

Hackham West Community Centre

PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE PERSONS PROCEDURE

1. Scope

The Hackham West Community Centre is committed to the safety and well being of children, young people and other vulnerable persons who access our services and programs. The Centre supports the rights of all vulnerable persons and will act without hesitation to ensure that a safe environment is maintained at all times.

The Hackham West Community Centre also supports the rights and well being of staff and volunteers and encourages their active participation in building and maintaining a safe environment. The Centre has high expectations of its partners and will only collaborate with organisations and agencies that demonstrate a similar commitment to protection.

The Centre promotes the development of an open and aware culture that links all aspects of the environment to ensure that the Centre's program is protective, that the Centre's facilities are safe and open to appropriate surveillance. We expect clear boundaries between the personal and professional lives of staff and volunteers.

The Centre will build an open and aware culture:

- focusing on the relationship between staff/volunteers and children and other vulnerable persons and ensuring that there are clear boundaries between roles;
- which ensure that our programs are accountable and open to outside scrutiny and influence
- supporting staff and volunteers through the provision of rigorous recruitment practices, adequate staffing levels and ongoing supervision and training
- which ensure that the rights of all vulnerable persons are articulated and acted upon
- The appointment of a dedicated Child Protection Coordinator

2. Definitions

Child means a person under the age of 18

Criminal history assessment involves obtaining information about potential employees and volunteers on the basis that the information is deemed relevant to working 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.

<i>Child Safe Environment</i>	an environment which protects children from abuse and/or neglect and harm
<i>Abuse</i>	abuse can be physical, emotional and sexual and/or neglect and include harassing behaviours like bullying including cyber bullying.
<i>Elder</i>	refers to a person aged 65 or older
<i>Vulnerable People</i>	refers to those who may be at risk of abuse or exploitation due to their dependency on others or experiences of disadvantage, and could include people with a physical, intellectual or psychological disability, the frail aged, children, people from culturally and linguistically diverse background, refugees, and those living in poverty.

“Abuse is a violation of an individual’s human and civil rights by any other person or persons.”

3. Procedures

Managing Risk to Minimise Abuse

A safe environment is created at all times and the risk of abuse is minimised by developing strategies that will reduce the opportunity for abuse to occur and increase the likelihood that abuse will be detected and reported. Strategies are developed in the following categories:

- Recruitment and supervision of staff and volunteers
- Physical environment
- Programs, services and activities
- Reporting procedures
- Training
- Use of Criminal History Screening Checks

Recruitment and Supervision of Paid Staff and Volunteers

The Board of Management, with support of delegated authority positions, including Senior Manager, Community Development Officer as well as Child Protection Coordinator, will ensure that the position descriptions for all paid and unpaid positions associated with the Centre’s activities are assessed and those positions that involve one or more prescribed functions are identified and included in the Register of Prescribed Positions.

When identifying whether a person or position performs prescribed function, the key consideration will be whether the person’s role will ordinarily involve regular contact with children (or their records) rather than their position title or their position description. Consideration will also be given to how the

definitions of regular contact, close proximity on a regular basis and prescribed records apply to people and positions within the organisation.

The Centre requires that a criminal history screening check is conducted for all individuals who apply for or are appointed to prescribed positions unless an exemption applies under the Act.

Rigorous recruitment processes are vital to providing a component in the creation of a safe environment at the Centre. We believe that paid staff and volunteers have exactly the same responsibilities when it comes to the development of a child safe and vulnerable person's environment within the Centre.

By demonstrating a professional and rigorous approach to the selection and supervision of staff and volunteers, the Centre will attract good quality individuals and deter potential offenders. The Centre will implement the following strategies:

