

Child Safety Policy

Title	Child Safety
Policy ID	
Version Number	Final for Approval
Relevant Legislation	
Process Owner	Business Operations Manager

Introduction and Purpose:

The purpose of this Child Safety Policy is to provide a clear framework for the safeguarding and protection of children who interact with Karuna and its team members. This policy outlines our commitment to creating and maintaining an environment where children are safe, respected, and their rights are upheld, in alignment with the Commonwealth Child Safe Framework.

1. Commitment to Child Safety

Karuna is committed to ensuring the safety, well-being, and dignity of children and young people under our care. We recognise the vulnerability of children and are dedicated to fostering an environment where children are protected from harm and feel safe and supported.

Our organisation:

- Values and respects the diversity of all children.
- Is committed to promoting and protecting children's rights and well-being.
- Works collaboratively with families and the community to create a child-safe culture.

2. Child Safe Standards

Our organisation will comply with the Child Safe Standards outlined in the Commonwealth Child Safe Framework. We commit to the following principles:

2.1. Child Safety and Well-Being is a Shared Responsibility

We recognise that child safety is a shared responsibility between our organisation, families, communities, and relevant authorities. We will actively collaborate with stakeholders to ensure that the safety and well-being of children is always prioritised.

2.2. Empowering Children and Promoting Participation

We are committed to fostering an environment where children feel empowered and encouraged to express their views, contribute to decisions affecting them, and feel listened to. We will ensure that children are given opportunities to participate in a meaningful way.

2.3. Commitment to Zero Tolerance of Abuse

Karuna has a zero-tolerance policy toward any form of child abuse. This includes physical, emotional, sexual, and neglectful abuse, as well as bullying or harassment. We are committed to preventing abuse and promptly responding to allegations of harm.

2.4. A Safe Environment for Children

We will ensure that all physical environments where children interact, such as our offices, service locations, and online platforms, are safe, secure, and appropriate. This includes regular risk assessments and implementation of strategies to mitigate potential risks.

3. Recruitment and Screening

We will implement thorough recruitment and screening processes to ensure the safety of children. This includes:

- **Criminal history checks** for all team members.
- **Working with Children Checks** (Blue Card) for all client-facing team members, including placements.
- Reference checks, including prior employers and individuals familiar with the candidate's work with children.
- Structured interviews and assessments to evaluate the candidate's commitment to child safety and their ability to act in the best interests of children.

4. Code of Conduct

We have established a **Code of Conduct** for all team members, including placements. This Code of Conduct outlines acceptable behaviour, including but not limited to:

- Treating people with respect and dignity.
- Demonstrating appropriate and professional behaviour.
- Establishing and maintaining appropriate professional boundaries.
- Committing to a lawful and inclusive environment.

5. Reporting and Responding to Allegations of Abuse

We recognise that safeguarding children requires prompt and decisive action when concerns are raised. Our organisation will:

- Ensure that all team members including placements understand their responsibility to report any suspected or observed child abuse, neglect, or risk of harm, whether identified during work or outside of work.
- Clearly communicate that certain professionals are legally required to report suspicions of physical or sexual abuse under Queensland's mandatory reporting laws (Doctors, Nurses, Social Workers), and that all staff have a duty of care to report any concerns about child safety.
- Provide clear guidelines for reporting concerns to appropriate authorities, including mandatory reporting requirements.
- Nominate the Business Operations Manager and Community Services Director as responsible for coordinating Karuna's response to any allegations, ensuring the child's safety remains the highest priority.
- Act quickly and effectively to address any allegations, ensuring that the child's safety is always the top priority.
- Provide support and guidance for children and families involved in any child protection issues.

6. Staff Training and Awareness

We will provide training and professional development for team members, Board members, and placements on child safety. This will include:

- Regular updates on the Commonwealth Child Safe Framework.
- Awareness of children's rights and the importance of promoting their welfare and providing a child-safe environment.

We will provide resources and/or training for staff who are client-facing on recognising the signs of abuse and how to respond appropriately.

7. Regular Review and Continuous Improvement

We are committed to the ongoing improvement of our child protection practices. We will:

- Conduct annual risk assessments.

- Review this policy regularly and ensure that it reflects any changes to legislation, guidelines, or best practices.
- Engage with children, families, staff, and external experts to seek feedback and identify areas for improvement.
- Continuously monitor and assess the effectiveness of our child safety practices and policies.

8. Complaints and Grievances

We will ensure that there is a clear, accessible process for children, families, and staff to raise concerns, complaints, or grievances related to child safety. Complaints will be handled sensitively, confidentially, and promptly, in accordance with our internal grievance processes.

9. Confidentiality and Privacy

We respect the privacy and confidentiality of all children and their families. Any personal information collected in the context of child safety will be handled with the utmost care and only shared when necessary to protect a child's safety, in accordance with relevant privacy laws.

10. Implementation and Accountability

This policy is endorsed by the leadership of Karuna and will be implemented across all areas of our operations. Accountability for child safety will be maintained through:

- Oversight by the Leadership Team and the People and Clinical Governance Advisory Committee.
- Regular assessment and review of our child protection practices.

Conclusion

By adhering to the principles and practices outlined in this Child Safety Policy, Karuna aims to ensure that all children who come into contact with our services are safe, respected, and protected from harm. We are committed to continually reviewing and improving our practices to ensure a child-safe environment.

Document Status

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