



Safe Environments Policy

Policy No. HRPOL01

Version No:	2
Responsible Officer/s	Manager Organisational Development
Issued:	8 Oct 2014
Next Review:	Apr 2019

1. Purpose

The District Council of Grant 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.

2. Scope

This policy aims to ensure that all Council managers, employees, volunteers, contractors and consultants are aware of their duty of care responsibilities for the protection, safety and wellbeing of children and vulnerable persons at all times. The aim is also to ensure the Council organisation and facilities are safe environments for children, young people and other vulnerable people.

3. Definitions

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

Abuse refers to all aspects of abuse, that is, neglect, physical, psychological, emotional and sexual.

Child means a person under the age of 18.

Relevant history screening is the process of obtaining information about potential employees, volunteers where it is deemed to be relevant to employment or volunteering in a prescribed position.

Mandatory reporting obligation any person providing services to children (staff, volunteer, contractor or consultant) must report any suspicion of abuse or neglect of a child to the Families SA Child Abuse Report Line, or on-line.

Prescribed position refers to a position that requires or involves prescribed functions which involve any of the following:

- Regular contact with children, young and vulnerable people (including aged care and frail aged) in close proximity (usually in eye shot) on a regular basis (multiple working instances of contact or limited duration of fewer, extended and intense periods of contact which may be away from the person's usual environment).
- Supervision or management of above positions; and
- Those who have access to personal records relating to children, young and vulnerable people.



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4. Policy

Council is committed to fostering the safety of children and other vulnerable people in the delivery of services and programs. Council's commitment includes:

4.1 Risk Management Strategy

Council will review risks regularly to address any new and emerging risks in order to maintain a safe environment.

4.2 Codes of Conduct

All elected members, employees, volunteers, contractors and consultants will be required to comply with the Safe Environment Code of Conduct which sets out standards of conduct when providing services to children.

4.3 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 people. Applicants for prescribed positions will be screened for their suitability through the process outlined in Council's Relevant History Assessment Procedure HRPRO01.

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

4.4 Involvement in decision-making

Council will aim to involve children, young people and other vulnerable people in decision making for provision of services where relevant.

4.5 Responding to Suspected Abuse and Neglect

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

5. Responsibilities

The policy will apply from the date of endorsement, to all elected members, employees, students on placement, work experience students, relevant volunteers, contractors and consultants providing services wholly or partly to children, or who work with children.

The Safe Environments Policy will be communicated to all relevant audiences to ensure awareness and understanding of Council's commitment to ensuring a safe environment. This will include Council Members, staff, volunteers, contractors, consultants, parents, carers, and children where relevant.



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6. References:

State Legislation

- Children's Protection Act 1993 (SA)
- Children's Protection Regulations

Other Related References

- Mandated Notifiers and Prescribed Positions Procedure
- Relevant History Assessment Procedure
- Safe Environment Code of Conduct

7. Availability of Policy

This Policy will be available for inspection at Council's principal office during ordinary business hours and on Council's website www.dcgrant.sa.gov.au.

8. Review

This Policy shall be reviewed by the District Council of Grant at minimum every four (4) years, within 12 months of a general election of Council (or on significant change to legislation or other matters which could affect this policy).

Action	Date	Minute Reference
Adopted by Council	8 October 2014	14123.1
Amended by Mgmt Team	23 March 2015	6.2
Amended	7 October 2015	15127.4

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ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES GUIDELINES

Attachment 1

1. Council

Responsible for development of the "Safe Environment Policy" and in conjunction with the Chief Executive Officer:

- promoting protection of children and other vulnerable people from abuse;
- responding promptly to advice received from the Chief Executive Officer or other sources concerning significant changes to relevant legislation and regulations; and
- regularly reviewing the effectiveness of the policy.

Council Members have individual responsibility for appropriate behaviour towards children and other vulnerable people, and for compliance with the policy.

2. Chief Executive Officer

Accountable to Council and responsible as follows.

- Ensuring the policy is implemented, monitored, reported on and evaluated.
- Being aware of mandatory reporting requirements, procedures, and associated legal responsibilities.
- Ensuring significant changes to relevant legislation are brought to the attention of Council in a timely manner.

3. Managers and supervisors (paid and voluntary)

Accountable to the Chief Executive Officer as follows.

- Recruitment and selection in accordance with Council's human resources policies and procedures and requirements for criminal history screening of existing employees and preferred applicants for prescribed positions.
- Effective implementation of the policy, procedures and safe work place practices.
- Being aware and promoting acceptable behaviour when dealing with children and other vulnerable people.
- Providing appropriate induction and on-going training as required in relation to the Safe Environment Policy.
- Establishing and maintaining supportive procedures for fulfilling mandatory notification requirements and ensure mandated notifiers understand their legal responsibilities.
- Reporting any reasonable suspicion of abuse of a child to the Child Abuse Report Line.
- Supporting staff and responding to enquiries regarding suspicions of abuse or related issues, maintaining appropriate records and ensuring records are securely stored.
- Maintaining confidentiality and fully cooperating with the Department of Education and Child Development, the South Australian Police and other relevant government agencies in their investigations of suspected abuse of a child or other vulnerable person.

4. Mandated Notifiers

Have obligations under the *Children's Protection Act 1993* (SA) to notify the Families SA if they suspect, on reasonable grounds, that a child has been or is being abused or neglected and the suspicion is formed in the course of their work (paid or voluntary) in carrying out official duties.

