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Child Safe Policy

Policy Number	POL/18/41[v6]
Effective date	1 July 2022
Last Review date	September 2026
Next Review date	March 2029 or as required
Responsibility	Manager Corporate Services

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. 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

4. Definitions

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child	A person under the age of 18 years who identifies as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Person
Child or young person	A person under the age of 18
Child Safe Standards	Refers to the compulsory framework that supports organisations to promote the safety of children. The standards are legislated under the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005. See Appendix for further information.
Code of conduct	A set of rules or practices that establish a standard of behaviour to be followed by individuals and organisations. A Code of Conduct defines how individuals should behave towards each other and towards other organisations and individuals in the community (refer to the WML Employee Code of Conduct).
Direct Contact	Any contact between a person and a child that involves physical contact; or face-to-face contact; or written communication; or contact by telephone or other oral communication; or contact by email or other electronic communication.
Failure to Disclose	Refers to the criminal offence when an adult who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 16 fails to report that information to police. Failure to disclose is a criminal offence under the <i>Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)</i> .
Failure to Protect	Refers to the criminal offence when a person in a position of authority fails to reduce or remove the risk of sexual abuse of a child by an adult associated with their organisation. Failure to protect is a criminal offence under the <i>Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)</i> .
Grooming	Means the criminal offence concerning predatory conduct undertaken to prepare a child for sexual activity at a later time. Grooming can be sexual misconduct and can involve the use of a variety of manipulative and controlling techniques used to build trust or normalise sexually harmful behaviour with the overall aim of facilitating exploitation or preventing disclosure (or both). Grooming can target those involved in gaining access to the child's life, including parents and other caregivers, colleagues and others in an organisation. Some examples of some grooming behaviours include: • Initiating opportunities for unsupervised contact with a child or group of children

	• Spending inappropriate special time with a child • Inappropriately showing special favours to one child over others • Inappropriately allowing a child to overstep rules • Inappropriately giving gifts, money, alcohol or drugs • Asking the child not to tell anyone else about their conversations, activities or interactions. Grooming is a criminal offence under the <i>Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)</i>
Reasonable Belief/Reasonable Grounds	Means a belief based on facts that would lead a reasonable person in the same position to form the belief on the same grounds. For example, a person is likely to have reasonable belief if they observed the conduct themselves, heard from a child that the conduct occurred, or received information from another source (including another person who witnessed the conduct).
Reportable Conduct	Refers to the five types of reportable conduct listed in the <i>Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005</i> : • Sexual offences (against, with or in the presence of, a child) • Sexual misconduct (against, with or in the presence of, a child) • Physical violence (against, with or in the presence of, a child) • Behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child • Significant neglect of a child.
Reportable Conduct Scheme	The scheme established under the <i>Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005</i> , which requires certain organisations that provide services or conduct activities related to children to notify the Social Services Regulator (SSR) about allegations of child abuse and child related misconduct made against their employees, volunteers or contractors.
Sexual Offences	Means certain sexual behaviours against, with or in front of, a child. Many of these behaviours are reportable conduct as per the Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme. This includes sexual assault, indecent acts, possession of child abuse material, and grooming a child in order to commit a sexual offence. This is a criminal offence under the <i>Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)</i> .
Sexual Misconduct	Refers to a broader range of inappropriate behaviours of a sexual nature that are not necessarily criminal. Sexual misconduct refers to conduct that amounts to misconduct, is of a sexual nature, and occurred against, with, or in the presence of, a child, including behaviour, physical contact or speech or other communication of a sexual nature, inappropriate touching, grooming behaviour and voyeurism.

Worker	Used as a generic term meaning a person engaged or providing services on behalf of Whitehorse Manningham Libraries. For the purposes of this policy, the word “worker” includes employees, volunteers (including work experience and work placement volunteers), contractors, consultants, persons employed through a third-party agency, Library Board Members.
WWCC	A Working With Children Check (WWCC) is a mandatory screening that assesses a person’s suitability to work or volunteer with children. It includes a review of criminal history and relevant information to help ensure child safety.

5. 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. All allegations and safety concerns will be treated seriously in accordance with our policies and procedures.

