

CHD-01-PY Safeguarding Children & Young People Policy



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Policy Statement

In keeping children and young people safe, the following values are a mechanism for guiding our actions and assisting in decision-making; they are a reference to which personnel can refer to ensure their responsibilities to children and young people are upheld.

Odyssey House NSW (Odyssey or Odyssey House) has zero-tolerance towards abuse and neglect of children and young people. We are committed to the rights of all children and young people to feel safe and be safe when participating in Odyssey's activities, services, and programs.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the responsibilities, procedures and practices required by all personnel within Odyssey House in relation to keeping children and young people free from abuse and neglect.

This policy supports our international obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Child Safe Standards recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and is aligned with the Australian Human Rights Commission National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

As such, our policies and procedures reflect child safe legislation and promote best practice and care for the children and young people within Odyssey. Our board approves our Odyssey House NSW Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy.

We take seriously our responsibility to deliver a service environment that is caring, nurturing and safe. We are committed to acting in advancing the safety and wellbeing of children and young people and ensuring compliance with all requirements set out in this policy.

Scope

The Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy applies to all personnel, including employees, casual staff, Board and committee members, volunteers and contractors involved with Odyssey House NSW.

This policy applies in all our operational environments and without fail wherever children and young people are participating in Odyssey's activities, programs, services and/or facilities.

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Principles

- Safeguarding children and young people is a shared responsibility; it is reliant on all individuals within our Odyssey to keep children and young people safe in our care.
- Any form of abuse or neglect towards children and young people will not be tolerated and immediate action will be taken upon to report any suspected harmful or abusive behaviours.
- The best interest of the child will be the primary consideration in all actions and decisions concerning the safety or wellbeing of a child or young person.
- We are accountable to the children and young people we work with by fostering high ethical standards in a culture of openness and transparency.
- We empower children by informing them of their rights and responsibilities and support them to speak up about any matters of importance to them, including if something goes wrong. We work to include the participation of children and young people in decision making regarding any services or other matters affecting them.

Outcomes

- **Zero-tolerance towards abuse and neglect:** All personnel actively uphold a zero-tolerance stance against any form of abuse or neglect towards children and young people, ensuring their safety and protection at all times.
- **Child safety and wellbeing:** The safety and wellbeing of children and young people are paramount in every decision and action taken, with their best interests consistently prioritised.
- **Compliance with international and national standards:** Alignment with international obligations and national standards is achieved, ensuring that our practices consistently meet the highest safeguarding standards.
- **Caring and nurturing environment:** A nurturing and supportive environment is cultivated, where children and young people feel safe, valued, and empowered to thrive.
- **Shared responsibility:** Safeguarding children and young people is embraced as a collective responsibility, with every individual within Odyssey actively contributing to their safety and protection.
- **Immediate action on concerns:** Concerns regarding the safety and wellbeing of children and young people are swiftly addressed and actioned upon, prioritising their protection and welfare above all else.
- **Empowerment and participation:** Children and young people are empowered to assert their rights and participate in decision-making processes that affect them, fostering a culture of inclusion, respect, and empowerment.
- **Accountability and transparency:** High ethical standards are maintained, fostering a culture of accountability, transparency, and integrity throughout Odyssey's operations and interactions with children and young people.

Definitions

Term	Definition
Bullying	Involves misuse of power by one or more individuals over another, often repeated over time, taking forms of abuse like verbal (put downs, threats),

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	physical (hitting, tripping), social (ignoring, ostracising), and psychological (spreading rumours, stalking).
Child or young person	A person under the age of eighteen years.
Code of Conduct	Sets standards to prevent harm to children and young people, specifying acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in interactions with them.
Emotional or psychological abuse	Occurs when a child doesn't receive necessary love, affection, or attention, leading to significant damage to their emotional, psychological, and social development.
Family Violence	<p>Violence between members of a family, extended family or those fulfilling the role of family in a child or young person's life, in a household harmful to children, includes witnessing or experiencing violence.</p> <p>Exposure to family violence places children and young people at increased risk of physical injury and harm and has a significant impact on their wellbeing and development.</p>
Grooming	<p>Perpetrator builds a relationship with a child to abuse them, can occur over time or quickly in any setting where a relationship is formed (e.g. sports, religious activities) and including online.</p> <p>The child may be given special attention and, what starts as an apparently normal display of affection, such as cuddling, can develop into sexual touching or masturbation and then into more serious sexual behaviour. Other perpetrators may draw a child in and abuse them relatively quickly.</p>
Harm	<p>Harm to a child, is any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child's physical, psychological, or emotional wellbeing. It is immaterial how the harm is caused. Harm can be caused by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • physical, psychological, or emotional abuse or neglect. • sexual abuse or exploitation. • a single act, omission, or circumstance; and <p>a series or combination of acts, omissions, or circumstances.</p>
LGBTQI+	A term for Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex.
National Principles for Child Safe Organisations	The National Principles are designed to build capacity and deliver child safety and wellbeing in organisations, families and communities and prevent future harm. The principles have been endorsed by all Commonwealth, state and territory governments.

