

Providing a Child-Safe Environment policy

Policy Statement

Fun 4 U Helensburgh aims to provide a stimulating, comfortable and safe indoor and outdoor environment that allows flexibility and access to a variety of quiet, active, group and individual activities. This policy guides educators and visitors on how to behave with the children at Fun 4 U Helensburgh and the importance of promoting children's participation in our organisation to make a safer environment for all.

Links Education and Care Centres National Regulations 2018, National Quality Standard 2018

Regs:

84	Awareness of child protection law
88	Infectious diseases
99	Children leaving the education and care service premises
103	Premises, furniture and equipment to be safe, clean and in good repair
104	Fencing
105	Furniture, materials and equipment
106	Laundry and hygiene facilities
109	Toilet and hygiene facilities
113	Outdoor space- natural environment
114	Outdoor space- Shade
115	Premises designed to facilitate supervision
123	Educator to child ratios
136	First Aid qualifications
155	Interactions with children
162	Health information to be kept in enrolment record
165	Record of visitors
166	Children not to be alone with visitors
167	Record of service's compliance
168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures
NQS	
2.1	Each child's health and physical activity is supported and promoted.
2.2	Each child is protected
3.1	The design of the facilities is appropriate for the operation of a service.
3.2	The service environment is inclusive, promotes competence and supports exploration and play-based learning.

Procedure

CHILD-SAFE CHILD-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT

Definitions:

Child-safe means taking active measures to keep children safe from physical, sexual or emotional abuse.

Child-friendly means creating a trusting environment that values, respects and welcomes children.

Our Service is committed to being a child safe organisation and endorses the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, placing the protection of children as a priority of our responsibilities and obligations. The Child Safe Standards recommended by the Royal Commission provide guidance for our Service to ensure our policies and procedures, strategies and attitudes, ensure children's safety is paramount.

Our Service has a zero tolerance to child abuse, and we are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children. We promote diversity and tolerance and aim to form equitable and positive relationships with children. We ensure children participate in decisions affecting them and listen and

respect their suggestions and ideas. We respond to any concerns, disclosures, allegations or suspicions of harm by reporting to the relevant authorities.

We are dedicated in 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 a disability.

Our Service will not tolerate bullying or harassment. Our priority is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and encourage positive relationships.

Communication

We aim to build and maintain positive and respectful relationships with children, families and educators of our Service and prioritise a child safe environment. We communicate regularly and clearly with all stakeholders and ensure our policies and procedures are available to employees, volunteers, families and children and young people. (Reg. 170). Feedback and evaluation of our policies and procedures is welcomed through surveys, feedback or discussions with management.

Code of conduct

Management, educators, staff, volunteers and students will adhere to our Service's *Code of Conduct Policy*. We will:

- adhere to our *Child Safe Environment Policy, Child Protection Policy* at all times
- provide adequate supervision of children at all times
- take reasonable action to protect children and young people for risk of harm
- ensure the service premise is free from the use of tobacco, illicit drugs and alcohol
- be responsible for their own, and others health and safety
- be a positive role model to children and young people
- respect children's privacy and dignity at all times
- listen and respond appropriately to the views and concerns of children and young people
- report any allegations of child abuse to the Approved Provider.
- notify the approved provider and/or the regulatory authority within 24 hours of any serious incident or complaint as per the National Regulations
- encourage children and young people to 'have a say' on issues that are important to them.

Staff, educators and volunteers must:

- not discriminate against any child, because of age, gender, cultural background, race, ethnicity or disability
- not put children at risk of abuse- refusing food/play, making threats, exposing children to inappropriate language or material (movies, internet, photos)
- not develop any 'special' relationships with children or young people that could be seen as favouritism such as the offering of gifts or special treatment.

Participation of families and young children

Our Service ensures families are always welcome and feel comfortable asking questions on how we prioritise child safety. We provide a range of opportunities for consultation and collaboration about decisions about their child's safety whilst at our Service including:

- policy and procedure review
- child protection
- allegations/grievance procedures
- sun safety
- written authorisations- parenting orders
- code of conduct
- supporting children with diverse needs and being inclusive.

We promote a respectful, child safe culture where children concerns are always responded to, and children feel empowered to participate in decisions and provide feedback to educators and staff.

