



Child Safe Environments Policy

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1. Commitment to the safety of children and young people

We are committed to providing a safe environment to all children and young people. Our policy complies with the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017, the Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016 and aligns with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

We value and respect children and young people and welcome them regardless of their abilities, sex, gender, or social economic or cultural background. Bullying and harassment won't be tolerated.

2. Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, work placement students and contractors referred to throughout the policy collectively as workers.

All workers are required to agree in writing to accept and act in accordance with the policy.

3. Communication

This child safe policy and related documents are available to children, young people and their families on our website <https://www.talkingmatters.com.au/>, on request and provided as part of a welcome pack at the first visit.

This child safe policy and related documents are provided to all workers as part of their induction following recruitment.

We encourage and respect the views of children and young people and involve them in decision making as appropriate.

We provide clear age-appropriate or developmentally appropriate explanations to children and young people including their right to safety, their right to be listened to and that they can provide feedback or make a complaint if they have a concern, to any worker or ask their parent/guardian to do this on their behalf.

We will listen to and act upon any complaints or concerns that a child or young person raises with us.

4. Code of Conduct

Caring for children and young people brings additional responsibilities for all workers. We are responsible for promoting and protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people by:

- Always following the Talking Matters organisation's child safe policy and taking all reasonable steps to ensure the safety and protection of children and young people,
- treating everyone including those of different race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, social class, physical ability or attributes and religious beliefs with respect and honesty and ensure equity is upheld,
- being a positive role model to children and young people in all conduct with them
- setting clear boundaries about appropriate behaviour between yourself and children and young people – boundaries help everyone to understand their roles,
- listening and responding appropriately to the views and concerns of children and young people,

- being alert to bullying behaviours and responding promptly and appropriately,
- ensuring another adult is always present or in sight when conducting one to one consulting, coaching, instruction, or other activity,
- being alert to children and young people who have been harmed, or may be at risk of harm and reporting this quickly to the Child Abuse Report Line (13 14 78),
- responding quickly, fairly, and transparently to any complaints made by a child, young person or their parent/guardian,
- encouraging children and young people to 'have a say' on issues that are important to them.

Workers must not:

- engage in rough physical games,
- develop any 'special' relationships with children and young people that could be seen as favouritism such as the offering of gifts or special treatment,
- do things of a personal nature that a child or young person can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes,
- discriminate against any child or young person because of age, gender, cultural background, religion, vulnerability or sexuality.

Breaches or suspected breaches of the Code of Conduct must be reported as soon as practicable to the General Manager Allied Health, either in person, by telephone on [0417 802 662](tel:0417802662), or via email at marilyn.pattison@talkingmatters.com.au Breaches or suspected breaches of the Code of Conduct will be taken seriously and dealt with quickly, fairly and transparently.

Any worker who breaches the Code of Conduct will face disciplinary action and depending on severity of the breach, the worker may have their employment terminated.

To ensure we engage the most suitable people to work with children and young people we have the following recruitment practices in place:

- our commitment to child safety is included in all job advertisements,
- clear position descriptions that include our commitment to child safety and wellbeing,
- written applications from applicants,
- face-to-face interviews that use behavioural questions to determine the applicant's knowledge of child safeguarding,
- at least 2 referee checks and qualification checks.

In accordance with the *Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016*, our organisation is registered with the DHS Screening Unit, and we link all Working with Children Checks (WWCC). All workers who will be working in a role with children and young people must hold a current, not prohibited WWCC issued by the Screening Unit of the Department of Human Services and provide evidence of this prior to employment and renew this every 5 years. We will verify the accuracy of all WWCCs in the DHS Screening Unit portal as required by law.

We will immediately contact the Department of Human Services Screening Unit when we become aware of certain information regarding any person involved with our organisation, including any serious criminal offence, child protection information, or disciplinary or misconduct information.

5. Training, supervision, and support for workers

We have strategies in place to supervise, train and support workers to understand our organisation's child safe policy, their mandatory reporting obligations, how to build culturally safe environments and their responsibilities to create a child safe and friendly environment. Our strategies include:

- Training:
 - as part of their induction, ensure all workers read and understand the Mandatory Notification Information Booklet available at: https://dhs.sa.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/103179/CSE-Mandatory-notification-information-booklet.PDF
 - complete Safe Environments: Through their eyes training every 3 years or Responding to Risk of Harm, Abuse and Neglect Training every 3 years,
 - include child safety as a standing item on meeting agendas.
- Supervision:
 - regular supervision sessions that include a focus on child safety and wellbeing
- Support:
 - an induction process for all new workers including a copy of this policy document,
 - regular performance appraisals that discuss child safeguarding,
 - appointing a child safety officer, Robert Dempsey, Executive General Manager, who has oversight of learning and education role within our organisation.

