.</p> <p>Staff and volunteers will understand their obligations on information sharing and record keeping.</p> <p>Child safety will be an item on team meeting agendas for child-related work areas. Topics will include supervision, excursions, risk assessments, environments, children’s behaviours, grooming behaviours, mandatory reporting, policies and procedures.</p>

Responsible Officer: Manager, Organisation Development					
Reference:		Consultative Cttee Report No:	15 July 2020	Effective Date:	
Min No:		Review Date:	15 July 2023	Page No:	7

<p>7. cont</p>	<p>Staff are equipped with knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training (cont)</p> <p>As part of the induction process, children’s workers will undertake the Office of Children’s Guardian “Child-Safe eLearning for front line workers” course. This will normally be completed as part of their first week at work.</p> <p>Staff will be aware of mandatory reporting requirements and have regular training to support their knowledge on child safety and Risk of Harm.</p> <p>At least annually, Child-safe refresher training will be provided to ensure staff are aware of changes in child related legislation, policies and procedures.</p> <p>The HR team will send reminders to staff whose WWCC expiry date is due. Following a renewal, HR will conduct the verification process in the same way as pre-employment verification (see above section 5 a) <i>We recruit appropriately</i>).</p> <p>Quick reference resources are available for staff.</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>Child Safe Standard 8</p> <p>Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur</p> <p>We identify and manage risks without compromising a child’s right to privacy and healthy development.</p> <p>Council has a child safe risk management strategy (CSRMS) which aims to ensure the wellbeing of all program participants by preventing, identifying and eliminating (preferable) or minimising the risk to child safety. It encourages consultation with all stakeholders to identify as many risks as possible with the intention of creating effective and practical prevention strategies including for online environments.</p> <p>Each work area will carry out risk assessments for their programs using Council’s child safe risk management strategy (CSRMS) tools. These will be used to establish settings and identify, analyse and evaluate risks for both physical and online environments.</p> <p>Interventions will be developed and implemented so that risk of harm is eliminated or reduced and managed.</p> <p>Council will maintain a central file of completed risk assessments. This shared resource will be available for use across work areas and situations, for example, camps, school visits, centre-based care, community based individual services, events.</p>

Responsible Officer: Manager, Organisation Development					
Reference:		Consultative Cttee Report No:	15 July 2020	Effective Date:	
Min No:		Review Date:	15 July 2023	Page No:	8
Document Set ID: 4521906 Policy not presented for Council endorsement.					
Version: 3, Version Date: 23/06/2021					

9.	<p>Child Safe Standard 9</p> <p>Implementation of Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved</p> <p>This Procedure will be reviewed every two (2) years. It may also be reviewed and updated if legislation requires it.</p> <p>Any review of this policy will require the involvement of Executive Leadership Team, Divisional Managers, Staff Consultative Committee and key stakeholders.</p> <p>Additionally, complaints will be analysed to identify causes and systemic failures to inform continuous improvement.</p>
10.	<p>Child Safe Standard 10</p> <p>Policies and procedures document how the Council is child safe</p> <p>Council's Child-safe policy and procedures address the Child Safe Standards, are accessible and easy to understand. These documents, and adherence to them, will be a critical part of Council creating safe spaces for children.</p> <p>Consultation across Council has informed the development of these documents and work areas will model compliance and ensure staff understand and implement them in their work settings.</p>

Responsible Officer: Manager, Organisation Development					
Reference:		Consultative Cttee Report No:	15 July 2020	Effective Date:	
Min No:		Review Date:	15 July 2023	Page No:	9
Document Set ID: 4521906 Policy not presented for Council endorsement.					
Version: 3, Version Date: 23/06/2021					

Review

This Policy will be reviewed every two (2) years. It may also be reviewed and updated if legislation requires it. Any review of this policy will require the involvement of Executive Leadership Team, Divisional Managers, the Staff Consultative Committee and other stakeholders.

Governance

This policy should be read in conjunction with Council's *Child-safe – Complaints Management procedure* and *Children's Workers – Code of Conduct* along with any related legislation, codes of practice, relevant internal policies, and guidelines.

Related legislation/policies:

Name
Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 and the related Child Protection (Working with Children) Regulation 2013
Children & Young Persons (Care & Protection) Act 1998
Children's Guardian Act 2019
Council's values
Council's Child Safe Risk Management Strategy
Council's Child Safe code of conduct
Council's Child Safe procedure – Dealing with Complaints/Allegations
Council's code of conduct
Ombudsman Act 1974
NSW Crimes Act 1900
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Resources:

Name	Link
NSW Office of the Children's Guardian	www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au
NSW Ombudsman – child protection	www.ombo.nsw.gov.au
NSW Communities & Justice – protecting our kids	www.facs.nsw.gov.au/families/Protecting-kids

Internal Resources:

Name	Link
Child-safe Complaints Management procedure	Intranet
Children's Workers – Code of Conduct	Intranet
Child-safe resources page	Intranet

Responsible Officer: Manager, Organisation Development					
Reference:		Consultative Cttee Report No:	15 July 2020	Effective Date:	
Min No:		Review Date:	15 July 2023	Page No:	10

Change History

Version	Approval date	Approved by	Min No	File No	Change
1		GM	SCC		

Internal use

Responsible officer		Mgr, Organisation Development		Approved by	GM
Min no		Report no		Effective date	
File No	E06.0379	Review date		Pages	11

Responsible Officer: Manager, Organisation Development					
Reference:		Consultative Cttee Report No:	15 July 2020	Effective Date:	
Min No:		Review Date:	15 July 2023	Page No:	11

Document Set ID: 4521906	Policy not presented for Council endorsement.
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