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Neglect	Persistent failure to provide adequate necessities of life (e.g. shelter, supervision, medical attention), to the extent that the child or young person’s health and development is, or is likely to be, significantly harmed.
Online environment	Digital communication platforms including social networks, messaging apps, and gaming chat.
Staff	All employees who work for Odyssey whether in a paid capacity excluding contractors.
Personnel	All who work for Odyssey whether in a paid or unpaid capacity, including employees, casual employees, volunteers, Board and committee members and contractors.
Physical abuse	Non-accidental physically aggressive acts causing harm, or risk of harm, to a child, includes various forms of physical violence (slapping, shaking, over-training), harmful substances (drugs, alcohol, poison) and certain types of punishment (abuse if they place a child or young person at risk of being hurt).

Delegations

Board of Directors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drive a positive Safeguarding culture and ensure that all safeguarding legislative and compliance requirements are met. • Provide strategic support and guidance of Safeguarding initiatives to ensure that all members of Odyssey empower children and young people to feel and be safe. • Review and endorse key Safeguarding Policies • Ensure Safeguarding is embedded in business and strategic planning processes. • Ensure that Safeguarding forms a critical function of the Boards risk management process and that reasonable steps are taken to manage the risk of causing harm to children and young people. • Conduct regular reviews of Safeguarding data analysis to inform continuous improvement strategies.
Board of Directors Safeguarding Advocate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act as a Safeguarding advocate within the Board/Management Committee/Council. • Act as the Board’s representative on Safeguarding and perform the role of conduit between the Safeguarding Children and Young People Committee and the Board Management Committee/Council.
Chief Executive Officer and Executive Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote a positive culture towards Safeguarding Children and Young People • Ensure adequate resources and support as determined by the Board of Directors is made available to enable to effectively deliver upon the Safeguarding Strategy. • Ensure that reports of child abuse and/or neglect are investigated fairly, following due process in a timely manner. • Ensure that appropriate communication and engagement strategies are implemented to engage children, young people and families in decisions that affect them.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Safeguarding Children and Young People policies and practices in their area of responsibility. • Ensure that there are appropriate controls in place to prevent, detect and respond to incidents.
Safeguarding Children and Young People Committee <i>(Odyssey's Leadership & Management Team (LMT))</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversee and monitor the Safeguarding Children and Young People policies, procedures, and practices. • Coordinate best practice opportunities, data, and learnings to continuously improve Odyssey's approach to Safeguarding Children and Young People • Regularly review all Safeguarding policies, procedures and practices. • Provide operational Safeguarding children and Young People leadership to embed Safeguarding Policy and relevant Safeguarding Law. • Ensure that the basic principles of safeguarding remain a regular feature within their service area's agenda. • Guide staff to know who to talk to and what to do should they have a concern regarding the safety of children and young people.
Safeguarding Children Lead <i>(Manager of Client Safety, Risk Compliance and Quality)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act as Odyssey's 'go-to person' for Safeguarding Children and Young People information and resources.
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commit to creating safe cultures, operations and environments for all Children and Young People. • Adhere faithfully to all Safeguarding Children and Young People policies and procedures. • Speak up when they see something, hear something, or feel something that worries or concerns them.
Contractors/Partner Agencies/ Visitors/ Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commit to adhering to the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policies and Procedures. • Report any suspicion that an incident may have taken place, is taking place, or could take place.

