



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

(This is one component of our Child Safe Environment Policies)

AIM

To provide an environment in which the best interests of children and their protection from harm and hazard is paramount. This will be fostered through our child safe culture, responsive relationships, engaging experiences and a safe and healthy environment. The Service has a commitment for an action or decision that concerns a particular child, the safety, welfare and wellbeing of the child is paramount

PROCEDURE

All Approved Providers, Nominated Supervisors and staff must act in the best interests of the child and take all reasonable steps to ensure each child's safety and wellbeing is paramount

The Lennox Head Community Preschool Inc.'s Child Protection policy is based on the Children and Young persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 & the Child Safe Standards of NSW:

The staff will implement and understand the Standards.

1. Child safety is embedded in the 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 in to account.
5. People working with children are suitable and supported.
6. Processes to respond to complaints of child abuse are child focused.
7. Staff are equipped with knowledge, skills, and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training. This includes Mandatory Child Protection and Safety Training.
8. Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur.
9. Implementation of the child safe standards is continuously reviewed and improved.
10. Policies and procedures document how the service is child safe.

Role and Responsibility in Child Protection as an Approved Provider.

As Approved Provider and Nominated Supervisor will:

- Ensure all staff remain up to date with National Regulations, Laws, Mandatory Reporting Obligations and Child Safe Standards.
- Ensure the Child Protection Risks assessments are completed and reviewed
- Ensure Educator to child ratios are always maintained.
- Ensure lines of sight are not obstructed and supervision is always organised to ensure the safety of both children and staff.
- Ensure staff across all levels of the organisation are familiar with mandatory reporting requirements and their role in keeping children safe.
- Ensure staff are aware of their reporting requirements and how to raise concerns related to child safety.
- provide reporting procedures and professional standards for care and protection work generally, and for staff relationships with children, young people and families.

- Ensure all staff, volunteers and students have an approved Working With Children Check (WWCC) And a record of this including the expiry date must be maintained. (Regulation 147, 149)
- Maintain a record of visitors to preschool and ensure no children are ever alone with visitors, students or volunteers.
- Ensure records identified as relevant to child-to-child safety and wellbeing are clear, objective and thorough; maintained in an indexed, logical, and secure manner; kept for 45 years; and, retained and disposed of in a consistent manner.
- Ensure the retention of records relating to child sexual abuse that has or is alleged to have occurred, for at least 45 years from the date the record was created.
- Keep a register of any child protection concerns

The staff will:

- Understand their key role in keeping children safe from harm in our service and understand that this is everyone's responsibility.
- Keep personal phone/camera devices in staff areas.
- Promote children's bodily integrity (respecting their physical space and only using touch when necessary and appropriate) and support children's age-appropriate understanding of consent and empower children to use their voices for personal advocacy.
 - Educate children about how they can seek help and help identify safe people and unsafe people.
 - Use correct anatomy names for body parts. This will equip children with the language to communicate or disclose information when something isn't right.
 - Ensure children they won't be in trouble if they ask for help.
 - Educate children about what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour with each other and between adults and children.
 - Learn about emotions, how these make our body feel and support children to label their emotions when they arise.
 - Make relations between these feelings and when we are feeling safe/unsafe and talk about who we might go to when we are feeling unsafe.
- recognize and report significant risk of harm using the Mandatory Reporters Guide and Reporting decision tree which is accessible to staff on service issued devices.
- promote the safety, welfare and well-being of children and young people in our preschool.

Child Abuse Allegations against Employees & Volunteers at the Lennox Head Community Preschool Inc

- Any allegations of child abuse or neglect made against an employee or volunteer at the preschool must be immediately referred Lennox Head Community Preschool (Approved Provider and/or Nominated Supervisor) and will be treated in the same way as all child abuse allegations and will follow the same procedure.
- All allegations will be taken seriously, and action will be taken immediately.
- The regulatory must be notified within 24 hours of any incidents or allegations of physical or sexual abuse of a child while at preschool .

Children's disclosure of abuse

Staff will

- Understand the varied means in which children can make a disclosure of abuse or complaints (verbal disclosures or expressing their fear over something, private conversations, tell another child, provide hints through drawings, roleplay, or stories, present somatic symptoms such as constantly feeling sick, or disguised disclosures 'what if' or 'a friend of mine said')
- listen actively to the child.
- use a calm reassuring tone.

- position oneself at the child's level.
- tell them you believe them and that it is not their fault.
- tell the child you will need to tell someone to help keep them safe.
- Understand their role is to listen to what the child has to say.
- Do not use direct or leading questions.
- not to make promises that cannot be kept.
- comfort the child, reassuring him/her that it was right to tell.
- document the interaction as soon as possible using the child's exact words and no personal interpretations.
- Follow the Mandatory Reporters Guide Process

A report must be made to Communities and Justice if there are current concerns about

- The basic physical or psychological needs of the child or young person are not being met (neglect)
- The parents or caregivers have not arranged necessary medical care for the child or young person (unwilling or unable to do so)
- Risk of physical or sexual abuse or ill-treatment
- Parents or caregiver's behaviours towards the child causes or risks serious psychological harm (emotional abuse)
- Incidents of domestic violence and as a consequence a child or young person is at risk of serious physical or psychological harm (domestic or family violence)

A report is made when there are 'reasonable' grounds of significant risk of harm. Reasonable grounds relate to the facts of the concern, the nature and the seriousness of the risk of harm, being mindful of the child's age and circumstances.

Using the decision tree as a guide to a report path to be taken, (more than one path can apply- other concerns)
Where the report does not meet the criteria, a concern sheet will be instigated within the service for the staff to maintain.

Safeguards for Reporters

Reports are confidential. Any person who makes a report is afforded the following protection by law if they make a report in good faith

- the report shall not be held to be a breach of professional etiquette or ethics or a departure from accepted standards of professional conduct.
- no liability for defamation can be incurred because of the making of the report
- the report, or its contents, is not admissible in any proceedings as evidence against the person who made the report
- a person cannot be compelled by a court to provide the report, or give any evidence as to its contents

If as a result of making a report, a person is threatened or fears personal violence, this should be reported to the police, who may apply for and pursue on their behalf an apprehended violence order.

No staff member may disclose to a parent, alleged perpetrator, employer or other person the identity of a person who makes a report of child abuse or neglect.

Procedures for incidents and allegations

- disclosure has been made or incident has been witnessed
- the Nominated Supervisor and/or Director is to be informed immediately, and documentation is to be completed to ensure timely accuracy
- safeguards are in place, as per the child safe code of conduct, to protect reporters.
- If this is a staff member, the procedure for Child Safe Conduct is followed and if necessary they are stood down immediately, pending an investigation.
- The Approved Provider is contacted immediately and notified

- If necessary, the police are contacted and/or the Department of Communities and Justice.
- A notification is made to the Regulatory Authority via the NQAITs Portal.

Attachments

Reporting process for children at significant risk and against staff.

(copy available on web site-reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/)

1 Neglect; 2 Physical Abuse; 3 Emotional Abuse; 4 Sexual Abuse; 5 Domestic Violence

7 The Vulnerability of Children with Disabilities; 8 Cultural Diversity and Child Protection