

SERVICE RECIPIENTS

Title: Child and Vulnerable People Safeguarding Policy

Objective

The purpose of the Child and Vulnerable People Safeguarding Policy is to guide the practices of Australian Inclusion Group (the Organisation), comprising of five entities and referenced in its entirety, in providing a practical guide to minimise risk and prevent child abuse occurring in our programs and/or community activities we are involved in or associated with.

The Organisation believes that all people including children, young people and vulnerable people have the right to be;

- emotionally and physically safe at all times;
- part of an inclusive and welcoming community and;
- protected, regardless of gender, race, disability, country of origin or religious belief.

We believe that protection of children and other vulnerable people is the responsibility of every individual, group, and community.

This policy outlines obligations and responsibilities for reporting and managing any concerns about abuse of children and other vulnerable people and protects Staff and Associates from unfair processes should any allegations be made about them.

Link to National Standard

This policy is linked to Standard 1 and 5 of the National Disability Services Standards, and Core Module 1 of the NDIS Quality Indicators and Practise Standards.

Guiding Principles

The Organisation's employees will treat all people including children, young people, and other vulnerable individuals with respect, regardless of race, colour, sex, language, disability, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic, or social origin, birth or other status and provide a welcoming, inclusive, and safe environment for all children, young people, parents, clients, employees, and volunteers.

All forms of abuse and neglect affect the physical, intellectual, and emotional development of the individual. With early identification and an appropriate response, people can recover from episodes of abuse and neglect. If allowed to continue, it can result in a number of problems such as low self-esteem, depression and/or suicidal thoughts, learning disorders, behavioural problems, developmental delay, eating disorders or violent/aggressive behaviour.

Definitions of Abuse

Physical Abuse: The intentional use of force to cause bodily harm or injury to another person. This can include hitting, slapping, punching, kicking, or any form of physical harm.

Emotional or Psychological Abuse: The sustained pattern of behaviours or words designed to control, manipulate, or intimidate another person. This can include threats, humiliation, isolation, and constant criticism.

Sexual Abuse: Involves non-consensual sexual activity or any form of sexual exploitation. This includes rape, molestation, harassment, or any sexual activity involving individuals unable to provide informed consent.

Verbal Abuse: The use of offensive, derogatory, or hurtful words or language to demean, belittle, or harm another person emotionally. It can include insults, name-calling, and threats.

Financial Abuse: The unauthorised or improper use of someone's financial resources or assets for personal gain, often involving manipulation or coercion.

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Neglect: Failing to provide necessary care or attention to the well-being of another person, leading to harm or endangerment. Neglect can occur in various contexts, such as child neglect or elder neglect.

Substance Abuse: The harmful or excessive use of drugs or alcohol, leading to physical, mental, or social problems.

Cyberbullying: The use of digital communication tools, such as social media or messaging apps, to harass, threaten, or intimidate another person.

Self-Abuse or Self-Harm: Deliberate actions taken by an individual to harm themselves physically or emotionally, often as a coping mechanism for emotional distress.

Stalking: The unwanted and persistent pursuit of an individual, often through invasive or threatening means.

Reasonable Belief: A justified, and rational conviction based on available evidence.

Grooming Vulnerable Persons: Manipulating and exploiting individuals in vulnerable positions.

Young Person: An individual in the early stages of life, between the ages of 15-24 years old

Child: A human being in the early stages of life, typically from birth to 18 years old.

Child Abuse: Any mistreatment of children that causes physical, emotional, or psychological harm. This can include physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, or emotional maltreatment.

Domestic Abuse (Domestic Violence): Domestic abuse refers to a pattern of behaviours in an intimate relationship or family setting where one person seeks to exert power and control over another through various forms of abuse. This abuse can be physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, financial, or a combination of these. It often involves repeated incidents and can have severe and long-lasting consequences for the victim.

Possible Indicators of Abuse

Physical Abuse:

- Unexplained injuries or marks on the body.
- Frequent injuries or injuries in various stages of healing.
- Consistent reports of being physically harmed.