- position descriptions will be developed for all staff and volunteers that:
 - clearly outline the nature of the position
 - the range of tasks
 - the expectations and accountabilities of the role
 - including specific information regarding child protection and vulnerable people issues
- formal interview processes in which the applicant's skills, abilities, interests and potential are evaluated against the Job/Role Description will be undertaken for all paid and voluntary positions
- interviews for all positions that have direct contact with children and vulnerable people will include specific questions about protection issues.
- claims made in position applications will be checked and referees will always be contacted
- a comprehensive induction process that provides an overview of the Centre as well as specific details on staff supervision and support and the *Protection of Children and Vulnerable Persons Procedure* will be conducted by the volunteer/programme team leader
- Criminal History Screening Checks through the Department of Human Services will be conducted for all new staff/volunteers, prior to their commencement and every 3 years & 5 years Working with Children Checks thereafter
- National Police Checks will be conducted for all new staff/volunteers prior to their commencement and every 2 years thereafter.
- regular and ongoing staff supervision and professional development sessions will be scheduled for all paid staff and volunteers
- supervision of staff and volunteers who are involved in the delivery of programs for children and vulnerable people will have a particular focus on establishing and maintaining appropriate professional boundaries and will ensure that poor practice is addressed and remedied by, firstly:
 - Reporting concerns to the Child Protection Coordinator
 - reporting concerns to the Chairperson of the Board of Management/Team Leader
 - discussing the issue with Community Development Officer/Senior Manager
 - referring to the Code of Conduct and Ethics. All staff/volunteers will sign a statement of acceptance that clearly describes appropriate behaviours in relation to staff/volunteers and their interactions with children/vulnerable people. All breaches of the Code of

Conduct will be addressed by the Senior Manager/Community Development Officer and the Board of Management

- performance appraisals of all paid staff and volunteers will be conducted on an annual basis.

Program and Activities including Physical Environment

In order to reduce the potential for abuse to occur, the Centre will work towards the protection of children and vulnerable people at all times to promote an environment where:

- all rooms that are utilised by programs for children and vulnerable people are open and accessible;
- staff ratios are appropriate to supervise children and vulnerable people in programs which may be based in more than one room;
- in transporting children and vulnerable people there are always two adults in the vehicle. In those exceptional circumstances where this is not possible, eg medical emergencies, the staff member or volunteers will inform the Community Development Officer of this action;
- Ensuring another adult is always present or in sight when conducting one to one coaching, instruction or other activities
- on camps and excursions where the environment may be difficult to supervise, appropriate staff/volunteer ratios will be maintained to ensure that there is proper supervision of children and vulnerable people.
- All children/vulnerable people will be listened to and responded appropriately to their views and concerns.
- Outside organisations and service providers (regardless if it is an association, body corporate, sole trader or partnership) must sign on the Hall Hire agreement form that they have their own measures in place to comply with providing a child safe environment.

In those instances where the environment is unsafe or where it is not possible to provide appropriate supervision or support, the Centre will halt or cancel the scheduled events or activities until the risks have been overcome.

Family friendships and the protection of children and vulnerable people.

In order to ensure that the Centre is a safe place for children and vulnerable people, it is critical that staff and volunteers understand the need to maintain professional relationships with program participants.

Staff and volunteers are actively discouraged from entering into personal relationships with participants outside of the Centre. The unfortunate reality is that individuals who are seeking to abuse children and vulnerable people will use personal relationships outside of the scrutiny of a professional setting to establish relationships with vulnerable children and vulnerable people.

We recognise this is a complex issue for many volunteers and staff. Our Centre is a community and communities interact – personal friendships amongst families and individuals are an important and positive part of life. Volunteers in many of the Centre's programs do mix socially with the families of

program participants and volunteers do find themselves in personal contact with children and vulnerable people who attend Centre programs.

In order to minimise the risk of abusive behaviour, to protect volunteers and staff and the reputation of the Centre and to ensure that friendships between families at the Centre are not restricted, the following strategies will be implemented:

- Volunteers and staff are actively discouraged from entering into personal relationships outside of the Centre with children and vulnerable people involved in Centre programs
- where friendships between volunteers or staff and individuals and families exist prior to their involvement in the Centre programs, then volunteers and staff will identify these relationships in writing to the Senior Manager, Community Development Officer or the Child Protection Officer
- where volunteers and staff were involved prior to their involvement in Centre programs in caring or parental-type relationships with young people (ie babysitting and sleepovers), then volunteers and staff will identify these relationships in writing to the Senior Manager, Community Development Officer or the Child Protection Officer through the Child Safe Environments Family Friendships Identification Form. Forms are available from the Child Protection Officer or in the Policy and Procedure Folder located at the Reception Desk or the Volunteer Office.
- Where a friendship forms or is existing prior to their involvement at the Centre, between a volunteer/staff and a family with a child/vulnerable person that attends the Centre programs. The volunteer/staff will identify these relationships through a conversation and filling out a Family Friendship Identification Form with the Child Protection Coordinator. Forms are available from the Child Protection Coordinator or in the Policy and Procedure Folder located at the Reception desk or the Volunteer Office.