We will show our commitment by:

- Encouraging participation and respecting the views of children and young people who participate in our programs
- Providing young people 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

6. Employee Code of Conduct

WML has an Employee Code of Conduct which includes expectations, whereby employees must:

- Treat children and young people with dignity and respect
- Take reasonable steps to ensure the safety and protection of children and young people
- Not engage in any unlawful behaviour or misconduct with a child or young person
- Report to police on 000 if a child is believed to be at immediate risk
- Report any incidents involving children through the incident reporting systems and Reportable Conduct procedures
- Respond quickly, fairly and transparently to any serious complaints made by a child, young person or their parent / guardian

7. 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.

8. 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
- Providing access to this policy on the WML intranet

9. Child Safety Contact Officer

WML has nominated the Coordinator Children's and Youth Services as the Child Safety Contact Officer. The Child Safety Contact Officer is responsible for responding to concerns or complaints made by workers, parents, children, or the community.

The Child Safety Contact Officer may seek advice from the CEO, Manager Corporate Services or member council Child Safe Officers when determining an appropriate response and/or action.

The WML Child Safety Contact Officer is responsible for reporting any child safety incidents to the Chief Executive Officer who will inform the Library Board and relevant member council Child Safety Contact Officer.

10. 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.

11. 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
- Procedures for engaging presenters, including requirements for holding a current WWCC
- Employee Code of Conduct
- Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedures
- Public Access Technology Conditions of Use
- Volunteer Policy
- Work Experience Policy
- Unattended Children Policy
- Reportable Conduct Policy

12. 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.

The WML Child Safety Contact Officer can be contacted on 9872 8600, email childsafetyofficer@wml.vic.gov.au

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 Families, Fairness and Housing:

<https://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/publications/child-safe-standards>

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

Social Services Regulator: <https://www.vic.gov.au/social-services-regulator>

- Phone: 1300 31 07 78
- Email: contact@ssr.vic.gov.au

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

Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)

Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)

Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)

Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (vic)

Commission for Children and Young People Act 2012

Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic)

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 Social Services Regulator website: <https://www.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. At a minimum an organisation must ensure: 1.1 A child's ability to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights is encouraged and actively supported. 1.2 Strategies are embedded within the organisation which equip all members to acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of Aboriginal culture and understand its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children and young people. 1.3 Measures are adopted by the organisation to ensure racism within the organisation is identified, confronted and not tolerated. Any instances of racism are addressed with appropriate consequences. 1.4 The organisation actively supports and facilitates participation and inclusion within it by Aboriginal children, young people and their families. 1.5 All of the organisation's policies, procedures, systems and processes together create a culturally safe and inclusive environment and meet the needs of Aboriginal children, young people and their families.
Child Safe Standard 2	Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture. At a minimum an organisation must ensure: 2.1 The organisation makes a public commitment to child safety. 2.2 A child safe culture is championed and modelled at all levels of the organisation from the top down and bottom up. 2.3 Governance arrangements facilitate implementation of the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy at all levels. 2.4 A Code of Conduct provides guidelines for staff and volunteers on expected behavioural standards and responsibilities. 2.5 Risk management strategies focus on preventing, identifying and mitigating risks to children and young people. 2.6 Staff and volunteers understand their obligations on information sharing and record keeping.

Child Safe Standard 3	Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously At a minimum an organisation must ensure: 3.1 Children and young people are informed about all of their rights, including to safety, information and participation. 3.2 The importance of friendships is recognised and support from peers is encouraged, to help children and young people feel safe and be less isolated. 3.3 Where relevant to the setting or context, children and young people are offered access to sexual abuse prevention programs and to relevant related information in an age-appropriate way. 3.4 Staff and volunteers are attuned to signs of harm and facilitate child-friendly ways for children and young people to express their views, participate in decision-making and raise their concerns. 3.5 Organisations have strategies in place to develop a culture that facilitates participation and is responsive to the input of children and young people. 3.6 Organisations provide opportunities for children and young people to participate and are responsive to their contributions, thereby strengthening confidence and engagement.
Child Safe Standard 4	Families and communities are informed, and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing At a minimum an organisation must ensure: 4.1 Families participate in decisions affecting their child. 4.2 The organisation engages and openly communicates with families and the community about its child safe approach and relevant information is accessible. 4.3 Families and communities have a say in the development and review of the organisation's policies and practices. 4.4 Families, carers and the community are informed about the organisation's operations and governance.
Child Safe Standard 5	Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice At a minimum an organisation must ensure: 5.1 The organisation, including staff and volunteers, understands children and young people's diverse circumstances, and provides support and responds to those who are vulnerable. 5.2 Children and young people have access to information, support and complaints processes in ways that are culturally safe, accessible and easy to understand. 5.3 The organisation pays particular attention to the needs of children and young people with disability, children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those