Recruitment

Our Service maintains a consistent recruitment, screening and selection process to ensure the best staff possible based on skills, qualifications, experience and suitability for the position available. All staff participate in an interview and have reference checks completed to ensure the applicant's suitability to the role, previous experiences and their commitment to child safe values and practices. All staff are provided with a comprehensive induction process which outlines our Code of Conduct, identifying and responding to child abuse, grievance processes, and work health and safety.

Working with children check-

Working in conjunction with the Child Protection Act and National Regulations, the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children is paramount within our Service and community. A Working with Children Check (WWCC) is a requirement for people who work in child-related work. It involves a national criminal history check and a review of findings of workplace misconduct.

The result of a Working with Children Check is either a clearance to work with children and is valid for five years, or a bar against working with children. Cleared applicants are subject to ongoing monitoring and relevant new records may lead to the clearance being revoked.

Management is responsible for the periodic review and maintenance of up to date records of employees' Working with Children Check, including the Working with Children Check number and the date on which each clearance expires. Once an employee provides their WWCC clearance, management will verify the clearance to ensure that it is valid and current. The WWCC will be placed in the individual's file and continue to be updated as required.

Child protection – Reportable conduct scheme

Children and young people always have a right to be safe and protected. To comply with legislation and ensure a child safe environment, educators are provided with training and ongoing supervision to ensure they understand that *child safety is everyone's responsibility*.

All educators and staff are mandatory reporters and must make reports if they suspect on reasonable grounds, a child is at risk of significant harm. All staff are provided with up to date training about child protection law and their obligations under this law and to ensure they are confident in following the reporting guidelines within NSW [and adhere to our *Child Protection Policy*. (Reg 84).

Through continual education and training, educators and staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe. Training gives educators and staff confidence to identify, respond and report child abuse.

Nominated supervisors and persons in day-to-day charge must complete a course in child protection approved by the Regulatory Authority on an annual basis.

Child protection- Allegations against Employees

To protect children and ensure their safety, welfare and wellbeing, management is responsive to report allegations or convictions of child abuse and child related misconduct by any staff member or volunteer or contractor to the Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG) as part of the *Reportable Conduct Scheme*.

Our Service will ensure an appropriate level of confidentiality of information relating to the reportable allegations as per the Children's Guardian Act 2019. We take our legislative responsibilities as part of the Reportable Conduct Scheme seriously and will respond to any reportable allegation or conviction against employees or volunteers that may arise.

Reporting and responding to general complaints

Feedback from children, families, educators, staff and the wider community is fundamental in creating an evolving Childcare Service working towards the highest standard of care and education. We aim to investigate all complaints and grievances with a high standard of equity and fairness. Our Service believes in procedural fairness and natural justice that govern the strategies and practices, which include:

- The right to be heard fairly
- The right to an unbiased decision made by an objective decision maker
- The right to have the decision based on relevant evidence.

Physical environment- supervision and safety checklist

Children's safety is embedded in our day-to-day practices. We ensure effective and adequate supervision is provided to children at all times. Educators will employ 'active supervision' strategies within the service

environment and when participating in excursions or transporting children. Consideration will be made for the different ages and abilities of children and the activities that may require different levels of supervision.

Through conducting risk assessments, we assess and manage risks in the physical environment collaborating with children to develop behaviour guidelines for play including adventurous play to ensure their safety. Educators have a sound understanding of their duty of care and responsibilities in ensuring a child safe environment.

Educators conduct regular safety checks to maintain basic standards of safety within our Service. We believe that child safety is a shared responsibility at all levels within our Service. Children are encouraged to speak up about their safety and the safety of their friends by telling an educator if they feel unsafe in a particular situation or environment.

Educators will complete the following daily checklists to assist and record inspections of the physical environment where foreseeable risks may be evident and cause harm or injury to a child:

- Daily indoor safety checks
- Outdoor Safety Checklist

Any findings that require attention will be either dealt with immediately or submitted into the maintenance book depending on priority.