6. Reporting and responding to harm or risk of harm

We aim to ensure that children and young people are safe from harm and risk of harm. Section 17 of the Safety Act defines 'harm' to mean physical or psychological harm (whether caused by an act or omission), including harm caused by sexual, physical, mental, or emotional abuse or neglect.

Mandated notifiers in our organisation are workers who:

- provide services to children and young people,
- hold a management position in the organisation the duties of which include direct responsibility for, or direct supervision of, the provision of those services to children and young people.

Mandated notifiers have a legal obligation to notify the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) on 13 14 78 as soon as practicable if they have a reasonable belief that a child or young person is or may be at risk of harm. If the child or young person is at immediate risk, report to South Australia Police (SAPOL) on 000. In cases involving Aboriginal children and young people, support is provided by Yaitya Tirramangkotti - an Aboriginal team, via the CARL number.

Even if not a mandated reporter, any person can report harm or risk of harm to a child or young person. The individual who identifies the harm or risk of harm is encouraged to make the report to authorities and can request the support from another worker to do so if required.

Information about making appropriate reports of harm or risk of harm is available from the South Australian Department of Child Protection website: <https://www.childprotection.sa.gov.au/reporting-child-abuse>.

All adult workers (even if not a mandated notifier) have a legal obligation to report child sexual abuse to the police and to protect a child from sexual abuse. Failure to meet these obligations may be considered a criminal offence.

Following a report being made to CARL or SAPOL workers must make an internal report to management.

We will be guided by the Department for Child Protection and/or SAPOL after a report has been made as to whether we can conduct an internal investigation.

If a worker is reported to CARL or SAPOL for causing harm or risk of harm to a child or young person, they will be removed from any role that involves working with any child or young person until authorities have concluded their investigation.

Following a report to CARL or SAPOL we will support the child or young person by:

- referring the child, young person, or their family to other appropriate services,
- continuing to provide a service to the child, young person and their family and monitor their circumstances.

We will document all information received regarding the report and store this securely in a separate file.

7. Reporting and responding to general complaints or feedback

Providing opportunities for complaints and feedback ensures that children, young people and their families feel valued and respected and enables us to improve the quality of our service. Children, young people and their families are informed that they can provide feedback or make a complaint at their first appointment, as part of their welcome pack, when they join the organisation.

Compliments, complaints or feedback can be provided verbally or in writing to any worker or direct to the General Manager, Allied Health Services, either by telephone on **0417 802 662**, via email at marilyn.pattison@talkingmatters.com.au or by post addressed to **The General Manager Allied Health, Talking Matters**.

We will deal with all complaints and feedback received from children, young people or their families promptly, sensitively and fairly. We will:

- listen to the complaint/feedback,
- the person receiving the complaint will make a record of it if received verbally,
- advise of the time expected for an outcome,
- if a worker receives a complaint, they must forward it to management as soon as possible,
- management will respond to the complainant with an outcome within 7(seven) days,

- clearly document and securely store decisions and actions taken in response to complaints and feedback,
- make sure that procedural fairness is followed at all times.

If the child, young person, or their family is not happy with the outcome from the complaints process they can contact:

- Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner 8226 8666 or Australian Health Practitioners Regulation Agency 1300 419 495.
- Australian Human Rights Commission Online: www.humanrights.gov.au Tel: 1300 656 419
- South Australian Equal Opportunities Commission (for complaints relating to discrimination) Online: www.eoc.sa.gov.au Tel: 08 8207 1977.
- Speech Pathology Australia: <https://www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au>
- Aphra <https://www.ahpra.gov.au/> (for concerns relating to practitioners – Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists).