	who are unable to live at home, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children and young people. 5.4 The organisation pays particular attention to the needs of Aboriginal children and young people and provides/promotes a culturally safe environment for them.
Child Safe Standard 6	People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice At a minimum an organisation must ensure: 6.1 Recruitment, including advertising, referee checks and staff and volunteer pre-employment screening, emphasise child safety and wellbeing. 6.2 Relevant staff and volunteers have current working with children checks or equivalent background checks. 6.3 All staff and volunteers receive an appropriate induction and are aware of their responsibilities to children and young people, including record keeping, information sharing and reporting obligations. 6.4 Ongoing supervision and people management is focused on child safety and wellbeing.
Child Safe Standard 7	Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused At a minimum an organisation must ensure: 7.1 The organisation has an accessible, child-focused complaint handling policy which clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of leadership, staff and volunteers, approaches to dealing with different types of complaints, breaches of relevant policies or the Code of Conduct and obligations to act and report. 7.2 Effective complaint handling processes are understood by children and young people, families, staff and volunteers, and are culturally safe. 7.3 Complaints are taken seriously and responded to promptly and thoroughly. 7.4 The organisation has policies and procedures in place that address reporting of complaints and concerns to relevant authorities, whether or not the law requires reporting, and co-operates with law enforcement. 7.5 Reporting, privacy and employment law obligations are met.
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 At a minimum an organisation must ensure: 8.1 Staff and volunteers are trained and supported to effectively implement the organisation's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.

	8.2 Staff and volunteers receive training and information to recognise indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and young people. 8.3 Staff and volunteers receive training and information to respond effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and support colleagues who disclose harm. 8.4 Staff and volunteers receive training and information on how to build culturally safe environments for children and young people.
Child Safe Standard 9	Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed At a minimum an organisation must ensure: 9.1 Staff and volunteers identify and mitigate risks in the online and physical environments without compromising a child's right to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities. 9.2 The online environment is used in accordance with the organisation's Code of Conduct and Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and practices. 9.3 Risk management plans consider risks posed by organisational setting, activities and the physical environment. 9.4 Organisations that contract facilities and services from third parties have procurement policies that ensure the safety of children and young people.
Child Safe Standard 10	Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved At a minimum an organisation must ensure: 10.1 The organisation regularly reviews, evaluates and improves child safe practices. 10.2 Complaints, concerns and safety incidents are analysed to identify causes and systemic failures to inform continuous improvement. 10.3 The organisation reports on the findings of relevant reviews to staff and volunteers, community and families, and children and young people.
Child Safe Standard 11	Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people At a minimum an organisation must ensure: 11.1 Policies and procedures address all Child Safe Standards. 11.2 Policies and procedures are documented and easy to understand.

	11.3 Best practice models and stakeholder consultation informs the development of policies and procedures. 11.4 Leaders champion and model compliance with policies and procedures. 11.5 Staff and volunteers understand and implement policies and procedures.
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Appendix 2

CHILD SAFETY INCIDENT REPORTING PROCESS

Whitehorse Manningham Libraries

STEP 1: Identify a Child Safety Concern

If a child is in immediate danger, call 000

STEP 2: Manage the Incident

- Notify parents/guardians
- Report to Police (if applicable)

STEP 3: Notify

- Branch Manager / Team Leader
- WML Child Safety Officer
childsafetyofficer@wml.vic.gov.au
- Complete incident report

STEP 4: Child Safety Officer

- Reports incident to CEO, the Library Board (through the CEO) and member council Child Safety Officers
- Provides support to parents, children and employees
- Links to appropriate authorities (Police, EAP)
- Determines reportable conduct with CEO (within 3 days)
- Reports employee related incidents to Manager Corporate Services
- Liaises with council Child Safety Officers

STEP 5: Employee Related Incidents

Handled under the WML Employee Disciplinary Policy

STEP 6: Reports and Review

- Reports securely stored
- Reviewed to identify improvement opportunities