

Early Years Services – QA3.1 Providing a Child Safe Environment

TRIM Reference: D15/35312 Due for Review: 9 November 2025
Responsible Officer: Coordinator Early Years

Purpose

Surf Coast Shire Early Years is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. We seek to prevent harm of any kind impacting children and young people and have zero tolerance for racism, child abuse and inequality. Children and young people's rights, relationships, identity, and culture must be recognised and respected, their voices heard, and their concerns acted upon. We aim to foster a culturally safe, child safe and child friendly environment for all children and young people we have contact with, deliver services to, or are impacted by our work.

This policy outlines Surf Coast Shire Council's commitment to ensure that the Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services:

- take all reasonable steps to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of children attending the services.
- promotes a culture of child safety and wellbeing within the service
- provide a child safe environment that promotes child engagement, positive experiences and responsive relationships at all times, which extends to online environments.
- supports and implements the requirements under the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 and embeds the Child Safe Standards across services and programs that interacts with families and children.
- has a timely and effective identification of, and response to, children who may be at risk of or who are experiencing abuse or neglect.
- provide contact information on Surf Coast Shire Website on how to make a report for the community.

Surf Coast Shire Council child safe commitment statement

Surf Coast Shire Council is committed to being a child safe organisation and has zero tolerance racism, child abuse and inequality. The focus of our work is on children under the age of 18. We recognise our legal and moral responsibilities in keeping children and young people safe from harm and promoting their best interests.

We have a commitment to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, culturally and linguistically diverse children, and to the safety of children with a disability. We aim to create enriching experiences for young learners and want children to feel safe, happy and empowered.

We have specific policies, procedures and training in place to support employees, volunteers and contractors to achieve these commitments. We create environments where all children have a voice and are listened to, their views are respected and they contribute to how we plan for, design and develop our services and activities.

All Surf Coast Shire employees, volunteers and contractors have a legal obligation to report suspected cases of child sexual abuse to the police.

Policy Principles

National Quality Standards: 2.2, 5.1.2, 7.1

Education and Care Services National Regulations: r 84, 85, 86, 99, 100, 101, 102, 166, 168(2)(h)

Education and Care Services National Law: Sections 162A, 165, 166, 167

Risk minimisation strategies, supported by clear policies and procedures for specific areas of child safety will help ensure the environment and practices at the service are child safe. Risks in the child's physical environment can be minimised by ensuring the safety of buildings, grounds, equipment, materials and furniture used at the service, and the safe storage and use of dangerous substances such as cleaning products and chemicals.

Victorian Children's Services Regulations 2020.

Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005.

Scope

This policy applies to all Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services environments; staff and educators.

Volunteers and students, while at the service, are responsible for following the child safe environment related policies and procedures.

Policy

Providing a Child Safe Environment at the Service

Approved Provider is responsible for:

- Ensuring staff, educators, contractors, volunteers and students understand and enact all Council policies and procedures required under the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 and the Child Safe Standards (refer to *Child Safe Organisation, Code of Conduct, Rights of the Child, Working with Children*).
- Ensuring that obligations under the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations are met.
- Management, educators and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities to identify and respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect.
- Ensuring all staff understand the Reportable Conduct Scheme and their responsibilities.
- Children's wellbeing is paramount and children will be actively involved in decision-making to provide an environment that encourages them to reach their potential.
- Ensuring all children attending our service are provided with a safe environment, both physically and online, through the creation of a child safe culture.
- Ensuring the physical environment at the service is safe, secure and free from hazards for children (refer to 8. *Related Policies* section of this policy).
- Ensuring all equipment and materials used at the service meet relevant safety standards (refer to 8. *Related Policies* section of this policy).
- Ensuring the service is up to date with current legislation on child restraints in vehicles if transporting children (refer to *Motor Vehicle Policy* and *Community Bus Policy*).
- Ensuring that the Nominated Supervisor, educators and all staff at the service who work with children are aware that it is an offence to subject a child to any form of physical punishment, or any discipline that is unreasonable or excessive in the circumstances.
- Implementing this policy in consultation with the Nominated Supervisor, educators, staff, contractors and parents/guardians.
- Identifying and providing appropriate resources and training to assist educators, staff, contractors, visitors, volunteers and students to implement a child safe environment.
- Protecting the rights of children and families.
- Ensuring all educators and staff have undertaken current child protection legislation training, including mandatory reporting requirements and obligations in their state/territory.
- Regularly monitor child protection training schedules and ensure all educators and staff are up to date with their training.
- Ensuring the Nominated Supervisor, educators, staff, contractors, volunteers and students are kept informed of any relevant changes in legislation and practices in relation to this policy and related policies.

