

Council Policy – Child Safe Awareness

Responsible Directorate	Community Development
Responsible Business Unit/s	Communities
Responsible Officer	Manager Community Development
Affected Business Unit/s	All

Objective

To acknowledge that the safety and wellbeing of children is a shared responsibility and that children in our communities may be at risk of vulnerabilities, with the Shire of Ashburton's (Shire) position being:

- to educate, promote and embed appropriate child safe practices at all levels of the organisation to foster environments where all children can thrive; and
- empower children and families by supporting environments that are child safe, culturally safe and that take a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse and harm.

Scope

This policy applies to all individuals working, including employees, volunteers, contractors, suppliers and anyone else who undertakes work, regardless of whether their work is directly related to children or young people.

Policy Statement

The Shire is committed to supporting the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people, including protection from any form of abuse.

This policy is one of the ways the Shire demonstrates its commitment to being child safe and a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse. We therefore aim to reduce the risk of harm and child abuse, including, but not limited to child sexual abuse in our communities by encouraging child safe environments to be created and maintained.

This policy has been developed in response to recommendation 6.12 of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and recognises that the Shire is uniquely placed within the local community to demonstrate leadership by supporting organisations to be child safe and to protect children and young people from harm and/or abuse.



This policy provides a framework that outlines the role of the Shire in supporting its employees and local organisations to be child safe through access to resources, raising awareness and sharing relevant information which aims to be consistent with the [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#).

Principles

The principles supported by this policy are:

- The rights of children and young people are upheld.
- Children and young people are respected, listened to, and informed about their rights.
- Children and young people have the fundamental right to be safe and cared for.
- Children and young people have the right to speak up, be heard and taken seriously without the threat of negative consequences.
- The safety and best interests of children and young people are a primary consideration when making decisions that concern them.
- Access to trusted and reliable information, including the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, helps support organisations to understand what they must do to help reduce the risk of harm and abuse.
- Communities are informed and involved in promoting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people including protection from harm.
- Collaboration with the community and our partners promotes the safety, participation and empowerment of all children and young people.

Functions

To support the Principles, the Shire through the Chief Executive Officer will ensure the following functions of this policy are resourced and assigned to the relevant officers, to:

- develop and implement internal processes that embed and promote child safe messaging at Shire hosted programs and events, and Shire staffed venues, grounds and facilities.
- develop and implement processes for reporting allegations of child abuse or harm as per our obligations under the Reportable Conduct Scheme.
- connect with and support local community groups, organisations, and stakeholders to encourage embedding the National Child Safe Principles (including culturally safe and inclusive resources) within their operations.
- maintain internal process for relevant Shire employees in relation to Working With Children Checks (WWC).

Responsibilities

The Shire has a leadership role in our community to support relevant organisations to be child safe and promote child safe practices.

Although the Shire is not legally responsible for providing oversight of compliance with child safe practices, it will take any reasonable steps to engage with persons who utilise Shire facilities to operate in alignment with this policy.

Compliance Oversight

To uphold the policy and the Shire's commitment to child safety, a Child Safety Compliance report will be submitted to the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee periodically on matters directly affecting the organisation.

Definitions

Abuse is an act, or a failure to act, towards or on behalf of a child that may result in harm. It can occur on one occasion or multiple occasions. Sometimes the impact of multiple events leads to harm that becomes cumulative in nature. Types of abuse include physical, emotional and sexual abuse, and neglect.

Child/Children means a person under 18 years of age, and in the absence of positive evidence as to age, means a person who appears to be under 18 years of age.

Child Safe Organisation is defined in the Royal Commission Final Report as one that:

- creates an environment where children's safety and wellbeing are at the centre of thought, values, and actions
- places emphasis on genuine engagement with and valuing of children and young people
- creates conditions that reduce the likelihood of harm to children and young people
- creates conditions that increase the likelihood of identifying any harm, and
- responds to any concerns, disclosures, allegations, or suspicions of harm.
Note: in the context of local governments, this would involve referring concerns to the Department of Communities or WA Police to respond as appropriate.

Implementation of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations give effect to the above.

Child safe, for the purpose of this policy, means protecting the rights of children and young people to be safe by taking actions that can help prevent harm and abuse.

Harm, in relation to a child, means any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child's wellbeing, whether caused by a single act, omission or circumstance; or a series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances.

Wellbeing of children and young people includes the care, development, education, health and safety of children and young people.

Relevant policies/documents

[Community Access and Inclusion Plan 2023-2027](#)

[Strategic Community Plan 2022-2032](#)

[Employee Code of Conduct](#)

[Youth Strategy 2026-2027](#)

[Procedure - Working With Children Checks](#)

Resources and Information – Child Safety Awareness

Relevant legislation/local laws

Child Care Services Act 2007

Children and Community Services Act 2004

Equal Opportunity Act 1984

Local Government Act 1995

Work Health and Safety Act 2020

Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act 2004

National Principles for Child Safety Organisations

Office use only				
Relevant delegations	Nil			
Council adoption	Date	21 July 2026	Resolution #	118/2026
Reviewed/modified	Date		Resolution #	
	Date		Resolution #	
	Date		Resolution #	
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