Risk assessment and risk assessment tool

It is a legislative requirement that Management and educators implement a risk management system where they identify and manage hazards and risks within the workplace to ensure a child safe environment. Strategies are in place to make sure child safety (through the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations) and Education and Care National Regulations are embedded across our Service. The key principles of risk management include:

1. Identifying all hazards or potential hazards in the service/residence/venue
2. Assess the risk of harm or potential harm for each hazard
3. Control or manage the risk – Risk Rating Matrix
4. Monitor and improve safety – Risk Assessment Action Plan
5. Evaluate and Review

It is the responsibility of all staff and educators at the Service to complete a risk assessment where children's safety may be jeopardised and when organising an excursion/incursion or any transportation of children. Children's safety must be incorporated into everyday practice within the Service. Common hazards within the Service which may require a risk assessment include:

- cross-infection and infectious disease
- administration of medication
- anaphylaxis procedures and management

- building and equipment (including storage)
- inadequate space for conducting activities and experiences
- hazardous chemicals
- electrical appliances
- food preparation and storage
- environmental influences such as shade, noise etc
- sun safety
- children's behaviours
- water safety
- fire equipment
- pets and/or animals
- inadequate supervision of children
- children's activities and experiences
- Work Health and Safety such as manual handling
- non-compliance risk
- hot drinks
- transportation of children (regular outing and regular transportation)
- excursions

To maintain a child safe environment, we will adhere to Service policies and procedures and conduct the following checklist and audits:

- Allergy risk management
- Emergency procedures risk assessment
- Transportation of children risk assessment
- Chemical Audit
- Incursion risk assessment
- Fire evacuation drills
- Supervision plan
- Chemical audit
- Shade Audit
- First Aid action plans
- Building and maintenance audit

Emergency and evacuation procedures

Management will ensure that copies of the emergency and evacuation floor plan is displayed in prominent positions near each exit of the service premises, including indoor and outdoor learning areas.

All staff are familiar with emergency evacuation procedures and regulatory requirements.

Rehearsals for emergency and evacuation procedures, including lock downs, are conducted at least once every 3 months. Records will be kept for all rehearsals.

Arrival and departure authorisation

Our Service prioritises children's safety at all times. We will only release children to an authorised person as named on the child's enrolment form. We request families provide current court orders, and parenting plans to ensure our records are up to date.

National Regulations require our Service to keep a record of children and visitor's arrival and departures, with the signatures of the person responsible for verifying the accuracy of the record and the identity of the person collecting the child.

Educators will work in collaboration with our *Delivery of children to and Collection from Education and Care Premises Policy* and *Student and Visitors Policy* to ensure children feel safe and secure.

To ensure children's safety, educators have a clear understanding of their legal obligation to check identification when a person is collecting a child. To maintain compliance, parents and educators will complete a authorisation to collect form if they authorise a person who is not on their emergency contact form to pick up their child.

Online safety

Our Service is committed to create and maintain a safe online environment with support and collaboration with staff, families and community. Management ensures anti-virus and internet security systems are installed to block access to unsuitable web sites, newsgroups and chat rooms.

Our Service ensures backups of important and confidential data is made regularly and either stored securely offline, or online. Software and devices are updated regularly to avoid any breach of confidential information.

Families are provided with information about our software program which is password protected and used to share observations, photos, videos, daily reports and portfolios. Passwords are not to be shared with others as per our written agreement.

Written authorisation is requested as part of the enrolment process for children to use computers/tablets; have their photo taken and published as part of promotional marketing or on the app program used by the service. The identity of a child is not published on any platform.

Only educational software programs and apps that have appropriate content and have been examined prior to allowing their use are used in the Service. Children are always supervised using any technology.

Storage of hazardous substances

Our Service will endeavour to provide a safe environment where necessary chemical and hazardous equipment are safely stored away from children and handled appropriately.

Management and educators will keep a register of hazardous chemicals used at the Service, including relevant Safety Data Sheets (SDS).

To maintain a safe environment for children, the following audits and checklists are conducted:

- Allergy risk management including the storage of medication
- Chemical audit including safe storage
- Shade Audit
- Building and maintenance audit

Equipment, furniture and maintenance record

There are several factors that can contribute to a hazard, such as a deprived program, insufficient supervision and dilapidated equipment. To ensure a child safe environment free from hazards, we have implemented practices and continue to monitor Service policies and procedures that uphold Australian Safety Standards.

The premises and all equipment and furniture used within the Service are audited to ensure all aspects are safe, clean and in good repair. We understand that hazards are specific to developmental stages; educators are aware that toys and equipment need to be checked to ensure they are safe and developmentally appropriate for children. Regular checks occur within the Service to ensure that all toys, furniture and equipment are in good condition and working order.