The Nominated Supervisor/Primary Nominee is responsible for:

- Ensuring that all educators and staff who work with children are aware of the relevant policies, and are supported to implement them in the service.
- Protecting the rights of children and families, and encouraging their participation in decision-making at the service.
- Ensuring learning environments are established that provide sufficient space, and include carefully chosen and well-maintained resources and equipment that will help enhance the quality of children's learning and experiences.
- Organising/facilitating regular safety audits.
- Ensuring that all cupboards/rooms are labelled accordingly, including those that contain chemicals and first aid kits, and that child-proof locks are installed on doors and cupboards where contents may be harmful.
- Ensuring Educators have up to date Material Safety Data Sheets for any cleaning chemicals stored at the service.
- Ensuring that all contractors/visitors adhere to Council's Child Safe Policy and sign in to the visitor's log book/visitors register and show a current Working with Children Card.
- Ensuring all children attending our service are provided with a safe environment, both physically and online, through the creation of a child safe culture.
- Ensuring the physical environment at the service is safe, secure and free from hazards for children (refer to 8. *Related Policies* section of this policy).
- Ensuring all equipment and materials used at the service meet relevant safety standards (refer to 8. *Related Policies* section of this policy).
- Ensuring the service is up to date with current legislation on child restraints in vehicles if transporting children (refer to *Motor Vehicle Policy* and *Community Bus Policy*).
- Ensuring that all educators and staff at the service who work with children are aware that it is an offence to subject a child to any form of physical punishment, or any discipline that is unreasonable or excessive in the circumstances.
- Participating in the implementation and reviewing of this policy.
- Identifying and providing appropriate resources and training to assist educators, staff, contractors, visitors, volunteers and students to implement a child safe environment.
- Maintaining current accredited child protection training.
- Completing SCS child safe training via SCS internal training platform.
- Reading and signing Early Years – Child Safe Code of Conduct.
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 and Child Safe Standards are embedded in the values and practice across Council Early Years services and programs.
- Keeping up to date and complying with any relevant changes in legislation and practices in relation to this policy and related policies.

Educators, Early Years staff and volunteers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that obligations under the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations are met.
- Implementing the providing a child safe environment policy and procedures.
- Being aware of current child protection legislation, including the mandatory reporting requirements and obligations.
- Maintaining current accredited child protection training
- Completing SCS child safe training via SCS internal training platform.
- Reading and signing Early Years – Child Safe Code of Conduct.
- Maintaining learning environments that provide sufficient space, and include carefully chosen and well-maintained resources and equipment to ensure a safe environment.
- Ensure children and young people participate in decision making in matters affecting them, including in relation to safety issues and risk identification.
- Providing up to date Material Safety Data Sheets for any cleaning chemicals stored at the service.
- Actively seek to prevent harm of any kind impacting children and young people and have zero tolerance for racism, child abuse and inequality.
- Ensuring all children attending our service are provided with a safe environment, both physically and online, through the creation of a child safe culture.
- Recognise and respond effectively to children and young people, taking into account diverse needs.

- Ensuring the appropriate risk assessments and action plans are completed, and all identified actions are taken to minimise the risks to children’s health and safety (also known as a risk minimisation plan).
- Ensuring the physical environment at the service is safe, secure and free from hazards for children (refer to 8. *Related Policies* section of this policy).
- Ensuring all equipment and materials used at the service meet relevant safety standards (refer to 8. *Related Policies* section of this policy). Conducting a daily check of the building and record as applicable.
- Following current legislation on child restraints in vehicles if transporting children (refer to *Motor Vehicle Policy* and *Community Bus Policy*).
- Participating in the implementation and reviewing of this policy.
- Protecting the rights of children and families, and encouraging their participation in decision-making.
- Keeping up to date and complying with any changes in legislation and practices in relation this policy and related policies.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- Reading and complying with the relevant policies.
- Reporting any concerns to the Nominated Supervisor.