Emotional or Psychological Abuse:

- Sudden changes in behaviour, such as increased anxiety, depression, or withdrawal.
- Signs of extreme fear or excessive worry when around a specific individual.
- Reports of threats, humiliation, isolation, or consistent criticism from someone.

Sexual Abuse:

- Unexplained pain or discomfort in the genital or anal areas.
- Significant changes in sexual behaviour or knowledge inappropriate for the person's age.
- Disclosure of non-consensual sexual encounters or exploitation.

Verbal Abuse:

- Frequent name-calling, insults, or derogatory language directed at the individual.
- Expressing fear or anxiety about interacting with a particular person due to hurtful language.

Financial Abuse:

- Sudden and unexplained changes in financial resources or assets.
- Reports of someone else controlling the person's finances without authorisation.
- Evidence of manipulation, coercion, or theft related to financial matters.

Version History Table:

Version	Version Date	Authorised Officer	Amendment Notes	Next Review Date
1.4	04/05/2020	Exec Committee	AlIG policy created	May 2022
9.0	07/12/2023	Olivia van der Kroon	Rename Community Incident Process to 'Direct Support Reporting Process' and included major changes, definitions to safeguarding (Ansvr audit results)	Aug 2024
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Neglect:

- Poor personal hygiene or signs of inadequate care.
- Unmet basic needs, such as food, clothing, or shelter.
- Deterioration in physical or mental health due to lack of care.

Substance Abuse:

- Physical and behavioural signs of excessive drug or alcohol use, such as intoxication, withdrawal symptoms, or erratic behaviour.

Cyberbullying:

- Evidence of online harassment, threatening messages, or harmful online content.
- Emotional distress related to online interactions.

Self-Abuse or Self-Harm:

- Signs of deliberate self-inflicted injuries, such as cuts, burns, or bruises.
- Frequent concealment of injuries or acts of self-harm.

Stalking:

- Persistent unwanted attention, contact, or monitoring by an individual.
- Documentation of invasive or threatening behaviour.

Grooming Vulnerable Persons:

- Suspicious behaviour by an individual, particularly an adult, forming inappropriate relationships with vulnerable individuals, *often involving secrecy and manipulation.*

Child Abuse:

- Physical signs of injury, malnutrition, or neglect in a child.
- Behavioural indicators, such as sudden aggression, withdrawal, or fear of certain individuals.

Domestic Abuse (Domestic Violence):

- Reports of a pattern of abusive behaviours within an intimate relationship or family setting.
- Physical injuries, emotional distress, or financial exploitation within a domestic context.

Remember, one sign on its own may not suggest abuse or neglect. It is important to exercise care and sensitivity when assessing these indicators and to involve appropriate authorities and support systems when abuse is suspected.

Procedures

The Organisation applies the following processes and procedures to prevent violence, exploitation and discrimination towards child and vulnerable people:

- a. The Organisation's recruitment process includes screening of employees and volunteers to minimise the risk to the Organisation of employing people who pose a risk to other people, including Clients and other staff. Working with Children (WWC) checks, NDIS Screening, or National Police Clearances (less than 6 months old) are prerequisites for potential employees or volunteers being appointed to those whose positions usually require them to come into verbal, physical or electronic contact with children (defined as someone under the age of 18 years) and other vulnerable individuals.
- b. When working with our Clients, it is important not to dismiss significant changes in a person's behaviour. If you are sufficiently concerned, you should report it to the appropriate person as outlined later in this policy.