Policy Implementation

1. Responsibilities

Safeguarding children and young people is a collective responsibility at Odyssey House. From executives to employees, volunteers, and contractors, everyone is expected to:

- Protect children and young people from all forms of abuse and neglect by our personnel.
- Remain vigilant for incidents of abuse or neglect outside our operations that may affect the children and young people we serve.
- Foster a child-safe culture endorsed by all individuals involved in our programs and services.

We require all personnel, regardless of their role, to:

- Follow our safeguarding policies and procedures diligently.

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- Report any instances of abuse or neglect to management, external authorities, or the police, whether perpetrated by personnel within Odyssey or external parties, including family members or strangers.

Additionally, we promote equity and respect diversity by:

- Anticipating and effectively responding to diverse circumstances, especially those with additional vulnerabilities.
- Informing children and young people of their rights and providing access to support and complaints processes.
- Ensuring participation in decision-making, with particular attention to the needs of various groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, people with disabilities, culturally and language diverse individuals, LGBTQI+ individuals, and those unable to live at home.

We uphold a zero-tolerance stance on racism and discrimination, acting promptly when identified. Our commitment to diversity and inclusion is further detailed in the Engagement Procedure for Equity and Diversity.

Detailed responsibilities for each role regarding the development and compliance of our Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy are outlined in Section 10 of this policy.

2. Safeguarding Governance

Odyssey has a safeguarding children and young people governance structure with robust systems in place which support personnel and service users to report safeguarding concerns and facilitate effective risk-based and informed decisions that ensure accountability to children and young people.

Our governance structure, the Safeguarding Children and Young People Committee (Leadership Management Team), with oversight of the Board Safeguarding Advocate defines the roles and responsibilities associated with providing oversight, management, and implementation of our commitment to safeguarding children and young people.

3. Our Commitment

We are dedicated to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people in our care. Our policies and procedures establish a safeguarding culture, informed by stakeholder consultation and accessible to all. We actively seek feedback to inform and improve our safeguarding efforts.

3.1. We are committed to safeguarding children and young people.

Our Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy underscores our commitment to protecting them from abuse and neglect. We ensure clear communication of this commitment to all personnel, providing child-friendly versions tailored to diverse needs. We have a zero-tolerance approach towards child abuse and neglect and take seriously any raised concerns / incidents.

Our approach to risk management recognises the potential risks to children and young people associated with Odyssey's service delivery and considers online and physical or psychological

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environments, and any vulnerable or diverse circumstances of children or young people utilising our services.

3.2. We are committed to creating culturally safe environments for all Aboriginal children and their families.

We are committed to creating environments where Aboriginal culture is celebrated and Aboriginal children, families and community members are welcomed and included. Strategies to embed cultural safety of Aboriginal children include:

- An Acknowledgement of Country at the commencement of formal meetings or public events
- Providing opportunities for children to share their cultural identity and express their culture.
- Supporting children and young people who wish to explore their culture, including consulting with their family and relevant Aboriginal organisations.
- Providing professional development for all personnel on the strengths of Aboriginal culture and its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children
- Celebrating NAIDOC week and acknowledging significant events including National Sorry Day and National Reconciliation Week
- Consulting and seeking feedback from Aboriginal children, families, and communities on their experience of expressing their identity at Odyssey and further opportunities to promote Aboriginal culture and practices.

3.3. Our personnel know the behaviour we expect.

We ensure all personnel understand their role in safeguarding children, with explicit behavioural expectations outlined in position descriptions and a Code of Conduct. Monitoring and supervision ensure adherence to these standards.

3.4. We minimise the likelihood of recruiting a person who is unsuitable.

We employ thorough screening processes to prevent the recruitment of unsuitable personnel. This includes communicating our safeguarding commitment, conducting safeguarding-related interviews, and rigorous reference and background checks.

We require our personnel to disclose criminal convictions or charges affecting their suitability to work with children and young people both prior to and after their employment, and we review police records and Working with Children Check or equivalent periodically.

We ensure that there will be no discrimination as part of the recruitment process, with respect to inclusion and equal opportunity and where possible, hire appropriate personnel that represents the diverse range of children and young people and their families involved in Odyssey.

3.5. Induction and training are part of our commitment

Our induction process equips new personnel with a clear understanding of our safeguarding policies and practices, individuals safeguarding responsibilities, commitments, and behavioural

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expectations. Ongoing training ensures continued education on child safety, cultural sensitivity, and relevant topics. Our personnel are provided with copies of Odyssey's Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy (this Policy), Code of Conduct and Reporting Policy and where applicable Recruitment Policy.