8. Risk management

Identified risk	Actions to minimise risk
Culture of organisation is not child-safe focussed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • child focused Code of Conduct is in place that sets the behavioural standards expected including what happens when a breach occurs • culture of management reflects our strong commitment to the safety of children and young people • the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations are embedded in policies and procedures • we meet the requirements of the <i>Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017</i> (which mandates child safe environments) and the <i>Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016</i> (which mandates Working with Children Checks)
Organisational workers harm children/young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recruitment processes including undertaking referee checks to ensure the suitability of persons before they are employed/volunteer with our organisation • interview questions (no prior preparation) should gauge an applicant's understanding of child safe principles and actions that would be taken to prevent harm to children and young people • all workers have WWCC with 'not prohibited' result prior to working with children and young people • WWCCs updated every 5 years and status remains as not prohibited • children and young people and their families are given a copy of our Child Safe Environments policy and complaints and feedback process

Identified risk	Actions to minimise risk
Organisational workers do not understand their obligations to report harm and risk of harm to the Child Abuse Report Line (or SA Police if child/young person is at immediate risk)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> all workers trained in Safe Environments – Through their Eyes on commencement and refresher training every 3 years after all workers trained in Responding to Risk of Harm and Neglect – Education and Care on commencement and refresher training every 3 years after all workers must abide by the child safe environments policy and Code of Conduct (latter is signed on commencement with organisation)
Physical contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> any physical contact must be appropriate to the delivery of services being provided where physical contact is required, this is undertaken in a safe way by explaining why contact is required and what will happen, and asking the child/young person for their permission (or their family if this is more appropriate) before proceeding unnecessary physical contact is not allowed
Online communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cyber safety and social media guidelines are in place and provided to all workers appropriate supervision is provided for all online activities workers must not communicate with children or young people via social media
Transport of children and young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> workers must not transport a child or young person unless specifically approved parents/guardians must provide consent before transporting a child or young person the worker must have a valid, unrestricted driver's licence the vehicle must be registered, insured and in roadworthy condition a worker must not be alone in a vehicle with a child or young person
Supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> children and young people are to be supervised by parents/guardians at all times if child/young person not collected by parent/guardian at end of class/training, two adults are to stay with child/young person until they are collected when providing one to one consultation with a child or young person, it will be in line of sight of another adult
Taking images of children and young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> consent of child young person and their parent/guardian required disclosure will be made as to how the image is to be used and consent must be provided by the child, young person and parent/guardian images must be presented in a way that de-identifies the child or young person

Identified risk	Actions to minimise risk
Physical environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> maintain a risk register that is reviewed annually to ensure effectiveness conduct risk assessments for all activities ensure all equipment is in good working order
Privacy and confidentiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> all documents containing confidential information will be stored privately in a locked filing cabinet (or similar place with restricted access) digital files containing confidential information shall be protected electronically by restricting the access to only those requiring it to perform their duties workers must not disclose information regarding any child or young person without written consent of the child, young person and their parent/guardian
Off-site activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> consent of parent or guardian must be given children and young people must be supervised by a minimum of 2 adults of the same gender as the children attending privacy when children or young people are bathing, toileting and dressing must be provided children and young people will not be left under the supervision of unauthorised persons children and young people have the right to contact their parents, or another adult, if they feel unsafe, uncomfortable, or distressed during the service
Change room requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a minimum of two adults of the same gender as the children or young people must be present supervision will be provided ensuring the child or young person's right to privacy adults must not shower or change whilst supervising children or young people phones, cameras and recording devices must not be used in change room

9. Related policies and procedures

- Talking Matters Children and Young People Mandatory Reporting Work Instruction v2.0
- Talking Matters Engagement Framework v2
- Talking Matters Feedback and Complaints Policy TM-002-3

10. Policy review

We will, at a minimum, review this policy and the related procedures once every 5 years as required by the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017. We will also review this policy when:

- new or added risks are identified for children or young people, which may require a change in the policy or procedures,

- a critical incident where a child or young person has experienced harm through involvement in the organisation,
- concerns are raised by anyone involved in your organisation about child safety or welfare in the organisation,
- awareness or compliance to the child safe policy and/or procedures is low,
- legislative changes/requirements.

We will lodge a new child safe environments compliance statement with the Department of Human Services each time we review and update this policy.

Policy Date: [February 1, 2024](#)

Review Date: [January 14, 2029](#)

11. Acknowledgment and Acceptance of Child Safe Environments Policy

I acknowledge that I have been made aware of the Talking Matters Child Safe Environments Policy. I have read and understand the policy and my responsibilities in the implementation of this policy and my responsibilities as a Mandated Notifier. I agree to operate under the Talking Matters Child Safety Environments Policy herein.

Name: _____.

Position: _____.

National Police clearance date: _____.

Mandatory notification training completed date:

Signed: _____.

Date: _____.

In the presence of:

Name: _____ on behalf of Talking Matters

Position: _____.

Signed: _____.

Date: _____.

This signed document is to be placed in each team members file.

Marilyn Pattison, General Manager Allied Health

Signed: _____

Dated: _____