

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

1.0 Introduction

This policy establishes Concept Care's commitment to creating and maintaining a child-safe and child-friendly environment where the rights, safety, and wellbeing of children and young people are upheld and protected.

It provides clear behavioural expectations, reporting responsibilities, and accountability mechanisms to ensure compliance with:

- NSW Child Safe Standards
- Children's Guardian Act 2019 and Children's Guardian Regulation 2022
- NSW Reportable Conduct Scheme
- NDIS Code of Conduct and NDIS Practice Standards
- Relevant child protection, privacy, and workplace laws.

2.0 Statement of Commitment

Concept Care affirms that:

- All children and young people have the right to feel safe, be safe, and to have their voices heard.
- Children with disabilities are entitled to supports that uphold their dignity, rights, and unique needs.

- Child safety is everyone's responsibility, from Directors through to volunteers.
- We will comply with all child protection legislation, the NSW Child Safe Standards, the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, and the NDIS Code of Conduct.
- We will act promptly, fairly, and transparently when concerns are raised.
- Retaliation or victimisation against any person who reports a child safety concern will not be tolerated.

3.0 Scope

This policy applies to all Concept Care staff, including:

- Disability support workers, contractors, and volunteers.
- Managers, HR, Directors, and governance personnel.
- Students, labour-hire staff, and subcontractors.
- All locations, services, programs, and online interactions involving children and young people under the care or supervision of Concept Care.

4.0 Definitions

Term	Definition
Child	Any person under 18 years of age.
Child abuse	Physical, sexual, emotional or psychological abuse, or neglect causing or likely to cause harm.

Term	Definition
Reportable conduct	Sexual offences, sexual misconduct, ill-treatment, neglect, psychological harm, and any offence involving a child as defined under the Children's Guardian Act 2019.
Reportable allegation	An allegation that a worker has engaged in reportable conduct.
Mandatory Reporter	A worker with legal obligations to report suspected risk of significant harm (Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998).
Grooming	Actions intended to form a relationship with a child, their family or carer to lower their inhibitions and facilitate abuse.
Harm	Any detrimental effect of a significant nature on a child's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing.
Cultural safety	An environment where a child's cultural identity is respected and nurtured.

5.0 Guiding Principles and Alignment with NSW

Child Safe Standards

Concept Care's approach to child safety is grounded in the NSW Child Safe Standards:

- Child safety is embedded in leadership and governance.
- Children participate in decisions affecting them.
- Families and communities are informed and involved.
- Equity and diversity are upheld.
- Complaints and concerns are responded to effectively.
- Processes for responding to allegations of child abuse are clear.
- Staff are equipped with knowledge, skills and awareness.
- Risks in physical and online environments are identified and minimised.
- Implementation is continuously reviewed and improved.
- Policies and procedures document child safety responsibilities.

In addition:

- Rights-Based: Aligned with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Inclusion: All children, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, culturally and linguistically diverse children, and LGBTQIA+ young people, are supported in culturally safe and inclusive ways.
- Zero Tolerance: Abuse, neglect, or exploitation will never be accepted.

6.0 Code of Conduct

Please refer to Concept Care's Child Safe Code of Conduct.

7.0 Leadership and Governance

- The Directors have ultimate accountability for child safety and ensure resources are allocated to implement this policy.

- Managers promote openness and accountability, ensuring staff understand their reporting obligations.
- Child safety incidents are reviewed monthly by management to identify trends and improvements.
- HR ensures that workforce systems (recruitment, training, supervision) uphold child safety standards.

8.0 Creating a Child Safe Culture

- Concept Care promotes safe behaviours through the Child Safe Code of Conduct.
- Children are encouraged to speak up and express concerns without fear of retaliation.
- Families and carers are active partners in safeguarding.
- Cultural safety is prioritised, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with disabilities.
- Regular communication reinforces to staff that child safety is non-negotiable.
- Concerns can be reported confidentially through Concept Care's Whistleblower Policy.

9.0 Risk Management

Concept Care will:

- Identify, assess, and manage risks to child safety in service delivery.

Particular attention is given to:

- In-home support and personal care tasks.
- Transport arrangements.
- One-on-one support environments.
- Online delivery or communication service.

10.0 Workforce Screening and Training

All staff in child-related roles must hold a valid Working With Children Check (WWCC), verified through the OCG database prior to commencement.

Pre-employment checks include police clearances, interviews, and reference checks that assess suitability for working with children.

All successful applicants must complete the mandatory Child Safe Modules prior to commencing employment.

Induction includes:

- NDIS Code of Conduct
- Concept Care Child Safe Code of Conduct
- Mandatory reporting requirements
- Trauma-informed practice

Ongoing professional development ensures staff are confident in preventing, identifying, and responding to harm.

11.0 Reporting and Escalation Pathways

Immediate Response

If a child is at risk of immediate harm:

- Ensure the child's safety
- Call emergency services (000) if required
- Notify the Child Safety Lead or Line Manager immediately.

Reporting Obligations

All staff must **report concerns or allegations** to:

- **Internal:** Child Safety Lead / Incident Management System (within 24 hours).
- **External (if applicable):**
 - Office of the Children's Guardian (New South Wales) – Reportable Conduct Scheme
 - Child Protection Helpline (132 111)
 - Police – for criminal offences.
 - NDIS Commission – where relevant.

All allegations will be documented, assessed, and managed in accordance with legal and organisational procedures.

12.0 Managing Allegations Against Staff

- Any allegation or suspicion of reportable conduct involving a staff member, contractor, or volunteer will be managed under the NSW Reportable Conduct Scheme and Concept Care's Internal Investigation Procedure.

- The safety and wellbeing of the child or young person will remain the paramount consideration at every stage. Immediate action will be taken to address any risk to the child.
- Staff who are the subject of an allegation will be treated fairly and respectfully, with procedural fairness and confidentiality maintained.
- Mandatory notifications will be made to the Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG) within the required timeframes, and to other relevant authorities such as the NDIS Commission, NSW Police, or DCJ as appropriate.
- Staff may be temporarily reassigned or suspended during investigations to reduce risk.
- All investigations and outcomes will be documented, reviewed, and used to strengthen child safety systems and staff training within the organisation.

13.0 Specific Considerations for Children with Disabilities

- Recognising that children with disabilities may face barriers to communication, we will use accessible communication methods (e.g., interpreters, AAC, Easy Read).
- We will monitor for signs of over-dependence, neglect, or exploitation.
- Reasonable adjustments will be made to support full participation in decision-making.

- We acknowledge the intersection of disability with cultural identity, trauma, or socio-economic disadvantage.

14.0 Engagement with Children and Families

- Children are consulted on decisions that affect them in age-appropriate and accessible ways.
- Families are given clear information about policies, their rights, and feedback channels.
- We provide multiple ways for children and families to raise concerns, including anonymous options.

15.0 Continuous Improvement

The Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy will be reviewed every two years or earlier if required by law or organisational change.

Feedback from children, families, staff, and regulators informs updates.

Incident reviews, audits, and complaints outcomes will be analysed to strengthen systems.

16.0 Breach of Policy

Breaches of this policy or the Code of Conduct may result in:

- Disciplinary action, up to and including termination
- Mandatory reporting to external authorities
- Referrals to professional regulatory bodies or the NDIS Commission
- Potential criminal investigation.

17.0 Related Documents

- Concept Care Child Safe Code of Conduct
- Concept Care Incident Management Policy
- Concept Care Human Resources Policy
- NDIS Code of Conduct
- NSW Child Safe Standards
- Privacy and Confidentiality Policy

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