Implementing the Child Safe standards

The Child Safe Standards recommended by the Royal Commission provide a framework for making organisations safer for children. They have been accepted by the NSW government. Based on extensive research and consultation, the Standards provide tangible guidance for organisations to create cultures, adopt strategies and act to put the interests of children first, to keep them safe from harm. The 10 safe standards were designed to ensure all aspects of organisations that are associated with children operate in a safe manner in order to ensure all children are not at risk of harm from neglect and/ or abuse at any time. The standards include:

1. Child safety is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture
2. Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
3. Families and communities are informed and involved
4. Equity is upheld and diverse needs are taken into account
5. People working with children are suitable and supported

6. Processes to respond to complaints of child abuse (or other concerns) are child-focused.
7. Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe, through continual education and training
8. Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse or other kinds of harm to occur.
9. Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved
10. Policies and procedures document how the organisation is child safe.

A risk management resource is made available from the Office of the Children's Guardian for organization to develop a risk management approach to ensure all aspects are working towards to ensuring the child safe standards are implemented into the service. Child safe standards also ensure that a code of conduct is developed in respect to the child safe standards.

Child Safe indoor environment

- The Co-ordinator will ensure that the service premises and all equipment and furniture used by the children are safe, clean and in good repair. Any broken or unsafe items will be disposed of accordingly. Children will have access to sufficient furniture, materials and developmentally appropriate equipment suitable for the education and care of all children (Reg. 103 and 105).
- The indoor spaces used by the children will be well ventilated with the use of properly maintained air conditioners and have as much natural light as can be provided by the windows and doorways. The air conditioners will be maintained at a comfortable temperature dependent on the season.
- The indoor area is to be set up to allow children to participate in a variety of activities with easy access to equipment. These indoor spaces must be set up to ensure that proper supervision can be maintained at all times.
- Easy access to areas should be maintained by making clear easily definable passageways and walkways through the building. Staff will ensure that children properly store their bags and those bags and other items are not thrown into walkways or play areas. All items obstructing areas are to be removed and placed in the correct storage areas.
- Access to the outdoor environment should be clear and easily accessible by the children and staff.
- The service will provide adequate, developmentally and age appropriate toilet and hand washing facilities for children. The service has laundry facilities located in a locked area that is inaccessible to children. All linen and dress up clothes are regularly washed.

Child Safe environment

- The outdoor space will be inspected daily for any obstacles or dangerous items. These items will be disposed of in a safe and careful manner prior to the children playing in the area. The educator responsible for the inspection will sign their time sheet under the appropriate column to say that they have completed the check.
- The outdoor space will be set up in a variety of different ways with a variety of equipment to encourage participation. The outdoor spaces allow children to explore and experience the natural environment by the use of natural features eg, natural vegetation and plants (Reg 113).

- Areas will be made available where children can play in large or small groups or by themselves. The service will ensure that the regulation requirement for outdoor space is adhered to with 7 square meters of unencumbered outdoor space being provided (Reg 108).
- Supervision will be properly maintained. Children are only to play in the areas that are clearly visible to the staff, and where proper child/staff ratios are maintained. This is to ensure the children's safety with regard to the need to maintain the rights and dignity of the children.
- Clear behaviour boundaries are set and enforced. When it is necessary to go outside the boundaries or line of supervision, a staff member must accompany the child eg oval, primary school.

Tobacco, drug and alcohol free environment

- Educators will ensure that children are provided with an environment that is free from the use of tobacco, illicit drugs and alcohol. Educators will not be affected by alcohol when working with children when the service is operating. The coordinator must ensure that no educators are affected by drugs that adversely affect that person's ability to care for children when the service is operating.

Continuous Review

To ensure we maintain a culture of continuous improvement, we will ensure our child safe practices are regularly reviewed, evaluated and improved. We aim to ensure all educators, staff and volunteers understand and effectively implement our policies and procedures to provide a child safe environment at our Service.

We will regularly review and monitor the effectiveness of our Child Safe policies and procedures and invite children, staff members, families and communities to contribute to their development.

Any updates or revisions will be communicated to all stakeholders. Our *Child Safe Environment Policy* will be reviewed on an annual basis

Relevant documents for consideration

Toxic Playground: a guide to reducing the chemical load in schools and childcare centers by Jo Immig, Total Environment Centre.

Education and Care Services National Regulations 82-84, 103-106 and 109-115 (under sections 301 and 324 of the Education and Care Services National Law)

Child Safe, Child Friendly Workshop. Participant's Workbook. NSW Commission for Children and Young People.

My Time, Our Place. Outcome 1.1 Children feel safe, secure and supported. Outcome 3.2 Children take increasing responsibility for their own health and physical wellbeing.

Comments:

Date created: August 2015

Date reviewed: August 2022