Reporting Procedure

Abuse of children and young people is a crime and the Centre will ensure that suspicions of abuse are treated seriously and reported to the appropriate authorities. These responsibilities for reporting are outlined in Child and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (chapter 8). All staff and volunteers of the Centre are obligated by law to notify Families SA if they suspect on reasonable grounds that a child or young person has been or is being abused and/or neglected and the suspicion is formed in the course of the person's work, whether paid or voluntary.

All disclosures and reports made to CARL are to be documented on the CARL Reporting Template and discussed with each Program Coordinator within that Program and the Child Protection Coordinator. Reports raised and the concern about the protection and wellbeing of children /vulnerable people will then be discussed with the Senior Manager and the Community Development Officer.

Conduct and practice at the Centre is monitored to ensure it meets the obligations outlined in these procedures. Staff and volunteers will report and document concerns raised about inappropriate staff/volunteer adult conduct towards children/vulnerable people.

Child Abuse Report Line

13 14 78

National Disability & Neglect Hotline

1800 880 052 – Monday to Friday 9.00am – 7.00pm

Noarlunga Mental Health Triage

13 14 65

Southern Adelaide Domestic Violence Service

8302 0066

ATSI Services: Ninko Kurtangga Patpangga

8297 9644

In addition to these responsibilities, the Centre will implement a reporting procedure to deal internally with all complaints and concerns or breaches of the Code of Conduct and Ethics relating to the protection of children or other vulnerable people. This mechanism will ensure that staff and volunteers deal appropriately with concerns or allegations:

- staff know that they must act when they have a suspicion of abuse
- staff know how to respond when a child or vulnerable person discloses abuse to them
- staff know how to respond when another person reports a suspicion of abuse to them
- staff understand that it is not up to them to investigate the allegation or determine its accuracy
- the Centre will support staff and provide debriefing if required
- appropriate confidentiality will be maintained

The Community Development Officer is delegated by the Board of Management to act as the first point of contact for children, vulnerable people and caregivers. The role of the Community Development Officer is to respond to initial concerns raised by children, vulnerable people or their families and to assume an advocacy role.

Training

The Centre will ensure that all paid staff and volunteers involved in the delivery of programmes to children and other vulnerable people and all Board Members undertake 'Child-Safe Environment-Our community response to child abuse and neglect' training. Staff and volunteers involved in the delivery of programs and services would normally be expected to attend 7-hour training or refresher training at least every 3 years.

Have a discussion regarding maintaining professional boundaries and maintaining a Child Focus

4. Legislative Requirements

- Aged Care Act 1997
- Australian Human Rights Commission Act 198
- Children and Young People Safety Act 2017
- Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992
- Disability Service Act 1993
- Equal Opportunity Act 1984
- Passenger Transport Act 1994
- Privacy Act 1988
- Spent Convictions Act 2009
- The South Australian Whistle-blowers Protection Act 1993
- Volunteer Protection Act 2001
- Work Health and Safety Act 2012

5. Related Documents

- Aged Care Accountability Principles
- Child Safe Environments Family Friendship Identification Form
- Hackham West Community Centre Code of Conduct and Ethics
- Information Sharing Form
- Information Sharing Guidelines for Promoting Safety and wellbeing
- Passenger Transport Guidelines
- Spent Convictions Regulations
- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Vulnerable person related screening- What does this mean?
- Criminal History Screening Checks-Department of Human Services- Working With Children Checks Screening-Aged care Sector Employment Screening-Disability Services Employment screening-Vulnerable Person Related Employment Screening
- CARL-Child Abuse Report Line Reporting template
- National Framework for protecting Australia's Children
- Quality Standards for early Childhood and Care and School age Care
- Photo Consent forms

6. Document History

Document Name:		Protection of Children and Vulnerable Persons Procedure	
Version No.	Version Date	Review Date	Description of changes
1	16/8/2021	16/8/202	
2	18/8/2021	18/8/2024	

[https://hwccsa-my.sharepoint.com/personal/volunteersupport_hwcc_net_au/Documents/Desktop/Policies and Procedures/Child Protection/Protection of Children and Vulnerable Persons Procedure.docx](https://hwccsa-my.sharepoint.com/personal/volunteersupport_hwcc_net_au/Documents/Desktop/Policies%20and%20Procedures/Child%20Protection/Protection%20of%20Children%20and%20Vulnerable%20Persons%20Procedure.docx)

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**Our
community
centre.
The heart
of HackhamWest.**