

Policy Document

SAFE ENVIRONMENT POLICY

Policy No: DCSB-SCC-17.02	Version No: 1.0	Administered by: Chief Executive Officer
Approved by: Council	Approved on: 15th October 2015	Agenda Item/Minute Book No or Approval Ref: 228/15
Last Reviewed: -	Review Date October 2018	File No: 17.063.001.001
Classification: Social, Cultural & Community Services		
Strategic Plan link: Strategy 1.1.7 Ensure compliance of relevant Council policies and procedures with legislative requirements.		
References and related Policies & Procedures: Local Government Act 1999 Children's Protection Act 1999 Children's Protection Regulations		

1. INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

The District Council of Streaky Bay is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and other vulnerable people who access our services. We support the rights of the child and vulnerable persons in the community and will act without hesitation to ensure a safe environment is maintained at all times. We also support the rights and wellbeing of our staff and volunteers and encourage their active participation in building and maintaining a secure environment for all children, young people and other vulnerable people.

This policy aims to ensure the Council organisation and facilities are safe environments for children, young people and other vulnerable people and that they are protected from abuse and neglect. This policy also aims to ensure that all Council elected members, employees, volunteers, contractors and consultants are aware of their duty of care responsibilities for the protection, safety and wellbeing of children, young people and other vulnerable people at all times.

2. DEFINITIONS

Abuse means all aspects of abuse (Sexual, Physical or emotional abuse, or neglect) to the extent that:

- the person/s has suffered, or is likely to suffer, physical or psychological injury detrimental to the child's wellbeing; or
- the person/s physical and psychological development is in jeopardy.

Child means a person under the age of 18.

Criminal history screening involves obtaining information about relevant potential employees, volunteers, contractors or consultants on the basis that the information is deemed relevant to assessing the suitability of a person to work in a child-related area. The information gathered may include details concerning previous employment and relevant experience; verification of qualifications and professional registration; criminal history information, reference checks and work history reports.

Mandatory reporting obligation means a mandated notifier (any person providing services solely or partly to children) must report any suspicion of abuse or neglect of a child to the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion Child Abuse Report Line.

Prescribed position is one that requires or involves one or more prescribed functions as follows:

- Regular contact with Vulnerable Person/s (including aged care and frail aged) in close proximity on a regular basis.
 - Close proximity means in reasonable unaided visual sight that is physically being within eyeshot.
 - Regular contact includes contact that may facilitate deliberate use of position and status to access and exploit the Vulnerable Person. This may include multiple instances of contact of limited duration (attendance at a weekly program) or fewer, extended and intense periods of contact which may be away from Vulnerable Person's usual environment.
- Supervision or management of above positions; and
- Access to records of a kind prescribed by regulation relating to Vulnerable Persons (including records relating to child protection services, health services, education services, disability services and court orders and proceedings).

Vulnerable Person means those who may be at risk of abuse or exploitation due to their dependence upon others or experiences of disadvantage, and could include people with a disability, the frail aged, people from culturally and linguistically diverse background, refugees, and those living in poverty.

3. POLICY AND PROCEDURE STANDARDS

Council is committed to and has endorsed procedural standards which focus on ensuring the organisation and Council facilities are safe environments for children and vulnerable

people. In particular, the following standards reflect the guidance provided by Department of Communities and Social Inclusion on appropriate standards of conduct for adults in dealing with children.

5.1 Risk Management Strategy

Council will identify and assess potential sources of harm and take steps to decrease the likelihood that harm will occur to children, young people and other vulnerable people who use our services. Areas of risk assessment will include human resources, activities and programs, record keeping, physical spaces, and organisational culture.

5.2 Codes of Conduct

All elected members, employees, volunteers, contractors and consultants will be required to comply with the code of conduct endorsed by Council.

5.3 Recruitment, Selection and Enhancing Performance

Council will take all reasonable steps to ensure that it engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work with, and provide services to, children and other Vulnerable Person/s. Applicants for prescribed positions will be screened for their suitability to provide services. Screening may involve interviews, referee reports, checking qualifications and previous employment history in working with children, and obtaining criminal history reports. If a criminal history report is obtained information will be dealt with in a manner that reflects the standards developed and issued by the Chief Executive, Department for Education and Child Development (<http://www.decd.sa.gov.au/docs/documents/1/CSEStdsInfoCrimHist.pdf>).

Council will ensure that all staff and volunteers who work with children or who have access to their records have ongoing support and training to develop, enhance and maintain a child safe environment.

5.4 Involvement in decision-making

Council will promote the involvement of children, young people and other Vulnerable People in service development planning where relevant, and inform them of their rights and how to access grievance procedures where relevant.

5.5 Responding to Suspected Abuse and Neglect

As part of Council's broad duty of care towards the safety and wellbeing of children and vulnerable people all staff and volunteers are encouraged to notify the Child Abuse Report Line when they suspect on reasonable grounds that a child has been, or is being abused or neglected.

Council will ensure that staff, volunteers, contractors and consultants providing services to and/or working with vulnerable persons are aware of and are trained, and appropriately supported to report any suspicion of abuse or neglect on reasonable grounds.

6. Records Management

All records shall be kept and disposed of in accordance with Council's Records Management Policy & Procedure, the Local Government General Disposal Schedule 20 Version 5, records of relevance to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse General Disposal Schedule 32 Volume 2.

7. Availability of Policy

This policy will be available on Council's website and for inspection at the Council's principle office during ordinary business hours at no charge. Copies of this policy may be obtained upon request at a cost to be determined by Council from time to time.