Whilst the obligation to report suspicions of abuse rests with mandated officers, they are encouraged to seek advice and support from the Deputy Chief Executive Officer in relation to suspicions of child abuse or neglect. This practice will ensure staff and volunteers are appropriately supported, records are kept confidentially and securely, and any organisation responsibilities in addition to the mandatory reporting obligation are pursued where relevant.

5. Other Council Staff, volunteers, contractors and consultants (non-mandated notifiers)



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All Council staff, volunteers, contractors and consultants providing services on behalf of Council have a role to play in providing a safe environment for children, young people and other vulnerable people, and for complying with the policy.

Council strongly encourages and will sensitively support any staff member, volunteer, contractor or consultant who, though not a “mandated notifier” as defined by the *Children’s Protection Act* (1993), suspects incidents of abuse or neglect of a child or other vulnerable person.

In these cases, incidents of abuse of a child or other vulnerable person are to be reported to the Deputy Chief Executive Officer who will, in consultation with the Chief Executive Officer, determine the appropriate action to be taken and where appropriate report to the relevant Government authorities.

6. Third Party Responsibility

Council will include, where relevant, a clause in contracts of engagement, leases, hire agreements, and grant funding agreements about compliance with Council’s Safe Environment Policy.

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SAFE ENVIRONMENT CODE OF CONDUCT	Attachment 2
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1. Purpose

Council is committed to ensuring that children and young people are treated with respect, fairness and dignity within a welcoming and supportive environment that is free from all types of abuse and inappropriate behaviour.

2. Scope

All elected members, employees, volunteers, contractors, consultants and any other persons engaged to provide any service wholly or partly to children or vulnerable people on behalf of Council are required to comply with this Code of Conduct, as well as children, young people, parents and carers who access Council services.

3. Supportive Behaviours

3.1 Elected members, staff, volunteers and those who access Council services must at all times:

- Treat children and vulnerable people with respect, equity and dignity
- Ensure children and vulnerable people are protected from any form of harm or discrimination
- Ensure the environment is safe for children and vulnerable people – this includes protection from violence, bullying, and teasing, threatening and sexist or racist remarks.
- Role model positive behaviours, for example:
 - give constructive feedback to children and vulnerable people
 - ensure children and young people are aware of their rights, including their rights to respect, fairness and safety; and
 - encourage children and young people to participate in decision making processes;

3.2 Staff and volunteers must be aware of their mandatory notification responsibilities and

- inform the Child Abuse Report Line (13 14 78) or report on line at www.reportchildabuse.families.sa.gov.au if they form a suspicion of abuse or neglect; and discuss their concern with their supervisor or manager; and
- Report any suspicions of abuse or neglect which are formed in the course of work to the relevant program manager.

4. Safe and protective work practices

Be aware of potential situations and actions when working with children or vulnerable people that may be misinterpreted or misconstrued, and adopt safe work practices. For example:

- where possible work in an open and visible environment when with children and vulnerable people;
- dress appropriate to the situation;
- secure parental/guardian consent for excursions or to obtain medical treatment for children and vulnerable people if the need arises;
- adopt a calm and non-judgmental attitude to allow young people to feel safe to raise complaints or concerns; and
- if necessary, explain grievance procedures and avenues for complaint in simple and clear language that is appropriate to the age of the child or vulnerable person.



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5. Unacceptable Behaviours include the following.

- Any form of discrimination against a child or vulnerable person on the basis of ethnicity, culture, religion, gender, sexuality or on any other grounds
- Hitting or physically assaulting a child or vulnerable person
- Using language that is offensive, abusive or otherwise inappropriate
- Showing preferential treatment to one child or vulnerable person over others
- Speaking to a child or vulnerable person in an angry, intimidating or threatening manner
- Engaging in rough physical play with children or vulnerable people
- Unnecessary physical contact with children or vulnerable people. For example, giving a child or young person a hug may be culturally inappropriate or it may be frightening or offensive to the child or vulnerable person
- Condone or participate in illegal or unsafe behaviours when working with children or vulnerable people
- Make inappropriate self-disclosures relating to any participation (past or present) in illegal or unsafe behaviours. For example past drug use should not be disclosed to or discussed with children or vulnerable people
- Initiating or engaging in 'friendship' relationships with a child or vulnerable people. For example it is unacceptable to make arrangements to socialise outside the work environment.
- Taking children or vulnerable people to your home or on outings that do not fall within professional duties or that have not been authorised by parents or guardians
- Acting in a sexually inappropriate manner – this includes verbal, physical and implied behaviours
- Initiating or developing a physical/sexual 'relationship' with a child or vulnerable person
- Initiating or developing any relationship that could be deemed as exploitative or abusive with a child or vulnerable person
- Failure to report disclosures of abuse or suspicions of child abuse to the relevant supervisor or Families SA Child Abuse Report Line (13 14 78) at the earliest opportunity

6. Breaches of Policy / Disciplinary Action

All staff and volunteers have a responsibility for promoting and supporting these standards of behaviour. Where a staff member or volunteer is found to have acted outside of this Code of Conduct, they will be subject to disciplinary action commensurate with the seriousness of their actions and in accordance with the prevailing Enterprise Bargaining Agreement, and other relevant policies and procedures.

7. Reporting – if you have a concern

All staff, volunteers and those accessing Council services have a role in supporting this Code of Conduct by raising their concerns with the Deputy Chief Executive Officer. Any questions of compliance raised by Council Members, other staff or the community regarding the Code will be considered by the Deputy Chief Executive Officer, or the Chief Executive Officer.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this Safe Environment Code of Conduct, you should discuss these with the Deputy Chief Executive Officer or the Manager Organisational Development.