

CHILD SAFE STANDARDS AND MANDATORY REPORTING POLICY

Policy

Glenroy Neighbourhood Learning Centre (GNLC) is committed to the protection, welfare and support of children and young people under 18 years of age in accordance with –

- a. the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic) and the Child Safe Standards (2019);
- b. the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic);

This Policy relates to young people who are currently under 18 years of age.

Commitment to Child Safety

- GNLC values Young People and is committed to their safety and wellbeing. GNLC wants Young People to be safe and happy. GNLC supports and respects all Young People.
- GNLC is committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all Young People. To ensure the safety and best interests of Young People GNLC takes into account the needs of those with Aboriginal heritage, those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and those with a disability.
- GNLC has zero tolerance of Child Abuse or Harm, and all allegations and safety concerns made to GNLC will be treated very seriously and consistently in line with GNLC's policies and procedures.
- GNLC has moral and legal obligations to contact authorities when it is concerned about a Young Person's safety and wellbeing.
- GNLC is committed to preventing Child Abuse or Harm by or through the early identification of risks and the removal and reduction of those risks.
- GNLC's recruitment process ensures all staff have a current employee class WWCC or valid VIT registration before commencement of employment.
- GNLC is committed to regularly training and educating its Staff on the risks of Child Abuse or Harm.
- GNLC has policies and procedures to guide and support its Staff to achieve these commitments to provide a Child-Safe Environment.

Safety and Participation of Children

- GNLC encourages all Young People to express their views about matters that directly affect them or are of importance to them.
- GNLC will ensure that Young People are provided with appropriate information about their rights and the standards of care to which they are entitled, and provide guidance and support when raising concerns, making complaints or letting someone know if they feel unsafe.
- GNLC will listen to and appropriately act on any concerns raised by a Young Person or any Adult concerning the safety and wellbeing of a Young Person.

Recruiting Staff

GNLC applies the best practices and standards in the recruitment and screening of Staff and takes all reasonable steps to engage skilled and appropriate people to work with Young People. All staff are required to hold a valid employee class WWCC or VIT registration.

The Manager and CoM should refer to the Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedure for a list of the requirements and the type(s) of checks.

Supporting Staff

- All GNLC staff must abide by GNLC Code of Ethical practice and GNLC policies that specify the standards of conduct required when interacting with Young People.
- GNLC will ensure that all Staff understand their roles in supporting a Child-Safe Environment at GNLC. Staff will receive induction and ongoing training, education and support relating to this Policy and the Child Safe Standards and Mandatory Reporting Procedure.

Reporting Child Abuse and Child Safety Concerns

- GNLC has processes in place for responding to and reporting on suspected Child Abuse or Harm, and concerns for the safety and wellbeing of a Young Person, which are specified in the Child Safety Reporting Process.
- GNLC will work to ensure that all Young People and Adults involved in Activities know what to do or who to tell if they observe actual or potential Child Abuse or Harm.

Risk Management

- GNLC recognises the importance of a risk management approach to prioritising actions which have the greatest potential for reducing Child Abuse or Harm, and to use this approach to inform its policies, procedures and the planning of Activities. Actions to address risks of Child Abuse or Harm may be additional to those required to deal with occupational health and safety related risks.
- Risk management approaches are regularly reflected on and improved as part of the Continuous Improvement Policy and Procedure.

Fair Procedures

- GNLC when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action, will base its decisions on evidence and seek to be fair and reasonable, taking into account all of the circumstances.
- All allegations of Child Abuse or Harm or concerns for the safety and wellbeing of a Young Person raised through the Child Safety Reporting process, will be recorded in the first instance using the

Reporting form. All records will be securely stored in accordance with GNLC Records Management Policy and procedures.

- All personal information gathered in relation to reports of Child Abuse or Harm or concerns for the safety and wellbeing of a Young Person will be handled in accordance with GLNC Privacy Policy and Privacy Procedure.
- If an allegation of Child Abuse or Harm, or a concern for the safety and wellbeing of a Young Person is raised, GNLC will provide updates to Young People and Adults as are appropriate in the circumstances.

Structured Work Placement Learning

- All Students undertaking Activities which are Structured Work placement Learning (SWL) activities (see Structured Work placement Learning Policy and Structured Work placement Learning Procedure) that involve contact with Young People must comply with this Policy, and will be provided appropriate information on requirements relating to working with Young People such as Working with Children Checks and legislative obligations to report on Child Abuse or Harm.
- Arrangements for Activities which are Structured Work placement Learning (see Structured Work placement Learning Policy and Structured Work placement Learning Procedure) for Young People who are Students will ensure that the SWL partner has appropriate policies and procedures relating to child safety.

Regular Review

This Policy and the accompanying Child Safe Standards and Mandatory Reporting Procedure should be reviewed every 3 years and following significant incidents if they occur.

Following the completion of an investigation arising from a Reportable Allegation, this procedure should be reviewed to determine any required changes to mitigate the risk of a re-occurrence.

Scope

This Policy applies to Adults and Young People involved in any Activity endorsed by GNLC. It applies to students enrolled in programs and also includes children of Staff and Students who may be on site.

This Policy does not apply to children accessing services provided by GNLC Childcare Centre: Refer Children's Centre Child Protection Policy.

This Policy relates to young people who are currently under 18 years of age. Therefore, adults who may have been impacted by childhood trauma or abuse are not covered by this Policy.

