



## **Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (2022)**

### **Child Safe Standards of Behaviour**

In addition to Council's Code of Conduct, Child Safe Standards of Behaviour have been developed for all areas of the workforce that provide detailed guidance on appropriate behaviour and conduct when working with children, young people and their families.

While all workforce participants are required to comply, it does not replace any legislative or regulatory obligations or other professional or occupational codes of conduct specifically where workforce have direct contact or supervisory roles with children or young people.

These standards aim to protect children and young people and reduce any opportunities for abuse or harm to occur. It also helps the workforce by providing them with guidance on how to best support children and young people and how to avoid or better manage difficult situations.

Council's Child Safe Standards of Behaviour aim to:-

1. Promote children and young people's safety in Council.
2. Set expectations for the workforce on how to behave with children and young people including details of acceptable and unacceptable behaviours
3. Protect the workforce from potential accusations of inappropriate behaviour.

There are some underpinning principles for adult behaviour in undertaking work with children and young people, such as:

- The adult/child relationship must always be professional and kept within the boundaries of the respective position description.
- An adult's response to a child or young person's behaviour or circumstance should be appropriate with their age and vulnerability and the adult's level of responsibility for the care, safety and welfare of the child or young person.
- As far as practicable, an adult should not be alone with a child or young person unless there is line of sight to other adults.
- An adult should not initiate or seek any contact with a child or young person outside of the work or volunteer setting.
- Children/ young people will be supported to express their culture and have their cultural rights acknowledged and respected.

### **Acceptable behaviours**

Council's workforce is responsible for supporting the safety of children and young people by:

- Adhering to Council's Child Safety & Wellbeing Policy, Child Safe Recruitment (including screening) requirements and Standards of Behaviour.
- Taking all reasonable steps to protect children and young people from harm and abuse.
- Treating everyone with respect.
- Uphold a zero-tolerance of racism and report/ act on incidents of racism
- Listening and responding to the views and concerns of children and young people, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child or young person has been



abused or that they are concerned about their safety/the safety of another child or young person.

- Ensuring as far as practicable, that adults are not alone with a child or young person.
- Ensuring that communication with children and young people online, including via social media channels and academic collaboration spaces (e.g. Google Docs or virtual classrooms) is done from a shared Council log-in, not a personal account.
- No information (contact details, photographic portrait, online handle name) of a child or young person is to be shared with community groups, or other Council departments without their or their/parents or carer's expressed consent.
- Reporting any allegations of abuse or safety concerns regarding children and young people.
- Understanding and complying with all reporting obligations as they relate to mandatory reporting <sup>1</sup> and reporting under the Crimes Act 1958.
- If an allegation of abuse towards a child or young person is made, ensuring as quickly as possible that the child(ren) or young person(s) are safe and have access to appropriate support services.
- Reporting any charges, committals for trial or convictions in relation to a sexual offence, or certain allegations or concerns about a workforce member.
- Linking Yarra Ranges Council as their employer on the Department of Justice [Working with Children Card Website](#), and/ or [Victorian Institute of Teaching Card](#) within 21 days of commencement of employment.
- Workforce participants who have direct care responsibility must disclose any social relationship (including online) that develops with children or their families that are only known through their engagement/employment within Council.
- Workforce participants who have a direct care responsibility must disclose (before it occurs) any paid or unpaid transaction that is planned with a child, young person or their family outside of the Council work setting.

## **Unacceptable behaviours**

Council's workforce must not:

- Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse or harm.
- Develop any 'special' relationships with children or young people that could be seen as favouritism (for example, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific children or young people).
- Personally give a gift (unless it is from Council) or accept a significant or valuable gift from child or young person, their parent, carer or family members (See Council's Corporate Code of Conduct).
- Exhibit behaviours with children and young people which may be construed as unnecessarily physical (for example inappropriate sitting on laps). See physical contact below.
- Put children or young people at risk of abuse (for example, by locking doors, or posting information about them online).

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<sup>1</sup> [Crimes Act 1958 \(Vic\) \(section 327\)](#) & [Children, Youth and Families Act 2005](#),



- Initiate unnecessary physical contact with children or young people or do things of a personal nature that they can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes.
- Engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children (e.g., personal social activities) or via online forums shared with children and young people
- Use inappropriate language in the presence of children and young people.
- Express personal views on appearance, gender, cultures, religion, race, or sexuality in the presence of children and young people.
- Discriminate against any child or young person, including because of age, gender, race, religion, culture, vulnerability, appearance, sexuality or disability.
- Through the opportunity presented by a role with Council, instigate a personal relationship with a child or young person or their family members outside of work (with the intention of grooming). This includes any kind of personal communication online such as via social media. (See Council's Social Media Policy Clause 4.2 )
- Photograph or video a child or young person without the consent of their parent or carer.
- Work with children and young people whilst under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.
- Invite any other adults into online platforms where collaboration with children and young people is occurring (e.g., online classrooms or closed forums).
- Communicate with children and young people online using a personal account.

### **Physical Contact**

As a general rule Council's workforce must avoid physical contact with children and young people.

Physical contact in the following situations is not permitted:

- Without permission from the child or young person.
- Without another staff member or parent/carer present.
- Any sexual (private areas of body) or sexualized contact.
- Any unnecessary and/or repeated contact that does not relate to the needs of the child or young person.

There will be situations<sup>2</sup> that are acceptable to make physical contact as part of fulfilling legitimate work purposes<sup>3</sup> and it is acceptable (if possible, through permission) for the child/young person/parent /carers and Council workforce participant.

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<sup>2</sup> Roles where it is acceptable to have physical contact with a child include Maternal and Child Health, and Early Childhood Educators.

<sup>3</sup> When physical contact involves reasonable steps to protect a child from immediate danger or harm.