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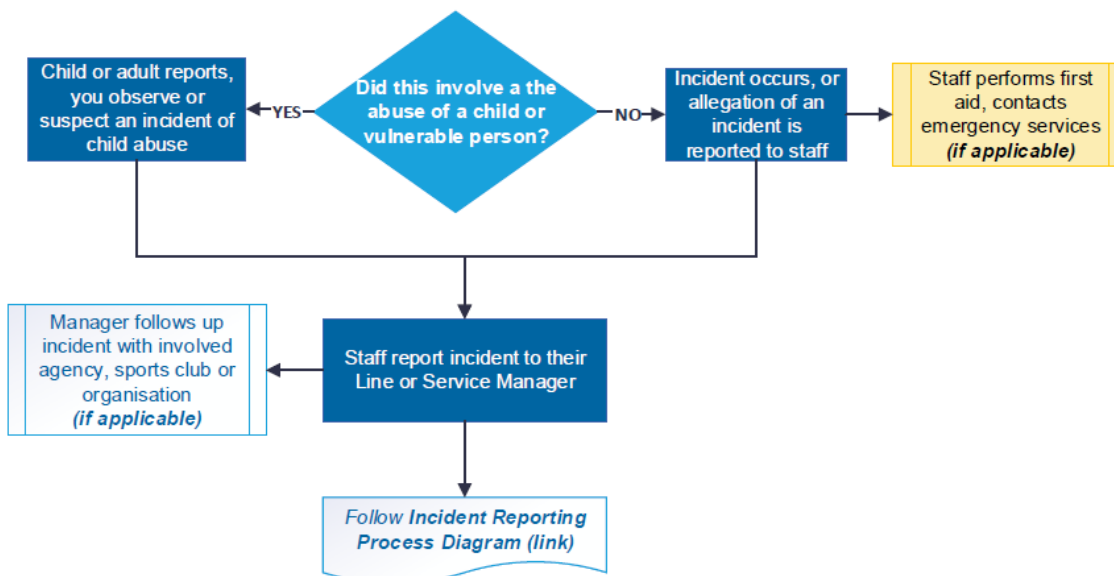
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- c. As part of induction all required staff receive training in responding to abuse.
- d. Service agreements include a 'contact section' ensures that participants always have more than one contact within the organisation to discuss supports, report incidents or provide feedback.
- e. The Incident Management and External Complaints policies outline how the organisation will respond to any allegations of violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation, or discrimination to ensure procedural fairness.
 - I. Reference [Incident Management Policy.pdf](#) , [Incident Management Process - Flow diagram.pdf](#), and [Incident and Service Improvement Registers - Flow Diagram.pdf](#) , [Community Incident Process Diagram](#).
 - II. Reference [External Complaints Policy.pdf](#) and [External Complaints Process - Flow Diagram.pdf](#)

Safeguarding Incident Reporting Process

If a child or adult reports, you observe or suspect an incident of child abuse follow the *Community Incident and Reporting Process*.

Direct Support Incident Reporting Process Diagram:



[Direct Support Incident Reporting Process Diagram \(link\)](#)

Reporting

All employees have a responsibility to respond to a disclosure or suspicion of abuse.

In the first instance all reports should be made to your direct Line Manager unless you are uncomfortable doing so or believe it to be inappropriate. If that is the case, you can report the matter to the General Manager or reports can be made directly to:

For WA:

- WA Police Child Abuse Squad - 9428 1500, or
- Department for Child Protection local office (www.dcp.wa.gov.au)

All reports that are made to your Manager, the Police or Department for Child Protection are confidential. You do not need proof of abuse to make a report – you can act on a suspicion of abuse.

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The Organisation's employees also have a responsibility to advise their Line Manager of involvement in any situation where actions could be misinterpreted or any situation which would be likely to bring the Organisation into disrepute.

It is expected that the Organisation employees will use common sense and avoid actions or behaviours that are abusive or exploitative of children or young people or could be construed as such. The following list of actions constitute a breach of the Organisation's Child and Vulnerable People Protection Policy and may provide grounds for employment with the Organisation to be terminated and / or result in criminal prosecution:

- Use inappropriate language – whether of an offensive, discriminatory, demeaning, abusive or sexual nature – when speaking with or whilst in the presence of a Client
- Engage in behaviour to shame, humiliate, belittle, or degrade an individual, or otherwise emotionally abuse the person
- Act in a sexually provocative manner or engage Clients in any form of sexual activity, including paying for sexual services
- Hold, cuddle or touch a Client in an inappropriate, unnecessary, or culturally insensitive way
- Condone or participate in, behaviour with Clients, which is illegal, unsafe, or abusive
- Spend time outside work requirements with any Client connected with the Organisation's programs; this includes interaction through social media tools
- Do things for people of a personal nature that they can do for themselves such as toileting them or changing their clothes
- Access or create sexually abusive images of people
- Use computers, mobile phones, video or digital cameras or any other technology for the purpose of exploiting or harassing people