3.6. We encourage the involvement of children, young people, and their families.

We engage children, young people, and families through inclusive processes, valuing diversity and promoting effective communication. We empower young individuals by encouraging their participation in decision-making, ensuring their voices are heard, and providing space for expressing their needs and concerns. We actively seek their input to inform our policies, procedures, and practices.

In developing a safe and supportive environment, we involve families in significant decisions regarding their children and provide them with relevant information, including:

- Our commitment to safeguarding children's rights.
- Expected behaviour for our personnel and service users.
- Our policy and reporting mechanism for abuse or concerns.

3.7. Our personnel understand their responsibility for reporting child abuse and responding to child safety complaints.

Our personnel are mandated to report child abuse promptly and thoroughly respond to safety complaints. Our policy, endorsed at the highest levels, requires:

- Immediate reporting of abuse, neglect, or concerns about policies or personnel behaviour.
- Compliance with all mandatory reporting laws.
- Swift and thorough response to all safety complaints.
- Adherence to a specified reporting process.
- Failure to report is considered serious misconduct.

In case of any internal or external complaint involving child abuse, personnel must follow our reporting policy and prioritise children's safety, reporting any potentially criminal behaviour to the NSW Police. Personnel receive and understand the policy's implications for their role, and we document and monitor all allegations, disclosures, or concerns regarding child abuse.

3.8. We maintain and improve our policies and practices.

Odyssey seeks to continuously review and improve our policies, procedures, and practices to safeguard children and young people from abuse and neglect. The responsibility for implementing and reviewing our safeguarding children and young people approach is led by the Leadership Management Team.

To identify any key improvements needed, Odyssey incorporates findings from; internal audits / reviews that assess our ongoing compliance with our responsibilities to keep children and young people safe, input and feedback received by children and young people and their families, feedback gained from communication with our personnel and feedback gained from 'complaints and compliments' received.

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Monitoring and Review

This document will be reviewed by the Policy Owner at least every three years, after consultation. Some circumstances may trigger an early review, this includes but is not limited to legislative changes, organisational changes, incident outcomes and other matters deemed appropriate by the Board and/or Chief Executive Officer.

When there are any updates or changes to this Policy, they will be communicated to all personnel and stakeholders.

External audit and verification based on a sample, conducted by the Australian Childhood Foundation shall occur at three yearly intervals.

Associated Documents

The following Odyssey House NSW policies and procedures must be considered in relation to this document:

People & Culture

- Code of Conduct
- Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Vision, Values and Aims Statement
- Learning and Professional Development Policy

Quality & Risk

- Complaints and Compliments Policy
- Complaints and Compliments Procedure
- Client Information Policy
- Incident Management Policy
- Incident Management Procedure
- Risk Management Policy
- Risk Management Procedure
- Organisational Risk Register
- Responding to Abuse, Neglect and Harm Procedure
- Child Safety and Mandatory Reporting Procedure
- Safeguarding Children and Young People Information for Parents and Care Givers
- Safeguarding Children and Young People Commitment Statement

Families & Children

- Child Car Restraint Procedure
- Immediate Safety Plan Procedure
- Immediate Safety Plan Template
- Risk Management Plan Family Recovery Centre Procedure
- Risk Management Plan Family Recovery Centre Template

College

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- Odyssey College Reportable Conduct of Staff, Volunteers and Others Policy
- Odyssey College Child Protection Policy

Related Legislation and Frameworks

Our Guidelines comply with relevant legislation. In upholding this policy, the following legislation and frameworks must be considered by all Odyssey House NSW Personnel:

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Child Safe Standards recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse
- National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009-2020
- Australian Human Rights Commission National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

References

- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), 2018
- World Health Organisation, (2006)
- Child Family Community Australia (CFCA), (2016).
- Australian eSafety Commissioner, (2020).

Document History

Version	Changes since previous version	Authored by	Endorsed by	Approved by	Date Effective
1	NA	Chris Lonsdale – Manager FRC Caitlin Carpenter – Manager Client Safety Risk Compliance & Quality	Executive Team	Odyssey House NSW Board of Directors	11 June 2024

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