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Child Safe Policy

Policy Number	POL/18/41[v4]
Effective date	1 July 2022
Last Review date	June 2022
Next Review date	June 2025
Responsibility	Manager Corporate Services

Purpose

This policy demonstrates Whitehorse Manningham Libraries' (WML) commitment to child safety. WML aims to provide children with an environment that is safe and welcoming and encourages their participation.

This Policy supports WML systems to prevent and respond to child abuse, and should be read in conjunction with WML's Reportable Conduct Policy.

Objective

- To reflect WML's commitment to provide a safe environment where every person has the right to be treated with respect and is safe and protected from harm.
- To provide employees with guidance on their responsibilities in relation to the Victorian Child Safe Standards.
- Ensure decisions and actions are consistent with the Victorian Child Safe Standards.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees of Whitehorse Manningham Libraries. For the purposes of this policy, employees are defined as:

- All employees – part time, full time, contract and casual
- Volunteers
- Work experience students
- Industry placement students

Our commitment to child safety

WML is committed to the safety and well-being of all children and young people participating in our programs and visiting our libraries. We aim to create a safe and friendly environment where all children and young people are valued and feel safe.

We will show our commitment by:

- Encouraging participation and respecting the views of children and young people who participate in our programs
- Providing students with information on what they can do if they feel unsafe
- Valuing diversity and not tolerating any discriminatory practices
- Having zero tolerance for child abuse
- Identifying and mitigating risks in online and physical environments
- Maintaining systems to record any risks or incidents relating to children, in order to regularly review, evaluate and improve child safe practices
- Promoting cultural safety for Aboriginal children, cultural safety for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children with disability, those who are unable to live at home, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children and young people

Recruitment practices

All reasonable steps are taken to ensure WML employs suitable and appropriate people to work with children. Selection criteria and position descriptions reflect our commitment to child safety and our legislative responsibilities.

Screening measures for all new employees and volunteers include:

- Working with Children Check
- National Police Check

If, throughout the recruitment process, a person's records indicate a criminal history, the applicant will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.

Regular ongoing screening of staff and volunteers will continue throughout employment with WML.

Training and supervision

WML is committed to providing appropriate training, supervision and information to employees and volunteers.

We will show our commitment by:

- Providing induction training to all employees, students and volunteers that includes our obligation to ensure child safety
- Providing staff with procedures on how to report inappropriate behaviour towards children

- Having a robust Employee Code of Conduct which includes expectations on appropriate behaviour towards children
- Providing appropriate supervision for new staff who are required to work with children and deliver programs
- Providing staff with training and support to ensure the ongoing maintenance of a child safe environment
- Including this policy in induction programs for employees, volunteers and students
- Refreshing knowledge of this policy and our ongoing commitment to child safety through training and staff newsletters

Procedural Fairness

We are committed to the safety and wellbeing of children attending our libraries and programs. We acknowledge that our staff are also entitled to being treated fairly and with respect. Any decisions made when recruiting, assessing incidents and undertaking disciplinary action will be thorough, transparent and based on evidence.

All incident reports in relation to abuse and safety concerns will be securely stored, including investigation details.

Where allegations involve the abuse or safety of a child, we will provide updates to children and families on progress and actions we as an organisation take.

Risk management

We have management strategies in place to mitigate risk. Policies and procedures include, but are not limited to:

- Occupational Health and Safety Policy and Procedures: including incident reports
- Near miss/hazard reports to identify areas that may pose a risk to children or adults
- Employee Code of Conduct
- Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedures
- Public Access Technology Conditions of Use
- Volunteer Policy
- Work Experience Policy
- eSmart Certification (Alannah and Madeleine Foundation and Telstra Foundation)
- Unattended Children Policy
- Reportable Conduct Policy

Reporting

Reporting child abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to police.

We have a legal and moral obligation to contact authorities when we are concerned about a child's safety.

If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.

Support for staff is also available through the Corporation's EAP provider, Relationship Matters Helpline: 8650 6262.

In circumstances where the alleged offence is believed to have been committed by a WML employee, volunteer or person otherwise engaged by WML, the reporting requirements are as per the Reportable Conduct Policy.

Further Information

Further information is available through the following sources:

Department of Human Services: <https://dhhs.vic.gov.au/publications/child-safe-standards>

Commission for Children and Young People: <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safety/>

Email: contact@ccyp.vic.gov.au

Phone: 1300 782 978

RELATED WML POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS

Code of Conduct – Employee
Recruitment and Selection Policy
Volunteer Policy
Position Descriptions
Induction Procedures
Work Experience Policy
Occupational Health and Safety Policy
Unattended Children Policy
Incident Reports
Reportable Conduct Policy

RELEVANT LEGISLATION

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986
Children, Youth and Families Act 2005
Crimes Amendment (Protection of Children) Act 2014
Victorian Working With Children Act 2005 (Amended 2014)
Children Legislation Amendment (Reportable Conduct) Act 2017
Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005
Commission for Children and Young People Act 2012

REVIEW

This policy was reviewed in line with the introduction of the new 11 Child Safe Standards, effective in Victoria from 1 July 2022. The policy will be reviewed as required.

Appendix: Child Safe Standards as of 1 July 2022

Overarching standards are listed in the table below. For full details go to the Commission for Children and Young People website: <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards/>

Child Safe Standard	Description
Child Safe Standard 1	Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued.
Child Safe Standard 2	Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture
Child Safe Standard 3	Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
Child Safe Standard 4	Families and communities are informed, and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing
Child Safe Standard 5	Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice
Child Safe Standard 6	People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice
Child Safe Standard 7	Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused
Child Safe Standard 8	Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training
Child Safe Standard 9	Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed
Child Safe Standard 10	Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved
Child Safe Standard 11	Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people