Important Contact Numbers (***Western Australia***):

- Kids Help Line – 1800 551 800
- Police Assistance Centre – 131 444
- WA Police Child Protection Squad – 9428 1500
- WA Department for Child Protection local office. Refer www.dcp.wa.gov.au
- WA Crisis Care – 9223 1111 or 1800 199 008 (free call STD)

Recording and Managing an Incident

Follow the process and steps outlined in the [Incident Management Policy](#), which includes an [Incident Management Process - Flow diagram.pdf](#) on how to escalate and manage the incident.

*Documenting the incident and resolution must be completed as per the [Incident Management Policy](#), **Appendix C - Internal CMS Incident Reporting Process**.

Roles and Responsibilities

Board Responsibilities:

- Policy Development and Oversight: The Board is accountable for creating and periodically reviewing the safeguarding policy to ensure its alignment with legal requirements and best practices.
- Resource Allocation: Allocate the necessary resources (financial, personnel, training, etc.) to effectively enforce the safeguarding policy.
- Support and Supervision: Offer guidance and support to the Safeguarding Officer to ensure their activities are in line with the policy.
- Accountability: Ensure accountability across all levels for the implementation of the safeguarding policy and the resolution of any breaches.

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Line, Senior, and Executive Management Responsibilities:

- Safety and Well-being: Line, Senior, and Executive Managers must prioritise the safety and well-being of children and vulnerable individuals under their organisation's supervision.
- Policy Implementation: Implement the safeguarding policy, including providing training to staff, including volunteers, and communicating the policy as required.
- Monitoring: Maintain vigilance in monitoring activities and promptly report any instances of abuse or neglect.
- Incident Reporting and Response:
 - Line Management: Ensure that team members report safeguarding incidents and support the incident resolution process, fostering a transparent reporting environment.
 - Senior Management: Define and communicate incident reporting procedures, oversee incident handling, and promote transparency and accountability throughout the organisation.
 - Executive Management: Hold ultimate responsibility, set the strategy, ensure legal compliance, allocate resources, and cultivate a culture that values reporting and safeguards all individuals involved with the organisation.
- Supervision of Support Staff and Volunteers: Provide guidance, training, and support to employees under their supervision.
- Documentation and Compliance: Ensure the [Incident Management Policy](#) process is followed and meticulous records of all safeguarding-related activities and ensure ongoing adherence to the policy.

Staff (including Volunteer) Responsibilities:

- Training and Compliance: Staff are obligated to attend mandatory training on safeguarding procedures and policies while strictly adhering to the safeguards in place.
- Awareness: Maintain vigilant awareness of signs of abuse or neglect and promptly report any concerns to management or the Safeguarding Officer.
- Safe Environment: Ensure that all activities are conducted in an environment that is safe, respectful, and inclusive.
- Incident Reporting and Response: Ensure the process for reporting and addressing safeguarding incidents is followed, including liaising with relevant authorities as required. *Reference, [Community Incident Process Diagram](#).*
- Documentation and Compliance: Maintain clear and updated records of all safeguarding-related activities and ensure ongoing adherence to the policy.

Safeguarding Officer Responsibilities:

- Policy Implementation: The Safeguarding Officer is responsible for overseeing the proper implementation of the safeguarding policy, ensuring compliance with all legal requirements.
- Training and Awareness: Provide comprehensive training or/and resources to staff, management teams, and the Board on safeguarding procedures.
- Incident Reporting and Response: Establish a well-defined process for reporting and addressing safeguarding incidents, including investigations and appropriate liaison with relevant authorities.
- Documentation and Compliance: Maintain meticulous records of all safeguarding-related activities and ensure ongoing adherence to the policy.

References

- [Incident Management Policy](#)
- [Incident Management Process - Flow diagram.pdf](#)
- [Incident and Service Improvement Registers - Flow Diagram](#)
- [Direct Support Incident Reporting Process Diagram](#)
- [External Complaints Policy](#)
- [External Complaints Process - Flow Diagram.pdf](#)
- [Training and Development Policy](#)

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