Definitions

Activity – any Glenroy Neighbourhood Learning Centre activity including educational classes, Neighbourhood House programs, other programs which are organised by GNLC or any other activities which take place on GNLC site.

Adult – anyone aged 18 years and over (and includes Staff, Students, GNLC Centre Users, visitors, parents, carers and guardians).

Young Person – a person who is currently under 18 years of age whether or not enrolled as a student. The plural of 'young person' in this Procedure is 'young people'.

Child Abuse or Harm – Includes:

- a. Any act committed against a child involving –
 - i. A sexual offence; or
 - ii. The offence of grooming under the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)
- b. The infliction on a child of –
 - i. Physical violence; or
 - ii. Serious emotional or psychological harm;
- c. Serious neglect of a child;
- d. Racial, cultural or religious vilification or discrimination of a child.

Manager – the Centre Manager

Mandatory Reporter(s) – Persons who have a mandatory reporting obligation as set out in Part 4.4 of the Children, Youth and Families Act (2005) (Vic). Persons include (but not limited to) registered teachers; school principals; registered medical practitioners; nurses including midwives; police officers; registered psychologists; early childhood workers; youth justice workers, out of home care workers and people in religious ministry.

Position of Authority – A person who by reason of their position at GNLC is deemed to have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk of child sexual abuse. At GNLC Position of Authority includes managers and Committee of Management (CoM)

Responsible Person – the individual member of Staff who is responsible for the Activities within a program area.

Reasonable Steps – Acting on concerns and suspicions as soon as practicable by following Child Safety Reporting Process and reporting to external authorities such as Victoria Police, Department of Health and Human Services – Child Protection or ChildFIRST as appropriate.

Reasonably Foreseeable - A reasonable person, in the same circumstances, would know or appreciate the risk of harm from the event or activity.

Reasonable Belief

- a. A 'reasonable belief' is not the same as having proof beyond reasonable doubt but is more than a mere rumour or speculation.
- b. A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds. For example, a 'reasonable belief' might be formed if:

- i. A Young Person states that they have been physically or sexually abused; or
- ii. A Young Person states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (sometimes the Young Person may be talking about themselves); or
- iii. Someone who knows a Young Person states that the Young Person has been physically or sexually abused; or
- iv. Professional observations of the Young Person's behaviour or development leads a professional to form a belief that the Young Person has been physically or sexually abused or is likely to be abused; or
- v. Physical signs of abuse leads to a belief that the Young Person has been physically or sexually abused.

Reportable Allegation [Reportable Conduct Scheme – Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)] – There is an allegation of 'reportable conduct' when a person forms a reasonable belief that a Staff member has engaged in:

- a. A sexual offence, sexual misconduct or physical violence against, with or in the presence of a Young Person; or
- b. Behaviour causing significant emotional or psychological harm to a Young Person; or
- c. Significant neglect of a Young Person;

whether or not the Staff member to whom the allegation relates to provides services to Young People, and even if the allegation arises as a result of the Staff member's conduct or misconduct outside the scope of their employment.

Note:

* A reasonable belief is more than suspicion. There must be some objective basis for the belief. However, it is not the same as having proof and does not require certainty. For example, a person is likely to have a reasonable belief if they:

- a. Observed the conduct themselves;
- b. Heard directly from a Young Person that the conduct occurred;
- c. Received information from another credible source (including another person who witnessed the reportable conduct or misconduct).

* Only conduct by an Adult Against a Young Person is reportable under this Scheme (Young Person to Young Person is not reportable).

Staff –

- a. All employees and CoM of GNLC;
- b. All contractors and consultants performing work on GNLC sites or on behalf of the GNLC;
- c. The Council and its committees;
- d. Any volunteer.

Student –

- a. A person enrolled at GNLC in a course leading to a certificate, or other award; or
- b. A person whose study performance is being or is to be assessed by GNLC, notwithstanding that such a person is not enrolled at GNLC in a course leading to a certificate or other award.

Direct Contact means any contact between an Adult and a Young Person that involves –

- a. Physical contact; or
- b. Face to face contact; or
- c. Contact by post or other written communication; or
- d. Contact by telephone or other oral communication; or
- e. Contact by email or other electronic communication.

Guiding Principles

Children and young people under 18 years of age are part of GNLC community. The Centre's educational, community-based activities have participants who are under 18 years of age.

GNLC is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, and has zero tolerance of child abuse or harm. The Centre seeks to create a culture and environment that is supportive and protective of children and young people under the age of 18. All reports of child safety concerns will be taken seriously and consistently in accordance with the Centre's policies and procedures.

Child safety concerns include:

- Disclosure of abuse or harm
- Allegation of suspicion or observation of abuse or harm
- Breach of the Code of Ethical Practice

Legislation and Regulations

Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005, and the Child Safe Standards;
Children, Youth and Families Act 2005
Child Safe Standards 2019

Relevant Policies and Procedures

- Child Safe Standards and Mandatory Reporting Procedure
- Child Safety Reporting Guidelines
- Child Safety Reporting Process
- Code of Ethical Practice
- Structured Work placement Learning Policy
- Structured Work placement Learning Procedure
- Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Recruitment and Selection Procedure
- Continuous Improvement Policy
- Continuous Improvement Procedure



Glenroy
Neighbourhood
Learning Centre

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