Definitions

Mandatory Reporting	The legislative requirement for selected classes of people to report suspected child abuse and neglect to government authorities.
Reportable conduct	Certain organisations or entities have legal obligations under Reportable Conduct Schemes. Under these Schemes, certain organisations or entities are required to notify and investigate certain allegations (reportable allegations) of abuse involving a child, when the allegation is against someone they employ, engage or contract in circumstances outlined by the legislation.
Rights of the Child	Human rights belonging to all children, as specified in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Related Procedure

Nil.

References

Related Surf Coast Shire Council and Early Years Services Policies

MPP-052	Child Safe Organisation
MPP18	Workplace Health & Safety Policy
SCS-021	Risk Management
WHS 6.0	Workplace Facilities and Inspection
WHS 2.0	Hazard Inspection, Risk Analysis and Control
WHS8.0	First Aid
WHS 9.0	Injury/Incident Reporting
SCS020	Community Bus Policy
WHS	Working in Seasonal Heat
HR21	Grievance Policy and Procedure
HR24	Code of Conduct
HR02	Working with Children & Criminal History Checks
HR40	Digital & Social Media Policy
MPP040	Public Interest Disclosure Procedure

MPP005	Privacy & Data Protection
MPP021	Fire Danger Preparedness Policy
D14/94986	Early Years First Aid Policy
D15/32925	Early Years Medical Conditions and Medications Policy
D15/42585	Early Years Staff Code of Conduct Policy
D14/94973	Early Years Delivery of children to, and collection from, education and care services
D14/105435	Early Years Infectious Diseases Policy
D15/33006	Early Years Tobacco, Smoke, Drug and Alcohol Free Environment Policy
D14/105413	Early Years Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy
D14/94981	Early Years Emergency Management and Evacuation Policy
D22/217989	Early Years Enrolment & Orientation of Children and their families Policy
D14/70705	Early Years Excursions Policy
D18/125865	Early Years Safe Transportation of Children and Road Safety Policy
D15/16286	Early Years Access and Inclusion Policy
D15/42638	Early Years Interactions with Children and Behaviour Guidance Policy
D15/32932	Early Years Nutrition and Healthy Eating Policy
D15/15724	Early Years Employment of Qualified/Staff and Ratios Policy
D15/35300	Early Years Sun Protection Policy
D15/33004	Early Years Supervision of Children Policy
D15/38683	Early Years Water Safety Policy
D14/104807	Early Years Food Safety Policy
D15/32929	Early Years Nappy Changing and Toileting Policy
D15/16337	Early Years Confidentiality, Management and Storage of Records Policy
D16/36657	Early Years Use of Electronic Devices Policy
D16/37049	Early Years Animals and Domestic Pets Policy

Related Surf Coast Shire Council and Early Years Services Work Instructions and Forms

D15/63330	Early Years Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record Form
D14/48936	Early Years Services Medication Record
D14/87971	Early Years Risk Assessment Management Plan
D17/54211	Child Safe Standards Reporting Form
D23/104577	Early Years Child Safe Code of Conduct – Child Safe Standards
D24/112060	Early Years Staff – Incident Report Form
D24/136792	Work Instruction – Campfire – All Surf Coast Shire operated Kindergartens and Pre-schools

Other References

Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005
 Criminal Law Reform and Child Safe Standards 2016
Choose With Care: Building child safe organisations – an information and training program:
 Department of Education and Training (DE)
 Education and Care Services National Law 2010
 Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
 Victorian Children’s Services Regulations 2020.

Document History

Version	Document History	Approved by – Date
1	Approved	General Manager Culture and Community – 1 April 2014
2	Amendment/Review	Manager Aged and Family – 1 June 2016
3	Amendment/Review	Manager Aged and Family – 21 September 2018
4	Amendment/Review	Manager Community Strengthening – 9 January 2020
5	Amendment/Review	Manager Community Strengthening – 16 July 2021
6	Amendment/Review	Manager Community Strengthening – 13 December 2022
7	Amendment/Review	Manager Community Strengthening – 9 May 2024